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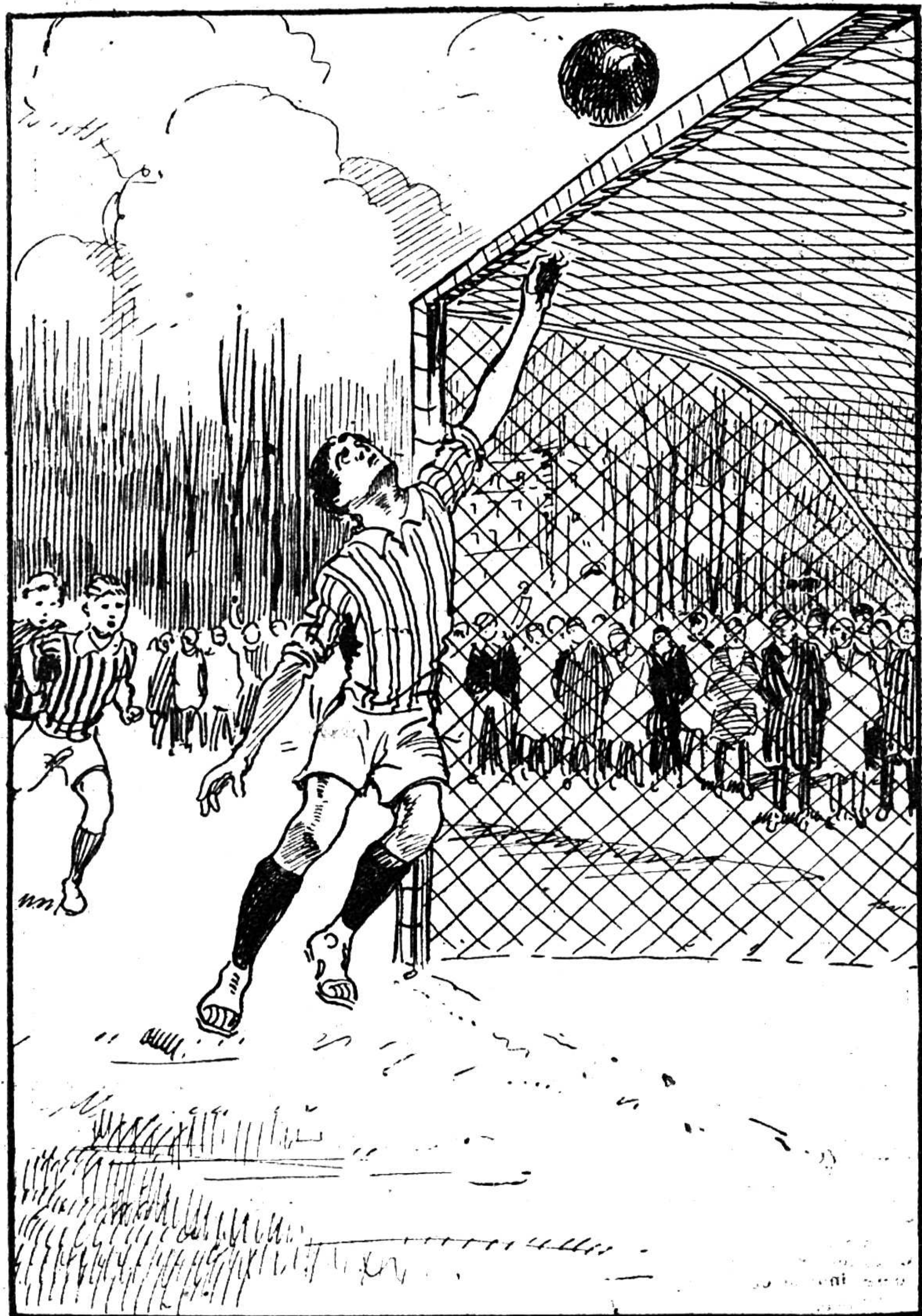


It was one of the most magnificent saves that had been seen on Little Side.

The MYSTERY GOALKEEPER

A Top-hole School and Footer Yarn
of the Boys of St. Frank's.

Also, thrilling detective story :—
**THE HOLLOWDENE MANOR
MYSTERY!**



The River House custodian just got to the ball as it was about to enter the net. It was one of the most magnificent saves that had ever been made on Little Side.



THE MYSTERY GOALKEEPER!

A ROUSING LONG COMPLETE SCHOOL STORY OF THE RENOWNED BOYS OF ST. FRANK'S

In addition to the popular school interest, Mr. Brooks gives us this week a story that will make a special appeal to lovers of football. He promised me some time ago that he would endeavour to write one yarn dealing with the great winter game before Christmas. And when Mr. Brooks does write a footer yarn, he writes with the authority of one who knows the game thoroughly, for there is nothing he loves better, as a relaxation, than to watch a first-class footer match. The story opens with some screamingly funny adventures of the absent-minded Professor Sylvester Tucker, and then leads on to the exciting footer match between St. Frank's College and the River House School.

THE EDITOR.

By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

CHAPTER I.

THE PROFESSOR AND THE PONY.

PROFESSOR SYLVESTER TUCKER, the science master of the Modern House at St. Frank's, came to a halt in the middle of the school Triangle.

"Extraordinary!" he murmured. "I certainly came out of doors for something. But what? Why am I here? Why am I in front of the fountain in this absurd fashion?"

The learned gentleman looked very much like a lost sheep as he blinked at the fountain. At least, he thought it was the fountain. He couldn't be quite sure, as it was remarkably blurry this afternoon. For some unaccountable reason, the fountain was a mere indistinct smudge.

"Speaking to me, sir?" inquired the smudge politely.

The professor started. What he had taken to be the fountain moved upon its foundations and approached him. As a matter of fact, the professor had mistaken Reginald

Pitt of the Fourth, for the marble ornament which decorated the centre of the Triangle.

"Good gracious!" said Professor Tucker. "Who is that? Why are you looking so absurdly indistinct, young man? I thought you were the fountain! But no matter—go away and don't bother me!"

Pitt grinned. The professor was looking at him in a peering, vague sort of manner, and without any sign of recognition. The Captain of the Fourth hardly felt complimented. It was not exactly flattering to be mistaken for a cold mass of marble.

"I was just glancing at this week's Mag., sir," said Reggie. "I was standing so still that you must have thought me a fixture."

"But why," demanded the professor, "are you so hazy this afternoon?"

"I'm afraid that's just an illusion, sir," said Reggie. "You seem to have forgotten your spectacles, and—"

"Bless my soul!" interrupted the professor. "Well, well, well! So I have! I knew there was something wrong—but for the life of me I couldn't remember what it

was. "My spectacles, eh? Splendid! Perhaps you will be good enough to fetch them for me, Fenton."

"I'm not Fenton, sir," grinned Reggie. "I'm Pitt."

"Don't bother me with such trifles!" said the professor testily. "Upon my soul! What does it matter to me who you are? Please go indoors, Handforth, and fetch my glasses. How do you expect me to walk about in this fog without my spectacles?"

Pitt hurried indoors with a chuckle. The early December afternoon was particularly bright, with a touch of frost in the air. It was the professor's eyesight that was foggy—not the atmosphere. But it was quite characteristic of him to wander out in this fashion.

Professor Sylvester Tucker was about the most absent-minded gentleman in the school. He was a continual source of amusement to the fellows, and it was so easy to pull his leg that the juniors were getting tired of it. The professor was Timothy Tucker's uncle—and this fact, as the Fourth agreed to a man, clearly explained his eccentricity.

As soon as Pitt had gone, the professor walked forward a few paces. This brief progress was quite sufficient to drive all thoughts of spectacles from the scientist's mind. He even forgot that he had been speaking to anybody.

"Good gracious!" he murmured abruptly. "I knew there was something to be done! The post office! Where is the post office? Bless my soul, why do they have these establishments in such ridiculous places?"

He blinked round, as though expecting to see a post office rise up out of the ground. His fingers, straying absently into his pocket, had come in contact with a telegraph form; and the professor was reminded that he had an urgent telegram to dispatch.

By this time he had overlooked the fact that his glasses were still missing, and he trotted briskly out of the gateway, and turned down the lane towards the village. Everything looked rather hazy at close quarters, but the old gentleman's long sight was fairly reliable.

In nine cases out of ten he forgot his objective when he was only half way there. Quite frequently he would leave the Modern House in order to visit the Ancient House, and would ultimately pull himself up short three miles away from the school, having wandered out of the gateway without knowing it.

"Good afternoon, sir," came a cheery hail close behind him.

The professor paused, and glanced round. Jerry Dodd had come up in the rear, and the sunny Australian junior was mounted on his pony. He was taking Bud out for one of his exercise runs.

"Good afternoon—good afternoon!" said the professor genially. "I must confess that I am nonplussed. Who are you, sir? How is it that you are such a remarkable height from the ground?"

"Why, I'm on Bud, sir," grinned Jerry Dodd.

"You're in bud?" said the professor abstractedly. "Impossible! You are not a flower, or a tree! I presume you are playing about on a pair of those ridiculous stilts. Very well—very well! Don't let me detain you, my boy. I am in a hurry to reach—good heavens! Who did that? How dare you take liberties with my hat?"

The professor's head-gear, caught by a gust of wind, had suddenly sailed into the air, and was now soaring gracefully over the hedge into the adjoining meadow. Jerry Dodd watched its flight with interest.

"Only the wind, sir," he exclaimed. "I'll just burst through the hedge and get your property back. By jings! This wind's getting up into a gale, by the sound of it."

Jerry Dodd quickly dismounted, and whispered a word to Bud. The pony understood perfectly, and stood there stationary. No commands could make him shift until his master returned.

The Professor was somewhat bewildered. His hat had gone, and being slightly bald on the top of his head, he was nervous of catching cold. It annoyed him exceedingly to have his hat removed so peremptorily.

"Why don't you do something, boy?" he demanded, turning to Bud, and glaring at him. "You promised to fetch my hat, and yet you stand there like a ninny! Go at once!"

Bud blinked lazily, and swished his tail.

"Do you hear me, sir?" thundered the professor. "Upon my soul! This is nothing more nor less than rank disobedience! Are you listening to me, or are you not?"

