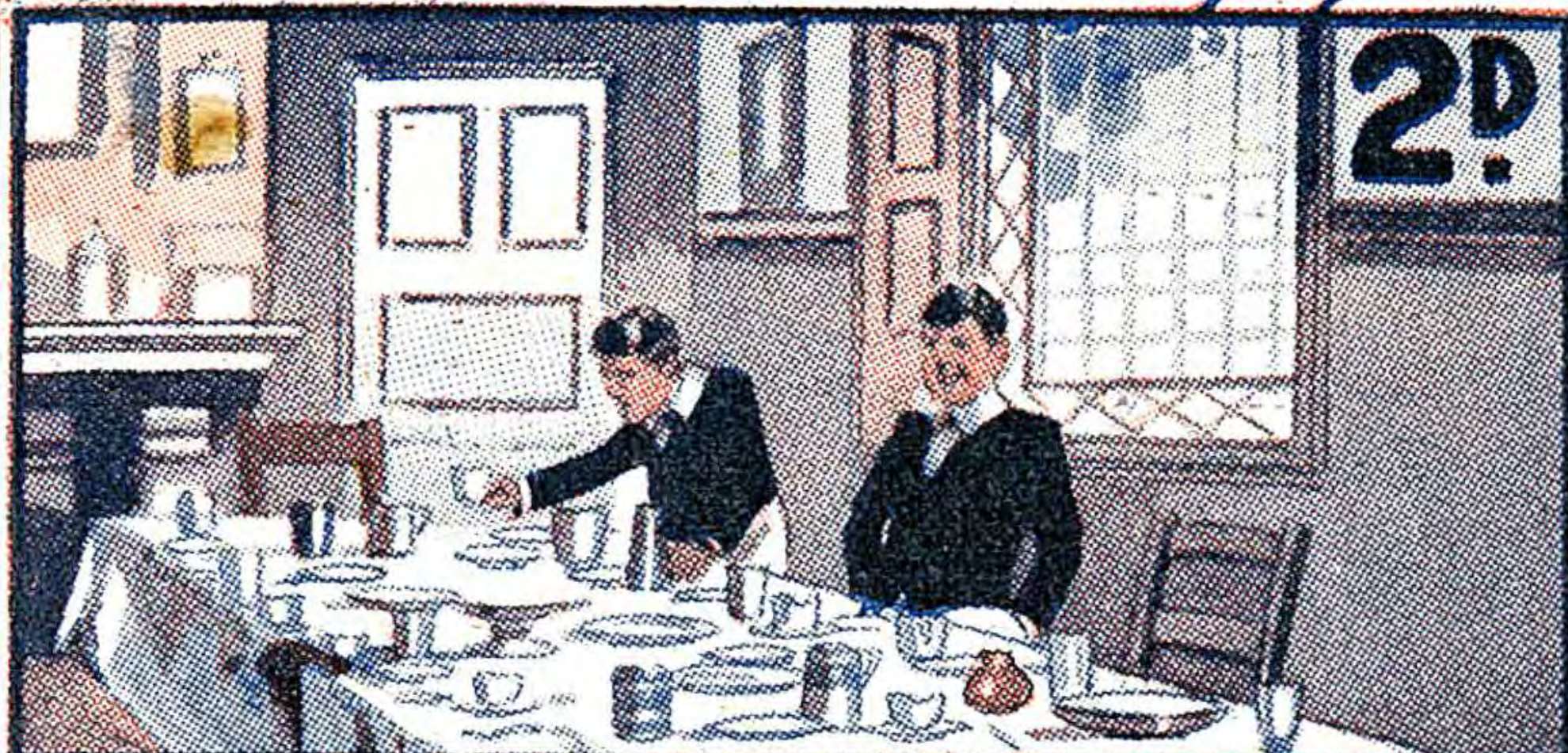


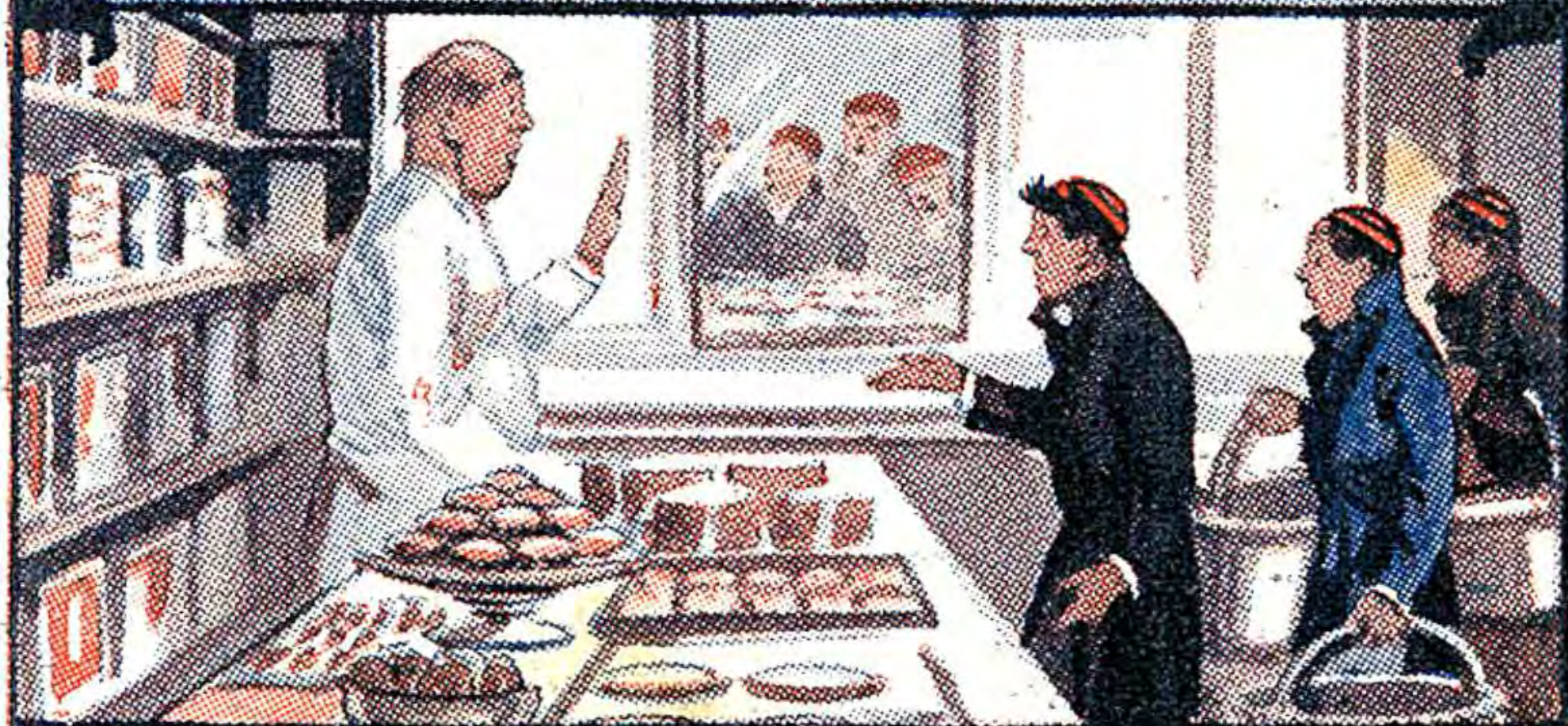
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WILLY HANDFORTH'S WINDELL!

*A Laughable Complete
Story of School Life and
Adventure at St. Frank's,
in which Willy Handforth
plays a leading part.*

By E. SEARLES BROOKS

CHAPTER I.

A SLIGHT MISTAKE.

BERTIE ONIONS, of the Fourth Form at St. Frank's, gazed gloomily out of the common-room window in the Ancient House.

"It's roaring with pain," he said, in a sad voice.

"Eh?" Edward Oswald Handforth sauntered up with his hands in his pockets. "What's roaring with pain, ass?"

"Oh, sorry!" sighed Bertie. "I mean it's pouring with rain."

Handforth grunted.

"I'm fed up," he said disgustedly. "Pouring all yesterday evening; pouring all night, and it's still pouring now. Life isn't worth living nowadays! We might as well be fishes!"

There was some little excuse for Handforth's lament. The morning was atrocious. Rain was descending in a heavy, continuous downpour. The Triangle was a dripping morass, with great puddles and pools.

Overhead, the leaden sky was unrelieved by any break in the clouds, and the visibility was so bad that the playing-fields were lost in a haze of mist and rain. It was essentially a morning for the fireside.

"We can't expect much else, you know," remarked Nicodemus Trotwood, as he took a seat on the radiator. "November isn't exactly a summer month, Handy. And grumbling won't make any difference, anyhow."

"I can't help feeling fed up, can I?" demanded Handforth tartly. "This weather is enough to give me the pip! Oh, my hat! We're getting all the freaks in here this morning," he added, as Cornelius Trotwood entered the common-room and went to his twin's side.

"A chilly, miserable morning, dear brother," said Cornelius mildly.

"Tell me something I don't know!" grinned Nicodemus.

"It wouldn't be so bad if there was a sign of a break," growled Handforth, scanning the sky. "But it looks like keeping on for weeks! Where's Church? Where's McClure? Why haven't those fatheads come?"

"Are you addressing me, my dear friend?" inquired Cornelius.

"No, I'm not!" retorted Edward Oswald. "I told Church and McClure to come straight to the common-room, and they've disobeyed my instructions! I shall have to punch their silly heads!"

"Really, I don't think so," said Cornelius mildly.

"Eh?"

"Surely they cannot still be in their beds——"

"Who's talking about beds?" roared Handforth, exasperated. "You deaf fathead, you never hear what a chap says! What's that in your hand?" he added, indicating a journal with a highly-coloured cover which Cornelius carried. "Let's have a squint!"

"You require some lint, my dear Handforth?" asked the deaf junior, with concern.

"Dear me! I trust you have not injured yourself—"

"I'm not talking about lint!" howled Handforth. "I want that paper!"

"Vapour?" said Cornelius. "There is certainly a mist outside—"

"Oh, my goodness!" groaned Handforth desperately.

He strode forward, and took the periodical out of Corny's hand. Nicodemus looked on, grinning—he always found amusement in his brother's unfortunate affliction.

Bertie Onions turned from the window, shivering.

"I think somebody had better fake the mire up," he said sadly.

"Fake the mire up?" repeated Nicodemus. "There's quite enough mire outside without faking it up, you duffer."

Bertie gave one of his heavy sighs.

"Sorry!" he said glumly. "Just a little slip, you know. I was merely suggesting that someone ought to make the fire up."

"Then why don't you say what you mean, instead of twisting your giddy words inside out?" said Nick. "This radiator's all right, as far as I'm concerned. Plenty of room for you, too."

The junior common-room was warmed by means of radiators, but possessed a fireplace as well—this latter giving the apartment a cosy, cheery aspect. Bertie Onions shovelled some coal on.

"I think the weather is breaking," he observed. "At all events, I just saw a light wine in the clouds."

"You saw which?" demanded Handforth, staring.

"A light wine— Er, I should say, a white line," corrected Bertie. "Let us hope the clouds will finally disperse themselves and allow the pun to soar down."

"I suppose you mean, the sun to pour down?" grinned Nicodemus. "All right, Bertie, we forgive you. You're just as bad as ever— What the— Here, steady, Handy—"

"I've won it!" gasped Handforth, staring at the paper in his hands in a dazed kind of way. "The third giddy prize! Ten quid! I'm the winner! My name's here, as clear as daylight!"

The common-room became alert, and juniors crowded round Handforth in an interested knot. Church and McClure arrived at this critical juncture, and took a lively interest in the news.

"You've won?" asked McClure, an incredulous expression upon his alert features. "Impossible! That solution you sent in was absolutely hopeless! You've made a bloomer, old man!"

"Of course you have!" declared Church firmly.

Handforth laughed in a superior kind of way.

"Rot!" he retorted. "Here's the announcement! Of course, I knew all along

that I should win, and it's like their cheek to give me the third prize! I ought to have got the first prize of fifty quid!"

"You haven't got anything!" persisted Church.

He and McClure simply couldn't believe what their leader announced. They remembered that competition—they remembered Handforth's hopeless puzzle solution. They had plainly warned him at the time that he was wasting a good postage stamp, and the recollection brought back painful memories.

"Here you are—look with your own eyes if you don't believe me!" said Handforth triumphantly. "Here's my name, and address—Ancient House, St. Frank's. Isn't that plain enough?"

Church and McClure seized the story-paper and gazed at the list of prize-winners in a fascinated kind of way. Sure enough, there was the name and address! It was incredible—unheard of. And then McClure suddenly gave a yell of laughter.

"I knew it!" he shouted. "Why the dickens don't you read properly? Here it is—'The third prize has been awarded to W. Handforth.' Poor old Handy! This prize has been won by your minor!"

CHAPTER II.

THE LUCK OF THE THIRD.



EDWARD OSWALD wasn't at all taken aback.

"My minor?" he repeated. "Oh, that? My dear ass, the printers have made a mistake, that's all! These printers are always doing that sort of thing. They've given me the wrong initial."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The common-room fairly howled. It was quite characteristic of Handforth to take the thing for granted. And when the truth was obvious before his face, he wouldn't accept it.

The possibility of his minor being the prize-winner didn't even find a moment's consideration in his thoughts. And the other juniors were intensely amused.

"Hallo! Everybody seems happy on this bright and sunny morning," remarked Reggie Pitt, as he strolled into the room with Jack Grey and Tregellis-West. "What's all the merriment about? I don't want to be inquisitive, but good jokes are so scarce nowadays that I don't want to miss one."

"Why, Handforth's young brother has won a ten pound prize in a competition, and Handy persists in saying that he's won it himself!" grinned Church. "Willy ought to be told about this."

"He'll be told!" put in Handforth grimly. "I'll tell him myself—and if he tries to make out that he's the winner, I'll open his eyes a bit!"

"That'll be a change!" said Pitt. "You generally close Willy's eyes."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, Handy, be sensible!" urged Church. "Don't you remember that Willy sent in a solution three days before you? As a matter of fact, you didn't post yours until after the closing date!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We warned you about it, but you wouldn't take any notice," added McClure. "You're dotty if you think you've won this prize!"

But Handforth remained serenely confident. "You can go and eat coke!" he said tartly. "You can't get away from facts—facts never lie! I puzzled over that competition for a whole week, and my solution was correct in every detail! Therefore, I've won the prize! Some fathead in Manchester has got the fifty quid, and I shall write to the Editor for an explanation!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Handforth suddenly frowned as the door opened and his minor appeared. Willy, of the Third, sauntered in as though he owned the place, and looked round at the amused Fourth-Formers with perfect calmness.

"I thought I'd find you here, Ted," he remarked. "As a matter of fact, I heard your voice at the other end of the passage. What's all the excitement about?"

"I'm not excited!" snorted his major. "I've won the third prize in that puzzle competition—a small matter of ten pounds—What the dickens are you staring at me like that for, you young ass?"

Willy, in fact, had come to a halt and was gazing blankly.

"You've won ten quid?" he repeated.

"Yes—my name's in the list," said Handforth carelessly. "They've been idiots enough to put your initial in front of the name, instead of mine. But that's nothing."

"Not at all!" agreed Willy, his face breaking into a grin. "My dear, poor, deluded chump, you haven't won a prize at all! It's mine! And I knew it ages ago. I was just coming along to tell you the news!"

"You knew it?" gasped Handforth, staring.

"Of course! I got the cheque this morning!"

"Cheque?" breathed Handforth faintly.

"Here it is—made payable to William Handforth," said the fag cheerfully. "You're not going to claim it as yours, I suppose? It's all the same if you do—you won't get it! If you're a bit short of tin, I might lend you a quid—"

"Then—then I haven't won after all?" asked Handforth, full realisation dawning upon him at length.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Fourth-Formers appreciated the joke keenly, and Handforth was so disgusted that he stalked majestically out of the room, threatening to write an immediate letter to the editor.

"Poor old Ted!" sighed Willy. "He's

always suffering from these delusions. You can clear off, Long! I'm not sharing this cash with any of you Fourth chaps!"

Teddy Long grunted, and looked crestfallen as Willy turned on his heel and passed out of the common-room. In the lobby, the fag ran into Mr. Beverley Stokes, the house-master.

"Oh, good!" said Willy. "Just the chap I wanted to see! I—I mean, I'd like you to do me a favour, sir," he added hastily. "Nothing much, sir. I only want you to cash me a cheque for ten pounds!"

Mr. Stokes was excusably startled.

"A cheque for ten pounds?" he repeated.

"Am I right, Handforth minor? Did I understand you perfectly?"

"Yes, sir. I wouldn't bother you, only I don't happen to have a banking account," said Willy. "I don't mind five quid now, sir, and the rest later on. I can trust you all right, sir."

"I am delighted to hear that you have such faith in my honesty, Willy?" said Mr. Stokes drily. "But if you think you will obtain five pounds now—or at any future time—you have made a slight error. Are you presuming to make me the butt of your latest joke?"

"Call this a joke, sir?" demanded Willy tartly.

He thrust the cheque under Mr. Stokes' nose, and the Housemaster took it gingerly, examined it once or twice, turned it over, and then shook his head.

"I am sorry to hear that you want this cashed, young man," he said. "I can see that it is no joke, as I first suspected. A ten-pound prize is a very considerable wind-fall for a boy of your age. Wouldn't it be better to keep the cheque intact—to place it safely away—"

"Here, come off it, sir!" protested Willy indignantly. "It's the first time I've won a prize like this, and I mean to give the Third a big treat at my expense. They don't know their luck yet, but they soon will!"

CHAPTER III.

WILLY, THE PEACEMAKER.



MR. STOKES looked pained.

"You intend to spend all this money on your Form-mates?" he asked. "I admire your generosity, Handforth minor,

but I cannot say that I entirely approve. Of course, the money is yours, and I should not presume to interfere—but I strongly advise you to think carefully."

"You're too late, sir," said Willy. "I've already thought carefully—I thought carefully for two solid minutes. And I came to the conclusion that it would be a wicked shame to lay ten quid aside when it could be used for a Form feed!"

"Well, I won't waste any further breath on you, my boy," said Mr. Stokes severely. "It is quite apparent that you have made up your mind to squander this money recklessly. My advice would fall on deaf ears."

"Not deaf ears, sir," corrected Willy. "Unheeding, perhaps, but my hearing is top-hole. What about the cash, sir? I'd like a pound in silver, if it's all the same to you."

"I don't happen to walk about with my pockets bulging with silver—or with notes, either," replied the Housemaster. "In fact, Willy, I can't change this cheque at all."

Willy flushed with indignation.

"You can't change it!" he said warmly.

Well, I like that! And you've kept me messing about here—I mean, I've detained you all this time for nothing, sir," he added hastily.

"It is hardly feasible that you will indulge in this feeding orgy during lesson-time, so perhaps the situation can be saved," said Mr. Stokes smoothly. "I shall be going into Bannington this afternoon, Willy, and I will get the cash for you then. How will that do?"

Willy brightened up.

"Oh, well, that's not so bad, sir," he said condescendingly. "If you'll promise to get the cash this afternoon, I'll wait. But I've got to have it by tea-time," he added, warningly.

"Then I'm afraid the whole transaction is off," said the Housemaster. "I shan't be home till six o'clock, at the earliest. If that won't do, Handforth minor, you'll have to go to the Head. And he may possibly read you a very severe lecture on the subject of squandering."

Willy frowned in deep thought, scratching his left calf at the same moment.

"Six o'clock?" he said musingly. "Of course, it's jolly late, sir. But I suppose I shall have to agree. All right—take the cheque. I'll be looking out for you at six. But, mind, if you're late—"

Willy broke off, recollecting himself, and thought it advisable to leave the remainder of his sentence unsaid. Mr. Stokes turned the cheque over again, and frowned at the back of it.

"What is this?" he asked. "What are these marks and blots?"

"Oh, those?" said Willy. "Only my beetletracks, sir."

"Your what?"

"That is to say, my signature, sir," corrected Willy hurriedly. "All cheques have got to be endorsed, you know," he added, with an indulgent air. "Didn't you know that, sir? Well, we live and learn!"

Mr. Stokes chuckled.

"We do, indeed!" he agreed drily. "At this moment I have learned that your handwriting requires careful attention—and I shall make a point of mentioning the point to Mr. Sutcliffe. Well, you can be off, young man."

"Thanks awfully, sir," replied Willy. "I'll buzz to your study at six o'clock this evening, and if you're not there I'll wait in the lobby. And don't be late, for goodness' sake!"

Willy nodded coolly, and sauntered off, leaving Mr. Stokes gazing after him with twinkling eyes. The Housemaster would certainly not have stood such "nerve" from any other junior. But, somehow, Willy had such an air of innocence about him that it was quite impossible to pull him up short. And, if the truth must be known, the genial Housemaster had a decided liking for Willy, and he even enjoyed the fag's refreshing cheek. Mr. Stokes was rather more broadminded than the average master.

Willy arrived in the Third-Form quarters to discover that a free fight was in progress. It seemed that Chubby Heath had mistaken some of Juicy Lemon's fretwork for firewood, and the labours of Juicy's past week were now represented by a few ashes in Chubby's study. Quite reasonably, Lemon had become incensed—although it was universally agreed in the Third that he had no justification for knocking Chubby backwards through the umbrella-stand.

At least half a dozen umbrellas were completely wrecked through this act of rashness, and the free fight was a direct consequence. Chubby himself was doing great damage to all and sundry. And then Willy sailed in. Willy was quite impartial.

He hit out at all and sundry, his own chums coming in for just as many blows as the others. For Willy took the simple view that the quickest way to stop a fight is to knock everybody out. As leader of the Third, he regarded it as his duty to restore peace. And this was his way of doing it.

The task was soon accomplished.

Handforth minor was the champion of the Third. He had a punch which closely resembled his major's, and once Willy was fairly started, he thoroughly enjoyed himself, and made a meal of it, so to speak.

"You fatheads!" panted Willy breathlessly. "Haven't you got more sense than to fight? I came here to tell you some good news, and now you'll all have to go into the sanny to get your injuries repaired."

"My fretwork's all burnt up!" roared Lemon.

"Oh, is it?" said Willy tartly. "I've always said that Chubby is useless—but I'll take that back. Any chap who burns up your fretwork is a public benefactor! I never saw such rotten designs in all my life! You ought to feel thankful it's destroyed!"

Juicy Lemon didn't look at all thankful—he continued to rave.

"Besides, what's the good of making a fuss now?" went on Willy. "It's no good

crying over burnt fretwork—or smashed gamps. These things happen, and we've got to make the best of 'em. By the way, somebody's got a sharp nose—I cut my hand when I punched a face just now!"

"You ass! You've smashed my glasses!" wailed Conroy minimus.

"That's your fault for being such an ass as to fight in your giddy windows!" replied Willy disdainfully. "Well, look here—I've won ten quid in a competition, and what about a Form feed this evening?"

"A—a Form feed?" asked a dozen voices.

"Yes—a regular royal spread!" replied Willy. "This money is a kind of wind-fall—I didn't expect it. I'm just using

CHAPTER IV

FERDINAND, THE ENTERPRISING.



FERDINAND was inclined to be peevish. Certainly, he had excellent cause to be. No self-respecting ferret actually likes to be pushed unceremoniously into a blue sugar-bag, and then deposited in the breast-pocket of an overcoat.