The pony was listening, but refused to make any reply.

CHAPTER II.

ASKING FOR IT.



"WELL I never!" Tessa Love, of the Moor View School, made

that remark as she turned a bend in the lane. She was alone, having walked to the village to make a few small purchases. And it occasioned her considerable surprise to observe the venerable Professor Tucker standing hatless in the middle of the lane, conversing with a pony.

Tessa smiled to herself as she approached. She had heard about the professor, although she hadn't met him. But it must be admitted that her quickened pace was due to Bud rather than to the professor.

She was very fond of the little pony, for she had performed many tricks with him when the St. Frank's juniors had assisted the performance in her father's circus. She and Bud, in fact, were staunch friends.

"Coo-ee!" called Tessa softly.

Bud pricked up his ears when he heard that familiar Australian cry. He evidently

knew the voice, too, for he was on the alert instantly, and he stamped about impatiently.

"Keep your feet still, sir!" said the professor irritably. "You not only refuse to fetch my hat, you stand there quite dumb, and to make matters worse, you kick your feet about! I shall report your conduct to your housemaster, sir!"

Bud gave the professor a contemptuous glance, and then deliberately turned his back on the learned gentleman. In fact, he even went to the length of giving the professor a push. And the pony pricked up his ears again and whinnied with delight as Tessa came up.

"Dear old Bud!" said the girl affectionately, as she patted his neck. "Where's your master? Where's Jerry?"

The intelligent pony raised his head and gazed at the nearest hedge, looking keen and alert. As clearly as though he had spoken, he told Tessa that Jerry was in the adjoining meadow.

"What is all this?" demanded the professor angrily. "Where is my hat? And who, sir, are you?" he added, peering forward at Tessa inquisitively. "Why am I kept standing here in this absurd fashion?"

"I am sorry, professor, but I've only just arrived," said the girl. "If there is anything I can do—"

"Good gracious!" interrupted the science master. "I thought you were one of the boys—I did, indeed! Pray forgive me, my dear young lady! I have been unfortunate enough to lose my hat—"

"Here you are, sir!" interrupted Jerry Dodd, as he broke through a gap near by. "I had to chase right across the meadow for it. Better shove it on hard, sir."

The professor took his hat eagerly.

"Thank you, my dear young friend—I am intensely grateful to you for your courtesy!" he exclaimed, pushing the hat on so hard that it nearly came over his ears. "Splendid! But I do wish I could find my glasses! I am quite lost without them—quite lost!"

"Going to the village, sir?" asked Jerry.

"To the village?" repeated Professor Tucker. "The village? Why on earth should I go to the village? Certainly not! It is my intention to visit the post office."

"But the post office is in the village, sir."

"Then it had no right to be!" said the professor testily. "A perfectly absurd arrangement! Why should I be compelled to walk all this way to the village in order to go to the post office? These government departments have no brains behind them at all! No brains whatever!"

"I'll go to the post office for you, if you like, sir," offered Tessa.

"Splendid! Thank you—thank you!" beamed the professor. "That is very kind and thoughtful of you."

He looked quite relieved, and Tessa smiled.

"If you'll tell me what you want me to fetch—" she began.

"Fetch?" interrupted the professor.

"Upon my soul! That's remarkable! What do I want from the post office? Why should I waste my time or your time— Ah, of course! The telescope!"

"Telescope, sir?" repeated Jerry Dodd.

"To be sure!" said Professor Tucker. "I must send an urgent telegram, ordering my new telescope. Thank you very much, boys, but I really must attend to this matter personally."

He patted Tessa on the shoulder.

"I appreciate your willingness, my lad, but such an important matter must receive my own attention," he said, beaming. "There, there! Run off and play—get back to your football, or marbles, or whatever you favour. Good gracious! Unless I hasten, the telegram will not arrive in time!"

He bustled off, and nearly walked into the ditch in his exuberance. Jerry Dodd and Tessa watched him go with amused smiles.

"By jings! It isn't safe to let him be out alone!" grinned Jerry.

"He mistook me for a boy!" said Tessa, with twinkling eyes. "It was too bad, wasn't it?"

"I'll say it was!" agreed Jerry heartily.

The professor's mistake, in fact, was decidedly uncomplimentary to Tessa, for she was looking extremely pretty and dainty in her warm winter coat and fur wrap. But the professor was such a harmless old fellow that nobody could be angry with him.

And he had by no means reached the end of his adventures yet. For as he approached the bridge over the River Stowe, three cheerful-looking juniors hove in sight. They were Hal Brewster and Co., of the River House School.

Brewster looked at his chums, and his chums looked at Brewster. Then they grinned happily.

"Old Timothy Tucker's uncle," said Brewster significantly. "Here he comes, toddling along, absolutely asking to have his leg pulled. What about it, my sons? Shall we pull?"

"We shall!" said the others promptly.

CHAPTER III.

LIKE A LAMB TO THE SLAUGHTER.



M OAT HOLLOW, the old house just round the bend of Edgemoor Lane, was facing Brewster and Co. as they halted against a gateway. They lounged there,

waiting for Professor Sylvester Tucker to draw level.

"And to think that we lived in that old barn once!" said Dave Ascott, with a sniff.

"My hat! It looks like a prison!"

"Or a reformatory!" said Glynn.

"Yes, but it wasn't like this when we

were on the spot," objected Brewster. "Since we left the old house has gone down and down, and I thought it was booked for complete destruction at one time. I wonder who's bought the place, and what he's going to do with it?"

Brewster wasn't the only one who wondered that. Moat Hollow had recently been known as the River House School, but since Dr. Hogge had built a fine new establishment a mile down the Edgemore Lane, the old place had fallen into disuse and desolation.

The villagers had already begun to refer to the house as Moat Hollow—in order to distinguish it from the new River House School. There was another reason, too. Curious alterations were in progress at the gloomy old house. The moat, disused for many years, was now being re-excavated, and other changes were being effected.

Before Brewster and Co. could discuss the subject further, Professor Tucker drew alongside, quite ignorant of the presence of these juniors. They surrounded him, and politely raised their caps.

"Good-afternoon, sir," said Brewster respectfully.

The professor paused, and blinked at the trio.

"The extreme brilliancy of Jupiter is undoubtedly caused by certain atmospheric conditions," he declared. "Eh? Oh, I beg your pardon, boys! Good-afternoon—good-afternoon! Did you wish to speak to me?"

"We wanted to hear some of your wonderful theories about the solar system, sir," said Brewster solemnly.

"Ah, the solar system!" agreed the professor. "Doubtless you remember the lecture I gave yesterday? I am glad that you take such an interest, young man. Splendid! In future I shall single you out for special attention. But at the present moment I cannot waste any time. I am bent upon sending off an urgent telescope."

"You're sending off a telescope, sir?" grinned Brewster.

"Yes, I am sending a telescope to the manufacturers at once, so that they can pack my telegram up and— Good gracious! What am I saying? Whoever heard of a telegram being packed up? Ridiculous!"

"Yes, sir," said Glynn. "I suppose you mean you're going to send a telegram—"

"Don't bother me!" broke in Professor Tucker. "Go away! How dare you delay me in this fashion, and waste my time? Where is the post-office? Good heavens! Who has taken the post-office away?"

"It's further down the street, sir," said Brewster. "We've got nothing to do just now—we'll take you there, sir. And on the way you can talk to us about Jupiter."

"Excellent!" beamed the professor. "A perfectly sound proposition, young man.

Now, Jupiter is really the largest planet—"

He went off into a long, scientific description of the planet, and became so engrossed that he not only forgot the post-office and his precious telegram, but he even overlooked the fact that he was walking along the lane.

His movements were mechanical—he accompanied Brewster and Co. meekly and willingly—quite unconscious of the fact that he was going back to St. Frank's instead of to the village.

The River House juniors were enjoying themselves immensely. They thought it great fun to take the professor back to his starting-point. It wasn't as though the telegram was urgent. On the professor's own showing, it was only an order for a telescope, and as the learned gentleman already had about a dozen, the River House fellows considered they were doing him a service by preventing this act of needless extravagance.

"Here we are, sir," said Brewster at length.

They had penetrated completely into the Triangle, and were, indeed, just outside the door of Mrs. Hake's little tuckshop.

"Eh? Here we are?" said the professor, interrupting his flow of astronomical thoughts. "Well, of course we are here! Where else should we be? As I was saying, the proximity of the earth to Jupiter is entirely dependent upon—"

"But didn't you want to send off a telegram, sir?"

"A telegram? Nonsense!" snapped the professor testily. "Why on earth should I want to send off a telegram? Don't interrupt me with such paltry, unimportant matters!"

"But I thought you were going to order a new telescope, sir?" asked Ascott.

Professor Tucker gave a violent start.

"Telescope!" he ejaculated. "Good gracious me! That's true! Now you come to remind me, I certainly did intend— Ah, this is the post-office, is it not? Splendid! One moment, boys, and I will join you again."

And, to the huge delight of Brewster and Co., the professor toddled into the tuckshop, intent upon his telegram. The jape had turned out even better than the River House fellows had hoped for.

"I think," said Brewster, "this is where we vanish!"

"Now and again you're almost human," agreed Ascott, nodding. "Come on—let's bunk through to Little Side. I spotted Reggie Pitt there as we came across, and we want to speak to him about Saturday's match."

And the River House trio discreetly made themselves scarce. They badly wanted to peep into the tuckshop, but they considered

it highly inexpedient to do so under the circumstances.

In the meantime, Professor Tucker was standing in the middle of the little shop, searching his pockets. He was becoming rather flustered. He searched his trousers, his waistcoat, his frock-coat, and then started all over again.

"Remarkable!" he muttered impatiently. "I wrote the telegram out in readiness, and now, extraordinarily enough, it has completely vanished. Very distressing! Upon my soul, where can it be?"

Mrs. Hake, behind her counter, was watching the professor in mild astonishment.

can't trust a famous gentleman such as yourself, Professor Tuck——"

"Tut, tut! Don't bother me, woman!" broke in the professor irritably. "You postal assistants are altogether too personal nowadays. I am grateful for your offer, but I must be firm. Now, where on earth—— Ah, good gracious! How very singular!"

The professor had suddenly discovered the telegram form in his spectacle-case, having apparently mistaken the form, in an absent-minded moment, for his glasses. He could now understand why his spectacles were missing. He must have left them on his study table.

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She didn't usually number the masters among her customers. And the professor was certainly not a likely client.

CHAPTER IV.
A SLIGHT MISTAKE.



MRS. HAKE leaned over the counter with kindly intentions.

"Maybe I can help you, sir?" she asked. "If it's money you're looking for, you needn't bother a bit—it's a pity if I

"Good! Here we are, my good lady! Let me know how much this will be, and kindly make haste about it," he exclaimed briskly. "Furthermore, I require your assurance that this telegram will be dispatched——"

"Telegram, sir?" echoed Mrs. Hake, justifiably astonished.

"Eh? Yes, telegram!" said the professor. "Why do you interrupt me with these totally unnecessary questions? Be good enough to count the words, and——"

"But you can't send a telegram from here, sir!" said Mrs. Hake, flustered.

Her confusion was reasonable. Never before had her little shop been mistaken for

the post-office, and she couldn't possibly understand why Professor Tucker should make such an extraordinary blunder. He was well acquainted with the fact that the post-office was in the village.

But Mrs. Hake didn't know that the professor had walked nearly to the village and back, and was quite convinced that he was in Bellton at the present moment. Without his spectacles, everything was a blur, and he hadn't the faintest suspicion that he was talking to Mrs. Hake. He probably wouldn't have recognised Mrs. Hake, glasses or no glasses.

"I think you've made a mistake, sir," went on the good lady. "This isn't a place where you can send—"

"Eh? What are you talking about?" demanded the professor impatiently. "You post-office assistants are thoroughly inefficient! Do you hear me, madam? Thoroughly inefficient! Unless you attend to me at once, I shall make a serious complaint to the Postmaster-General!"

"Oh dear!" said Mrs. Hake feebly. "If only you'll listen, sir—"

"I do nothing else but listen!" retorted the professor. "Take this telegram at once, and let me have no more of this nonsense! It must be dispatched at once. You understand, my good woman—at once!"

"But—but this isn't the post-office, sir!"

"Rubbish!" said the Professor irritably.

"Do you think I don't know where I am?"

"Well, you're at St. Frank's, sir—"

"St. Frank's?" snorted the professor. "Fiddlesticks, woman! I'm in Bellton, and this is the post-office! Don't dare to argue with me! Haven't I walked all the way from St. Frank's specially to send this telegram? Do you take me for a lunatic, madam?"

"No, sir, but—but this isn't the post-office, really!"

Poor Mrs. Hake was nearly at her wits' end. It afforded her some slight measure of relief when three Third-Formers marched purposefully into the tuckshop. Mrs. Hake's eyes gleamed. Perhaps these young gentlemen would be able to assist her.

"Now," said the professor, "have you finished with this ridiculous absurdity? Take this telegram at once! If I have any more discourtesy I shall report you!"

The professor slapped the telegram down on the counter, and glared at Mrs. Hake straight in the eye. She didn't know, poor soul, that the professor could only see a blurry outline.

"I—I can't take the telegram, sir," she persisted weakly. "Please, sir, you've made a mistake—this isn't the post-office—"

"How dare you!" thundered the professor, outraged. "How dare you keep up this preposterous farce? I'm amazed that the authorities should place such an incompetent person as you in control of this office! Are you an assistant, or the post-mistress? Tell me, woman!"

Mrs. Hake was too overcome to make any reply at all. But she looked imploringly at the Third-Formers, who had halted in the middle of the shop to watch the entertainment.

"He's mad!" said Chubby Heath, in a whisper.

"Clean dotty—just like T.T.!" agreed Owen minor. "Didn't I always say he was jolly well touched?"

"Leave this to me!" said Willy Handforth happily.

He strode forward and touched the professor on the arm.

"Go away!" snapped the old gentleman.

"Do you hear me, sir? Don't pester me now! I won't be pestered! I am having quite enough trouble with this woman without—"

"Sorry, sir, but you've got off at the wrong station!" said Handforth minor.

"Eh—station? What on earth—"

"You've backed the wrong gee-gee, sir," explained Willy. "In other words, you're a bit off the rails."

"Off the rails?" repeated the professor blankly. "Good gracious! Do you take me for a tramcar, young man? What nonsense is this? I have come here to dispatch a telegram—"

"Oh, well, of course, there's no law against that, but if you send that wire off in this place, you'll be a bit of a mivvy!" said Willy calmly. "No offence, sir, but there you are. You can't very well send a telegram from the tuckshop."

"Tuckshop! What is a tuckshop?" asked Professor Tucker, mystified.

Willy nearly staggered, but controlled himself.

"You don't know what a tuckshop is, sir?" he asked blankly. "Why, it's a place where you get tuck."

"Are you daring to take liberties with my name, sir?" demanded the professor. "Enough of this levity! I am in the post-office, and—"

"Oh, here you are, sir!" exclaimed Reggie Pitt breathlessly, as he ran into the tuckshop. "I heard you were here, so I hurried across. Your glasses, sir."

"My glasses!" said the science master. "Ah, splendid! Wonderful! How in the world did you know that I required them, my dear lad?"

Pitt didn't think it necessary to explain, and the professor donned his enormously thick glasses and started. The foggy, indistinct appearance of his surroundings underwent a sudden change. Everything became clear and well-defined.

"Why, dear me!" gasped Professor Tucker. "Good gracious! This—this is the Triangle, surely?" he added, gazing out through the doorway.

"Well, it used to be, sir," said Willy. "As far as I know, it hasn't become a square or a circle."

"Upon my soul!" said the amazed professor. "And I thought I was in the post—"

office. How really extraordinary! How positively remarkable! Dear, dear! My apologies to you, madam," he went on, bowing to Mrs. Hake. "And my thanks to you, young men! Extraordinary! In fact, unaccountable!"

And Professor Sylvester Tucker, completely at sea regarding the whole occurrence, pattered out of the tuckshop, and trotted indoors. Apparently, he had forgotten all about the telegram, after all. Or it is possible that he was labouring under the misapprehension that he had sent it.

you; the professor is always asking for his leg to be pulled. I don't wonder at you falling—he's irresistible."

They were standing near the ropes on Little Side. A junior House match had started shortly before, but Reggie himself wasn't taking part in it because he was giving one or two reserves a trial.

The game was watched by the greater majority of the Lower School, for a football match was always attractive. Brewster and Co. looked on with keen attention—by no means disinterested.



And Handforth, in goal, was trying to look unconscious of the fact that Willy was just near the goal-line near by, mimicking his major's actions.

CHAPTER V.

GETTING READY FOR SATURDAY.



HAL BREWSTER grinned.

"Did you find him there?" he asked.

"Yes; and the poor old chap thought he was in the post-office at Bellton," said

Reggie Pitt, as he came up.

"That's funny!" said Brewster, with a chuckle.

Dave Ascott and Georgie Glynn tittered loudly, and Pitt nodded.

"All right; I know all about it!" he said severely. "Like your nerve to play tricks on one of our masters! Still, I'll forgive

"Nothing much to scare us here," remarked Ascott. "In fact, Hal, I think we shall beat St. Frank's on Saturday."

"Of course we shall!" replied Brewster promptly.

"If you do, I'll be the first to offer congratulations," said Pitt, with perfect composure. "But you'll have a run for your money, my sons! We're in particularly good form at present."

"So are we," replied Brewster.

"What about our new——" began Glynn.

"So are we!" repeated Brewster hastily. "We shall probably give you a surprise on Saturday, Pitt. I hope so, anyway. By jingo! That was a good save! Well done, Handy!"

Bob Christine had sent in a stinging shot,

but Handforth, in the Ancient House goal, dealt with the situation in his usual masterful way. With the utmost coolness he had fisted the ball out with a first-time punch.

"It's a bit risky," said Ascott critically. "I mean, punching a ball back into play like that. A sensible goalie would gather the ball in his arms and make sure of it." Pitt smiled.

"Handy's different," he replied. "I'll admit that it's a risky thing for any ordinary goalie to punch like that—but Handforth has never been known to miss. He's a perfect genius in goal. Rather a good thing, too—because he's not much of a genius at anything else."

"Well, every man to his job," said Brewster. "I rather like the way that Griffith is shaping—Hullo! Look at the audience over there! I didn't spot 'em until this minute!"

Brewster grinned as he nodded over towards the hedge which divided Little Side from the lane. At one point this hedge was low, and four or five dainty forms were now in evidence.

"Irene and Co.!" exclaimed Pitt, raising his cap and waving it. "Why the dickens don't they come in? They've got a standing invitation to walk in as often as they like—and to have the best pavilion seats, too!"

Irene Manners and her girl chums acknowledged Pitt's wave, and they broke through a gap in the hedge and approached. Tessa Love was with them, to say nothing of Ena Handforth.

"We didn't really mean to come in," smiled Irene, looking very pretty with her fair hair blowing about her ears. "I hope we're not intruding?"

"Not likely!" replied Reggie. "The more the merrier."

"That's just what I said," agreed Doris Berkeley heartily. "But Renie thought we should put Ted in a fluster if we came in. You know how he goes whenever he catches sight of Irene!"

"Oh, Doris! How ridiculous!" said Irene, going quite pink.

"Well, it's true, and you jolly well know it," replied Doris firmly. "It's a mystery to me, but as soon as ever Ted sets his eyes on you he goes all weak to the knees. I think it must be your fatal beauty!"

"I'll never speak to you again!" said Irene indignantly.

"Rats!" grinned Doris. "That's what you said yesterday, and since then you've spoken to me about seventy-seven times. Look out, Marjorie—powder your nose a bit and look demure. Here comes Archie!"

Doris was certainly a tartar. But she was such a jolly sort of girl, so free and easy, that nobody could help liking her. Her chums never knew what she was going to say next, but they were all the more fond of her because of that.

Archie Glenthorne strolled up—having been attracted, as a matter of fact, by the

presence of Miss Temple. Archie was particularly fond of Marjorie—in a friendly, chummy sort of way.