Ferdinand, therefore, had good reason for feeling that he was an ill-used member of society. Upon the whole, he didn't have such a bad time. His owner fed him on the

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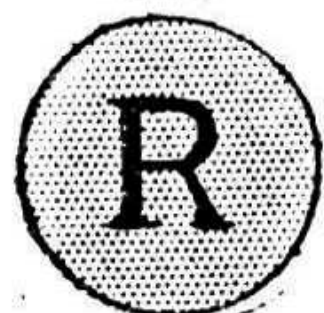
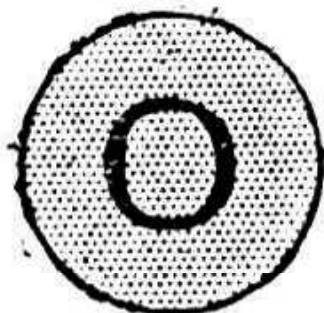
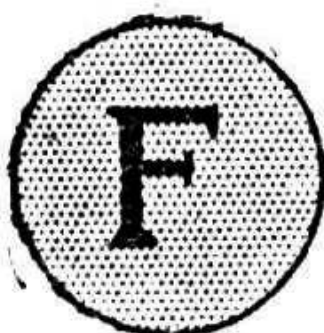
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thirty bob for a new camera, and all the rest can be spread on the feed. For eight quid we can break all Third-Form records."

The fags recovered themselves with amazing speed. Juicy Lemon even forgot about his fretwork, and it turned out that most of the smashed umbrellas belonged to the Fourth, so the damage was of no consequence.

Peace in the Third was restored, for Willy's great news had produced complete harmony, and he was regarded as a hero. Any fellow with eight pounds to spend on a feed had to be treated with profound respect!

best fare, and he usually had many idle hours in which to indulge in restful sleep.

But the present occasion was apparently marked out as one of Ferdinand's busy afternoons. Being enclosed in a sugar-bag, he wasn't aware of the plan of action. But as Willy Handforth was, it didn't matter.

Dinner, in fact, was over, and Willy was marching briskly along the muddy lane which led to Edgemore. He was, according to his own statement, out on a ratting expedition. Not that he actually wanted rats. But, he argued, what was the good of keeping a ferret if he didn't use him?

The rain had ceased. To the joy of the entire junior school, the clouds had dispersed half-way through the morning lessons, and by midday the sky was clear. And now, in the early afternoon, the sun was shining and the countryside was beginning to recover from its half-drowned appearance.

Willy was feeling quite satisfied about the Third Form feed. In his usual business-like way, he had made his plans, and the entire arrangements were neatly cut and dried.

Willy had already visited the tuckshop in Bellton. And Mr. Binks had promised to have a special selection of tuck ready at six o'clock to the minute. It wasn't often that Mr. Binks received an order amounting to eight pounds and over. To the village confectioner it somewhat resembled a contract.

And while Willy was happily setting out on his ratting expedition, the energetic Mr. Binks was hard at work in his bakery, making an apparently endless supply of doughnuts, jam-puffs, cream-tarts, and other indigestible trifles. It is doubtful if Mr. Binks would have accepted such a large order from any other junior without cash. But he knew Willy of old, and had complete confidence in Willy's ability to pay. Handforth minor's word was good enough.

In case Willy was delayed during the afternoon—for Ferdinand might possibly become stubborn while investigating a rat-hole—he had arranged with Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon and Owen minor and Dicky Jones to go straight down to the tuckshop at six o'clock. Here they would take charge of the various parcels and await Willy's coming with the cash.

"Yes, I think everything's all serene," murmured Willy, as he strode along. "We shall have all our work cut out to carry eight quids' worth of grub, but I'll bet there won't be any grumbles. I've a good mind to make old Binks send the giddy consignment up in his car. Why not? These tradesmen are getting too independent nowadays. I shall have to put my foot down!"

At this point Ferdinand required attention. Feeling that his temporary quarters were somewhat confined, he had bitten his way out, and was vigorously endeavouring to scramble into the open air.

"None of that, my lad!" said Willy severely.

He coaxed Ferdinand back into his pocket. Ferrets are queer creatures to deal with, and as a general rule show no particular affection for their masters. In fact, they are so liberal with their bites that it doesn't matter to them which hand they snap at.

But Ferdinand was a perfect little gentleman in his own way.

Willy had brought him up from infancy, and Ferdinand was undoubtedly an exceptional little beast. He not only knew his master's voice, but he would answer

a whistle, and his habit of biting had been sternly repressed from early youth.

Willy could handle the ferret with impunity. He had trained it with inexhaustible patience and kindness—for, in spite of what certain libellous Fourth-Formers had said, Willy was gentle to a degree with his pets. Woe betide any interfering fag who teased or worried Willy's miniature menagerie. Willy would cheerfully slaughter a fellow-fag for the slightest offence, but to harm a hair of his pets' anatomies was unthinkable. After all, fags were of no importance, anyhow.

So Ferdinand, instead of being a snappy animal to be treated with care and respect, was a likeable little creature which Willy could handle with impunity.

Having arrived at a quiet, deserted part of the lane, Willy took stock of his surroundings. He had heard through the medium of Tubbs, the page-boy, that field rats were to be found in abundance near the second spinney to the east of Edgemore. According to Tubbs, rat-holes were so numerous that Ferdinand would have a regular picnic.

Willy was on the right spot, but there appeared to be no rat-holes. He resolved to read Tubbs a stern lecture on the subject of exaggeration when he got back. In the meantime, he broke through a gap in the hedge and made his way across a small meadow towards the spinney. It is to be feared that Willy was trespassing, although a detail of this nature was of no consequence.

He beheld a number of likely holes almost at once, and his eyes gleamed. There was work for the enterprising Ferdinand, after all.

CHAPTER V.

MR. DUNN AND MR. POTTER.



"DON'T forget—as soon as you've chased a few rats, come straight back!"

said Willy sternly. "No loitering, my lad! If you get that tired feeling while you're out of my sight, I'll send you to bed supperless!"

Ferdinand blinked, and looked very meek. He was sitting on Willy's hand, and he had taken his instructions very complacently. This was easily understandable, for Ferdinand was no wiser now than he had been at the first. For a ferret he was intelligent—but he hadn't yet reached that stage when he fully appreciated the English language.

He sat there, looking very clean and yellowish, with his sharp little nose sniffing the air, and his pink eyes very alert. Willy seized him by the shoulder blades, and deposited him at the entrance of the nearest hole.

"All right—full speed ahead!" said Willy.

Ferdinand hesitated a moment or two, and then commenced his investigation. He vanished from sight, and Willy set himself to wait. The fag didn't quite know what to expect next. His ratting experience was extremely limited. In fact, he didn't actually know how to use a ferret at all. He had only kept the animal as a pet, and this ratting exploit was by way of an experiment.

He had a vague idea that he ought to employ nets, and he had heard that ferrets ought to be muzzled. But he couldn't be bothered with such details as these.

He had no fear that Ferdinand would not return. The little animal always answered his whistle, and was surprisingly obedient. Willy resolved to give him ten minutes of entire freedom. If he failed to return during that time, something would have to be done.

The ten minutes elapsed in due course, and Willy was frowning with annoyance. He had expected to witness the flight of a dozen rats or so, from various holes. But no such pleasing spectacle had occurred.

Willy consulted his watch, and he was so intent upon his task that he failed to notice the approach of a stranger across the sodden grass. The man had come from the spinney, and he was apparently interested in Willy's enterprise.

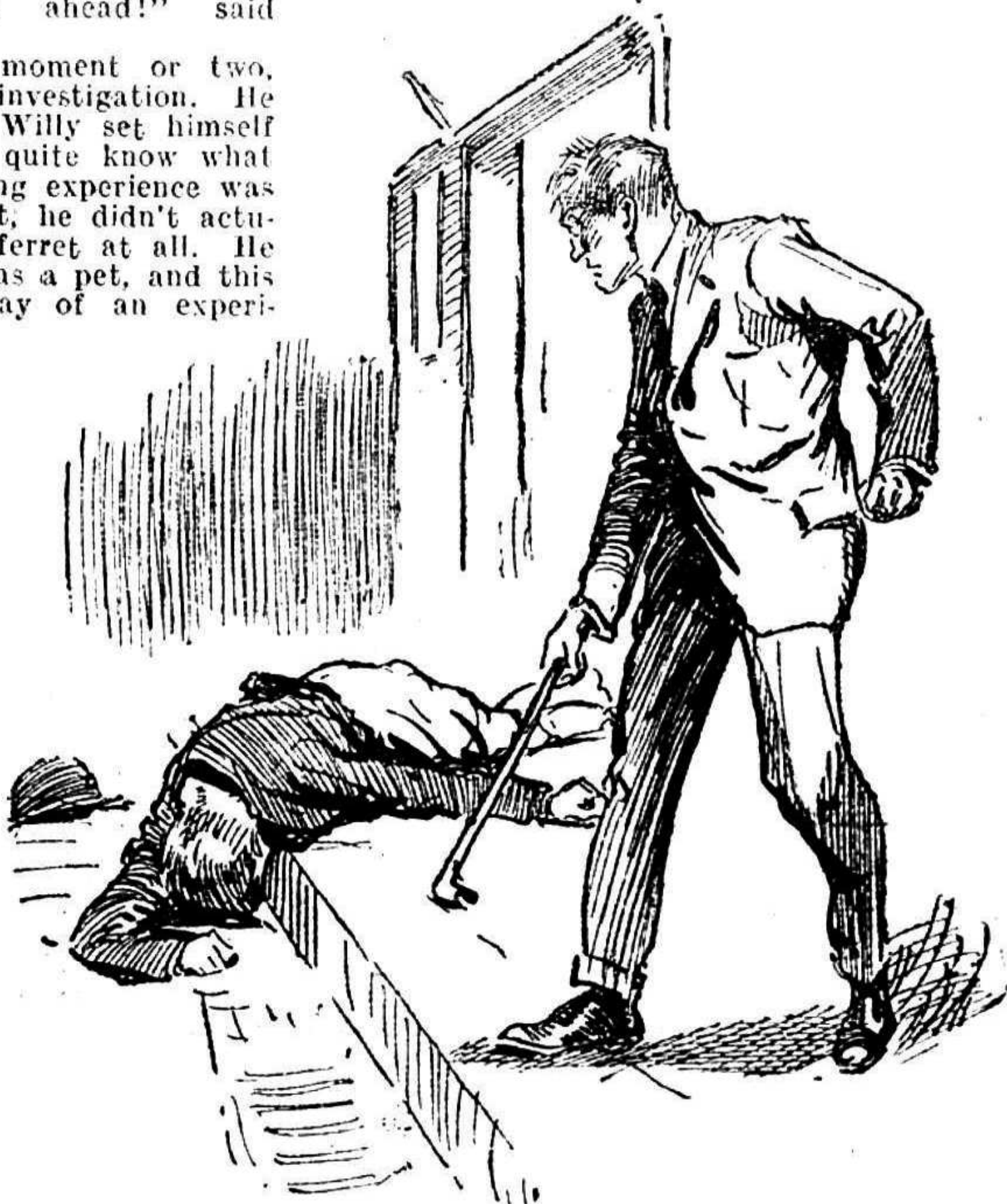
The man was attired in corduroy breeches and gaiters, and carried a gun under his arm. Without question he was a game-keeper, and, as such, he viewed with dark suspicion the activities of this intruder.

He was about to send out a hail, when something happened. The event was so rapid that even Willy nearly missed it. There was a sudden wild scuffle at one of the holes, and two rabbits came shooting out like stones from a catapult. They swerved wildly, and went careering across the meadow.

And Ferdinand, with a few stray whisks of fur hanging about his jaws, appeared in full pursuit. Willy stared.

"Well, my hat!" he gasped. "Rabbits, by jingo!"

He gave a shrill whistle, and it spoke



Ned Potter was utterly horrified. Dunn was dead! And he—Ned Potter—had killed him.

well for Ferdinand's training that he answered at once. For the ferret smothered all his natural instincts, and obeyed the summons.

"Caught you nicely, ain't I?" said a rough voice in the rear. "Poaching, eh? You young rat—"

"Eh?" gasped Willy, turning round. "Hallo! Where the dickens did you spring from? And this isn't a rat—it's a ferret!"

"I weren't referrin' to that animal!" retorted the man angrily. "This 'ere's private property, an' you're after rabbits! You'll suffer for this, young 'un, as sure as my name's Dunn."

"Rot!" snorted Willy. "I thought these were rat-holes! I was just trying to teach Ferdinand a few tips—"

"You can't fool me with a yarn like that!" snapped Mr. Dunn, advancing, and grasping Willy by the scruff of his neck. "I'll teach ye to try these 'ere poachin'!"

games! You're lucky I don't hand ye over to the police!"

Willy was taken by surprise. He hadn't expected any violence of this kind. Dunn was a youngish man, with a coarse-looking exterior—not that this was anything against him. His occupation was necessarily rough. But he was clearly an evil-tempered man.

"Look here, I didn't mean to poach!" protested Willy warmly. "I came here to scare a few rats! No harm in that, I suppose?"

"I'll learn ye!" growled Mr. Dunn savagely.

Without giving his victim the slightest chance to explain, he raised his thick ashplant and brought it down with stinging force across Willy's shoulders. It was a brutal blow, and the fag nearly crumbled up.

"You brute!" he shouted breathlessly.

The ashplant descended again, and try as Willy would, he found it impossible to wriggle free from the gamekeeper's powerful grip. Matters would have gone very hard with him, no doubt, but for a timely intervention.

A shout came from the neighbouring hedge, and a newcomer appeared. He was a well set-up youth of about twenty, and he had taken in the situation at a glance. This fag was being brutally treated, and it was enough for the stranger's sense of fair play.

In half a dozen strides he reached the spot, and acted. With one powerful drive he sent Mr. Dunn reeling back, and a second blow, equally as forceful, landed the gamekeeper on his back with a sickening thud.

"Thanks awfully!" panted Willy.

"That's all right, young gent—don't need to thank me!" said the newcomer grimly. "This feller was bullying you! I know him—and he ain't one o' my best friends, neither!"

The game-keeper scrambled to his feet and gathered up his gun. He gazed at the young fellow with malicious hatred, but made no attempt to continue hostilities.

"All right, Ned Potter!" he snarled. "I'll get even with ye for this!"

Without another word he slunk off—obviously afraid of his young antagonist. Ned Potter gave a scornful laugh, and then frowned at Willy.

"Likely you was up to mischief, young gent, eh?" he suggested. "But that wasn't no excuse for Dunn's bullying. Best get clear o' this medder straight away. One of the St. Frank's boys, ain't you?"

"Yes," replied Willy. "I say, thanks for butting in like that. That beast took me by surprise, you know."

Ned Potter laughed, and walked away. A few moments later Willy saw him mount a bicycle in the lane, and ride off. And the hero of the Third decided that it was high time for him to get back to St. Frank's.

He replaced Ferdinand in his pocket, disgustedly confiding to the ferret that rattling wasn't all it was cracked up to be.

CHAPTER VI.

A DRAMATIC TURN



A RCHIE GLEN-THORNE, of the Ancient Fourth, adjusted his monocle, and gazed into the Third Form room with some surprise.

"What-ho!" he observed. "Festivities, what? I mean to say, the good old spread, and all that sort of stuff!"

"You needn't be jealous—this is only for the Third!" said Chubby Heath severely. "No outsiders allowed! Sorry, Archie, but you can buzz off as soon as you like!"

"Dash it all!" protested Archie. "I mean, rather dashed steep, what? I haven't the faintest desire to join the revels. I'm looking for Brent, don't you know. Some chappie assured me that Alf was absolutely to be found in the good old faggery."

"Well, he absolutely isn't," said Chubby pointedly.

"So," said Archie, "I observe. I must proceed elsewhere, and continue the jolly old search. Frightfully exhausting, and so forth, but when a chappie is missing, all another chappie can do is to whizz about somewhat."

The swell of the Ancient House wandered away, and Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon felt happier. They didn't want any intruders. This great feed was to be a Third Form affair exclusively.

The Form room was a cheerful sight—although, possibly, Mr. Suncliffe might not have thought so. Fortunately, the Third Form master was quite unconscious of these secret preparations.

The class-room wore a gay, banquet-like appearance. Forms had been converted into temporary tables, and the entire cutlery and crockery of the Third Form studies had been requisitioned. The assortment was weird and wonderful, but the fags weren't at all particular.

"Fine!" said Chubby Heath critically. "Everything complete."

"Except the grub," remarked Owen minor. "My hat! Eight quid's worth! We'll have the finest feed of the term! Willy's a good 'un, you know—I've always said so!"

Willy's popularity was tremendous. A fellow who could provide a feed like this was unquestionably a brick among bricks. The Third was not accustomed to lavish extravagance. A feed usually consisted of five or ten shillings' worth of Mrs. Hake's "left-overs." This present affair was to be a

really gorgeous spread of the finest quality.

Tea was over, and the fags had taken care to eat sparingly. They were reserving their appetites for the good things to come. For, as Lemon pointed out, it was sheer idiocy to fill up on slabs of bread and butter and leave insufficient space for the celebration delicacies.

It was very dark outside, and Willy's lieutenants were thinking about starting for the village. Willy himself was doing his prep. in advance—for Willy was a level-headed, methodical youngster, who believed in doing things in an orderly fashion. Later on he would be on the look-out for Mr. Stokes and the ready cash.

In the meantime, a totally unexpected incident was taking place in the village—an incident which was destined to have a direct bearing on the Third Form feed.

The White Harp Inn, the favourite resort of the rougher element of Belton was aglow with lights, and looked very cheerful in the darkness of the chill November evening. A meeting between two sworn enemies took place which, under the circumstances, was singularly unfortunate.

To be exact, Dunn, the gamekeeper, lurched out of the White Harp just as Ned Potter was passing by. Mr. Dunn had been drinking rather heavily, and he acted in a manner that he would never have done in a perfectly sober condition.

The light flooded out through the doorway, and showed up Ned Potter clearly. At the sight of the young fellow, Dunn uttered a growl of hatred, and raised his heavy stick—the same ashplant that had descended with such force upon Willy's shoulders.

"I told ye I'd get even, didn't I?" muttered Dunn thickly.

He fairly hurled himself at Potter—a drunken attack which Potter regarded with the utmost contempt. The incident, indeed, would have been a mere trifle but for the intervention of Fate.

Crash!

Potter was quite prepared, and he met the attack with a straight drive which sent the half-intoxicated man hurtling backwards. It was the second time within a few hours that Mr. Dunn had been floored. But this time the result was utterly disastrous.

For he fell face downwards, twisting in the course of the fall. His forehead struck the edge of the rough stone pavement with shattering force, and he lay perfectly still. There was something horrible in the limp inertness of that sprawling figure.

Potter had been about to pass on, but he paused, his heart quickening rapidly. He knew well enough that his blow had been harmless enough. But the stillness of Dunn's form was disquieting. Potter seemed to remember having heard a sharp, significant crack.

"You asked for it, you fool!" he exclaimed huskily. "I only give you a punch in the chest. Don't lay there like that—there's folks comin' along the street——"

Potter broke off, and moved nearer to the still figure. It was very dark there, and he could only see the dim outline of Dunn's form. They were not more than four paces from the door of the inn.

"Come on, mate—move yourself!" muttered Potter anxiously.

He went down on one knee and attempted to lift the man up. His fingers encountered the heavy stick, and he grasped it almost unconsciously. And at the same moment the door of the inn was thrown open, and two villagers emerged. A bright shaft of light shot out.

Jim Potter was revealed in that gleam. And the villagers uttered cries of horror and stared. Under the circumstances, they could hardly be blamed for putting a wrong construction on what they saw.

The young fellow was bending over the fallen man, a heavy stick in his hands, his face as pale as death. And Dunn was half pulled up, and in Potter's arms. An ugly, jagged wound showed on his forehead, and blood was flowing profusely.

"My stars!" gasped one of the villagers. "It's Potter—Ned Potter! Ay, and young Dunn! He's dead—Potter's killed him!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE ARM OF THE LAW.



NED POTTER was utterly horrified.

The words seemed to come from a great distance, but he heard them with startling clearness. They seared into his brain.

Dunn was dead! And he—Ned Potter—had killed him!

The shock was so great that Potter was dazed for a few brief seconds. In a curious kind of way he felt himself detached from the whole incident—as though he were an onlooker. And from this angle he was able to see himself as these other men saw him.

The whole thing was obvious. There had been a quarrel, and Potter had murderously struck Dunn down with the ashplant! The evidence of the eye-witnesses would prove the case to the hilt. And Potter's story of the actual encounter would be regarded as a ridiculous lie.

A kind of panic seized the young fellow. He was by no means a fool, and the deadly circumstantial evidence against him was overwhelming. He knew that Dunn had been speaking about their quarrel of the afternoon—and he had, himself, told several people that he and Dunn were booked for

a fight. He had related this jokingly—little dreaming of what was to come.

And people would talk—people would put two and two together. Without doubt, Potter was in a position of grave danger. He had done nothing—he was entirely innocent—but his peril was acute.

"Boy, what have you done?" shouted one of the villagers, rushing out.

"Done?" gasped Potter. "Nothing! It was an accident! He—he was drunk—he fell over and must have hurt himself——"

"That won't do!" interrupted the older man sternly. "You hit him with that stick—you can't deny it! Boy, you've killed him! He's dead! You've cracked his head——"

"I didn't!" shouted Potter wildly.

"Better fetch the police!" put in the other villager, in a scared voice. "An' you stay here, Potter—best not try to get away——"

"The police!" stammered the young fellow. "But—but—— You don't understand! I tell you it was an accident——"

He broke off, panic seizing him completely. With a shudder, he flung the ashplant from him, twirled round, and sped off into the darkness. His one wild aim was to get away—to flee from this dreadful scene. The police! Once arrested there would be no chance for him!

He hadn't taken a dozen strides up the lane before he collided with somebody who was coming along from the direction of the bridge. But Potter took no notice; he rushed straight on.

"Good gracious me!" exclaimed the other. "What is all this? What is this extraordinary commotion? Bless my soul! The man's gone! Very rude of him—decidedly ungentlemanly!"

The new arrival was an elderly gentleman, tall and thin and with somewhat stooping shoulders. He possessed a high-domed forehead and prominent teeth, and his eyes were twinkling from behind horn-rimmed spectacles with enormously thick lenses. He was attired in a frock-coat and baggy trousers. In a word, Professor Sylvester Tucker, the new Modern House science master of St. Frank's, had appeared on the scene.

"You'll do, sir!" shouted one of the villagers, as Professor Tucker came up. "There's been murder done! We've got to carry this poor chap into the inn. Go you and fetch the policeman, if ye will!"

* The professor blinked.

"Murder?" he repeated vaguely. "But, my good man, how ridiculous! I can assure you I know nothing whatever about——"

"You'll find the policeman up by the station, sir."

The professor came to himself somewhat.

He now saw that the two men were lifting a limp, inert form. The science master was astonishingly absent-minded, and he generally walked about so deeply engrossed in thought that he frequently forgot what he had come out for.

But for once his abstraction was broken.

"Good heavens!" he ejaculated. "That man is badly injured! Ah, yes, to be sure! You want the police? An excellent idea—a very sound proposition!"

The professor toddled off up the street, completely forgetting his former annoyance—occasioned by the fact that his favourite stars were obscured by a cloudbank.

"The police!" mused the professor. "But why? Goodness gracious, why? Surely a doctor would be more suitable? After all, a policeman is of very little use in all matters connected with medical aid!"

Professor Tucker shook his head doubtfully, and at this moment he observed two of his pet companions of the solar system coyly emerging from behind the clouds. The professor adjusted his glasses anxiously.

"Dear me!" he murmured. "Jupiter is looking remarkably small this evening! Possibly the atmospheric condition is unfavourable. I must confess the sky is decidedly hazy."

He walked on, and dimly noticed a burly figure in his path. He halted, and found himself face to face with P.-c. Sparrow, the local arm of the law. Mr. Sparrow, in fact, was hurrying up the street to investigate a few shouts and screams that had just sounded from the direction of the White Liarp.

"Ah, excellent!" said the professor genially. "The constable, eh? Now, let me see—— Good gracious! I wanted you, officer! I am, in fact, searching for you at this moment!"

"Anything wrong, sir?" asked Sparrow importantly. "I thought, mebbe, there was a fight, or something?"