"So here we are, what?" he observed genially. "I'm not altogether sure that you girls ought to be hovering about. I mean, this football is a dashed rough sort of affair. At any moment there might be stretchers and things whizzing to and fro."

Doris laughed scornfully.

"Rubbish!" she said, in her blunt way. "Football's the finest game under the sun! And it's a shame that we can't play it! You fellows would have to look out for yourselves if we could!"

CHAPTER VI.

PUTTING HANDFORTH OFF HIS STROKE.



ARCHIE looked rather shocked.

"Oh, I say! Dash it!" he protested.

"Not really, dear old girl? I mean to say, football, what? Hardly the correct and proper pastime for delicate young ladies, and all that sort of thing!"

"Delicate young ladies, indeed!" retorted Doris. "I like that! Why, I could easily whack you at football, Archie! At least, I believe I could," she added. "But you're a dark horse. You look terribly lazy, but I don't believe you are, really."

"Good gad!" ejaculated Archie blankly.

Reggie Pitt chuckled.

"Why continue the argument?" he asked. "After all, Miss Doris, football isn't quite a ladylike game—and I'm sure you're only joking. I wonder what's wrong with Handforth? He nearly muffed that shot just now."

Doris shook her head and turned to Irene.

"I think you'd better go and hide in the pavilion!" she whispered. "You always have this effect on Ted, you know."

"Indeed, I won't!" retorted Irene warmly. "And if you go on like this, Doris, I'll—I'll—"

"Never speak to me again?" chuckled Doris. "All right; don't worry! I don't believe it's you at all. I think poor old Ted is upset because of that imp, Willy!"

"Willy?" asked Irene, in surprise.

"Can't you see him?" put in Ena. "As soon as the game's over, I'll take William in hand. It's like his nerve to show off because we're here! And Ted's as weak as a mouse to put up with it!" she added coldly.

The juniors were grinning—particularly Brewster and Co. They couldn't help appreciating the little comedy that was in progress. The game was rather slack at the moment, and Handforth, in goal, had practically nothing to do. He was pacing up and down between the goalposts, trying to

look unconscious of the fact that Willy was just near the goal-line, near by, mimicking his major's actions. Chubby Heath and several other Third-Formers were standing by, grinning.

"Watch me," said Willy, "and I'll show you exactly how not to keep goal! This is a lesson, don't forget. I'm skipper of the Third Eleven, and you've got to take heed!"

Handforth pretended to be indifferent. He paused carelessly, and leaned against the goalpost in a casual manner. Willy immediately leaned against the air, copying his major's attitude with complete fidelity.

The sound of feminine laughter brought Handforth up straight with a jerk. His face was very red. But he turned with assumed carelessness, and gave Willy a glare that ought to have shrivelled him up.

"Go away!" hissed Handforth fiercely. "If you don't clear off, you young rotter, I'll slaughter you!"

"Hi! Look out!" gasped Willy, in alarm.

Handforth leapt round to his job, and was just in time to see Grey score a neat goal at the other side of the field.

"That's the way to make him jump!" said Willy calmly.

But during the brief lull while the teams lined up again, Handforth seized his chance. He suddenly gave a leap sideways, and grabbed Willy unawares. The fag was hopelessly captured.

"Pax!" he gasped. "Can't touch me, Ted—I've got my fingers crossed!"

"Blow your fingers!" roared Handforth. "I'm going to biff you!"

"Oh, all right—get it over!" said Willy resignedly. "It was a dirty trick, though, the way you grabbed me! Another two seconds and I should have been out of your reach. You might give a chap a chance!"

"Take that!" said Edward Oswald thickly.

With one heave, he swung Willy across his knee, and delivered three or four resounding slaps on the fag's seating accommodation. Willy went quite pale. He was too startled to be angry. Such a disaster as this had never before happened to him in public.

"Help!" he moaned feebly. "Oh, my goodness!"

He would cheerfully have accepted two black eyes in preference to this humiliating chastisement. Here, in front of the entire Junior School—in front of Irene and Co.—he had been placed across Handforth's knee and slapped! The roar of laughter that went up made Willy go all weak.

"Serves him right!" said Ena approvingly. "Good old Ted! I didn't think he had enough enterprise! I don't believe in bullying, but a good old slapping now and again does Willy good."

By this time, Willy had wrenched himself free, and he staggered back, gradually assuming a crimson appearance. Even his own chums were cackling. And Edward Oswald was looking unusually delighted.

"You wait!" said Willy tensely. "My hat! Just you wait!"

Handforth grinned, very pleased with himself.

"And let that be a lesson to you, my son," he said. "If you think you can cheek me in public you've made a bloomer! You'd better clear off before I give you another dose!"

Willy was too full for mere words. He turned his back on Edward Oswald, and observed Chubby Heath and Owen minor and Juicy Lemon were grinning broadly. That spectacle was the last straw. All Willy wanted to do at the moment was to hit somebody—he didn't care whom—and to hit hard.

"Does it smart much, old man?" cackled Chubby, missing the danger signal.

"Not half as much as this!" roared Willy aggressively.

Biff!

Chubby Heath went over backwards with an awful thud. Lemon and Owen minor looked startled, and turned to flee. But Willy was too quick for them. He sailed in like a whirlwind, and the destruction he wrought within twenty seconds was astonishing. Third-Formers lay strewn over the grass in wild disorder.

And Willy marched off, feeling slightly relieved.

CHAPTER VII.

DORIS IS MYSTERIOUS.



DORIS BERKELEY leapt out of her seat, cheering.

"Goal!" she cried excitedly. "Oh, what a beauty!"

The girls were in the pavilion, and the second half of the game was well under way. Handforth had at last been beaten, and Buster Boots & Co. were now on equal terms with their rivals.

The goal had been a beauty—a first-class shot from Boots, which Handforth had had no opportunity of ever reaching. He had made a valiant attempt, but without avail.

"That's what I call a goal!" said Doris enthusiastically. "What a shame it is that we can't play football! Wouldn't it be lovely to kick goals like that?"

Pitt looked at her curiously.

"You're not serious, are you?" he asked.

"Why shouldn't I be?" she retorted, with twinkling eyes.

"Oh, well, I thought perhaps you weren't!" replied Reggie, after an awkward little pause. "I believe in girls playing cricket or hockey or netball, but it doesn't seem quite the thing—Well, football, you know, is rather a rough game, Doris."

"Is that any reason we girls shouldn't play it?" she demanded.

"Yes, it jolly well is!" replied Pitt firmly.

"What are you two arguing about?" asked Irene, leaning forward in her seat. "Why don't you look at the game? Bob Christine made a lovely run just now, and Ted was nearly beaten again."

"We're not arguing," laughed Doris. "But Reggie says that football is too rough for girls to play. What do you think, Renie?"

"I think you are an awful tease," replied Irene promptly.

"That's not an answer!"

"Irene doesn't want to commit herself," chuckled Pitt. "I don't blame her, either. As for you, young lady, you're only trying to pull my leg, so I shan't take any notice."

"Who are you calling 'young lady'?" asked Doris warmly.

"You!"

"Then it's like your cheek!"

"Of course, if you're not a young lady, I apologise!" said Pitt gravely.

"Oh, you wretch!" cried Doris. "What's the good of arguing with you. You've always got something awfully smart to say. But I'm not going back on what I just told you—and if you don't like it you can lump it!"

"Frankness," said Reggie, "is a virtue. You're several kinds of tomboy, Doris, but I'll bet one game of football would be more than enough to satisfy your curiosity. You may think it's easy for Handforth, for example, to walk up and down in that goal-mouth, but goalkeeping is one of the most important positions on the field."

"Do you think I couldn't keep goal?" scoffed Doris, pouting.

"I think you could try," chuckled Reggie.

"Just you wait!" exclaimed the girl. "Oh, you bounder! I'd love to have an opportunity of putting it to the test! Perhaps I'll have the opportunity, too!" she added mysteriously.

There was a gleam in her eye, and Pitt couldn't help observing it. The junior captain turned away to answer a question from Tessa, and the discussion ended. But Reggie didn't forget it.

As a matter of fact, he was rather disappointed. He had his own ideas about girls playing football, and although he believed in the fair sex indulging in plenty of exercise, he regarded football as an unsuitable game for young ladies.

And Reggie was a trifle upset because of Doris' views. He wasn't the kind of fellow to have a particular fondness for any girl; but of all the Moor View maidens he certainly favoured Doris. She was just the kind of vivacious girl he admired.

"You mustn't take any notice of Doris, you know," remarked Ena Handforth, noticing Pitt's serious expression. "She's

only trying to be funny. She likes watching football, but she wouldn't dream of playing herself."

"Oh, wouldn't she?" asked Doris quickly. "You wait and see!"

She left her seat and ran out of the pavilion. Pitt watched her curiously, wondering what she was about to do. Doris generally had everybody guessing. She was so full of life and spirits that her own chums were in constant trepidation regarding her next action.

But she only ran over to Hal Brewster, of the River House School. She apparently knew him well, for she was soon talking to him with an earnest air about her that was most unusual. And when she came back her pretty mouth was firmly set, and that gleam in her eye was even more pronounced.

"You don't know what I said to Brewster, do you?" she asked teasingly.

"Haven't got the faintest idea," replied Reggie with a laugh. "And, if it comes to that, I'm not a little bit curious. Did you see Clapson just now? He made one of the prettiest passes of the game."

"Bother Clapson!" said Doris, frowning.

She was rather annoyed with Pitt. She had badly wanted him to be curious, and to find that he was perfectly indifferent irritated her. But perhaps Reggie was not quite so indifferent as he made out.

For, during the remainder of the game, his gaze strayed absent-mindedly from Doris to Hal Brewster and back again. And the captain of the Fourth was most unusually thoughtful.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ABSENTEE.



RALPH LESLIE FULLWOOD looked out of the Fourth-Form dormitory window and nodded with approval.

"Rainin'," he remarked. "Good!"

"Eh? What's that?" demanded Handforth, sitting up in bed. "Raining?"

"Pourin'," nodded Fullwood, pleasantly.

This piece of news brought a number of fellows out of bed in record time. It was Saturday morning, and therefore a half-holiday. And this afternoon the St. Frank's Junior Eleven was booked to meet the River House School on the football field.

"Rats!" growled Armstrong, as he stared out of the window. "Fullwood's right. It's coming down cats and dogs!"

"I'm fed-up!" snorted Handforth, disgustedly. "Whenever we have an important fixture it rains like the dickens! It's enough to make a chap go grey! What's the matter with the rotten weather?"

"Silence, O grumbler!" said Pitt severely.

"The weather is the one factor we can't alter. So why grouse? It won't do a ha'porth of good, you know. Besides, it'll probably clear up by dinner-time."

"Optimist!" said Jack Grey gloomily.

"Quite right—I am an optimist!" agreed Reggie. "Why not? If I wasn't an optimist, how do you think I could get out the Mag. every week? By every sign known to an editor next week's issue will never appear. But do I despair? Not a bit of it. Next week's issue will appear just the same as usual. That's optimism!"

"Handy hasn't written his Trackett Grim stuff yet," said Church. "He's put it off until to-morrow, because he can think better on Sunday. He says he gets all his brilliant ideas on Sundays."

"Then why hasn't he written anything on Sunday before?" asked Pitt blandly.

Handforth glared.

"Are you making out that my stuff isn't brilliant?" he demanded.

"Peace, child!" said Reggie sternly.

"Look here, you ass——"

"I can see a streak of blue sky!" yelled Owen major triumphantly. "Pitt's right! The weather's going to clear!"

"Rotten!" growled Fullwood, in a murmur to Gulliver. "I was hopin' it would rain all day!"

"Then you've got queer hopes!" said Gulliver sourly.

"Have you forgotten the Rushton Handicap to-day?" muttered Fullwood. "We've backed Corkscrew, an' he can always jump better on soakin' wet turf. If it's pourin' with rain he's a dead cert. I've got thirty bob on Corkscrew, don't forget."

Gulliver grunted. He wasn't interested. Having no money to back, he was out in the cold, or he might have shared Fullwood's views regarding the weather conditions.

Morning lessons were somewhat strained, in both sections of the Fourth. In the Modern House the juniors were particularly tried. For not only were they anxious regarding the weather, but Mr. Pycraft, their Form-master, was unusually caustic. At one period, indeed, it seemed that Buster Boots himself was in danger of being detained for the afternoon. But this calamity was averted by a display of tact on Buster's part.

And when lessons were over for the day the juniors streamed out into a wet Triangle, anxious and worried. They were relieved to find that the rain had ceased, and the clouds were now breaking. Indeed, the sun itself was peeping tardily from behind the drifting cloudbanks.

"What-ho!" observed Archie Glenthorne. "The good old sun, what? The priceless old swab of yellowness, as it were! I must say he looks frightfully washed out, but better late than never, by gad!"

"It's going to clear up!" said Alf Brent

gladly. "Supposing we go along and inspect the field?"

"Absolutely not!" said Archie firmly. "Good gad! What next, old chestnut? I couldn't possibly wet the old waltzing apparatus. I mean to say, the idea of dashing about on the good old turf is somewhat foul. No, Alf, old horse. I shall retire to the study, poke up the bally fire, and indulge in forty of the brightest until Phipps trickles along to inform the young master that dinner is served."

"Lazybones!" said Brent accusingly.

"Absolutely!" agreed Archie. "I hate to admit it, laddie, but the good old bone department is positively devoid of energy. Furthermore, the tissues are so dashed flabby after a morning in the class-room that there remains nothing but the lounge as a restorative."

He strolled off elegantly, and Alf went away to have a look at Little Side. He found Pitt and several others there in advance. The football ground was somewhat washed out, but there was no possibility of the game being postponed.

Indeed, after dinner a wonderful change came about. The sky had cleared completely, and the sun was shining with almost spring-like warmth. The wind had died down to a soft breeze, and the turf was drying beautifully.

"Well, what about it?" asked Pitt genially. "What did the oracle say this morning? Observe, my sons, the result of optimism! And here's Brewster and all his merry men!" he added briskly.

The River House juniors had just turned into the Triangle—a business-like looking crowd, well booted and wearing overcoats and carrying bags. But Reggie frowned as he looked them over.

"Only ten!" he remarked. "What's the idea?"

"Our goalie's coming along in a few minutes," explained Brewster, after he had exchanged greetings. "The other crowd will be along soon, too—they're practically all coming to cheer us to victory."

"More likely to groan when you go down!" said Handforth tartly.

"We're not going down," said Ascott. "Don't you believe it!"

"Well, I hope Kingswood won't be long," remarked Pitt, as they made a move towards Little Side. "The days are getting jolly short now, and we don't want to be delayed."

"Kingswood isn't playing in goal to-day," said Brewster. "We've got another chap."

"Brampton?" asked Pitt.

"No—a new fellow," said Brewster, with curious hesitancy. "He's pretty hot in goal—and he'll be along soon. Unless I'm mistaken, he'll give your forwards some pretty hard work!"

"A new fellow?" repeated Handforth. "What's his name?"

"Oh, I— His name?" said Brewster.
 "Oh, Norman."

"Norman what?"

"Norman nothing—that's his name," replied Hal, looking uncomfortable. "What's the idea of the cross-examination? By the time we've changed, he'll probably be on the spot. He's coming all ready dressed for the field."

There was something rather mysterious about Brewster's strange secrecy. The St. Frank's fellows thought very little of it at the time—but later on they were destined to remember it.

CHAPTER IX.

A SLAP IN THE FACE FOR FULLWOOD.



"BY gad! I shall have to be goin'!"

Fullwood jumped up as he glanced at his watch, and Gulliver and Bell eyed him without much interest. They were in

Study A in the Ancient House, and the little apartment was looking very cosy.

"Well, aren't you comin' with me?" asked Ralph Leslie, as his chums showed no signs of activity.

"Rats! The roads are all muddy, and there's no reason why we should all get caught in the rain," said Bell. "This fine spell won't last, you know—it'll be pourin' again soon. We're stayin' in, Fully."

"Rather!" agreed Gulliver, turning a page of his book.

"All right—stay in, and go to the dickens!" snapped Fullwood. "A bright pair, ain't you? Just because you haven't got any bets this afternoon you don't care a toss. I'll go alone—an' all the better!"

He strode out of the study in a huff, for Fullwood was rather partial to company. He never much cared for cycling alone. But he was always quick to take offence, and thereafter became sulky for a spell.

He got his bicycle out of the shed, and rode off up the lane. He didn't go through Bellton, but took the road towards the moor. He had arranged to meet a certain horsey gentleman at an obscure inn near Bannington, and the moor road was the nearest. Fullwood wanted to hear the result of the three-thirty as soon as it came through. He was quite anxious on the point.

His route took him past the Moor View School, and as he pedalled leisurely by the gates he glanced in. He was just in time to see quite an interesting little incident in the porch of the girls' school. He only caught a glimpse as he passed the gate, but it was enough.

A footballer was standing with his back to the gate—a slim young fellow dressed ready for the field. And he was in the act of implanting a kiss upon the lips of a young lady who stood in the doorway. It was a most edifying sight for a chance passer-by.

Fullwood, in fact, was so surprised that he instinctively applied his brakes.

"So it's got to kissin', has it?" he grinned. "By gad! I wonder who the lucky bounder is? If I hadn't seen Handforth on Little Side as I was comin' out, I should suspect that he was makin' love to Irene! I'll bet he's kissed her plenty of times, anyhow!" he added, with a chuckle.

Fullwood jumped off his machine, and turned back. He was very curious to see who the footballer was. The fellow would come out in a minute, and then the leader of Study A would confront him. The prospect was rather interesting.

The gate opened, and the footballer emerged. He was about to run lightly up the lane, when he caught sight of Fullwood, and paused. And Ralph Leslie himself stared hard. He walked forward, surprised and rather bewildered, and stared harder than before.

"Why, what the deuce—" he began.

Then he paused. The junior who confronted him was slim, well-built, and rather slight. He had a fresh complexion, and dark eyes. Fullwood couldn't see his hair, for it was concealed beneath his tight-fitting cap. His neck was very clear and white.

And there was something about his face that Fullwood knew. And the cad of the Fourth allowed a slow grin to overspread his features.

"Jolly good!" he remarked, approvingly.

"I—I don't understand you!" faltered the other, in a low voice.

"Jolly good—but not good enough to spoof me!" grinned Fullwood. "And I'm not sure that the other fellows will be fooled, either!"

"What do you mean—fooled?" asked the footballer, recovering his calm.

"You know what I mean!" replied Fullwood knowingly. "You wouldn't like to tell me your name, would you?"

"I don't mind," said the other. "My name's Norman."

"Norman, is it?" chuckled Fullwood. "Tell that to the marines!"

"I'm Norman, of the River House School!" said the footballer quickly. "I don't understand you! Why are you looking at me like that?"

"I was just admirin' your figure," grinned Fullwood. "You look toppin', although I think I like you best in your ordinary things. Still, I must say, you look the part to the life."

"Look the part?" repeated the self-styled Norman. "What part?"

Fullwood laughed outright.

"It's no good—I know who you are!" he said boldly. "I saw you kissin' one of the other girls a minute ago. How would you like to kiss me for a change?"

"Oh!" exclaimed Norman, with a quick breath.

He flushed slightly, and stood there, gazing at Fullwood with flashing eyes. For a moment he seemed nonplussed, and then he stepped forward.

"How dare you?" he shouted, angrily. Slap!

The footballer raised his hand, and Fullwood staggered back with a startled yelp. The other's neat palm had caught him a resounding slap on the cheek. The blow stung severely, but Fullwood's dignity was hurt even more.

Norman stood there, breathing hard. For one boy to slap another in the face was a somewhat extraordinary proceeding—but Norman didn't seem to be quite the same as other boys.

"By gad!" gasped Fullwood. "You—you infernal little spitfire!"

The footballer turned without a word, and sped away—running up the lane with fleet footsteps. Once he glanced over his shoulder to see if Fullwood was following him, but Ralph Leslie was not.

He stood there, holding his bicycle with one hand, and rubbing his smarting cheek with the other. Fullwood was furious. For a moment he thought about going in chase—but he gave up this idea.

He badly wanted to keep his appointment with the horsey gentleman—and there would be plenty of time to amuse himself at the remarkable Norman's expense later on in the afternoon.