"How perfectly annoying!" said the professor testily. "I distinctly wanted you, constable—in fact, I believe some crime has been committed. Murder, possibly, but of that I cannot be sure——"

"Murder!" gasped the village policeman. "Where, sir?"

"Where?" said Professor Tucker. "What do you mean—where? My good man, how should I know? I can assure you I don't go about with criminal information on the tip of my tongue!"

The policeman grunted, and hurried off up the street, grimly aware that something was gravely amiss. He left Professor Tucker to ramble on to himself.

It was fully two minutes before the professor discovered that he was alone, and by this time he had quite forgotten who he had been talking to, or why, indeed, he was in Bellton at all.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FUGITIVE.



MRS. POULTER, the buxom, portly matron of the Ancient House, rose from her easy-chair in the kitchen and uttered a triumphant sigh. She had just concluded a particularly difficult task of needlework, and she moved towards the door with a tired step. In the meantime, her chair was uttering a few creaks of relief, as wicker chairs will when relieved of a heavy load.

"Don't forget the fire, Mary Jane," she said, glancing round. "I'm going up to the young gentlemen's quarters to see about them pillowslips. There's never no end to what these boys want."

"That there ain't, Mrs. Poulter," agreed Mary Jane feelingly.

The kitchen was very cosy and bright at this quiet hour of the evening. The great kitchener was glowing, radiating a great warmth throughout the entire apartment.

After Mrs. Poulter had gone, Mary Jane had the kitchen to herself. The other servants were either upstairs, or in the sculleries or pantries. Mary Jane continued her sewing industriously.

She was quite a plain girl, but none the less likeable because of that. In fact, of all the female servants in St. Frank's, Mary Jane was the most popular with the boys. She was always ready with a cheery word, with a smile, and, what was more important, always ready and willing to render invaluable assistance on the little minor troubles the juniors were encountering.

Mary Jane, in fact, was a sport. She had even been known to contribute an occasional effort to the school magazine—at the express invitation of the juniors. Her views were generally sound, and she was a level-headed girl, with a heart of gold.

She heard an urgent rap upon the side-door, although she took little notice of it. One of the other maidservants answered, and Mary Jane was dimly conscious of a conversation outside in the passage. Then the kitchen door opened, and a scullery-maid looked in.

"It's your young brother, Mary Jane," she announced. "Seems in a rare way, too. I never see him look so pale and shaky. Says he wants to speak to you urgent."

"Well," exclaimed Mary Jane, laying down her sewing. "I never did! Whatever does Ned want to come here for? I've told him that Mrs. Poulter don't like us having visitors. All right, Bertha, I'll come out."

She rose to her feet, and a few moments later was out in the passage. Ned Potter was there, quite unable to keep still. He paced up and down in the passage nervously and agitatedly. He wrung his cap between

his fingers, and there was a wild, hunted look in his eyes.

"Mercy on us!" exclaimed Mary Jane, as she faced him. "What's amiss, Ned? You look regular upset—"

"I want a word with you alone, Mary!" muttered Ned hoarsely. "And I can't stay more than five minutes, neither. They're after me even now, I expect," he added under his breath.

Mary Jane was frankly astonished, but being a girl of sound common sense, she took in the situation at a glance. Clearly, Ned was highly agitated. She led him into a little empty pantry and closed the door. She laid a hand upon her brother's arm.

"My, Ned, but you look awful scared!" she said quietly.

"Scared, sis!" he repeated. "They're after me, I tell you—the police!"

"Police!" she ejaculated, wide-eyed. "But, Ned! What—what—"

"I've killed Harry Dunn!" said the young man hoarsely. "Don't look like that—don't make things worse, Mary! It was an accident—I swear that on my knees! But they won't believe it—they'll take me—"

"You don't mean it, Ned!" said Mary Jane breathlessly.

In a few tense sentences he described what had happened. He explained how he had warded off Dunn's attack by one simple thrust, and how Dunn had fallen face downwards upon the pavement-edge.

"But they can't harm you for that, Ned!" protested the girl. "And perhaps Dunn ain't dead, either!"

"Even if he ain't, they'll have me just the same, and it'll mean five years!" muttered Ned. "Besides, he's dead—I know it! I could feel it when I tried to lift him up. Don't you understand, sis? I had that stick in my hand when they saw me. There's no chance for me, Mary—I've got to clear out!"

He described the position even more graphically, and at last Mary Jane understood the full gravity of the situation. She had gone pale with fright and anxiety, for she was very fond of her brother, and the thought of him being arrested and sentenced nearly caused her heart to stop beating.

"Oh, Ned, I don't know what to say!" she murmured. "Maybe you've done right in runnin' away, but it seems to them that you've really done it."

"I had to run—there's no chance for me!" he insisted, in a fever of panic. "That's why I come here. I'm broke, Mary, and I thought maybe you could let me have some money."

Mary looked at him strangely.

"Money?" she repeated. "Yes, of course. But—but—"

"I want to get to London—Birmingham—the further away the better!" interrupted her brother feverishly. "Only a few quid,

Mary—I'll pay you back as soon as I can—"

"Don't, Ned! Don't talk about paying me back!" interrupted Mary Jane huskily. "Wait here. I shan't be more than two or three minutes. Yes, I'll let you have some money, Ned."

The girl's manner had completely altered during the last few moments. There was a queer, alarmed look in her eyes—an expression which was not entirely due to her brother's danger.

She turned quickly and passed out through the door.

CHAPTER IX.

MARY JANE'S SACRIFICE.



SWIFTLY, with light footsteps, Mary Jane mounted the back stairs. She reached her bed-room, entered, and closed the door. Then she paused, holding a hand to her agitated throat.

"What shall I do?" she whispered. "Oh, what shall I do?"

The girl was looking absolutely startled. Her brother's news had alarmed her even more than she realised. But so little time had elapsed that she couldn't yet appreciate the full horror of the situation.

She only knew one thing—Ned needed money; must have money!

And the tragedy of the whole situation was that she had none! Mechanically, she went to the dressing-table and opened one of the top drawers. She took out her purse, and emptied a few shillings into her shaking palm. But she had known all along that this trifle was useless.

She had received her month's wages only a week earlier, and practically all of it had gone to an aunt of hers, in Southampton. Mary Jane's heart was soft, and she was generally disposed to think of her own needs last.

She knew that this present crisis was vital. Ned had to get away at once—within five minutes, even. He had said that the police were after him, and she believed it. She also had perfect faith in his own account of the incident. Yet she knew that he was in grave danger. The circumstances of Dunn's death—or presumed death—were utterly damning for her brother.

And money was essential—big money.

It only took her a few moments to make up her mind. There was, indeed, no time to hesitate. But even as she made her decision she trembled with agitation, and that expression in her eyes became nearly as hunted as her brother's.

Then, with a firm set of her jaw, she left the bed-room.

Ned, meanwhile, paced up and down in

the empty pantry like a caged-up tiger. The slightest sound made him jump. At any moment he expected an alarm—he was waiting to hear the voice of P.-c. Sparrow. It seemed ages before Mary Jane re-appeared.

In fact, the sudden opening of the door caused the unfortunate youth to start back with a hoarse cry in his throat. But he was intensely relieved to find that his sister had come. He was too frightened to see the terrible change in her.

"Here you are, Ned, all—all I've got!" she whispered pantingly.

He gazed fascinatedly at the notes she pressed into his hand.

"But, sis!" he muttered blankly. "I—I can't take all this—"

"You'll need it, Ned—you've got to get a long way away!" she broke in. "Eight pounds—all in notes. You'd best walk to Bannington over the moor, and get on to one of the London trains. Please go, Ned. I'll pray for your safety."

He was too overcome with gratitude and relief to say much. Indeed, afterwards, he felt savagely ashamed of himself. He knew that he had only uttered a few mumbled, incoherent words of thanks.

Then, somehow, he stumbled out and was gone. With a pang he even realised that he hadn't kissed his sister good-bye. But in those vital seconds he thought only of his liberty.

Left alone, Mary Jane changed. She held on to one of the pantry shelves for support, and for quite an appreciable time she seemed stunned. The sound of footsteps partially brought her to herself, and her breathing became strangely agitated.

Above all else, she would have to show a bold front! She must act normally, as though nothing had happened. But the girl knew well enough that this was impossible. No matter how she tried, she could never face Mrs. Poulter or any of the other servants.

The footsteps receded, and she slipped out of the pantry, and silently crossed the passage and ascended the stairs. Like a shadow, she entered her bed-room and closed and locked the door.

Here, at least, she was certain of a brief spell of privacy. She didn't trouble to turn the light on. She walked unsteadily across to the bed, and sat on the edge of it.

"Eight pounds!" she whispered. "Oh, what have I done? Eight pounds! But Ned's got it, and, with Heaven's help, he'll be able to get away! Poor Ned! It's a shame—it's wicked that he should have to suffer so!"

For a few moments she consoled herself with the thought that her brother would escape—would defeat those cruel, heartless trackers who were after him. It wasn't fair—that he, an innocent boy, should be hunted like a criminal! But then Mary

Jane remembered the circumstances, and her common sense reminded her that the evidence was deadly.

"Eight pounds!" she murmured again.

And then suddenly she flung herself down on the bed, and burst into a torrent of pitiful sobs. She cried as though her heart would break, but it was not altogether grief that compelled her. Somehow, it seemed that her tears were produced by something akin to fear and actual terror.

The outburst lasted for fully five minutes, and by this time she was breathless and half-exhausted. Her breath came in great sobs, and it was only by a powerful effort that she controlled herself.

And then, feverishly, she acted.

Switching the light on, she hastily packed a few things into a small bag, and then changed her clothes. She donned a rather shabby walking costume, thick shoes, and a close-fitting hat.

And then, with a last look round the comfortable little bed-room, she grasped her bag, switched off the light, and stole silently out.

CHAPTER X.

THE FIGURE IN THE LANE.



WILLY HANDFORTH grunted.

"Five past six!" he muttered indignantly. "Here have I been waiting twenty solid minutes! Oh, what's the good? These giddy masters haven't got any consideration for anybody!"

This was somewhat unreasonable, for Mr. Beverley Stokes had distinctly told Willy that he wouldn't be back before six. The fag was impatiently pacing up and down in the dark Triangle, on the look-out.

Six times he had been to Mr. Stokes' study—all to no purpose. Chubby Heath and Owen minor and the rest had gone down to the village to take charge of all the parcels, although Mr. Binks would certainly not let them remove as much as an ounce before the cash arrived. Mr. Binks had had twenty years experience of junior schoolboys, and he had learned a singular wisdom.

"When old Stokes comes I'll jolly well let him have the length of my tongue!" murmured Willy curtly. "What does he care? I'm nearly starving, and he's probably lounging in the Japanese Café, or gassing with some of his pals in Bannington—"

But at this point Willy brightened up wonderfully. The sound of a car struck his ears, and as he hurried forward across the Triangle two gleaming lights turned in at the gateway. Willy raced up and leapt on to the car's footboard while it was still moving.

"Here you are, sir!" exclaimed Willy. "Better late than never!"

"You silly young ass!" snapped Mr. Stokes. "You might have hurt yourself, jumping on like that!"

"Oh, rats! I—I mean, not at all, sir," said the fag. "Got that money? I ought to be down in the village by this time, strictly speaking. Still, it won't be so bad if you whack out straight away."

Mr. Stokes had brought the car to a standstill by this time, and he proceeded to "whack out." He handed Willy ten crisp currency notes, and the junior took them with a careless air, as though handling notes was his usual occupation.

"I suppose it's no good advising you to keep this money, Handforth minor?" asked the Housemaster.

"Not a bit of good, sir," replied Willy cheerfully.

"Ten pounds is a big sum, and, strictly speaking, I ought to forbid you to spend it on riotous living!" said Mr. Stokes sternly. "However, I always believe in giving my boys as much liberty as possible."

"And a jolly good principle, too, sir," approved Willy. "Well, so-long! That is to say, good-evening, sir! Thanks awfully for getting the cash. I've kept the other chaps waiting a bit, but that'll be all right—I'll tell 'em it was your fault."

And Willy vanished into the gloom, grasping his currency notes triumphantly.

Willy's first proceeding before leaving the Triangle was a somewhat curious one. He took an envelope from his pocket and slipped two notes into it—a pound-note and a ten-shilling note. Then he stuck the letter up, and dropped it into the school box.

"Well, that's gone!" he said thankfully. "Good thing I got that letter all ready—I'm certain of my new camera, anyhow. If I hadn't got rid of the tin at once, I should have been tempted at the tuckshop."

Willy considered that he was perfectly justified in spending thirty shillings entirely on himself. He would keep another ten as pocket-money, and the remaining eight pounds would serve for the feed.

He hurried down the lane in a joyous mood. He proved this by progressing with more than his usual eccentricity. Instead of walking or running like a rational human being, he wended his way to the village in a series of wild hops and jumps, occasionally prancing sideways by way of a change.

This was Willy's way of indicating that he was at peace with the world. And, curiously enough, he progressed with remarkable rapidity. But this style of progress was liable to lead to minor disaster at times.

On the present occasion he made a sad miscalculation half-way down the lane. A pile of stones had been placed on the roadside ready for repair work. It had been

there for weeks, together with various other piles at regular intervals. And it was one of Willy's favourite pastimes to leap over these heaps whenever he passed up and down the lane.

And in the darkness he miscalculated, and, instead of clearing the pile of stones, he landed in the middle of it. And just on the other side, crouching near the hedge, he caught sight of a dim figure. But for the fact that he sprawled on the grass at that particular spot, he would have missed the shadowy object altogether.

"Hallo, who's that?" asked Willy, as he jumped up.

The figure made no reply, and Willy instinctively grabbed his money more tightly. Tramps sometimes lurked in the lane, and just at the moment Willy was utterly alone, with no hope of assistance should he be attacked. But he was quite self-possessed.

"It's no good skulking there!" he said severely. "I spotted you at first. What's the game?"

He peered closer, and then suddenly gasped.

"Oh, sorry!" he said, confused. "Beg pardon, miss! I thought it was one of the chaps. Lost something, or what?"

Willy was quite prepared to retire at once, but he couldn't help feeling rather curious. And he received another surprise when he recognised his companion as Mary Jane, of the Ancient House staff.

"Why, Mary Jane, what's the giddy idea?" he asked, recovering his composure. "Trying to give me a scare, eh? There's nothing doing, my lady! You can't pull my leg—"

"Oh, Master Willy, please don't stop here talking," muttered Mary Jane brokenly. "I—I thought I'd hide while you went by. Please don't bother about me. I—I'd rather be alone."

Willy was rather staggered. Accustomed as he was to Mary Jane's cheery voice, her present husky accents took him by surprise. Obviously, she was in deep distress.

And Handforth minor wanted to know the reason why.

CHAPTER XI.

A STARTLING CONFESSION.



MARY JANE was rather dismayed. She had successfully stolen away from the school, and she had hoped to reach the station in the darkness without being seen

or recognised. This encounter with Willy was awkward.

"Don't be silly, Master Willy," she said, trying to speak with her usual cheery tone. "There's no need for you to wait—please go away and leave me alone."

"Not likely!" replied Willy bluntly. "There's something wrong. What's the matter? Feeling ill, or twisted your ankle, or something?"

"It ain't anything like that, Master Willy," replied Mary Jane. "I do wish you'd—Oh!"

She ended up with a sudden startled exclamation, for a slight scratching sound was followed by a blaze of light. Willy, in fact, had struck a match without warning. And he stared at Mary Jane in amazement.

"I say, you're as pale as a sheet!" he said concernedly. "You've been crying, too—your eyes are all squiffy! My only hat! You're dressed in your costume, too, and you've got a bag!"

"Please Master Willy!" muttered the girl wretchedly.

The match burnt out, and Willy gave a jump.

"I say, you're not leaving, are you?" he asked anxiously.

"Yes, Master Willy— At least, I—I—"

"Leaving!" snorted the fag. "What piffle! Look here, Mary Jane, if you leave St. Frank's, the place won't be the same! And what's the idea of scooting off all of a sudden, like this? Don't you remember you promised to sew up that tear in my bags?"

"I—I'm sorry, Master Willy—"

Mary Jane broke off, further words failing to come. She had, indeed, made such a promise, and scarcely more than forty minutes had elapsed since her previous meeting with Willy. The thought was a shock to her. It seemed that ages had elapsed since she had been her happy, care-free self.

"Look here, Mary Jane, you can't bluff me like this!" said Willy severely. "If you were leaving St. Frank's you'd have got the sack, and if you'd got the sack you'd have a month's notice. See? They wouldn't pack you off like this, all in the dark. By Jingo!"

Willy paused. A startling thought had occurred to him.

Mary Jane's behaviour was highly suspicious. Her very agitation was astonishing, and her pale face and heavy eyes told their own story. Something pretty bad must have happened during the last hour—something drastic in the extreme.

"Look here," said Willy bluntly. "Are you doing a scoot?"

Mary Jane caught in her breath sharply, but made no reply.

"Are you running away?" demanded Willy. "Are you bunking? By George, I believe you are! What for? What the dickens is the matter, Mary Jane? What's the idea of doing a giddy moonlight flit?"

ANSWERS
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"Don't—don't ask me, Master Willy!" breathed Mary Jane faintly.

"Rot! I am asking you!" snapped Willy. "You're not the kind of girl to scoot for nothing! And I won't let you go! Understand? I'll jolly well stick here until— Oh, I say! Chuck it, Mary Jane!" said Willy, in acute distress. "Oh, glory! Don't turn on the waterworks!"

He had suddenly become aware of the fact that Mary Jane was sobbing convulsively. She had been feeling utterly panic-stricken even before meeting the fag. And Willy's searching cross-examination was too much for her in her present distraught condition. Her usual self-possession deserted her, and she broke down.

"Don't—don't stop me, Master Willy!" she sobbed. "I've stolen money—I'm running away! Oh, I think I must be going mad! I don't know what to do—"

"Stolen some money!" repeated Willy, aghast. "I don't believe it!"

But even as he said the words, he did believe it. Mary Jane wouldn't be in such a condition as this unless something very extraordinary had happened. Willy forgot all about his waiting chums—he forgot all about the feed, and he laid a gentle hand upon the girl's arm. In his own way, Willy could be very sympathetic at times. His heart was golden.

"I know one thing, anyhow!" he said softly. "If you've stolen some money, Mary Jane, you stole it for a good purpose! I'd stake my life on your honesty, any day! How much did you take?"

"Eight pounds, Master Willy," muttered the girl. "Oh, please leave me alone! I—I'm not fit to talk to you, young gentleman—"

"Whose money was it?" persisted Willy.

"Mrs. Poulter's. I—I took it from her housekeeping funds—"

"Oh, well, that's not so bad," said Willy comfortingly. "Come on, Mary Jane—let's



The professor blinked.
"Murder?" he repeated vaguely. "But, my good man, how ridiculous! I can assure you I know nothing whatever about —"

have the rest of it! You can't skip off now, you know! You've told me so much, and I want to know the rest!"

Mary Jane's resistance was completely broken, and then and there she told the whole story. Even while she was doing so, she didn't know why she should confess like this to a mere fag. But she had always had a particularly warm spot for "cheeky Master Willy," as she generally referred to him. And Handforth minor's blind faith in her honesty affected her deeply.

Willy listened with growing consternation. His usual irresponsible levity completely deserted him.

"Ned Potter!" he said, at length. "I'd forgotten he was your brother, Mary Jane! And you say he killed that chap, Dunn? I don't believe it! Somebody's made a bloomer!"

Mary Jane was too overcome to reply.

"Anyhow, I jolly well knew you weren't a thief," went on Willy confidently. "Fancy you bunking! Why didn't you tell Mrs. Poulter the whole thing— No, I suppose you couldn't," he added thoughtfully. "Anyhow, although you took the money like that, it wasn't what anybody would call a real

theft. You did it to save your brother—and I'm jolly proud of you!"

"Oh, Master Willy!" muttered Mary Jane, trembling.

"Jolly proud of you!" repeated Willy firmly. "Look here, Dunn fell on his face, and cracked it, didn't he? That wasn't your brother's fault. All the same, he's in a bit of a mess, I'll admit it. In a way, I feel that I'm the cause of it all."

"You, Master Willy?" asked Mary Jane. "Why, yes. Your brother smashed into that gamekeeper chap this afternoon to help me," replied Willy. "That's what started it. Don't you worry, Mary Jane. We'll soon put things straight!"

And Willy knitted his brows, and thought rapidly.

CHAPTER XII.

BREAKING IT GENTLY.



HANDFORTH MINOR was filled with deep concern for the unfortunate servant

girl. The story he had wrung out of her proved beyond question that she had strayed

from the path of honesty for the sake of her brother. Under the tense stress of the calamity she had taken a course which she would never have adopted if her own safety had been at stake.

And Willy felt an uneasy pang when he realised that he was the unconscious cause of the disaster. If Ned Potter hadn't come to his assistance that afternoon, this present situation could never have arisen.

"Eight quid!" muttered Willy, with a start. "Well, I'm jiggered! I say, Mary Jane, kick me, will you? Punch me in the eye—biff me on the nose! Of all the fat-headed asses, I'm the biggest!"

Willy spoke in a tone of supreme disgust.

"Here am I, worrying like the dickens, and the whole thing's as easy as winking!" he went on. "Eight quid! I say, does Mrs. Poulter know that you took the money?"

"Not—not yet, Master Willy," faltered the girl.

"Then it's simps!" said the fag lightly. "All you've got to do is to whizz back to the school, and put that money back before Mrs. Poulter finds out. The sooner you go the better!"

Mary Jane stared in bewildered confusion.

"But—but I haven't got the money, young gent!" she said wretchedly. "Didn't I tell you, I gave it to Ned—"

"Eight quid—all in pound notes?" asked Willy keenly.

"Why, yes, they was pound notes, all of them," said Mary Jane.

"All right—take these!" said Willy, pulling out his cash, and merely extracting a

solitary ten-shilling note. "You'll find eight there, Mary Jane. Hurry off like the wind, before Mrs. Poulter finds out!"

The girl's heart gave a wild throb. In the dim gloom of the lane she stared at Willy as though he were a ghost. The prospect of sudden deliverance nearly overpowered her. She stood there, trembling from head to foot.

"Oh, Master Willy!" she panted breathlessly.

And then, suddenly, the thought came to her that the junior was tricking her. She seemed to go cold all over, and she gripped herself firmly. She had been a fool to hope, even for a second!

"Come on—don't waste time!" said Willy bluntly. "What's up—fainting, or something? If you faint, Mary Jane, I'll jolly well biff you! I hate girls who faint! Take this money and buzz!"

And then Mary Jane realised that it was true. She took the money in a kind of dream. She would be able to put it back in Mrs. Poulter's cash-box. It would be easy! The matron wouldn't know anything about it! The girl, in fact, realised in a flood of choking joy that she was saved.

She started thanking Willy in a broken, hysterical fashion. But Willy took her firmly by the arm and led her a few steps up the lane.

"That'll do later on," he said grimly.

Without another word, he turned and strode away; and although his eight pounds had vanished for good, Willy felt a kind of warmth within him that wasn't usually there. After all, what was a rotten feed compared to an act of this kind? The Third was dished out of its spread, but Mary Jane had been saved from disgrace and misery.

Besides, cream-puffs and doughnuts, and such-like things were fatal to the constitution, anyhow. Willy consoled himself with such thoughts as he strode on down to the village. He assured himself that he had saved the entire Third from a bout of biliousness and indigestion—and that was something to congratulate himself upon. Curiously enough, Willy didn't even think he deserved praise for his act of warm-hearted generosity to Mary Jane.

"Of course, it's going to be a bit awkward," murmured the fag thoughtfully. "I can't explain to the chaps—I mustn't breathe a word about this to a living soul. Mary Jane told me her secret, and I'll go on the giddy rack before I betray it! And I mustn't tell any whoppers, either."

The position, in fact, was awkward in the extreme.

Not only had Mr. Binks baked a veritable mountain of special pastry and cakes, but Chubby Heath and Co. were on the spot, with the stuff all wrapped up in parcels, waiting to be paid for!