So Fullwood jumped on his machine, and rode away.

CHAPTER X.

THE MYSTERY GOALKEEPER.



REGGIE PITT emerged from the junior pavilion and frowned.

"Hasn't your goalie turned up yet, Brewster?" he asked.

"Not yet," said the River House skipper, as he glanced at his watch. "Can't make it out, either—he promised to be here at two o'clock sharp. Awfully sorry to keep you waiting, old man—but he won't be a minute now."

"Why didn't he come with the rest of you?" asked Tommy Watson, bluntly.

"Oh, he— Well, he wasn't quite ready," said Brewster awkwardly. "But he's bound to turn up— Good! I think I can spot him now!"

"Yes, here she comes!" said Ascott, eagerly.

"Eh?" said Handforth, staring.

"I—I mean, here he comes!" said Ascott, hastily.

A slight figure was running across the Triangle, and a moment later Norman, the new River House fellow—if Brewster's word could be believed—came racing towards the pavilion.

"That your goalie?" asked Handforth, critically. "You have my sympathy!"

"Thanks, but we don't need it!" retorted Brewster tartly.

"You will do soon," said Edward Oswald. "Why, this chap's as slim and slender as a giddy girl! How can you expect him to

keep goal against St. Frank's? You'd have done better to play Kingswood, as usual."

Hal Brewster looked grim.

"Thanks all the same, but I'm skipper of our team—and I'll be awfully obliged if you'll let me choose my own eleven," he replied gruffly. "I'm playing Norman because he's a better man than Kingswood."

"Well, you know best, of course," said Watson.

The St. Frank's footballers were in readiness for the field, and the River House fellows were just as prepared. Morrow, of the Sixth, had just bustled up to fulfil his duties as referee.

Norman seemed to hesitate just before he reached the crowd of waiting juniors. It was as though he faltered at the last moment. But Brewster waved his hand, and ran forward.

"Come on, Norman, old man," he shouted cheerily. "We're waiting!"

The new junior came up, rather breathless.

"I'm—I'm awfully sorry!" he panted. "I was delayed a bit."

"It doesn't matter—you're in time," replied Brewster. "This is Norman, you chaps—our new goalie!" he added, introducing the slim junior with informal brevity.

"Very pleased to meet you," said Norman nervously.

He looked at Pitt and Handforth and the other juniors for a moment, and then lowered his brown eyes. The juniors regarded him strangely. There was an odd ring in his voice—a note that struck a familiar chord.

And his features seemed known to them, too—

"By George!" breathed Handforth, with a violent start.

He turned red and confused, and looked at Norman with such a startled expression that Church and McClure grabbed their leader by the arms.

"What's wrong?" asked Church.

"Can't—can't you see?" breathed Handforth. "He's—he's not a boy at all!"

"Not a boy!" repeated McClure, blankly.

He and Church stared at the new arrival in a manner that was rather ungentlemanly—but as Norman was still gazing demurely at the ground, he missed these very direct looks.

"Great Scott!" breathed Church. "It's—it's Doris!"

"Doris!" gasped McClure.

"Of course!" snorted Handforth. "Look here, we're not going to play these River House chaps with a girl in the team! Not likely! It won't be a proper game! Besides, it isn't right for Doris to come here like this, trying to spoof us—"

"But—but—" Church paused breathlessly.

A moment later and Handforth would have rendered the position awkward in the extreme. But Reggie Pitt was more tactful, and he seized Handforth by the arm, and drew him aside.

"Just a minute!" he said grimly. "Yes, and the rest of you, too!" he added. "I want to give you a few final tips before we start."

Pitt drew the eleven round him, and Norman, at the same time, got into conversation with Brewster and Co. The two teams were some distance apart. Morrow fumed in the centre of the field, blowing his whistle imperiously, and wondering what all the delay was about.

"It can't be true!" muttered Tommy Watson, blankly.

"It seems a bit thick—but it's true enough!" exclaimed Reggie Pitt. "This new goalie is Doris Berkeley. She looks differently dressed up as a boy—but the disguise isn't quite good enough. We've spotted her."

"Well, I'm jiggered!"

"My only hat!"

"But—but—"

"Keep your hair on!" interrupted Pitt, with a twinkle in his eye. "Don't you remember last Wednesday? Don't you remember how Doris talked about football? The young harum-scarum! She is deliberately trying to spoof us!"

"And it hasn't worked!" said Handforth.

"It has worked!" said Pitt calmly.

"Eh?"

"She must have got round old Brewster to work this dodge on us, and we'll let it continue!" said Reggie, with a grin. "Understand? We'll pretend we haven't spotted her—and teach her a lesson!"

"My hat! That's an idea!" grinned Bob Christine.

"But is it quite fair, dear old boys?" asked Tregellis-West doubtfully. "Football's a frightfully rough game for girls—it is, really! Wouldn't it be better to show her up at once, and spare her?"

But Pitt was firm.

"No fear!" he replied grimly. "She came here to fool us, and we won't let on that we know. If she doesn't like the hard knocks of football, she oughtn't to play such tricks! We'll go straight ahead, and give her a terrific twisting!"

"Yes, by George, why not?" said Handforth. "Biff the leather past her as many times as you can! That'll make her realise that goalkeeping isn't such a soft job as she seems to think! It's like her giddy nerve to think she can play in the same position as me!"

And the St. Frank's Junior Eleven came to an understanding. They would carry on with the game as though nothing unusual was afoot!

CHAPTER XI.

SURPRISING THE NATIVES.



"GOOD gad!"

Archie Glenthorne adjusted his monocle, and stared blankly.

He had just strolled up in all his customary elegance to have a look at the game. And he had caught sight of Norman, the new River House goalie, as he passed on to the field with the rest of the team.

"I mean to say, how absolutely extraordinary!" went on Archie. "Alf, old corkscrew, did you, by any chance, see what I saw? That is, did you gaze upon the features of the chappie with the willowy form?"

Alf Brent was looking rather startled.

"Yes, I did!" he replied. "I'll swear that that chap isn't a chap at all. He looks just like Doris."

Archie breathed with relief.

"Then everything's all right," he murmured. "I mean to say, I haven't been seeing things, and all that sort of rot. But, dash it all, just fancy! I mean, just fancy! What about it, laddie?"

Alf hardly knew what to say. And these two were not the only juniors round the ropes who had come to the same conclusion. Before long Little Side was fairly humming with the story.

And it was quite obvious that Reggie Pitt intended going through with the game. The juniors regarded the prospect with joy. It would be a novelty to see how this remarkable goalkeeper shaped!

"And about time, too!" said Morrow tartly, as Brewster and Pitt came forward for the toss. "I suppose you know we're ten minutes late, don't you?"

"Sorry!" apologised Brewster. "My fault!"

"All right—go ahead!" said the prefect.

They tossed up, and Brewster won. Not that there was much in it, for there was practically no wind, and the sun had retired behind some filmy clouds. The teams lined up, and Morrow carefully consulted his watch.

The whistle blew.

Christine kicked off, and tipped the ball immediately to Watson, who sent over a swinging pass to the wing before he could be robbed. Pitt was ready, and he trapped the ball neatly, and sped off down the touch-line. The St. Frank's forwards were bearing down in orderly fashion, and Pitt centred with a beautiful pass.

Slam!

Grey got his foot to the ball, and sent in a first-time shot that was beautiful to behold. Within the first few seconds the Saints were proving their quality.

But the leather just shaved the outside of the crossbar, and a roar of applause went up in appreciation. Half a foot lower, and a goal would have been certain.

"Go it, St. Frank's!"

ANSWERS

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"Well done, Jack!"

Round the ropes, the crowd was watching intently.

"I say, did you notice that?" asked Brent. "Did you see the way Doris leapt up? It's staggering but I honestly believe she would have saved that shot—even if it had gone under the bar!"

"Imposs, dear old boy," declared Archie. "Why, dash it, Handy himself couldn't have done it!"

But Norman had undoubtedly made a superb spring at the crucial moment—displaying a fine sense of judgment. The game was soon in full swing once more, and for a few minutes most of the play was confined to midfield.

Pitt had put a strong eleven in the field, with Bob Christine in the centre-forward position. Reggie himself was playing as outside-right, with Jack Grey as his partner. On the other wing, Tregellis-West and Watson were in their favourite positions—and they generally worked together in perfect harmony.

With Handforth in goal, and Boots and Armstrong at back, the defence was strong. And Yorke, of the Modern House, had recently shaped wonderfully well in the centre of the half-back line. He was in that place now, and so far he had succeeded in holding Brewster so skilfully that the River House centre-forward had no chance to get going.

Norman was looking very businesslike in goal—surprisingly so, under the circumstances. There seemed to be no girlish nervousness about him. He followed the game intently, on tip-toe the whole time.

His backs were Hawke and Riley—a pair who had been proved time after time. But they were incapable of holding the tricky St. Frank's forwards.

Pitt was in particularly good form—and that spelt danger. Yorke persistently fed the right wing, and although Pitt was carefully marked, he was as elusive as a will o' the wisp.

Once he had the leather at his feet, he streaked up the field, disdainful of all opposition. He was directly opposed to Riley—and Riley was having a bad time of it.

In all these duels, he always got the



With one heave, he swung Willy across his knee, and delivered three or four resounding slaps on the fag's seating accommodation.

worst of it. Pitt literally made rings round him.

With delightful coolness, Pitt swung the ball into mid-field, and it fell at the feet of Bob Christine. And a roar went up at once. Bob had only the goalkeeper to beat.

"Shoot—shoot!"

Christine shot. It was one of the deadliest kicks imaginable—a terrific drive which sent the leather towards the net at lightning speed. The ball kept low, and the crowd roared.

"Goal!"

But the River House custodian performed a miracle. Hurling himself full length, he just got to the ball as it was about to enter the net. With outstretched hands, he tipped the leather round the post. It was one of the most magnificent saves that had ever been made on Little Side.

And Reggie Pitt came to a dead halt as the whistle blew, and breathed hard.

"Well, I'm blessed!" he ejaculated softly.

CHAPTER XII. KEEPING IT UP.

"O H, well saved!"

"Corner—corner!"

Norman picked himself up, muddy and dishevelled. But he was still cool and calm.

"Fine!" gasped Hawke

enthusiastically. "By jove, that was priceless."



Norman; I was sure you were whacked by that shot!"

"Not yet!" laughed the bright-eyed goalie.

"What do you think of it, eh?" panted Jack Grey, as he ran up to Pitt.

"I don't like to think it was a fluke, but what else can we believe?" said Pitt.

"It was a glorious save, old man. If Doris goes on like this, she'll have the laugh over us for terms!"

"We've got to whack her!" said Grey firmly.

The corner kick was taken, and there was a moment of tense excitement. Tregellis-West took the kick, and dropped the leather almost in the goal-mouth. Grey got his head to it, but Norman was ready. With one swift punch he fisted the ball out into play, and Riley cleared it into midfield. And then came one of those swift turning of the tables that so often happens in football. Brewster pounced upon the leather, and streaked towards the St. Frank's goal like a hare. Armstrong tackled him, but was beaten. Brewster ran on, and Boots rushed up to avert the threatened disaster.

With beautiful coolness, Brewster halted with the ball at his feet. He tapped the leather sideways, ran round the confused Buster, and then rushed at the goal.

Handforth was dancing about like a madman.

Slam!

It was a well-directed kick, and Handforth would easily have been excused if he had failed to stop it. But, with superb judgment, he gathered up the leather, and whirled it back into play.

But Brewster had rushed up, following his advantage, and on the rebound he scored with skill and judgment. It was so swift that Handforth had no chance. The ball sped into the net far beyond Edward Oswald's reach.

"Goal!"

"Hurrah!"

"Oh, well kicked, Brewster!"

"Goal!"

The River House spectators yelled themselves hoarse. And the St. Frank's Fourth-Formers looked at one another blankly.

First blood to the visitors! And they were spurred on to even greater efforts.

"My only hat!" muttered Brent. "And they're playing a girl in their own goal!"

The teams lined up again, with Reggie Pitt and Co. looking rather grim. This sort of thing couldn't go on, of course. They had started this game with the intention of giving Doris Berkeley a twisting! And the scoring had been opened by the visitors!

All the St. Frank's forwards were on tip-toe to make a special effort. And a minute from the re-start the forward line swung down the field with deadly determination.

Once again the River House defence was penetrated, and this time it was Pitt himself who tried to score. He ran in dangerously,

and the crowd watched with breathless interest.

They knew what it was when Reggie adopted these tactics.

"Shoot!"

"Go it, Pitt!"

Pitt steadied himself even as Hawke and Riley were hurtling themselves at him. He beat them both, and sent in a deadly oblique shot that would easily have beaten nine goalkeepers out of ten.

But, with a spring like a panther, Norman was ready. He gathered up the ball as it came, bounced it once, and then kicked it clearly into mid-field with one well-directed thrust. It was yet another example of perfect play.

"Oh, well saved!"

Reggie bit his lip. He had thought he had scored a certain goal, and it was rather terrible to realise that this nimble goalie had defeated him with apparent ease.

There had been no fluke about that last save. To any experienced eye, it was obvious that Norman knew his business from A to Z. His judgment was perfect, his anticipation amazing. And he kept serenely cool as though this sort of thing was a mere trifle to him.

So determined were the St. Frank's forwards to force a goal that they reduced the River House backs and half-backs to a state of hopeless confusion. In popular parlance, the Saints were "all over" their rivals.

Again and again the defence was shattered, and the St. Frank's forwards forged through to the attack.

But the goalkeeper was always there—always ready.

Norman was the one insuperable obstacle.

Shot after shot was rained in, but he dealt with them so skilfully that the Fourth-Formers themselves were soon cheering and applauding. The River House goalie was giving a display second to none.

The whistle blew at last for half-time.

"And this," breathed Reggie Pitt, "is the girl we laughed at! This is the girl we were going to twist into knots! Will somebody please be good enough to kick me to see if I'm awake?"

CHAPTER XIII.

ON THEIR METTLE.



EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH glared round him aggressively.

"Well, you're a fine lot!" he exclaimed with disdain.

"You're a bright set of specimens, I must say!"

"Look here——"

"Call yourself forwards?" demanded Handforth. "In my opinion, you're not forwards at all—you're backwards!"

"It's all very well for you to talk, Handy, but you were out of it at your end of the field," said Watson. "Besides, you've got nothing to boast about! We're one down owing to your slip."

"My slip?" repeated Handforth fiercely.

"Well, you let them score that goal——"

"I didn't even see it!" roared Handforth.

"Steady on!" put in Pitt. "Don't get excited, Handy, old man. You've played a good game—jolly good. That goal you conceded was a cert. Howard Baker himself couldn't have stopped it!"

Handforth was somewhat mollified.

"And you don't know what Doris is like!" went on Pitt grimly. "My only hat! She's mustard! I'll never say that girls are unsuitable for football again! She's an absolute marvel!"

"I'm blessed if I can understand it," said Jack Grey flatly. "She seems to know all the tricks. And as for judgment and skill, I've never seen her equal! I thought Handy was a good gaolie, but she's better!"

The Fourth eleven were in the pavilion—private for a brief spell. And they were giving free play to their amazed feelings.

"After all we said, too!" remarked Church. "We grinned like Cheshire cats when we found that Doris was to play, and we thought we'd score about twenty goals in the first half!"

"And we haven't scored one!" groaned De Valerie.

"You'll have to buck up!" declared Handforth. "You've simply got to get two or three goals in the next half. You must! If you don't, Irene and Co. will simply crow over us for the rest of the term!"

"They'll have plenty of reason, too—if we don't score," said Pitt. "But you can't get away from the fact that Doris is a marvel. Although she's playing against us like this, I admire her. She's proving her spirit. And yet, somehow, I don't like it!"

"I should think you don't!" growled Watson.

"I'm not talking about the game now," went on Pitt quietly. "I'm talking about Doris herself. It seems—well, it seems all wrong to me. Girls shouldn't play football—it isn't a feminine game at all. And to be quite frank, I'm jolly worried."

"Worried?"

"Yes, I am," replied Pitt. "I like Doris tremendously. Don't grin—there's no nonsense about a friendship like that. I like her the best of all the Moor View girls, because she's so free-and-easy and straight-from-the-shoulder. And yet, at the same time, she's always remained a real girl. You know what I mean—nothing masculine about her."

"And now she's wrecked it all, eh?" asked Watson.

"Well, more or less," admitted Pitt. "It's unnatural that a girl should play football like this. And although I'm determined to do my best to score, I feel a bit uncomfortable. You can bowl a girl over like you can a boy. And I'm disappointed. I didn't think Doris was such an out-and-out tomboy. I like a certain amount of it—but not too much."

"Same here," agreed Jack. "Everything in moderation. She's gone a bit too far this time. But it's no good talking—she's made up her mind to show us up, and she's doing it!"

"Wait until the game's over!" said Pitt grimly.

A minute or two later they emerged on to the field once more. Brewster and Co. were carefully surrounding their goalkeeper, so that nobody could get too close.

Pitt had not failed to observe that Irene Manners and Marjorie Temple and several other Moor View girls had appeared on the scene. They were obviously excited and eager—and small wonder! But it was rather galling to realise that a mere girl should defy the entire St. Frank's attack!

The game restarted with a kind of tense feeling in the air. Brewster and Co. were determined to improve their advantage. And Pitt and his merry men were equally determined to beat this remarkable goalkeeper as soon as they possibly could. The entire eleven was on its mettle.

They simply had to win. There were no two ways of looking at it. If they failed to pull the game round, they would never be able to lift their faces again. A defeat on their own ground, with such a goalkeeper as this opposed to them, would be an everlasting humiliation.

And, to make matters worse, a stroke of bad luck befell the Saints.

The game had hardly been going two minutes before Brewster received a pass from one of his wing men. He was apparently in an offside position, but Morrow decided otherwise. And Morrow was correct. It was one of those instances where the referee could see better than the players or the spectators.

"Offside!" yelled the crowd.

And the backs were so convinced that they stopped dead. And Handforth actually turned to make a remark to one of the fellows behind the net.

But Morrow didn't blow his whistle—he pointed up the field. And Brewster seized his advantage in a flash.

Hiss!

The leather left his foot and sped goalwards at a tremendous pace, rising slightly, and slipping under the bar at the corner. Handforth didn't even see it until it was in the net.

"Goal!" yelled the delighted River House spectators.

"What!" gasped Handforth blankly. "Look here, you're mad——"
 "He was offside!" roared Boots, rushing up to the referee.
 "He was onside!" retorted Morrow firmly. And he pointed relentlessly to the centre of the field.

CHAPTER XIV.

A STAGGERER FOR THE FOURTH.



IT was a lesson to the St. Frank's defence. They were entirely at fault, as they now realised to their sorrow. They had failed to play to the whistle, and had only themselves to blame. Taking it for granted that Brewster had been offside, they had eased up—always a fatal mistake.

And the River House was now two goals up!

This sort of thing couldn't go on, and it spoke volumes for the determination of the St. Frank's forward line that it did not lose heart. Christine and his inside men were grim and desperate, and Pitt and Tregellis-West, on the wings, were no less so.

The game became a fierce, terrific struggle.

The River House backs were practically worked off their feet, and although they did wonders, they were soon worn out.

And again and again the home forwards broke through. Twice Bob Christine ran through the defence practically unchallenged, and twice he made magnificent drives. But in both cases Norman brought off superb saves.

The first time he punched out skilfully, and Riley just managed to scramble the leather wildly over the touch-line.

Christine's second effort was equally as fruitless. This time he ran up close and directed the ball towards the corner of the net. But the goalie flung himself headlong across the goal-mouth, apparently careless and indifferent to injury.

With remarkable skill, he gathered up the ball, and threw it past Christine as the latter rushed up to complete his work. Jack Grey was on the spot, and he kicked swiftly.

Norman saw the coming danger, spun round while he was still outstretched on the ground, and tipped the leather round the post with his heel. It was one of the swiftest pieces of work that had ever been seen. And it proved beyond all question that this goalie was no novice.

The resulting corner-kick was wasted, for Tregellis-West placed the ball behind the line in his anxiety to drop it close.