And Willy would have to bluntly declare that the feed was off!

He wouldn't be able to give any explanation of his apparently contemptible act. The fag was just beginning to realise the position he had placed himself in. He had promised the Third this feed, and he would now be compelled to break his promise, and was unable to make the slightest explanation.

Another junior might have been dismayed at the prospect. But Willy wasn't. He squared his shoulders as he walked along, and calmly prepared to face the music. The thought of Mary Jane's hysterical joy kept him calm.

In the meantime, Chubby Heath and Co. were vastly impatient.

It was close upon six-thirty, and they had been waiting for fully twenty minutes. The village tuckshop was a place of great anxiety. Sundry parcels were filling the counter from end to end, with others overflowing on to the floor, and even the chairs.

Eight pounds in solid cash can purchase an enormous amount of cakes and pastry, for Mr. Binks' fare was of the simple kind which runs in the direction of quantity rather than quality.

The fags were jumpy and worried. Mr. Binks himself hovered behind the counter in a condition of extreme agitation. He had made all this special tuck, and it was ready to be carried away, but no cash was yet in tangible sight.

Mr. Binks regarded all fags as any other man might regard a gang of pickpockets. He kept his eye on them suspiciously and grimly. More particularly he kept his eye on the parcels. At any moment he expected a sudden explosion, during which the Third-Formers and the tuck would vanish together.

But no such disaster happened. Willy's word was law, and he had sent forth the edict that not a single fag was to move from the shop until he arrived with the money.

And so the vigil continued.

CHAPTER XIII.

A SHOCK FOR THE THIRD.



FATTY LITTLE of the Fourth caught the gleam of light from Mr. Binks' tuckshop as he passed down the village street. It was like a beacon, irresistibly beckoning to him.

"Old Binks is a harsh rotter!" murmured Fatty disgustedly. "He won't trust a chap for a giddy farthing! Here am I, literally starving, and he's got all sorts of pastries going stale for want of eating!"

Fatty Little was in the unfortunate position of being broke. This was no unusual state for him. He had, of course, haunted Mrs. Hake's little shop in the

Triangle since tea-time, but Mrs. Hake was just as obdurate as Mr. Binks.

Fatty moved towards the tuckshop with a new hope welling up in his bosom. In his heart, he knew well enough that his quest was of no avail. But where food was concerned, he never admitted defeat.

There was just a chance that Mr. Binks would be in a good humour, and Fatty might be successful in obtaining a shilling's-worth of tuck "on tick." If this remarkable event happened, it would be a record-breaking feat.

Fatty Little nearly rolled into two dim figures that hovered just outside the tuckshop. He pulled up short, and peered forward. He recognised the figures as Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon.

"Seen Willy about?" asked Chubby anxiously.

"Willy?" repeated the fat junior. "Yes, I saw him hoyering about the Ancient House just before I came out. Lemme pass, you young fathead! I want to get some tuck!"

"No good—old Binko's sold out," said Lemon briefly.

"Sold out!"

"Every giddy crumb!" replied Lemon. "We bought the entire stock—eight quids' worth! It's all wrapped up in parcels, waiting to be carried away."

Fatty Little's heart gave a jump.

"Eight—eight quids' worth!" he gasped. "Great doughnuts! I say, I'll carry one of those parcels, if you like——"

"We don't like!" interrupted Chubby tartly. "We want our parcels delivered wrapped up in brown paper—not in your tummy! You can clear off, Fatty! I wouldn't trust you with a penn'orth of dog biscuits!"

"Look here, you young rotter!" snorted Fatty indignantly. "I'm not going to stand your giddy cheek——"

"Now then! What's all this rumpus?" interrupted a gruff voice.

Edward Oswald Handforth loomed up, accompanied by Church and McClure. They weren't going to the tuckshop, but Handforth never believed in letting anything escape him without a close investigation.

"Seen your minor?" demanded Heath and Lemon in one voice.

"Blow my minor!" retorted Handforth. "I've got something better to do than look after that young ass! I've come down to the village to investigate this murder!"

"Which murder?"

"Why, wasn't there a man shot dead outside the White Harp?" asked Handforth. "The murderer escaped, and he's probably lurking about waiting to kill a few more people at this very minute!"

"You've got it wrong, old man," said Church gently. "The victim was struck down with a stick, and somebody says that

his assailant was Ned Potter—Mary Jane's brother. I don't believe it personally——"

"Well, it's true," broke in Chubby Heath. "We heard it ages ago—you're late! The affair happened nearly an hour ago, and the chap isn't dead at all."

"Isn't dead?" repeated Handforth indignantly.

"No, of course not. He was pretty badly sloshed, but they've taken him to the doctor, and the last I heard is that he'll soon recover," replied Chubby. "All the same, old Sparrow is after Ned Potter. Wants to arrest him on a charge of murderous assault. And he deserves to be arrested, too—it was a rotten attack, by all that I can hear."

Handforth grunted with disappointment.

"Well, there's a check!" he snorted. "I've come all the way down here to investigate a murder, and there isn't a murder at all! I've been swindled!"

"Somebody had better find Potter quick!" said Chubby Heath sarcastically. "Get him to commit a murder or two, so that Handy can investigate! It's too bad that he should be disappointed——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Handforth reached out, and serious trouble would have resulted but for the timely arrival of Willy. He marched up out of the gloom, and Chubby Heath gave one yell of triumph and seized him.

"At last!" he gasped. "You awful boulder! We've been waiting ages! The stuff's all wrapped up, and old Binks is so worried that you can see his hair turning grey as you watch it!"

"It'll turn white in a minute!" said Willy grimly. "But life's full of little troubles, so prepare yourselves for a shock. Remember my motto—keep smiling! When things are blackest, smile broadest!"

Willy pushed his way into the shop, and Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon followed. Handforth and Co. continued their walk up the street, considering it far below their dignity to mix with this fag rabble. Fatty Little hovered about the tuckshop like a particularly fat but hungry wolf.

"Good!" said Owen minor gladly. "Here he is, Mr. Binks! Didn't we tell you he'd come? You can always trust Willy! Eight quid exactly, isn't it? Whack out, Willy!"

The crisis had arrived.

Willy coughed and tried to look unconcerned. He had just eleven shillings and fourpence on him, which wasn't likely to go far. He regretted sending that money for the camera now, but it couldn't be helped.

"The fact is," said Willy, "the feed's off!"

"Off?" repeated the fags, aghast.

"Off!" said Willy firmly. "I'm sorry, but I've only got just over ten bob. Something's happened—I can't explain what—but the whole programme is cancelled!"

CHAPTER XIV.

TRIED BY THE FORM.



MR. BINKS shook visibly. "Do—do I understand that the order is cancelled?" he asked huskily. "Really, Master Handforth, this is an extraordinary——"

"I'm awfully sorry, Mr. Binks, but it just can't be helped," interrupted Willy earnestly. "Of course, if you'll let us take the stuff, I'll guarantee to pay by instalments, and I'll give you ten bob to start with."

Mr. Binks set his jaw.

"It can't be done, young gent!" he replied firmly. "I know I can trust ye, but it's against the rules. Your headmaster don't allow it. If he found out about it, I'd be ruined, because he'd place my shop out o' bounds. No, Master Handforth, it can't be done."

"Then we'll just take ten bob's-worth of stuff and clear out," said Willy. "I'm sorry, you chaps—it's a bit of a shock, I know, but you'll all get over it in time."

The other fags were gradually losing their consternation, and were now becoming angry and excited. Willy was their leader, and they had grown accustomed to trusting him in everything. For him to let them down was a terrible blow. And, being irresponsible youths of tender years, they overlooked all Willy's previous record, and condemned him on the spot.

"Ain't—ain't we going to have the feed at all?" yelled Owen minor.

"No—it's off!"

"Why, you—you mean rotter!" roared Owen minor. "You promised to give the Third a feed, and now you're backing out of it! Yah! Rotter!"

"Mean beast!" shouted the others excitedly.

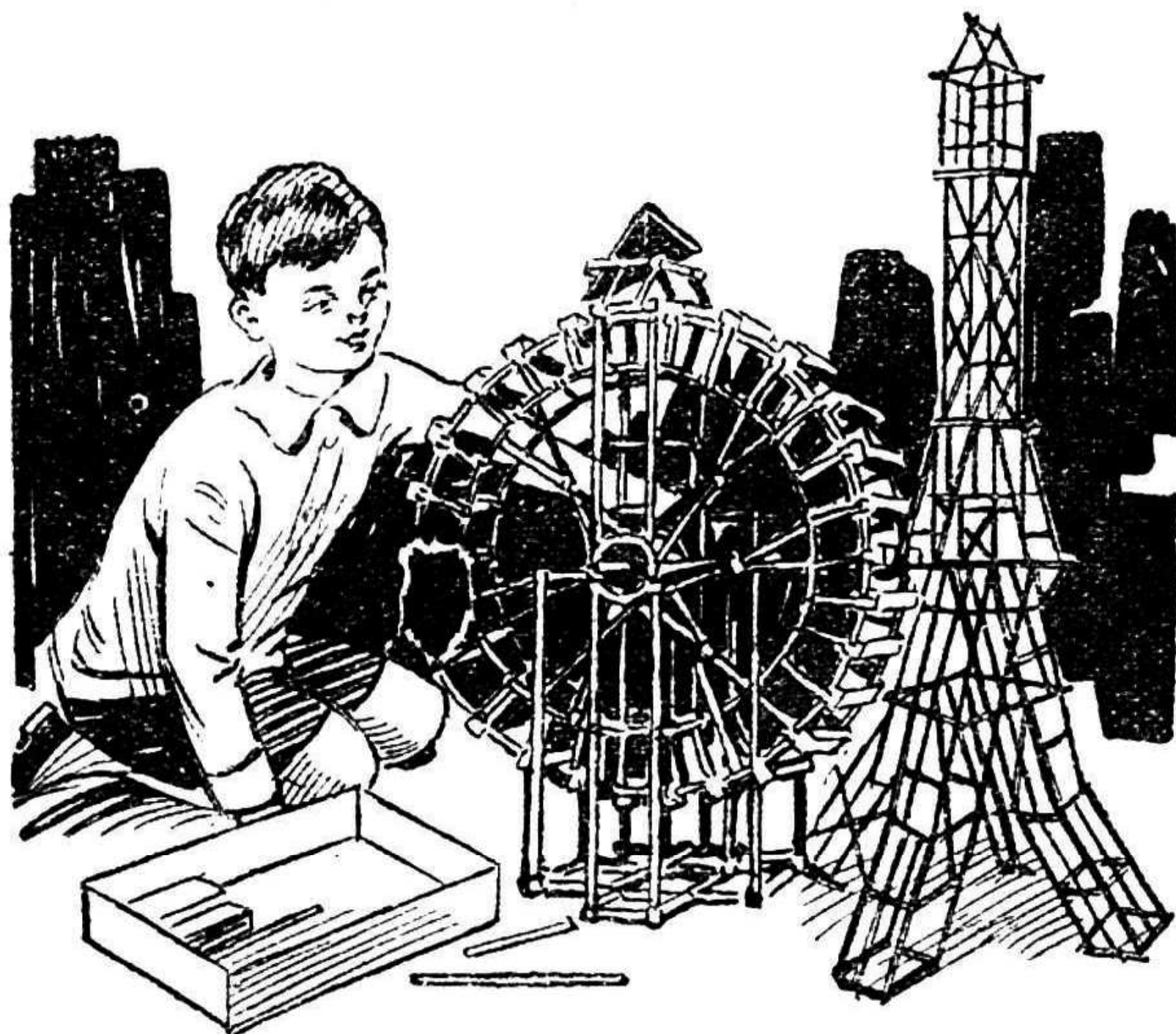
"And what about my cakes and pastry?" demanded Mr. Binks, working himself into a fury. "You ordered the stuff, young gents, and you've got to pay for it! I made it all special, and if you don't take it, I shall have it on my hands!"

"We'll take it, but you'll have to wait for your money!" said Willy tartly. "I've already apologised—I can't do more than that. Be a sport, Mr. Binks—let's have the stuff——"

But Mr. Binks put his foot down firmly, and flatly refused. Furthermore, he was so incensed that he unceremoniously hustled the fags out of his shop and locked the door. He wouldn't even serve them with ten shillings'-worth. Mr. Binks was exasperated beyond measure.

Out in the street the fags surrounded Willy in a yelling mob.

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"What about that money?" roared Chubby. "Didn't you get it?"

"Yes, I did," retorted Willy.

"Then where is it?"

"I've got ten bob here——"

"Ten bob!" howled Chubby. "But it was ten quid!"

"It was, but it isn't now!" replied Willy.

"It's no good you bothering me—I'm not answering any questions! I've told you I'm sorry, and I meant to make up for it as soon as I could. But you can all go and eat coke! You can jolly well fry your faces!"

"Yah, rotter!"

"Grab him!"

"He's not going to swindle us like this!"

If the fags were incensed, Handforth minor was no less angry. He considered that he was being treated badly. He realised that his chums were sadly disappointed, but that was no excuse for this disgraceful scene. Willy was thoroughly disgusted at the fags' disloyalty.

He attempted to assert himself—to exert his authority as he usually did. But this time it didn't work. Chubby Heath and Co. were too excited and angry.

They seized Willy and held him by sheer force. And then he was rushed away up the lane towards St. Frank's. In the midst of his captors he had no chance of getting away.

And when St. Frank's was reached, and the entire Third heard the news, the commotion was deafening. One might have been excused for thinking that a calamity of national importance had descended upon the school. The uproar in the Third Form-room was tremendous.

The fags were hungry, disappointed and infuriated. Willy's cold calmness only made them more exasperated. And his blunt refusal to explain the disappearance of his cash proved the last straw.

"Let's hold a court!" shouted Chubby Heath. "Let's shove the rotter in the dock and try him!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Good idea!"

Willy was quickly placed in the dock, which was merely a couple of forms with a desk in front of them. He accepted the situation passively, since it was obviously useless to fight against this overwhelming storm.

"I'm the judge!" shouted Owen minor. "Prisoner at the Bar, we've tried you and found you guilty of rank treason and mean caddishness——"

"Rats!" howled Chubby. "I'm the judge!"

There was a wild uproar, and after various noses had been punched the fags sorted themselves out, and Chubby Heath established his right to be the judge. The trial itself was a farce.

This was partly on account of the fact that Willy had no defence. To all questions he gave the same answer—the learned judge and the learned counsel could jolly well go and boil their heads. Willy had the same answer for everybody, and the trial was therefore greatly handicapped.

The Third condemned him in one voice.

He was sentenced to run the gauntlet, to be frogmarched, and to be sent to Coventry by the entire Form for a solid week. But as Mr. Suncliffe arrived on the scene at this period the court hastily adjourned. And Willy escaped the first two sections of his punishment.

So the Third, in a series of excited meetings, held in various odd corners, concluded that the matter could be adjusted by sending Willy to Coventry for a fortnight. But what enraged the Third most of all was the fact that Willy seemed highly pleased with the arrangement.

Handforth minor, in fact, was feeling very satisfied. He had saved Mary Jane from disgrace, he had saved the Third Form from indigestion, and he had received proof that his late chums weren't worth a fig.

Upon the whole he felt happy.

CHAPTER XV.

WELL DONE, MR. DUNN!



NED POTTER looked at Inspector Jameson dazedly.

"You'd better take it quietly, lad," said the inspector in a gruff voice.

"You've got to come with me to the police-station, and it'll be all the better if you walk easy. I don't want to handcuff you unless you make me."

"All right, sir," muttered Ned miserably. "I—I'll come!"

Every ounce of hope and spirit was knocked out of him. The inspector had accosted him while he was in the act of approaching the ticket-hole in the booking-office at Bannington Station. And the incident was over so quickly and unobtrusively that a few people on the platform and in the waiting-rooms had no suspicion that an arrest had been made.

So Ned's wild hope of getting completely away was destroyed at the outset. Fortunately his sister knew nothing of this disaster. And she, at St. Frank's, was hoping against hope that all would be well. Her own peril was over—thanks to Willy. And now all her thoughts were for Ned.

In the meantime, Reginald Pitt and Jack Grey were in Bellton village, having strolled down after prep. to glean a few facts about the sensational story which was already current throughout the school. And they were not the only juniors in the village.

Handforth & Co. were still there, and even Archie Glenthorne had aroused himself sufficiently to "leg it" to the village. But this was really Alf Brent's doings. Alf had literally dragged his languid study-mate out, and Archie did not possess enough energy to protest.

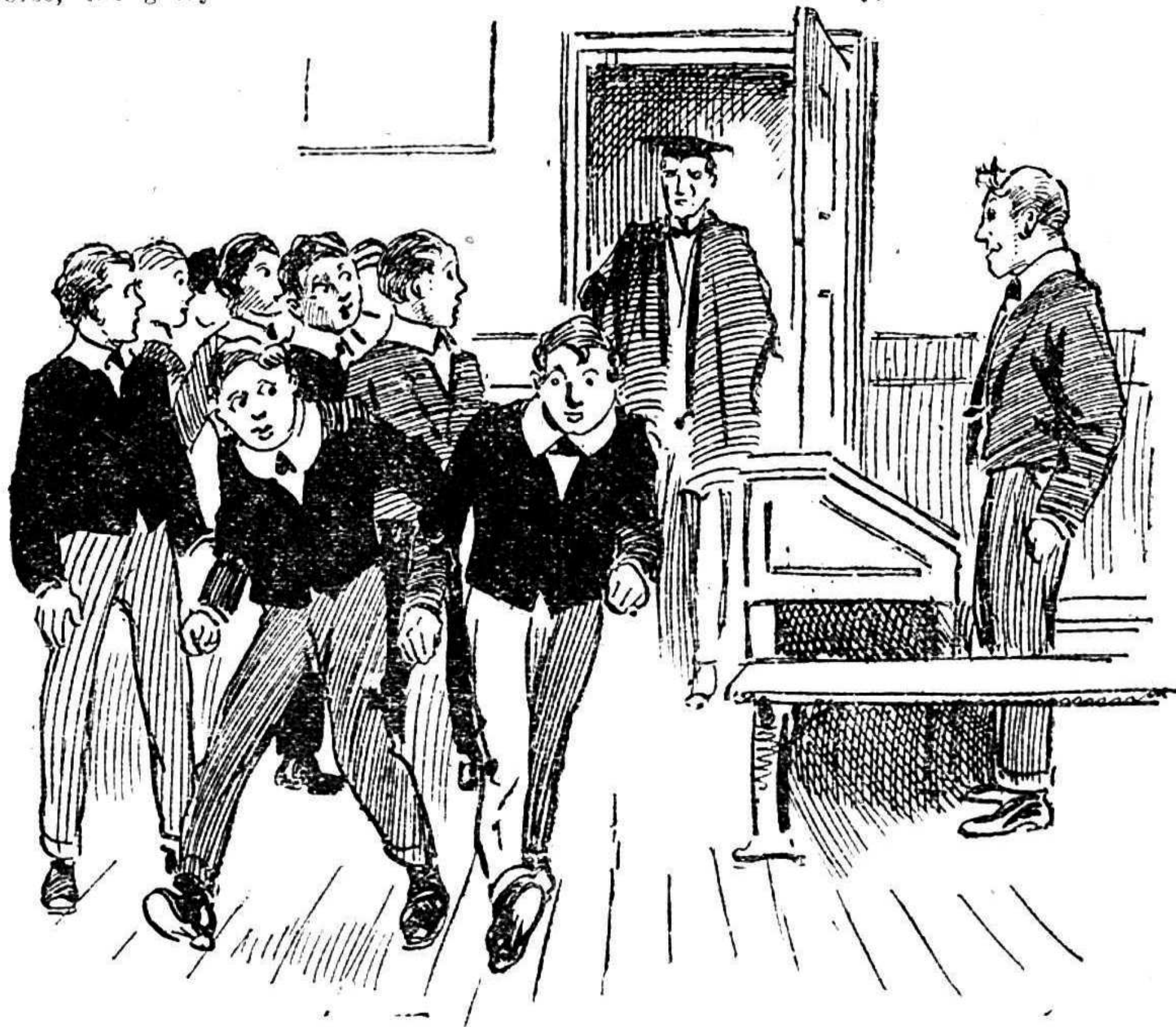
"Heard any news?" demanded Handforth, as he met some of the others at the corner of the little village green. "The thing's a swindle, anyhow. There's been no murder, and Dunn's recovering. To make things worse, the giddy murderer's bunked!"

"How did you make this marvellous discovery?" asked Pitt.

"Oh, easy!" replied Edward Oswald carelessly. "Just near the seat of the crime I found a Caistowe 'bus ticket, which proves that Potter is in the habit of going there. So it stands to reason that he's there now!"

"Good old Trackett Grim!" chuckled Jack Grey.

"But I say!" protested Archie. "That is, what-ho! I mean, I don't absolutely pretend to be brainy, and all that sort of



But as Mr. Sutcliffe arrived on the scene at this period, the court hastily adjourned.

"Too bad!" said Reggie Pitt sympathetically. "I may be wrong, of course, but I'd like to know how there can be a murderer when there's no murder? Being a celebrated criminologist, perhaps you'll elucidate the point?"

"Rats!" growled Handforth. "The chap isn't a murderer at all—that's the rotten part of it. I'm just scouting about for clues now, and before long I'll be on his track. I've already established the fact that Potter has gone to Caistowe."

thing, but doesn't it strike the old bean that somebody else might have dropped the 'bus ticket?"

"Impossible!" said Handforth flatly.

"Oh, well, you know best!" said Archie. "All the same, dear old conker, I positively fail to follow the old trend. Good gad! If these murderer chappies were tracked like that we'd all be under suspish!"

"Hallo! Here comes the limb of the law!" said Pitt softly.

P.c. Sparrow was striding up, and there

was a certain air of importance about him. The village constable, in fact, was revelling in the whole business. He hadn't had a case like this for years.

"Any fresh news, inspector?" asked Pitt briskly. "Oh, sorry! I mistook you for Mr. Jameson! You look so powerful and important, you know."

P.-c. Sparrow expanded visibly under this subtle flattery.

"Yes, young gent, there's noos!" he said grimly. "Young Potter has been arrested; he's up at the Bannington Police-Station now. That's where I'm going—to report in full. But fust of all I'm going to the doctor's, to see how the victim is getting on."

"Good!" said Reggie. "We'll come with you."

The policeman wasn't altogether pleased at this arrangement, but he couldn't very well get out of it. And the little crowd went up the village street, and finally arrived at Dr. Brett's comfortable home.

"Potter arrested, eh?" said Handforth disgustedly. "In Bannington, too! I suppose he must have dodged there from Caistowe—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Further argument was stopped by the appearance of Dr. Brett. And, what was quite astounding, he was accompanied by no less a person than Mr. Harry Dunn—a shaky, pale-looking Mr. Harry Dunn, but unquestionably Mr. Harry Dunn.

"Great pip!" ejaculated Handforth blankly.

"What's this? What's this?" demanded the constable, frowning. "I thought this man was half-murdered?"

"Not even a quarter!" said Dr. Brett cheerfully. "I don't suppose you'd understand the medical terms, Sparrow, so I'll put it briefly. Dunn received a nasty blow on his forehead, which gashed the skin and stunned him. He bled profusely for a few minutes, giving him an appearance of having been horribly battered. But, as a matter of fact, he's quite able to go home."

"I say, that's fine!" said Pitt enthusiastically.

"I've put a few stitches in, and he'll be fully himself within a week," went on the doctor. "Oh, and by the way, Sparrow. Dunn wasn't assaulted at all—the affair was an accident."

"Accident!" echoed Sparrow, and all the juniors.

"Yes, it was!" replied Mr. Dunn, speaking for himself. "Me own fault, too. I asked for it, and I got it. A blamed fool—that's what I was! Took too many drinks, and this is the result!"

His listeners plied him with eager questions.

"Why, it was nothing to make a fuss about," growled the injured man. "I went for young Potter with a stick. Don't know

why, but I was in liquor. He give me a punch, and I tripped and fell. That's all I remember. Anyway, Ned Potter never hit me with that stick, like you think!"

Mr. Dunn wasn't such a bad sort, after all.

He freely acknowledged his own fault, and that was praiseworthy. And he displayed a keen concern when he learned that Ned Potter was under arrest. In fact, he insisted upon going to Bannington at once. And Dr. Brett generously came to the rescue by offering to drive him over in his car.

The juniors were highly pleased at this satisfactory termination of the "sensation."

Mary Jane was overjoyed when she heard the news through her brother, Ned, who returned the money she had lent him. The girl lost no time in repaying Willy the eight pounds, which her deliverer very reluctantly accepted.

That evening, in the Third Form dormitory, Willy paused before undressing. The other fags were regarding him with black looks. Chubby Heath and Lemon were rather uncomfortable, and more than once they attempted to speak to him. But they lacked the courage.

"A bright lot, ain't you?" said Willy, taking out his currency-notes and carelessly counting them. "As it happens, I've got that cash now. I can't explain why I didn't have it earlier, but—"

"You've got the money?" gasped Chubby Heath breathlessly.

"Eight quid!" replied Willy. "Hallo! I thought you weren't going to speak to me? Don't forget I'm in Coventry."

"Blow that!" panted Chubby. "We—we thought—"

"I tell you I'm in Coventry—"

But the Third Form held a lightning meeting. It took them precisely five seconds to remove Willy from Coventry, and to squash the sentence out of existence. Truth to tell, the fags were feeling rather ashamed of themselves, for having treated their leader so harshly.

A secret party broke bounds forthwith, and long before ten o'clock a feed of the most gorgeous description was in full progress in the Third Form dormitory.

Willy Handforth's windfall had performed wonders in its brief span of life.

THE END.

NEXT WEEK!

**The Twins'
Terrible Tangle;
or, the Schoolboy Detectives!**

JIM THE PENMAN'S GREAT COUP!



A clever complete detective story of JIM THE PENMAN, introducing NELSON LEE, the famous criminologist and his brilliant assistant, NIPPER

CHAPTER I.

THE FORGED LETTER.

COLONEL MILLBANK, Governor of Portmoor Prison, uttered an exclamation of astonishment.

"Bless my soul!" he ejaculated, staring at a letter in his hand, and hesitating with a piece of toast and marmalade midway to his mouth. "Bless my soul! This is really surprising!"

The colonel continued to peruse the letter, apparently oblivious of the fact that his muttered remarks had aroused the curiosity of the other occupants of the room—all of whom were looking at him with expectant glances.

Breakfast was proceeding in the governor's household, and the meal had only recently commenced. Up till a moment ago the colonel had been leisurely looking through his morning letters; but when he came to the officially-stamped document, which he now held in his hand, his attitude changed, and he became alert and absorbed in its contents.

Mrs. Millbank, the governor's wife, observed the signs, and gave a little sigh.

"More work and responsibility for your poor father, I suppose!" she said, addressing herself to her daughter Constance. "He always seems to be getting these horrid things from the Home Office, with instructions to change the routine, or transfer a prisoner, or something. I declare he never gets a moment's peace!"

Constance Millbank laughed.

"Well, daddy seems to thrive on it," she declared, looking at the colonel's ruddy countenance significantly. "I've never seen him looking better than he does now, mamma. What do you say, Sylvia?" she added, turning to her school-chum, who had arrived the night before. "Do you think

my father is worrying himself to a skeleton?"

Sylvia Parkinson shook her head.

"No; I think the colonel looks topping!" she exclaimed. "I don't know how on earth he manages it—living here among all these terrible convicts. I've only been here a few hours, but already I'm beginning to feel depressed and nervy. I can't help thinking of all those poor men——"

"Poor fiddlesticks!" cut in Mrs. Millbank, with a sniff. "Why, my dear, the majority of the prisoners here are criminals of infamous repute—men who have richly deserved their sentences. I dare say that letter which the colonel is reading is the official notification of some fresh arrival——"

"It's nothing of the kind," said the governor, looking up from his letter, and catching his wife's words. "This letter, curiously enough, is from the Home Secretary himself——"

"From my father!" said Sylvia Parkinson. "Oh, how funny! As a rule, he is much too busy to bother about where I am staying. Sometimes, I believe, he even forgets I'm alive!"

Colonel Millbank smiled.

"My dear young lady, this letter is an official one, and does not refer to you at all!" he said. "All the same, you will be very glad to hear that your father is coming down to Portmoor to-night."

Sylvia Parkinson looked at the colonel with surprise in her eyes, and then shook her head.

"Surely you have made a mistake, Colonel Millbank?" she said quickly. "My father cannot possibly undertake the journey from London just now. He is quite incapable——"

"Mistake!" interrupted the governor. "I have made no mistake. This letter is perfectly lucid, and states quite positively that Sir James Parkinson will visit the prison

to-night. Read it for yourself, my dear girl!"

The colonel passed the letter over to his guest, who took it with a little frown upon her face. Clearly she was greatly puzzled by the news she had heard, and she commenced reading the letter with great interest. It was only a brief official note, and had evidently been written by the Home Secretary in person.

Sylvia glanced at her father's well-known handwriting, and read:

"Dear Colonel Millbank,

"There are one or two rather important matters in connection with Portmoor which I should like to discuss with you immediately. Therefore I propose to motor down for the purpose, and you may expect me at about seven o'clock this evening.

"My visit will be brief, and not an official one in the usual sense of the term, as you can quite understand.

"Yours very sincerely,

"JAMES PARKINSON."

As the girl finished perusing the letter the frown upon her face deepened, and she looked at the governor in great perplexity.

"I can't understand it!" she exclaimed. "This letter, as you said, is perfectly clear, and it's from my father, right enough. But he's ill in bed, and quite unable to travel——"

"What's that?" cut in the colonel. "Sir James is ill in bed, you say?"

"Yes."

"But how can that be?" asked the prison governor. "Sir James could not write me at all if he were ill, and he certainly wouldn't arrange a visit to Portmoor——"

"Of course he wouldn't!" chimed in Constance Millbank, looking at her chum queerly. "It's you who have made a mistake, Sylvia—not father!"

But Miss Parkinson was firm.

"I tell you I left my father in bed yesterday, with a badly sprained ankle!" she said. "His doctor had given him very explicit instructions not to attempt to get up for at least four days. The sprain had caused the ankle to swell up to about twice the usual size, and it's impossible to suppose that father has recovered his health again as quickly as this. I can't understand why he wrote this letter—that is, if he did write it!"

Colonel Millbank looked at Sylvia blankly.

"Why do you say 'if' he wrote it?" he inquired. "Obviously, it is from Sir James, and nobody else—unless it is a forgery! And that, of course, is quite out of the question—— By heavens!"

Colonel Millbank broke off abruptly, and a very grim look crept into his eyes. With great suddenness an explanation of the

mystery flashed into his brain, and he brought his fist down upon the table with a thud.

"That's it!" he muttered, with a note of excitement in his voice. "Mr. Lee warned me to be on the look-out against that forger, who has threatened to have revenge——"

"What on earth are you mumbling about?" asked Mrs. Millbank, looking at her husband across the breakfast-table. "Did I hear you mention the word 'forger'?"

The Colonel nodded.

"Yes, you did!" he said grimly. "After what Miss Parkinson has told us about her father's injury there can be no doubt that this letter is a forgery. Moreover, if we take into consideration the events which have recently occurred, I don't think it is difficult to guess the identity of the criminal who is responsible for it——"

"Good gracious!" ejaculated Constance Millbank excited. "You surely don't mean Jim the Penman, daddy?"

"Who else is capable of a thing of this sort?" asked the governor. "Yes, my dear, I suspect Mr. James Douglas Sutcliffe of being the author of this letter, and I must take immediate steps to ascertain the cause of his writing the note. Evidently the scoundrel is planning a deep-laid scheme of some sort, which must be counteracted at all costs. I must communicate with Sir James Parkinson at once!"

The colonel left the table as he spoke and made his way to his office, determined to get to the bottom of the mystery without delay.

If he was right in his surmise, it looked as if Jim the Penman was booked for a shock.

CHAPTER II.

A SUBTLE SCHEME.



THORNTON hurried into the room with a look of excitement in his eyes.

"It's no good, Jim; your wheeze won't work this time!" he exclaimed regretfully.

"You'll have to think out another stunt!" Jim the Penman glanced at his companion with a look of amusement in his eyes, and smiled.

"Why?" he inquired.

"Sir James Parkinson is in bed with a sprained ankle—that's why!" answered Thornton.

"Well, what about it?" queried Sutcliffe easily.

Thornton snorted.

"Great Scott!" he exploded. "What's the matter with you, Jim? Are you getting dense——"

"Not that I am aware of," cut in Jim the Penman, with a chuckle. "But you're getting excited, Thornton—a most unwise proceeding in a gentleman of your profession. It is always wisest to keep calm—"

"How the thunder can I keep calm when you refuse to grasp the seriousness of the situation?" demanded Thornton heatedly. "I tell you that the Home Secretary is confined to his bed—"

"Precisely!" said Jim coolly. "I am quite aware of that, my dear fellow. I knew it some little time ago, as a matter of fact!"

Thornton stared.

"But—but his illness makes it impossible for you to carry out the scheme you have in mind!" he argued. "That letter which you sent to the Governor of Portmoor, signed with Sir James Parkinson's name, is sure to be detected as a fake now, because the Home Secretary is known to be unfit to travel! Therefore the scheme must be dropped."

Douglas James Sutcliffe smiled again, and shook his head.

"Not at all, Thornton—not at all!" he said quietly. "My plans are running with perfect smoothness, I fancy, and I have no cause whatever to grumble. All my arrangements in the present instance are based upon this accident which has befallen the Home Secretary, and it is because he is safely confined to his bed that I am taking the liberty of using his name!"

Thornton shrugged his shoulders helplessly.

"I'm hanged if I can make head or tail of what you're driving at, Jim!" he confessed. "Do you mean to say that you want that letter to be taken for a forgery?"

"Yes."

"But what in the world for?" asked Thornton blankly. "It's like running your head into a noose—absolutely!"

Jim laughed.

"You ought to know me better than that, Thornton," he answered. "No; I don't intend to run any risks; but I do intend to carry out my purpose. During this last day or two I've been deucedly busy, and I found out a few things. One of them was this accident to Sir James Parkinson; another was that his daughter, Miss Sylvia Parkinson, was going down to Portmoor yesterday to stay with the governor's daughter. She's there now!"

"What the thunder has she got to do with this business?" demanded Thornton.

"A good deal," returned Sutcliffe. "Her presence at Portmoor is necessary to my plans, because she will at once suspect the letter as being a fake. She knows that her father is ill, and she consequently knows that he cannot possibly travel down to the prison. She will explain this to the governor, who will immediately suspect

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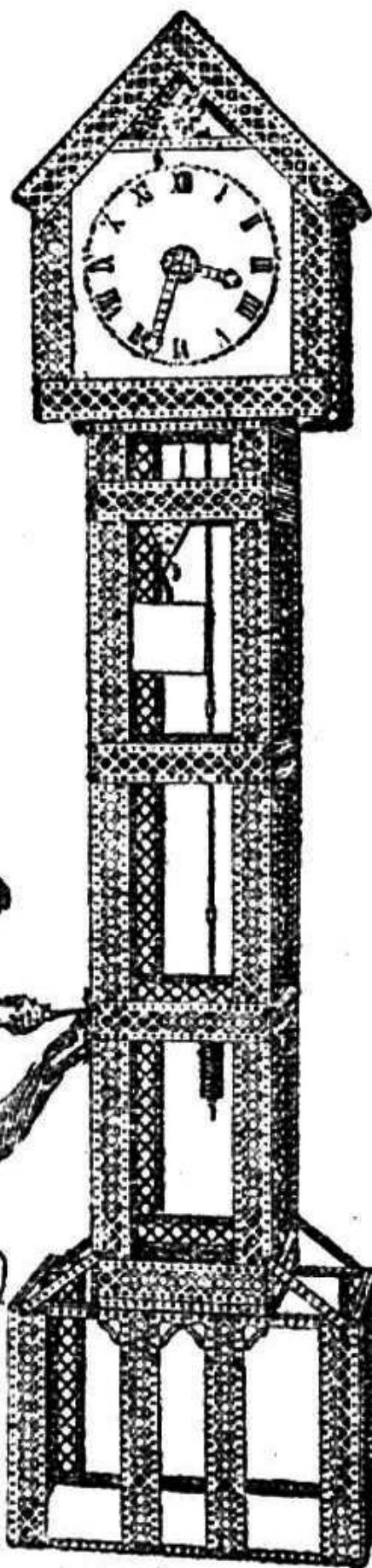
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me as being the author of Sir James' letter. That is precisely what I want!"

"You want to be suspected?" said Thornton incredulously. "Well, I'm—I'm jiggered!"

"You'll understand my reasons later on," said Jim the Penman. "I'm up against Colonel Millbank, and one other individual at Portmoor, and I mean to get 'em both at one stroke. And when I do they're going to be put through it with a vengeance!"

A harsh, vindictive note had crept into Sutcliffe's voice, and it was clear that he was in deadly earnest. Just recently he had been engaged upon a campaign of revenge against all those who had caused him to spend five years of misery in Portmoor Prison, but his campaign so far had not been an unqualified success.

At every turn he found himself in conflict with the famous detective of Gray's Inn Road. Nelson Lee had foiled his plans again and again. And Jim the Penman had come to the conclusion that it was his turn to score a triumph over his hated rival.

Sutcliffe had, within the last week or so, forged Nelson Lee's name to a cheque, and had managed to get away with £5,000; he had attempted to defraud Sir Rodney Marshall—the K.C. who had prosecuted him at his trial five years ago—of four times that amount, but had been prevented by the detective.

Later, by posing as a Scotland Yard inspector, he had lured Mr. Justice Dorrington from his London house with the idea of forcing a large sum of money from him—but again he had been foiled by Nelson Lee, and so deprived of the revenge he had sworn to take against the judge who had sentenced him. Finally, he had devoted his energies to the capture of Chief Detective-Inspector Lennard, and had attempted to ship him out of the country—confined inside a packing-case! This manoeuvre, too had been frustrated by his arch-enemy, the great criminologist; and now, apparently, Jim the Penman was engineering a cunning plot against the Governor of Portmoor Prison.

Thornton—one of Sutcliffe's accomplices—could not make anything of his chief's plans; they appeared to be too subtle for his comprehension. And Jim refused to enlighten him further at this juncture. The pair conversed for a few minutes longer, and then Jim rose to his feet with a very satisfied look on his features.

"Don't you worry, Thornton," he said confidently. "You can take it from me that everything is running on oiled wheels! To-night I'm going to bring off a terrific stunt, and we'll start for Devonshire as soon as I get back—"

"Where are you off to now?" growled Thornton.

"Brixton!" said Jim. "After I've finished

there my plans will be complete, and there'll be nothing to hinder us from achieving our purpose! This time we're going to win, remember—no matter who we're up against!"

And Jim the Penman, after delivering himself of those confident words, swung himself out of the room, and started off for Brixton.

CHAPTER III.

SETTING THE TRAP!



NELSON LEE looked at Nipper as the telephone rang for the second time.

"Well, you indolent young rascal, aren't you going to answer it?" he inquired, looking at his assistant sternly. "'Pon my soul, your laziness is getting beyond all bounds—"

"Oh, blow the telephone, guv'nor!" grumbled Nipper, getting up and crossing to the instrument. "It's been ringing all the blessed morning, and I'm fed up with answering the silly chumps who want to know if you can find their gold watches, or their tie-pins— Hallo! Yes—this is Mr. Nelson Lee's house! What? Is he in? Who are you— Oh! Sir James Parkinson, the Home Secretary! Hold the line a moment, sir, and I'll ask the guv'nor to step to the 'phone!"

Nipper, with a somewhat red face, looked across at his master, who was smiling in his usual genial manner. He was quite used to the lad's little ways, and he was perfectly aware that Nipper had frequently to go through the ordeal of replying to the most ridiculous questions which were addressed to him over the telephone. Quite half a dozen times since breakfast Nipper had had to submit to this annoyance—and his exasperation was only natural.

Now, however, it was different, and the famous detective lost no time in hurrying over to the telephone and taking the receiver. The next moment he was in conversation with Sir James Parkinson, and it was soon apparent to the detective that the baronet was in a somewhat agitated condition.

"Is that you, Mr. Lee?" he asked quickly. "Good! If you can spare the time, I'd like you to come to my private house in Cavendish Square immediately. The matter is extremely important, and will probably enable you to effect the capture of Jim the Penman—"

"That is quite sufficient for me, Sir James!" cut in Lee keenly. "I will come with my assistant at once!"

He rang off after a few more words, and explained the situation to the eager Nipper. Within three minutes the pair were in a taxi en route for the Home Secretary's private

residence, and upon arrival they were shown without delay into the injured man's bed-room.

Sir James, as his daughter had informed Colonel Millbank, was quite unable to leave his bed; but he quickly told Lee and Nipper the news he had just learned over the long-distance telephone. Sylvia Parkinson, evidently, had lost no time in informing her father of the facts regarding the letter which the prison governor had received, and of his suspicions.

Quickly, and in as few words as possible, Sir James related his news to Nelson Lee and Nipper, concluding by turning a grave face towards them, and speaking in a very serious tone.

"That is the situation, Mr. Lee," he said, "and I am very glad that my daughter happened to be down at Portmoor at such a time as this. I have had a talk with her and with Colonel Millbank, the Governor of Portmoor, who is strongly of the opinion that the letter which purported to come from me was really written by Sutcliffe."

The detective nodded grimly.

"The colonel is very probably right," he agreed. "Sutcliffe has threatened to 'get even' with the governor, and it looks as if he has adopted this ruse in order to achieve his purpose. Your daughter's presence in the colonel's house was extremely fortunate, and it would be most unwise to allow our advantage to slip away. By acting promptly we shall probably catch Sutcliffe unawares; but if we are to set an effective trap for him we must make our plans without delay. I'll go to Scotland Yard at once, and make the necessary arrangements with Chief Detective-inspector Lennard."

The famous investigator was as good as his word, and very shortly after taking leave of the Home Secretary, both he and Nipper were seated in chairs opposite the Chief Inspector in his office. Lennard could see at once that something unusual was in



Chief Warden Hulton caught the senseless man in his arms, and hoisted him upon the window-sill.

the wind, and he looked at his visitors inquiringly.

"What's the matter, Lee?" he asked keenly. "You've got something good up your sleeve, or else I'm a Dutchman!"

Nelson Lee nodded, and lost no time in telling Lennard exactly what had occurred, and what he suspected. The Chief Inspector was delighted at the chance which presented itself to capture the notorious forger, and he slapped his thigh enthusiastically.

"By thunder," he exclaimed gleefully, "if we work things right, we ought to be able to give Jim the surprise of his life, Lee! But—how the deuce are we going to get down to Portmoor by seven o'clock? Devonshire is a deuce of a way—"

"Aeroplane from Croydon!" said Lee shortly. "You can arrange that, Lennard, easily enough, in your official capacity. By using a 'plane we can do the journey with-

out the slightest trouble; but it's our only chance of arriving in time."

Lennard nodded, and grasped the telephone.

"Leave it to me!" he said quickly. "I'll arrange for that machine to be got ready for us at once!"

And so it came about that Lee and Nipper, accompanied by Chief Detective-Inspector Lennard, were whirled through the air from London to Portmoor in one of the fastest aeroplanes that could be found. The journey was exhilarating but uneventful, and the trio arrived at the grim old prison in plenty of time to make their final plans.

The governor welcomed them with open arms, and promised to do everything in his power to assist them in their arrangements.

He was quite as eager as any of them to see the notorious forger once more safely under lock and key; but would Jim the Penman fall into the trap?

Obviously, he would have to be extremely clever to avoid disaster on this occasion; but Douglas James Sutcliffe had a habit of slipping out of tight corners.

And none knew this better than Nelson Lee.

CHAPTER IV.

A STARTLING DISCOVERY.



COLONEL MILLBANK glanced at the clock.

"Quarter to seven!" he exclaimed, rubbing his hands together in satisfaction. "Plenty of time, Mr. Lee; but if I were you

I should take up the positions you have arranged at once. This audacious criminal might take it into his head to arrive before the specified time, and find us unprepared."

The detective nodded.

"I was about to suggest the same thing, colonel," he agreed readily. "Nipper is already on the watch outside the prison gates, and we can trust him to keep his eyes open."

It had been decided that Nelson Lee and Chief Detective-Inspector Lennard should await the "Home Secretary's" arrival in a small ante-room which adjoined the governor's office. Here they would be ready to act as circumstances required at a moment's notice.

In addition to this, Colonel Millbank had arranged for Chief Warder Hulton to be on special duty in a second ante-room, and the preparations seemed to be in every way perfect. Hulton was an extremely reliable official, and could be trusted in any emergency.

Once Jim the Penman entered the colonel's office, he would have no possible chance of getting out of it without first outwitting Nelson Lee and the chief-inspector—to say

nothing of Hulton. And such a feat was obviously ridiculous on the face of it.

Hulton would conduct the expected visitor into the governor's presence, and would then take up his stand in the adjoining room, thus effectually barring Sutcliffe's escape by that means, if he should attempt anything so foolish.

Two ordinary warders were on duty outside the locked door of the office, and the only remaining door led into the room which Lee and Lennard were occupying.

The trap appeared to be complete down to the last detail, and it seemed absurd to suppose that so astute a criminal as Jim the Penman would deliberately walk into it. But he could not know of the arrangements which had been made for his reception, and it was upon this fact that the would-be captors were relying.

Even so, it seemed too good to be true. That the most notorious forger of modern times—the man who was wanted by the police on innumerable charges—should calmly walk into the prison governor's office of his own free will appeared to be bizarre and fantastic, unreal, and farcical.

Colonel Millbank began to show signs of uneasiness as the minutes ticked by, and he positively started when—at seven o'clock precisely—Chief-Warder Hulton opened the door of the ante-room and ushered in "Sir James Parkinson." But the governor managed to rise from his chair and to bow to his visitor, acting just as if he was in the presence of the genuine Home Secretary.

The newcomer looked amazingly like the man he was impersonating, and the governor had some difficulty in convincing himself that he was a fake. Truly, this man Sutcliffe was an astonishingly clever fellow!

"Good-evening, Colonel Millbank!" said Sir James in a genial tone. "You got my letter all right, I hope?"

The governor nodded.

"Oh, yes, Sir James—it arrived by this morning's post!" he returned. "I was somewhat surprised to see it, but I am more surprised to see you here in person. Allow me to congratulate you upon your marvellously quick recovery."

The visitor blinked.

"Recovery?" he repeated, obviously at fault. "I—I—er—don't quite follow, colonel. Were you under the impression that I have been ill?"

The governor laughed.

"It is common knowledge almost that Sir James Parkinson sprained his ankle, and is confined to his bed in consequence!" he remarked. "Therefore, I shall be extremely obliged if you will be good enough to explain who you are and why you are masquerading here as the Home Secretary—Ah, that makes you wince, eh, you impostor!"

"Wince?" repeated Sir James, with a shake of the head. "I was not wincing, my

dear sir—I was merely laughing! You are quite right about my being an impostor, but I had certainly looked forward to carrying on the deception a trifle longer than this. Hang it, I have scarcely been here long enough to earn my generous fee——”

“Fee?” said the Colonel. “What on earth are you talking about? I know who you are, you infernal scoundrel! You are——”

“Jimmie Langdon, of Brixton!” cut in the “Home Secretary,” with a bland smile. “I’m an actor, colonel, and I’ve been ‘resting’ so long that I just jumped at the opportunity of earning twenty-five quid for impersonating Sir James Parkinson. The gentleman who offered me the job explained that it was intended to work a joke off on you, but it seems to have fallen bally flat, if you ask me anything. You jumped on me before I had a chance to show you my dramatic abilities——”

“Well, I’m hanged!” ejaculated the colonel, in genuine amazement. “Of all the infernal swindles—— You’re just an out-of-work actor, and not the man we want at all. But I can’t believe it. Mr. Lee—inspector!” he called, raising his voice to a loud tone, and running to the door of the ante-room. “Come here! There’s something wrong!”

The detective and Lennard emerged at once, and listened to the governor’s story in surprise. When he had finished the chief inspector strode over to the self-styled actor and quickly jerked off his wig and moustache. A glance at the stranger’s face was sufficient, and the Scotland Yard man uttered a disgusted exclamation.

“By thunder!” he roared. “This man is not Jim the Penman, Lee! We’ve been tricked! Do you hear, man—we’ve been tricked!”

Nelson Lee nodded. He was asking himself why Sutcliffe had arranged this little tableau for their benefit.

There seemed to be no answer; but the famous investigator was very puzzled and very suspicious.

CHAPTER V.

JIM THE PENMAN WINS.



CHIEF WARDER HULTON entered the office at that moment and handed a note to

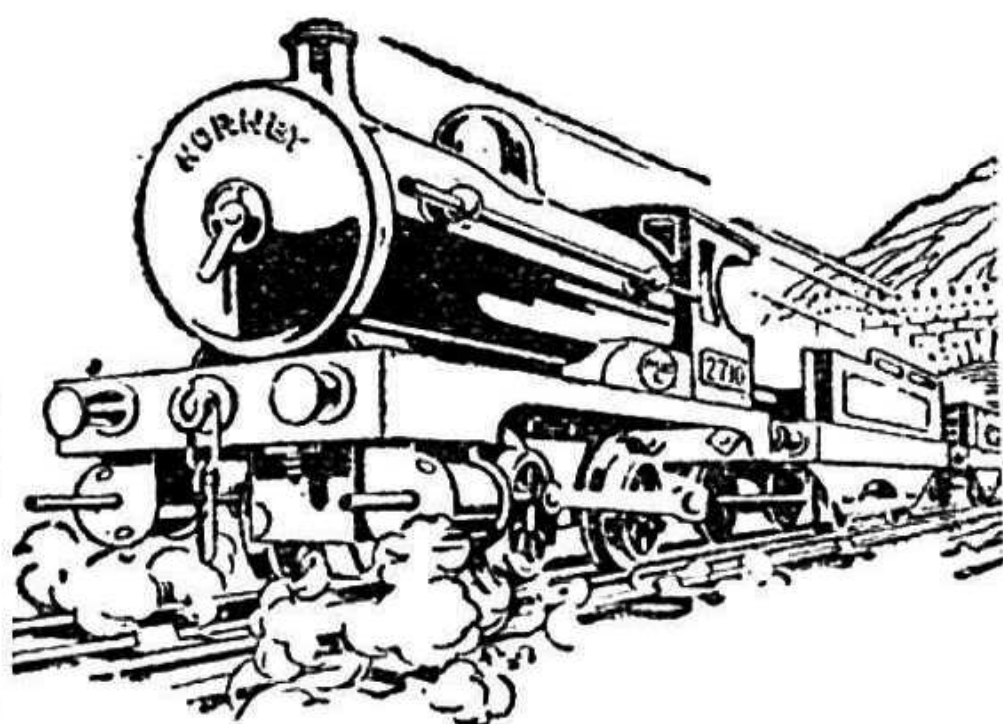
Nelson Lee, with the remark that it had just arrived. The detective took it eagerly,

and found, as he had expected, that it was from Sutcliffe.

“Dear Lee,” it said, “An explanation of the mystery will be supplied very shortly. Look out for it!— JIM.”

That was all—just that brief message scrawled on a piece of paper. Lee pursed

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his lips as he read it, and passed it over to Lennard, who read it at a glance.

"The audacious blackguard!" he snorted disgustedly. "He's got nerve enough for anything! But what does he mean, Lee?"

The detective shook his head and frowned as Lennard commenced suggesting possible reasons for Sutcliffe's astonishing behaviour. And while the two detectives were thus engaged, Colonel Millbank saw Chief Warder Hulton beckoning to him from the door of the ante-room in a mysterious manner.

"What is the matter, Hulton?" asked the governor, walking to the man's side and glancing at him queerly. "No more surprises, I hope— Well, I'll be dashed!"

The chief warder silently pointed to a note which was pinned to the window-frame in the small apartment, and the colonel hurried over to it. As he did so, Hulton quickly closed the ante-room door and silently locked it. Then he followed the governor with stealthy strides, and produced a sandbag from the pocket of his coat.

The colonel was now studying the pinned-up note with great intentness, but the next second he received a blow upon the back of the skull which effectually rendered him unconscious. And as he crumpled up into an inert heap, Chief Warder Hulton caught him in his arms and hoisted him upon the window-sill.

Supporting him there while he threw up the sash, the prison official pushed his burden to the outside ledge, and then called softly into the darkness. Instantly an answering hail sounded, and Hulton grunted with satisfaction.

"Here you are, Thornton!" he whispered. "Grab his legs and hold him while I jump out! Gosh! He's heavier than I thought he'd be!"

Thornton raised his arms and grasped the inert figure of the governor.

"Right, I've got him, Jim!" he exclaimed, in a scarcely audible tone. "As soon as you're outside, we'll rush him into the car with the other chap!"

"Chief Warder Hulton"—who was in reality Jim the Penman—nodded and vaulted out of the window. He was exceedingly pleased with the success of his plans, and he and Thornton, carrying the colonel between them, lost no time in hurrying to their motor-car.

Upon reaching it, they unceremoniously threw the luckless governor into the tonneau beside the body of another man who lay there—a man who was under the influence of drugs. He was the real Chief Warder Hulton, and Jim had lured him out of the prison by one of his simple but effective fake messages. Hulton had immediately been rendered unconscious, and Sutcliffe, after making himself up exactly the same as the warder, had calmly taken his place.

Then, in the personality of the prison guard, he had coolly proceeded to await the coming of the actor, Jimmie Langdon, and had thoroughly enjoyed the discomfiture of Colonel Millbank and the two detectives. Now he had both the governor and Hulton in his power; he had achieved the object for which he had made such elaborate plans.

The motor-car hurried away the instant the second prisoner had been placed aboard, and made off into the darkness of the night at an almost dangerous rate of speed. Sutcliffe himself was at the wheel, and he did not intend to give his enemies a chance to overtake him.

Meanwhile, Colonel Millbank was soon missed from his office.

Nelson Lee, within a few seconds of his passing into the ante-room, had turned to speak to him, and had found that he had vanished. The detective's suspicions were instantly aroused, and he dashed to the door, which he soon found to be locked. With tense expressions on their faces, he and Lennard had forced it open, and had then seen the note which Jim had pinned to the wall for their benefit.

Together Lee and Lennard read the message:

"Dear Lee,—I've taken both Millbank and Hulton from under your nose, and they're well on the way to get their deserts! This affair was arranged so that I should have both you and Lennard under observation while I carried out my plans, for I've had enough of your infernal last-minute surprises! As you arrived by aeroplane there's no car handy for you to pursue me, so I can breathe freely! Yours as ever,
"JIM."

Nelson Lee breathed hard as he read the message, and then pursed his lips.

"Hulton!" he muttered. "Chief Warder Hulton must have been Jim—in disguise! By thunder, Lennard, Sutcliffe has acted with remarkable astuteness this time, and he has won hands down!"

Chief Detective-Inspector Lennard nodded gloomily.

There was no doubt about it; Jim the Penman had won. By sheer daring and audacity he had got the better of his enemies. But Nelson Lee vowed that he should not have the advantage for long.

A few minutes later Nipper was found to be missing, and Lee began to take hope. Did the lad's absence mean that Jim would, after all, be outwitted?

THE END.

Another Exciting Story of this Series next week, entitled:—

NIPPER versus JIM THE PENMAN!



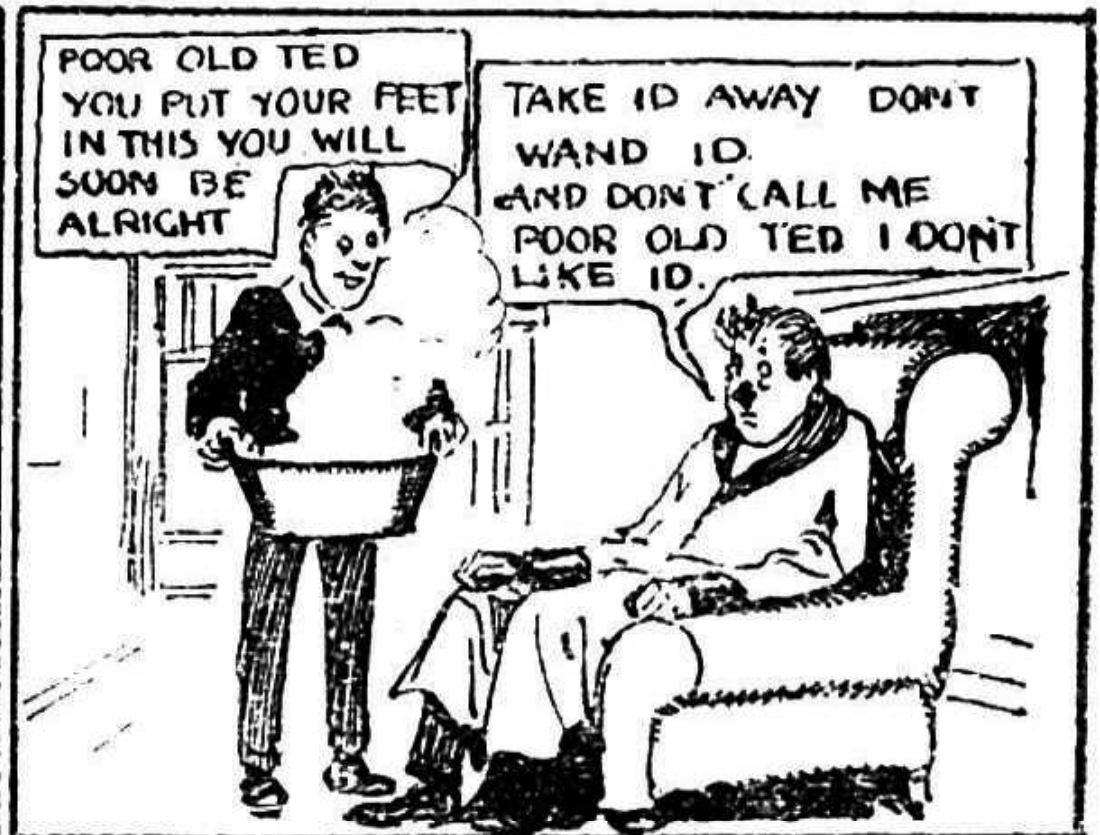
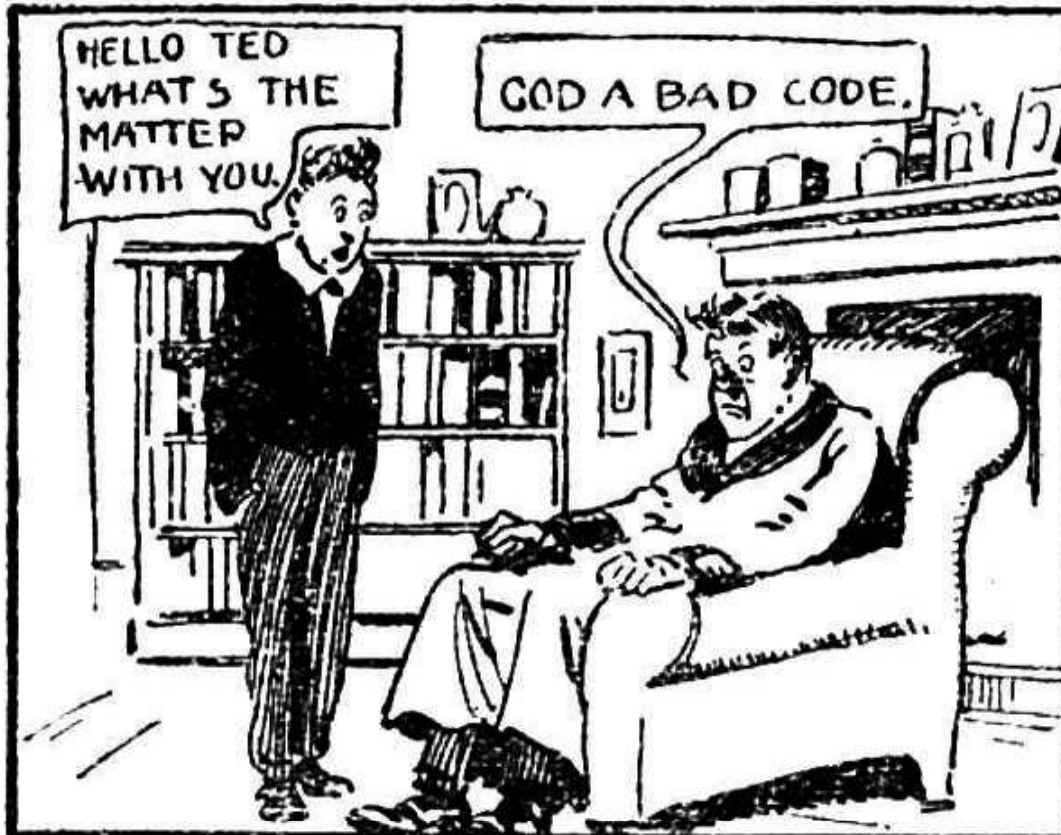
St. Frank's Magazine.

No. 53. Vol. 3.

Edited by Pitt.

November 29, 1924.

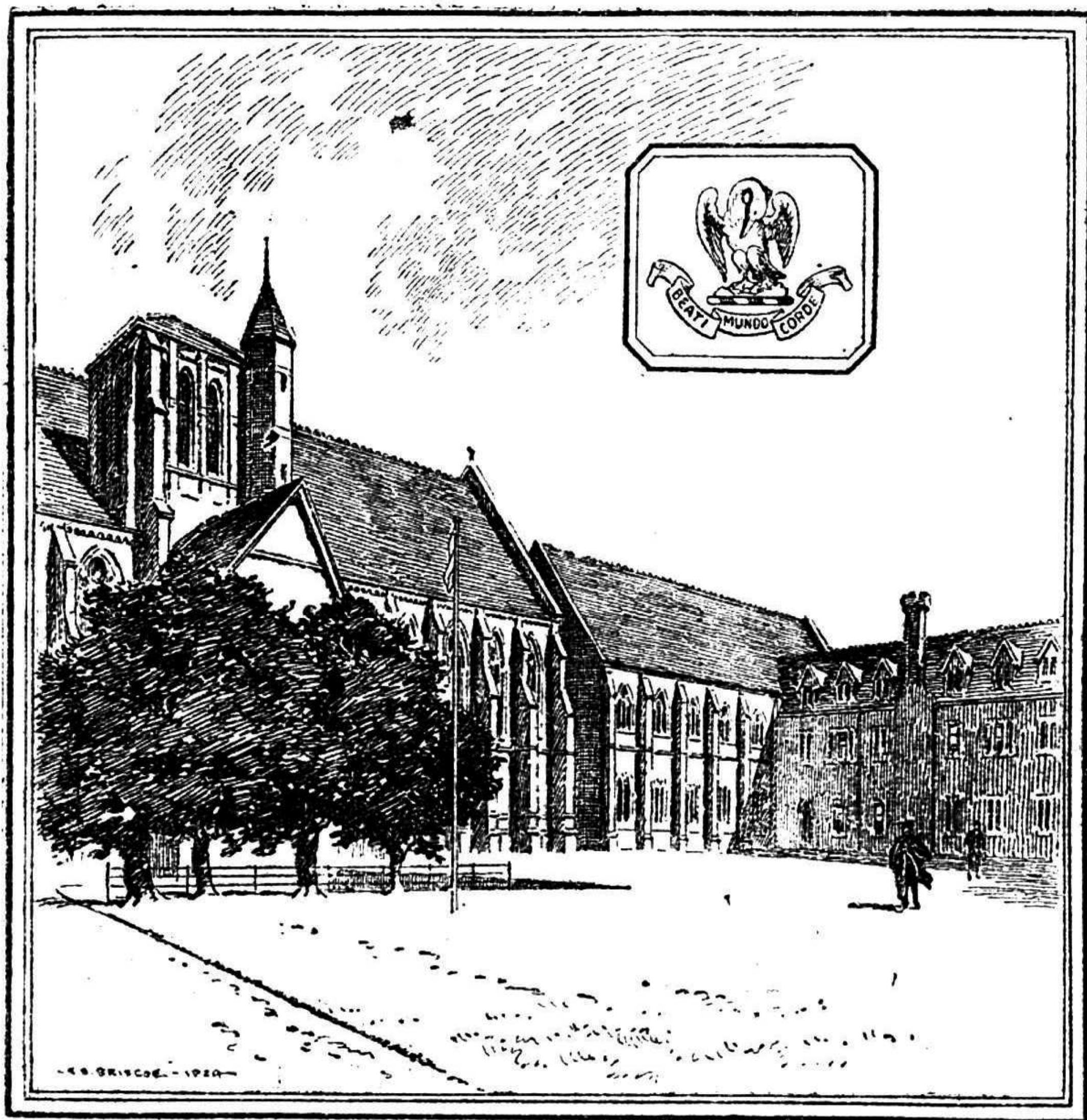
ADVENTURES OF THE HANDFORTH BROTHERS THE COLD CURE!



OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

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

No. 55. ARDINGLEY COLLEGE.



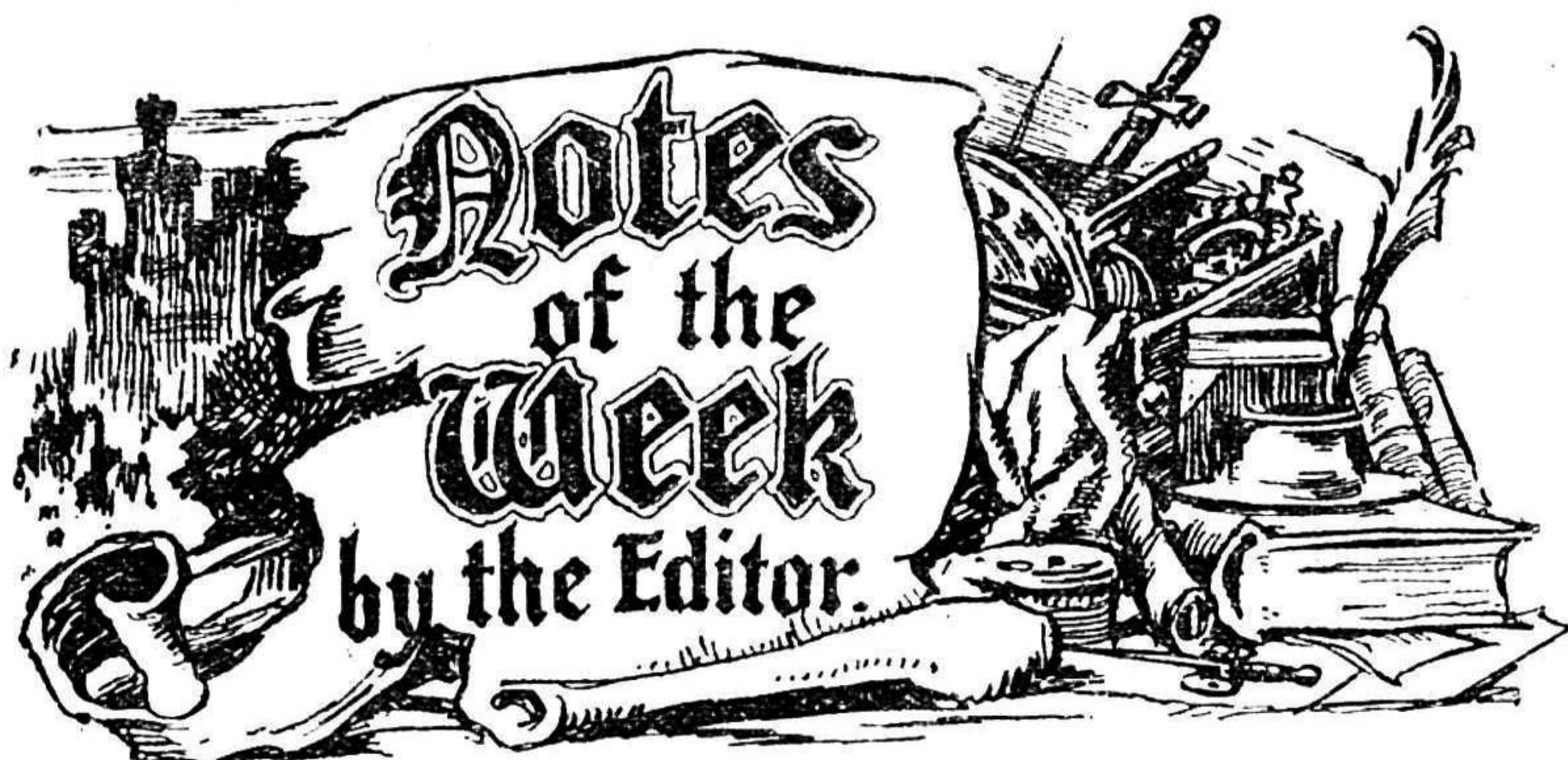
Ardingley College was founded in 1858 by Canon Woodward. There are 330 boys at the college, divided into three houses. These are known as Headmaster's House, School House, and Junior House.

The chapel is one of the finest public school chapels in the country. There is also an open air swimming bath, an armoury, a library, a sanatorium, and an assembly hall.

I am indebted to a reader for photo, badge, and particulars of the above school,

and I am accordingly presenting him with the original sketch by Mr. Briscoe.

Admirers of Mr. Briscoe's work in this series of public school sketches will be interested to learn that this artist has added considerably to his fame in architectural drawings by a new book recently published called "BYWAYS OF LONDON." The most picturesque nooks and corners and buildings of London, renowned for their history and quaintness, have been faithfully recorded by Mr. Briscoe in the magnificent series of full-page pen drawings contained in this book.



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

My dear Chums,

I am sorry I have had to hold over this week the opening instalment of Handy's new serial, "IN QUEST OF GOLD," his "Replies in Brief," and one or two other articles. You see, I did not expect Dick Goodwin's articles on "HOW TO DO IT" would absorb four pages of the Mag. I was not counting upon the diagrams taking up so much space. But if I have been rather generous towards our new contributor, it is because I know most of you, my chums, will gladly welcome these articles on how to make things, and will not mind the first of the series being somewhat longer than you expected.

AN APPEAL TO PARENTS.

There is a peculiar charm about making things for oneself. It comes, I suppose, from the pleasure it gives us, there is the knowledge that we are saving money by learning how to do things for ourselves. A boy who is handy with tools is a great asset to the home. He can save his parents pounds in repairs. Then again, the handy boy is never likely to suffer from the evil effects of idleness. When you think it out, you will find that idleness is the chief cause of all the misery in the world. It undermines the character, brings about poverty, disease and crime. Parents will do well, then, to encourage their sons to take up some kind of hobby. I appeal to fathers in particular to interest themselves in the matter, and to allow their sons to use a shed, an attic, or a spare room for a workshop.

FOR THE BOY OF LIMITED POCKET MONEY.

In these days most of us do not get too much pocket money to spend. That is why

I have asked Goodwin to write these articles with due regard to the financial resources of the majority of my readers. It is surprising what wonderful things can be made with a few ordinary tools, the simplest of materials and a little ingenuity.

SUGGESTIONS FROM READERS.

Goodwin wishes me to invite readers to send in suggestions for anything they would like him to describe how to make in these HOW TO DO IT series. Letters should be addressed to Dick Goodwin, c/o The Editor, THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY, The Fleetway House, Farringdon St., London, E.C.4.

WILLY HANDFORTH AGAIN.

This shining star of the Third has been getting into hot water again. He becomes successively a hero, an outcast, and then a hero again. This all in one day, and just because he wins a prize in a magazine competition.

GETTING READY FOR CHRISTMAS.

Only another three weeks to go and then we break up for the Christmas holidays. Several of the fellows are already making plans and sending out invitations to their chums for house parties. Archie is giving a very big affair at Glenthorne Manor, and it is expected that most of the Fourth will be there for Christmas. I do not know how true it is, but Glenthorne Manor is supposed to be haunted. At all events, it has many legends and historical associations, in which the Glenthornes of a bygone day seem to figure a great deal. We can look forward then to some exciting times this Christmas at Glenthorne Manor.

One thing more before I conclude this chat. The first instalment of Handy's new serial, which I was unable to include in the present number, will make its appearance in the Mag. next week.

Your sincere chum,
REGGIE PITT.



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

No. 37.—CECIL DE VALERIE.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

Slim and elegant figure, aristocratic and striking. Unusual type of face, with pale, sallow complexion and aquiline nose. Generally wears half-smile, with parted lips, revealing perfectly even teeth. Eyes, piercingly dark. Hair, nearly black and worn long and brushed straight back. Height, 5 ft. 3 in. Weight, 8 st. 4 lb. Birthday, March 11th.

CHIEF CHARACTERISTICS:

Cool, calculating, and entirely self-possessed. A capable junior, with a keen, active brain. Something of a dandy, and capable of big things. Has great power for good or evil.

SPORTS & RECREATIONS:

A keen footballer and cricketer, and enthusiastic over any sport he interests himself in. Hobbies: Reading, wireless, and chemistry.

No. 38.—DAVID MERRELL.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

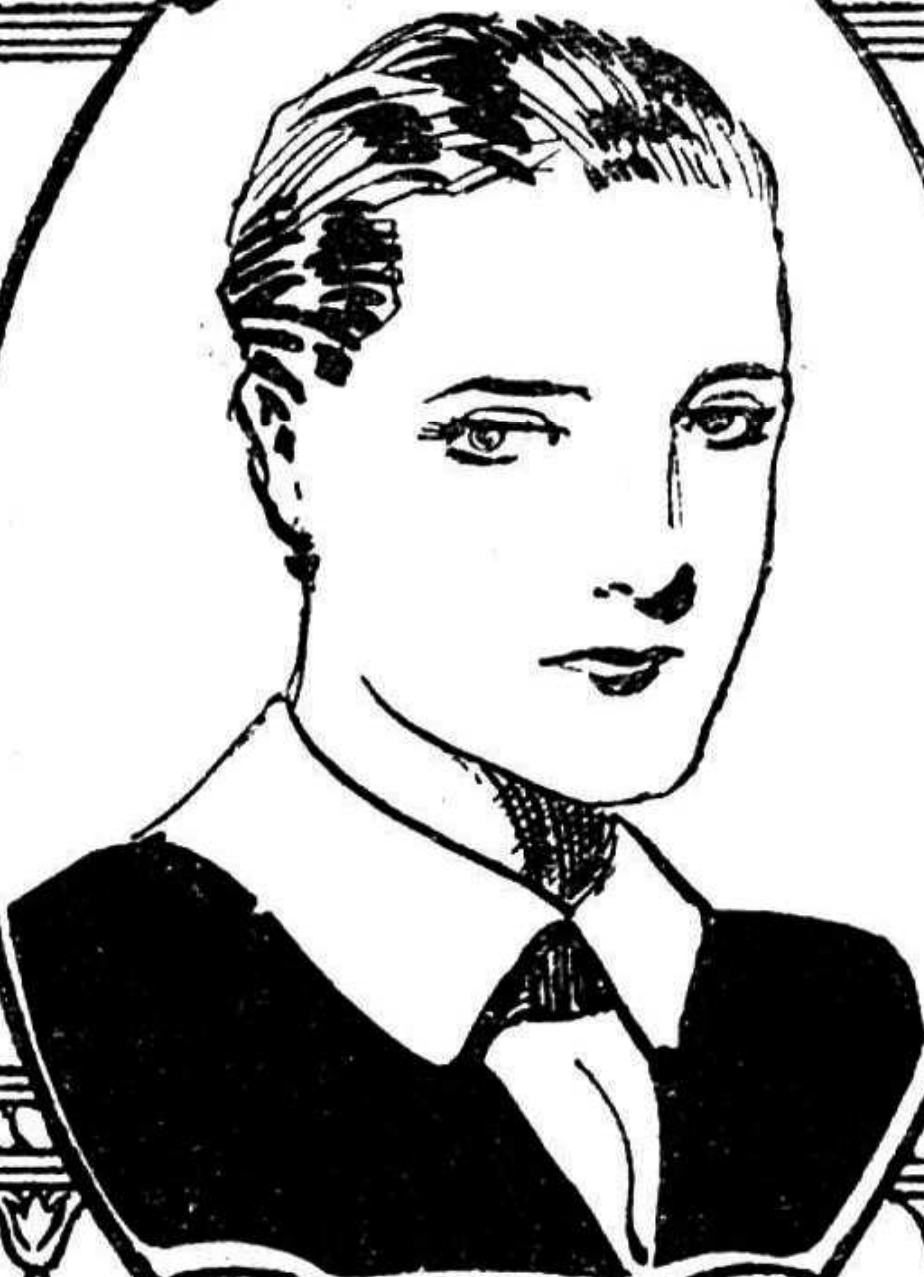
Clumsy and awkward, with big limbs and burly figure. Unpleasant features, with close-set eyes and aggressive jaw. Eyes, grey. Hair, medium brown. Height, 5 ft. 2 ins. Weight, 9 st. 2 lb. Birthday, November 28th.

CHIEF CHARACTERISTICS:

Strong in muscle, but weak in intellect. A bully by nature, and unless kept in check would soon develop his bad qualities. An admirer of Fullwood and Co.

SPORTS & RECREATIONS:

Seldom interests himself in sport, although capable of developing into a first-class wrestler. A notorious slacker in class, and therefore near the bottom. Hobbies: Petty bullying and following the lead of Fullwood and Co.



C. DE VALERIE



DAVID MERRELL

THE FOURTH At ST. FRANK'S.



No. 39.—GUY PEPYS.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

A striking-looking junior of medium size. Studious, refined features, with an expression of habitual dreaminess. Generally wears eye-glasses, and affects long, wavy hair. Eyes, brown. Hair, chestnut. Height, 5 ft. Weight, 8 st. 6 lb. Birthday, August 30th.

CHIEF CHARACTERISTICS:

Mild and inoffensive, and regarded in the Fourth as being somewhat "cranky." A keen observer, and more or less witty with his pen. Careful with his money, recording every item of expenditure in his celebrated diary.

SPORTS & RECREATIONS:

Although taking no active part in sports, is a keen spectator. Hobbies: Writing his diary, looking after his clothing, and reading classical literature.



GUY PEPYS

No. 40.—JOHN HOLROYD.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

Just an average boy, with no particular peculiarities in appearance. Eyes, blue. Hair, fair. Height, 5 ft. 1 in. Weight, 8 st. 5 lb. Birthday, February 16th.

CHIEF CHARACTERISTICS:

Happy-go-lucky and careless. Fond of japes, and frequently up to mischief in the Modern House. A decent sort of junior.

SPORTS & RECREATIONS:

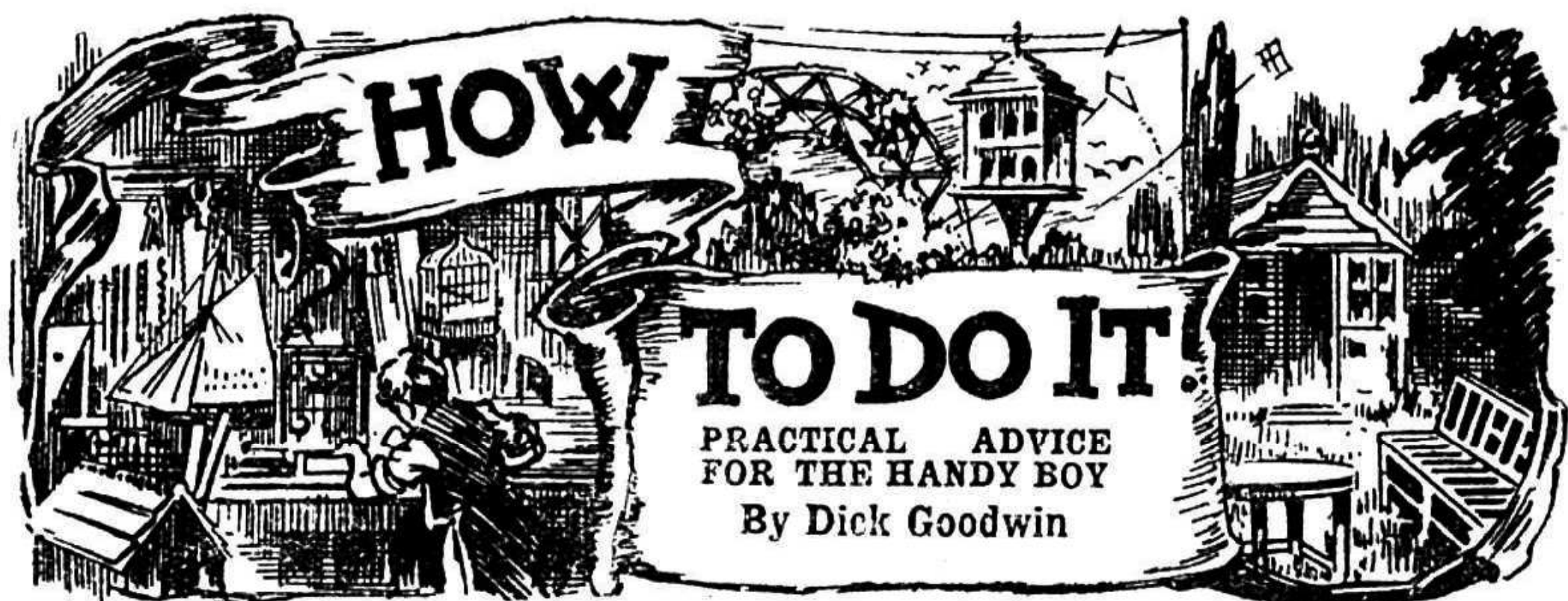
Not painstaking enough to be prominent in football or other sports. Prefers to jog along an easy path. Hobbies: Cycling, practical joking and fretwork.

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



JOHN HOLROYD

NEXT WEEK: Jerry Dodd, Edwin Munroe, Augustus Hart, Peter Cobb.

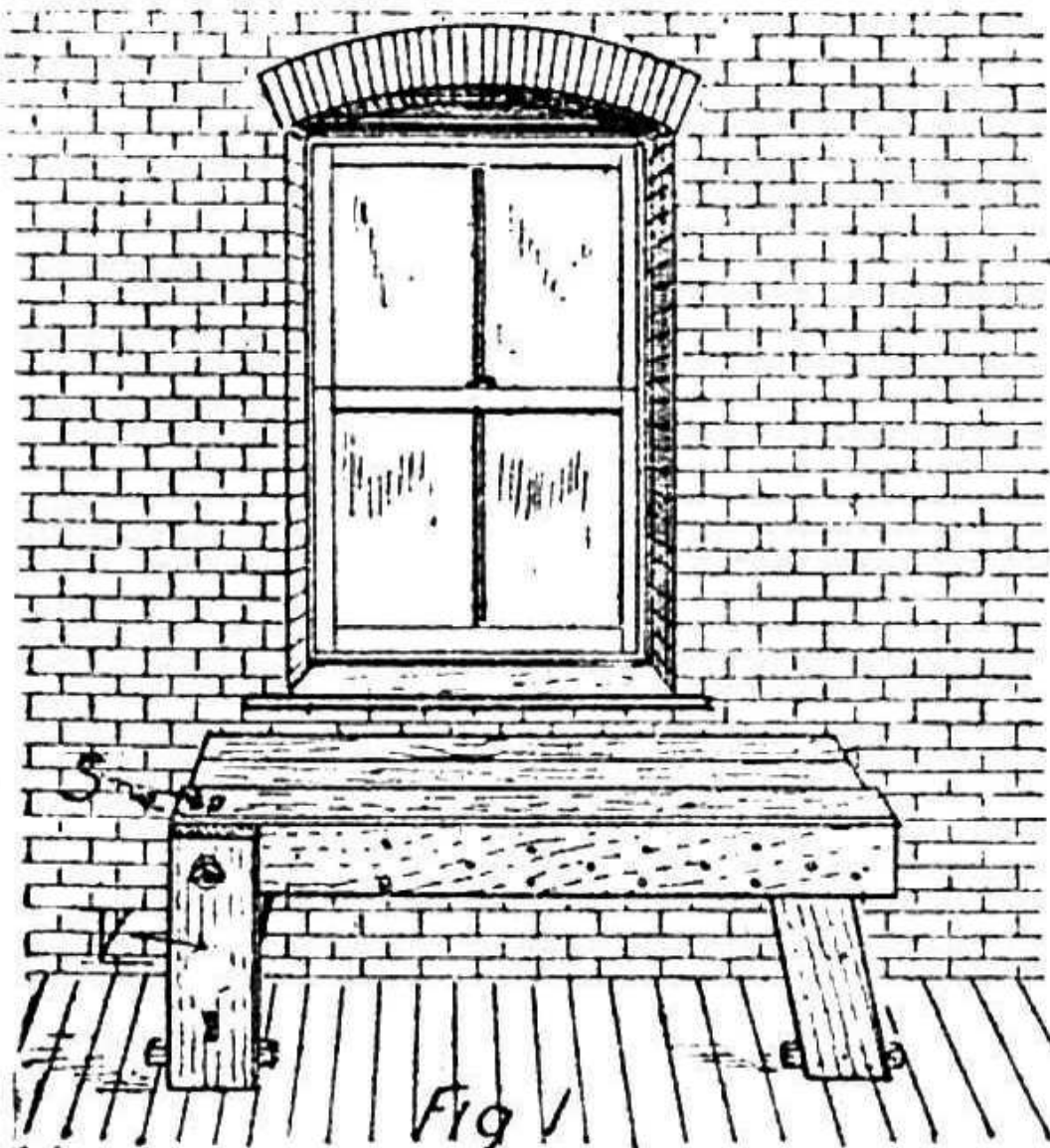


FITTING UP THE WORKSHOP

The old store-room has at last been cleared out, and with the help of some of the juniors the ceiling and walls have been washed and covered with distemper. The walls are now a pale green, and the window-frame and door nut brown. The bench is a special invention of my own, and is made with the smallest amount of wood and the greatest possible strength. It is fixed to the wall under one of the windows so as to get the best light.

HOW THE BENCH WAS MADE.

There is one heavy board on top with two thinner boards behind. These are supported on a framework attached to two strong legs. The vice is made with an upright piece of wood, and fixed to the leg with a steel bolt and a wing-nut. An ordinary bench screw could have been fitted,



but as it would cost about five shillings, we used the bolt instead.

MAKING THE FRAME.

First of all the back of the frame, A, was sawn off to 4 ft. 6 in. long from a 10 ft. length of machine planed yellow deal, which measured a little less than 2 in. square at the ends. Two more pieces, B, each 1 ft. 9 in. were sawn off the remainder, and these were fitted to the back piece, 11 in. from the ends. I have shown the way the joints were made at Fig 2. A groove the same width as the wood was cut out halfway down in the back piece and a notch made on the ends of the short pieces to fit in the grooves. The short piece was laid on the wood and marked, a try-square used to make the mark true, and a gauge to give the depth. I nearly forgot that the saw has a thickness, and nearly started the saw on the line instead of on the waste side. If I had done so the groove would have been too wide.

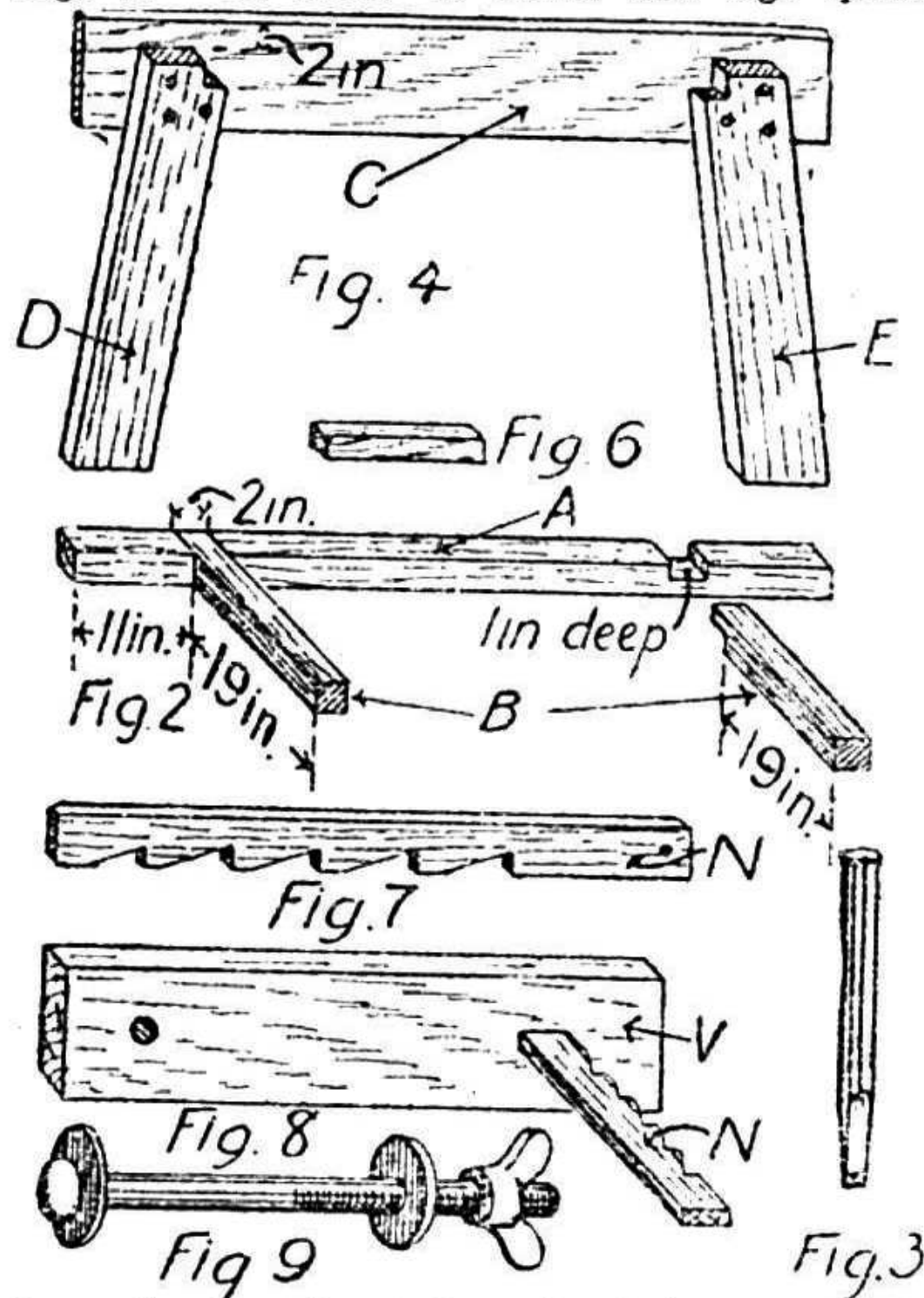
FIXING BENCH TO WALL.

While I was sawing the notches in the short pieces one of the fellows placed the long piece against the wall under the window and measured it, so that the top was 2 ft. 6 in. above the floor. He then made a pencil-mark all round the edges on to the wall. As screws could not be driven into the brick, a number of holes had to be made with a $\frac{1}{2}$ in. cold chisel. I have shown it at Fig. 3. This tool was driven into the wall with a hammer, and was continually turned round until the hole was about 3 in. deep. Six holes were made, and these were filled in with short lengths of wood; the operation is called plugging. The position of the holes was marked on the long length, and then holes to correspond were bored with a pin-bit held in a brace. The short pieces were screwed in position in two places with $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. screws.

and then the back length screwed to the wall with stout 4 in. screws.

THE LEGS OF THE BENCH.

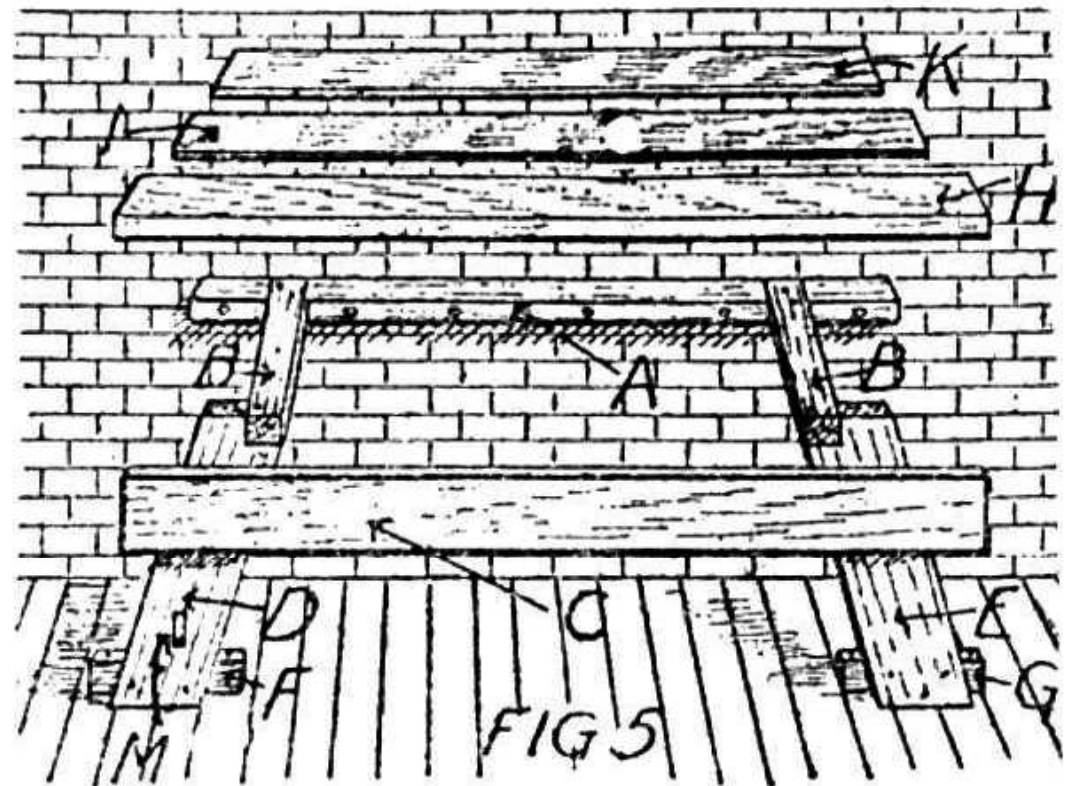
The front board, C, and the legs, D and E, were now made. The first piece, C, was 4 ft. 6 in. by 9 in. by 1 in., machine planed quite smooth, and the legs 2 ft. 8 in. by 9 in. by 2 in. The slope of the legs was marked off on the floor by placing one across the boards, with one corner touching the wall and the other 4 in. away, by drawing lines from the corner touching the wall and the opposite corner at the other end parallel with the line of the floor-boards. The wedge-shaped pieces were sawn off, and at the top of the inner sloping edges a notch was cut to take the end of the frame. The two legs were then screwed on to the front piece with 2 in. screws, 4 ins. from the ends, and 2 in. down, as I have shown at Fig. 4. The front, fitting against B.B., projected 2 in. above the frame, and then the latter was nailed in two places with 4 in. wire nails, to the legs, as shown at Fig. 5. In order to make the legs quite



firm, the length of 2 in. by 2 in. wood left over was sawn in half, as at Fig. 6, and screwed to the floor, as at F and G, in three places with 3 in. screws; the legs were screwed to the blocks in three places with screws of the same size.

THE TOP BOARD.

The front top board, H, Fig. 5, was cut to 4 ft. 6 in. from a length of 9 in. by 2 in.



machine-planed birch. As it would not do to allow the heads of the three screws at each end to project, a hole was drilled the same size as the head to a depth of $\frac{3}{4}$ in. in each case, and continued through with a drill of the same diameter as the screw; 3 in. screws were used, and the holes filled in with wooden pegs glued in. Six 2 in. screws were driven in from the front. The two boards at the back, I and K, 4 ft. 6 in. by 6 in. by 1 in., machine-planed, were screwed in two places at the ends, the screw holes being slightly widened at the top with a countersink bit. Before the thick top board was finally screwed down a $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. by in. hole was cut right through, 6 in. from the end and 2 in. from the front edge. This hole was fitted with a short length of wood to form a stop to rest the wood against when planing, as at S, Fig. 1.

THE VICE.

The vice, V, is formed with a 2 ft. by 9 in. by 2 in. of birch, but yellow deal would have done. At a height of 6 in. from the bottom a 2 in. by 1 in. hole was cut through and a corresponding one, M, Fig 5, cut in the front leg. These holes were made for the 1 ft. 6 in. by 2 in. by 1 in. piece, N, shown enlarged at Fig. 7; the number of notches does not matter very much, those I cut started 4 in. from the end, and were 3 in. apart and $\frac{3}{4}$ in. deep, all made with the saw. The notched piece was now placed in the slot, and a hole bored through the side so that a 6 in. wire nail could be driven through and hold the projection in, as in Fig. 8, but allow it to move a little. The vice leg was fitted up close to the sloping leg, D, and then a hole bored right through both pieces to take in 1 ft. by $\frac{3}{4}$ in. bolt with wide thick washers; this is shown with the wing-nut at Fig. 9. The hole was in the centre of the upright leg and 4 in. down. To provide rests for long lengths of wood held in the vice, holes were bored at intervals in the front board, $\frac{1}{2}$ in. diameter, and a wooden peg was fitted. This finished the work.

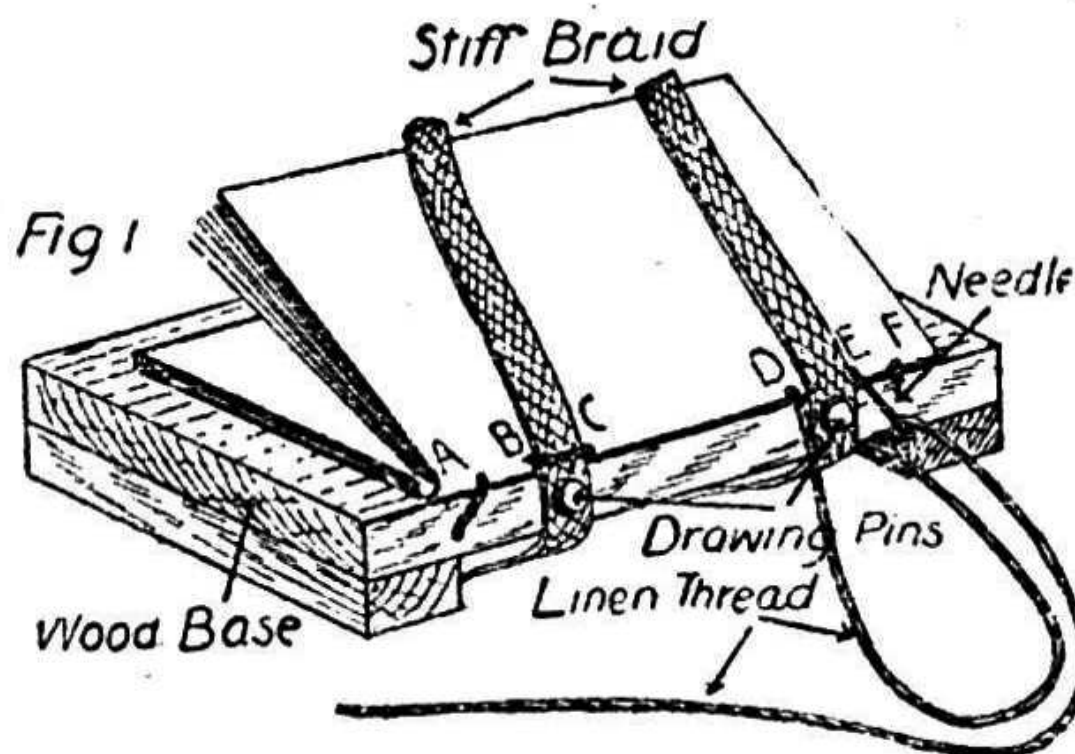
A SIMPLE METHOD OF BINDING

ALL THAT IS REQUIRED.

I have a piece of wood measuring 8 in. by 7 in. by 1 in., strengthened underneath with two pieces 7 in. by 1½ in. by 1 in., fixed with three 1½ in. screws. I keep a length of stiff black braid, ¾ in. wide, which my sister bought at a drapers, together with some stout linen thread and a long needle with a large eye.

MEASURING THE BRAID.

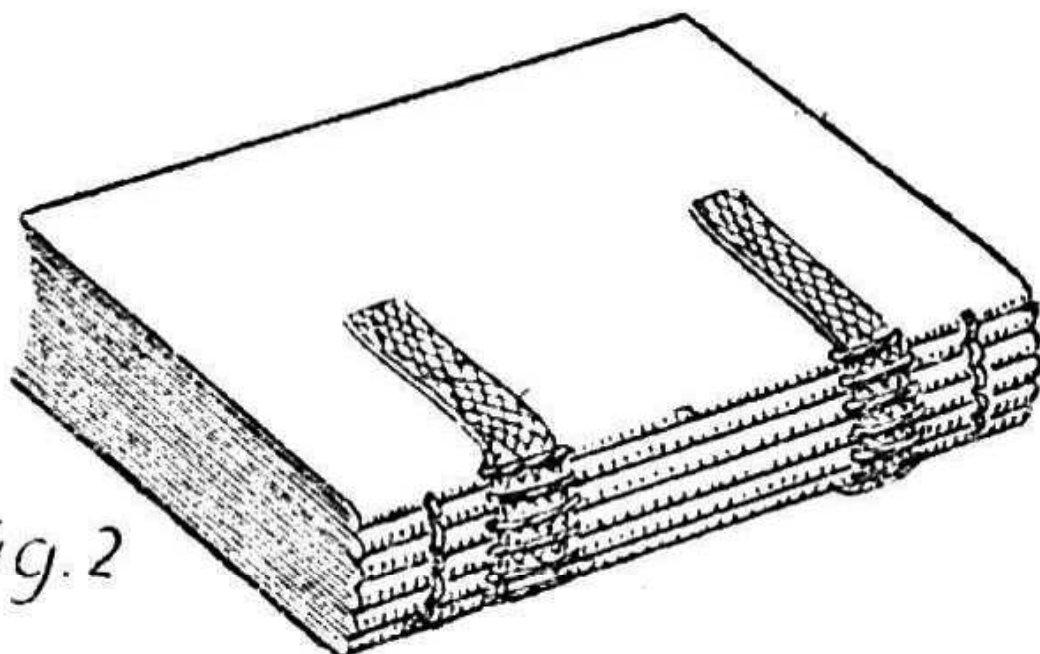
I take off the covers and pull out the wire staples of the numbers I want to bind, press them together, and measure the thickness, and then I cut off two lengths of braid 4 in. longer than this length. These pieces I pin, 2½ in. apart, in the centre of the front edge of the flat board, with drawing-pins; the pins are placed 1½ in. from the end of the braid. Next I make sure that the numbers are in



order, and beginning with the earliest one, I place it on the board, so as to leave an equal amount of space each end of the braid.

SEWING THE PARTS TOGETHER.

The needle is now threaded with a yard or so of thread, and when the leaves have been opened out to the centre, I push it from the back to the inside, ¼ in. away from the outside, and leave about 2 in. out as at A, Fig. 1. The needle is then pushed from inside to the outside again, this time close to the edge of the braid, as at B. It is then pushed inside close to the other side of the braid, as at C, and the thread pulled tight. The needle is now pushed out again close to the second strip of braid, as at D, taken back, as at E, and finally pulled



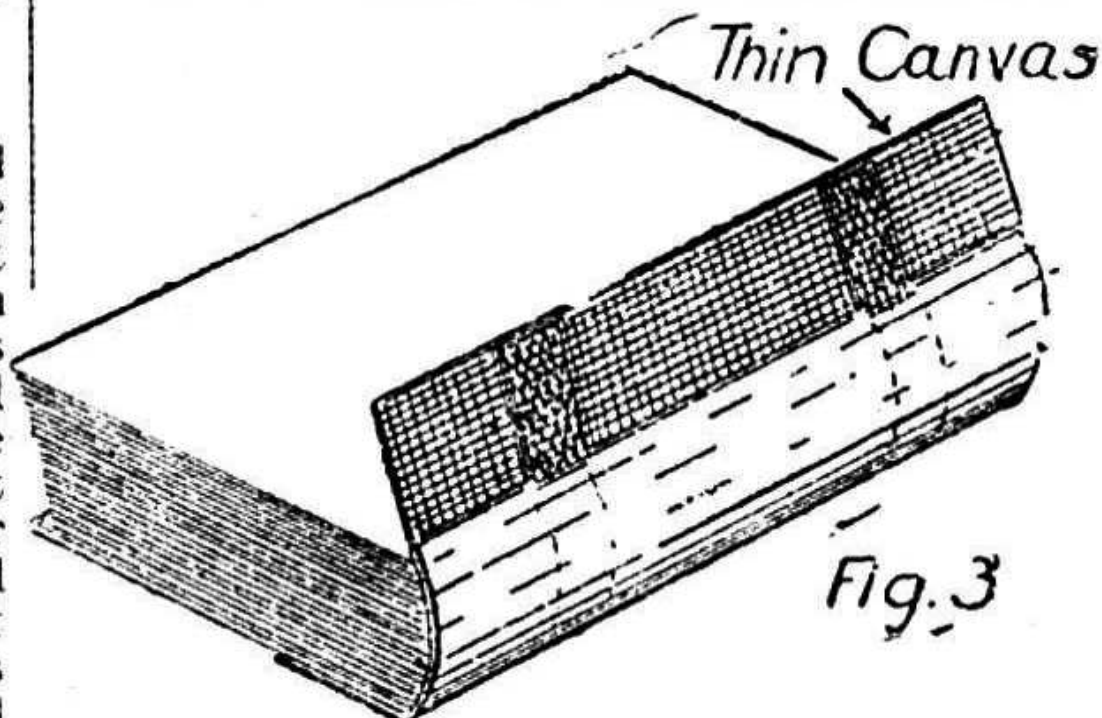
out at the back, as at F. The next number is placed on top of the one just sewn and joined to the braid in just the same way; but this time you commence at F and work back to A. The two ends of the thread at A are pulled tight and tied together. The remaining numbers are now sewn in turn, each one being placed neatly in position, and exactly over the one underneath.

WHEN THE PARTS ARE SEWN.

When the sewing reaches the end of each section the needle should be threaded through the loop underneath before being pushed into the new section. When all the sections have been sewn together, the thread should be tied to the last loop underneath. Another piece of wood, or a book will do, should be placed on the top of the sections and pressed down hard while the braid is pulled up; the pins can now be pulled out and the volume placed on the table. The work will look like Fig. 2.

COVERING THE BRAID.

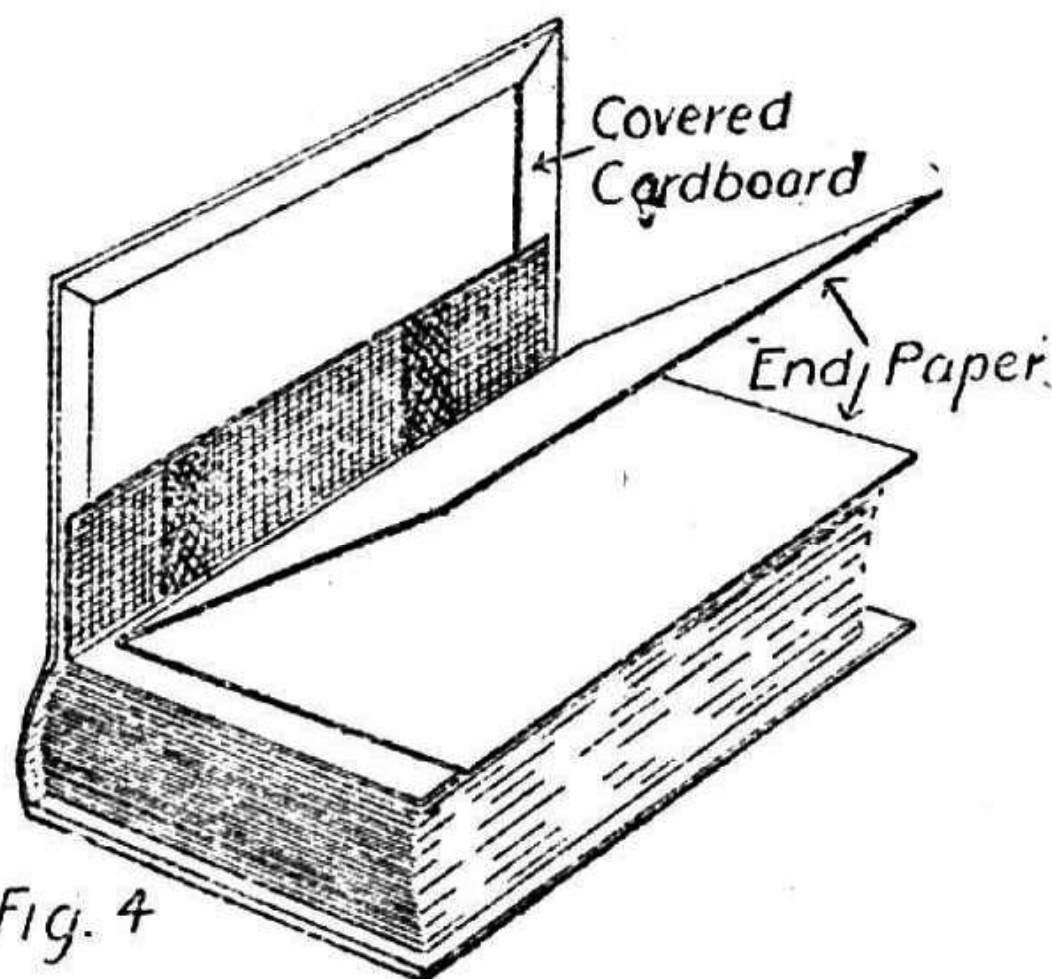
The next stage is to place a few heavy books on top and paste on a length of thin canvas or muslin (it does not matter which) enough to cover the whole of the back and the spare lengths of braid, as shown at Fig. 3. I next cut two pieces of cardboard a little larger than the pages and also a piece of bookbinder's cloth (this is very inexpensive), but it must be large enough to overlap the cardboards and leave



enough to go round the back of the volume. I place the cloth flat on the table, snip the four outside corners off, and cover the inside surface with paste. The cardboard is placed on and rubbed down, the cloth is turned over and smoothed over with a soft cloth and then left to dry.

THE FINAL OPERATION.

When ready, the cover is placed in position, and the two flaps of canvas are pasted and pressed on the two covers in turn. This stage is shown at Fig. 4. To complete the book, two end papers (I use ordinary notepaper) are pasted to the inside of cover to make the work look neat. Last of all I place a few heavy books on top and leave the volume until the paste has had time to dry, at least for a whole day. Some day I will tell you how I make what I call my best bindings.



TOOLS, AND HOW TO USE THEM

THE HANDSAW.

Usually about 24 in. long, is made of thin, highly tempered steel, with about six teeth to the inch. The saw should be held firmly with the right eye over the blade. A cut is begun by drawing the teeth upwards, using the end of the thumb as a guide. The cut is called the kerf, and this measures nearly $\frac{1}{8}$ in. wide, so that due allowance must be made. It is usual to saw on the waste side of a line. The blade should be oiled when not in use.

CHISELS.

These are made of cast steel, highly tempered, and ground and sharpened to a long bevel on one side only. The handle is made of beech or boxwood. An oilstone is used for keeping a keen edge, but the original angle must be retained, and the chisel moved evenly up and down the stone on the bevel side only. Sweet-oil is the best lubricant. In use, always keep both hands on the chisel, one for pushing the chisel and the other for guiding. The exception is when the chisel is used for cutting a mortise or deep hole, when a mallet is used on the top of the handle and the chisel is firmly held in one hand.

TRY-SQUARE.

This is a tool used for marking lines at right-angles to the edge of the wood, and comprises a stout steel blade set at right-angles to a wooden stock. The tool is also used for testing right-angles. It is used

with the blade flat on the surface and the stock close to the edge when marking.

MARKING GAUGE.

Made of beech, the marking-gauge has a long stem with a pointed spur at one end and a stock with a screw. The stem fits in a hole in the stock and can be set at any distance. It is used in the left hand, with the stock pressed against the wood. Any lines parallel to the edge of a piece of wood can be marked with a gauge; the spur should be pressed sideways, and not dug into the wood.

SCREW DRIVER.

These are obtainable in several lengths. The edge should be kept true and held closely in the slot of the screw.

HAMMER.

The Warrington shape is the most convenient. It is held firmly on the thickened portion of the handle.

BRACE AND BITS.

The brace is a tool used in boring holes, and is provided with an adjustable holder or chuck for the bit. There are centre-bits from $\frac{1}{4}$ in. to $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. diameter, pin and shell-bits from $\frac{1}{8}$ in. to $\frac{3}{4}$ in., and twist-bits from $\frac{1}{4}$ in. upwards. Centre-bits are generally used for wood up to 1 in. thick, and twist-bits for thicker wood or deeper holes. Pin and shell-bits are used in soft wood for making holes for screws. The brace and bit must be used at right-angles to the surface, and held steadily. It is a mistake to try to force the cut; allow the bit to work through naturally. When boring holes with centre and twist-bits, the bit should be turned until the point appears on the other side, when the hole is finished from the other side.



(NOTE.—If any readers care to write to me, I shall be pleased to comment upon any remarks that are likely to interest the anajority. 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.)

One of my letters is from a terrible tomboy in Glasgow, and she was kind enough to send me a photograph of the Glasgow Cenotaph. Thanks, "Terrible Tomboy," for your criticisms and suggestions. I am sorry I can't answer your letter in detail.

I've had lots of answers to my inquiry about the length of the stories. There is an enormous percentage in favour of making the school story longer, and here are a few staunch readers whose letters particularly impressed me—W. A. P. Waldron (Co. Galway), J. Napier (Wisbech), K. W. Beecroft (Hull), Alex. Petrie (Aberdeen), Larry Brown (Hailsham), F. Clarke (Manchester).

I should like to give replies to all of you individually, but it simply "can't be did." Still, I've read your letters with interest and delight, and you can be quite sure that I appreciate them to the very utmost. You needn't think that I just glance at your criticisms and suggestions, and then put them on the shelf. On the contrary, I am making careful notes of your requirements, and I shall do my best to please you all.

But about the school stories being longer. Well, we can't do anything yet—not until well after Christmas, anyhow. And it's only fair, isn't it, to carry on for a month or two as we are? For all I know, you may change your minds; and there are lots and lots of readers who are as keen as mustard on the detective stories.

That was a particularly nice letter of yours, Christopher N. Williams. I've got a faithful Bristol reader in you, anyhow! I entirely agree with you about the bogey of being "too old to read school stories." It certainly is a bogey. We all like to feel

young, don't we, and as far as I'm personally concerned, I enjoy reading school stories as much as ever I did—not my own, naturally!

A Plymouth girl reader, too modest to sign her name, assures me that the Old Paper is just right as it is, without any alterations at all. This is very nice, of course, but the young lady will probably write again soon, and make all sorts of suggestions! My chief aim is to please the boys, but I like to please the girls as well. I don't mind confidentially admitting that I'm a wee bit afraid of the girls.

I think I've already mentioned that some of our readers want the Old Paper to come out daily, and plenty of others won't have any objection if the price is raised to 3d.—enlarged, of course. But what about cutting the Old Paper into two? This is only just a spur-of-the-moment idea, remember, so don't take anything for granted.

Still, it seems to me that it might prove a solution to the everlasting problem. What would you say if the Editor decided to carve the Old Paper into two? If this ever came to pass, we should have the twin journals out weekly, probably on different days—the "St. Frank's Magazine" containing the school story, and THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY with the detective yarns.

I'd welcome your views on this suggestion. Just a line on a postcard will do, if you haven't got time for a proper letter. The only drawback, as far as I can see, is the possibility of our readers being divided up. If you'd all buy the companion papers all would be well. But would you? That's a point I'd like thrashed out before the Editor and I really put our heads together.

It is a curious coincidence that we begin the New Year with our 500th number of THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY. I wonder how many of my older readers can say they have taken in the Old Paper every week from No. 1 without a break, and I should like to know how many of them possess all the numbers up-to-date. Will these old friends and staunch supporters write to me, for I would like to congratulate them, and, if it were possible, to shake hands with them.

THE HOW-TO-DO- EVERYTHING BOOK



BOOT REPAIRING

Every time you call in a man to do a job in your own home, every time you send a repair job to an outside tradesman to do, you are paying away money that you can easily save. Any job that wants doing in your home, whether it's mending a pair of boots, re-upholstering a chair, papering a room, mending a table, cleaning a clock, etc., can be done in your spare time without trouble or cost if you have **THE AMATEUR MECHANIC** to show you how to do it.

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YOU could do any of these jobs at home

To make your own wireless set—How to make garden frames, garden furniture and garden paths—How to mend windows, and to make, mend and strengthen locks and bolts—To clean, overhaul and repair motors and motor cycles—To install electric light, etc.—To etch on brass—To build a boat or canoe—To paint and paper a room—To sole and heel and patch boots and shoes—To make a pair of hand-sewn boots—To make household furniture—To re-seat chairs—To upholster sofas, etc.—To install a speaking-tube—To clean a stove—To repair bicycles—To work in metal—To repair water taps—To varnish a violin—To repair the piano—To make a padded chair from an old cask—To stuff furs—To stuff and

mount birds—Wood inlaying—To prepare working drawings—To renovate a grandfather's clock—To make garden arbours, arches, seats, summer-houses, etc.—To use metal-drilling tools—To renovate mirrors—To mend china—To do fretwork—To limewhite poultry-houses—To do gold and silver-plating—To clean a watch—To mend keyless and ordinary watches—To distemper ceilings and walls—To make picture frames—Curtain fitting—Make and fix roller blinds—Lay carpets—Repair a wire mattress—Re-tyre and renovate a perambulator—Make or repair a camera—Repair and renovate sewing machines—Make or repair a gramophone—Install electric bells—How to cure damp walls, leaky roofs, etc., etc.

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"I had the misfortune to have my first volumes stolen. I have missed them so much that I was simply compelled to send for a new set. As a handy man I meet so many different jobs that otherwise would 'beat' me were it not for your splendid works."

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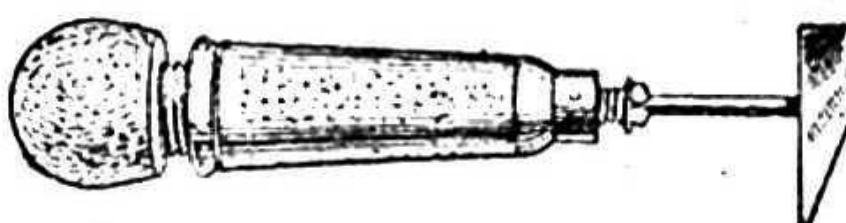
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