The game swung away to mid-field once more, but only for a few minutes.

Pitt himself attempted to score, and if

Reggie couldn't manage it, then the position was indeed hopeless!

He sent in three shots that any normal goalkeeper would have muffed. But Norman was apparently invincible. Nothing seemed to disturb him. And at last the home forwards began to lose heart.

In the meantime, Brewster and Co. were bubbling over with delight. They knew how much they owed to their goalkeeper. But for him they would have been at least four goals to the bad.

"It's no good, old man—we're done!" muttered Jack Grey, as he found himself alongside Pitt during a slack moment.

"We've got another ten minutes yet," said Pitt grimly.

"But it's staggering—it's more than I can believe!" said Grey. "Doris, you know! A giddy slip of a girl!"

"Don't rub it in!"

"And we laughed at her!" breathed Jack. "Ye gods and little fishes! Can you imagine how she'll laugh at us?"

"I've been imagining it for ten whole minutes!" replied Reggie.

At this point further conversation was impossible, for the game became exciting. Watson was making an effort now, but it met with the same result as all the others. With Riley beaten, he sent in a well-judged shot that looked a winner all the way.

Of course, it wasn't.

The River House goal was apparently enchanted. Its custodian provided an impassable barrier. He dealt with everything as a matter of course, and the performance was generally acknowledged to be the most remarkable that had been seen on Little Side for many a term.

The ropes were lined with breathless juniors, and a number of seniors had come over from Big Side to find out what all the excitement was about. And the talk about Doris was no longer whispered. The fellows were discussing her openly, and marvelling at this astounding display.

And then at last, to the intense relief of the visiting backs, the final whistle blew.

And the St. Frank's junior eleven left the field, a defeated team.

"It's all up!" said Pitt hopelessly. "We've got to thank Doris for this overwhelming defeat. And, by Jove, I'm going to be the first to congratulate her!"

Reggie pushed his way through the players, but it was rather difficult to get near the victorious goalie. The slim figure was surrounded by enthusiastic juniors.

Norman himself was laughing in a musical voice, and he seemed in no way embarrassed by the crowds of fellows round him.

"I say, Miss Doris, it was too marvellous for words!" shouted Handforth, pushing through Brewster & Co.

"Miss who?" grinned Dave Ascott.

"Miss Doris, of course," retorted Handforth. "We know all about it! We knew it all along! And she's put up a marvellous show!"

"Hear, hear!"

The novel goalkeeper laughed merrily.

"I only did my best," she said in a demure voice.

CHAPTER XV.

BEYOND BELIEF.



ROUND the ropes the game was being discussed with bated breath.

"Well, she's proved that she can play football just as well as chaps!" declared Griffith. "I wouldn't have

believed it. I always thought Doris Berkeley was lively, but this time she's taken the biscuit!"

"Rather!"

"It's too amazing for words!"

"What puzzles me is this," said Alf Brent. "Where the dickens has she had her practice? You're not going to tell me that a mere novice could keep goal in that way?"

"Absolutely not, old doorknocker!" agreed Archie. "I mean to say, the dear young thing positively performed a few well assorted miracles. I'm not much of a football expert, but I dashed well know a dashed good goalie when I see him dashing about!"

"Well, it beats me——"

"Oddslife!" interrupted Archie in a queer voice.

"Eh? What the——"

"Good gad!" said Archie.

He groped aimlessly for his monocle, apparently under the delusion that it would assist his vision. He was gazing fixedly across the playing-fields towards the Triangle.

"What on earth's the matter with you, old man?" asked Brent.

Archie shook himself.

"A bally delusion, of course," he murmured. "One of those frightful things a chappie sees when he's having a vision, what? Frightfully queer, and all that sort of stuff; but——"

"What are you talking about?" demanded Alf.

Archie looked at him in a dreamy kind of way.

"Tell me, dear old pai," he pleaded, "is Doris Berkeley in the middle of the bally field, surrounded by sundry knots of the good old lads? Is she, or, as it were, is she not?"

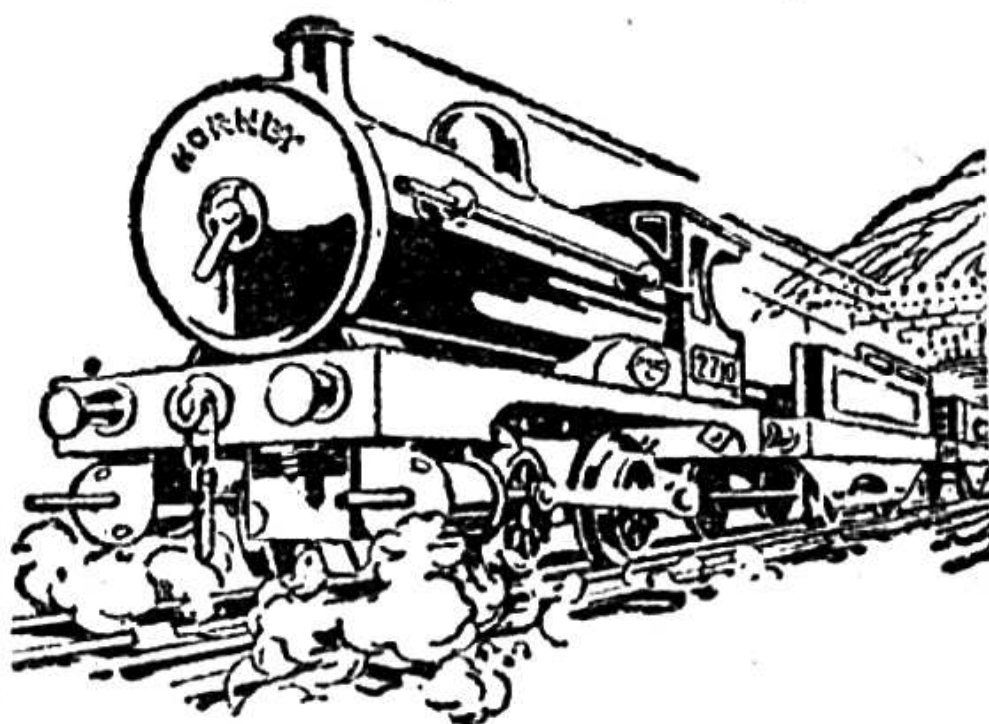
Alf glanced towards the crowd of players.

"Of course she is!" he replied. "I can see her now."

Archie sighed sadly.

"Then, old darling, one of us is absolutely seeing things," he replied. "One of

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us, laddie, is seeing not once, but absolutely twice. If Doris is on the bally playing-field, surrounded by noisy enthusiasts, how can she be tripping with gazelle-like steps out of the good old Triangle?"

"You're dotty!" said Brent, staring.

"Alas, old dandelion, I believe I am!" admitted Archie frankly.

"But what the dickens——"

"Gaze!" interrupted the swell of the Ancient House. "Be good enough to cast the eyesight department towards the star-board offing! Do I see aright, Alf, or is it not so?"

Brent, grinning, turned and gazed towards the Triangle, wondering what on earth his study-chum was rambling about. And then Alf gave a leap. He positively started like a frightened steer.

"Great Scott!" he yelled.

"Absolutely!" said Archie. "The very words I wanted to say, dash it, but I couldn't think of them. As you say, Great Scott! In point of fact, Gigantic Scott!"

"It's Doris!" breathed Alf feebly.

"The one and only!" said Archie, reeling a little.

The two juniors continued to stare. Tripping on to Little Side from the Triangle was Doris Berkeley herself. Unmistakably and unquestionably, the girl was Doris.

She was daintily attired in a blue serge frock, with a light fur round her neck, and a small fur toque on her head. She was looking unusually attractive.

And yet, in the middle of the playing-field, the mystery goalkeeper was still in the midst of the enthusiastic juniors.

"But—but there can't be two Dorises!" stammered Brent blankly.

"As dear old Euclid would say, the bally thing's absurd!" agreed Archie. "But, dash it all, we've seen them both, laddie! So there must be. Twins, what? Good gad! Have I had a brain storm, or what?"

By this time other fellows had seen Doris approaching, and all sorts of shouts were going up. The entire junior school had taken it for granted that Doris herself had kept goal for the River House during the match. And the sight of the girl approaching in this unexpected manner was staggering in the extreme.

What could be the meaning of it?

One thing, at all events, was obvious. The Fourth had been spoofed! Doris Berkeley had decidedly not played football that afternoon. The mysterious Norman was somebody totally different, although he certainly bore an amazing resemblance to the girl herself. It was so great a resemblance, indeed, that nobody would ever dream he was other than the girl.

Reggie Pitt took a deep breath as he caught sight of the dainty figure coming towards him over the grass. And his heart gave a little leap. He was startled, but at the same time he felt infinitely pleased. He went towards her—breathlessly.

"Doris!" he exclaimed. "You?"

"Of course it's me!" she chuckled. "Do I look like anybody else?"

Pitt seized her arm in his impatience.

"Yes; you look like somebody who's been keeping goal for the River House all the afternoon," he replied grimly. "We thought you were here all the time; we thought this chap was you!"

"How absurd!" laughed Doris gaily.

By this time she was surrounded, and Irene & Co. had joined her. All the girls were laughing joyously.

And Doris herself had never looked prettier or saucier.

CHAPTER XVI.

DORIS, THE INCORRIGIBLE.



HANDFORTH pushed his way forward.

"I say, Miss Doris, what's the idea?" he demanded bluntly. "I believe you've tried to spoof us!"

"I haven't tried to—I've done it!" chuckled the irrepressible Doris. "Oh, my hat! What a lark! I was hoping all along that you'd be fooled, and you were! Isn't it gorgeous?"

"Oh, too gorgeous for words!" said Buster Boots gruffly.

"Norman!" called Doris. "Here he is! Allow me to introduce my brother—Norman Berkeley!"

"Your brother?" yelled Handforth.

"Yes, of course!"

"Then—then she isn't a girl, after all?" Doris laughed merrily.

"Norman, are you a girl?" she asked.

"No, I'm jolly well not!" replied Norman. "And I'm glad this giddy farce is at an end. These japes are all very well, but one's enough for me. These chaps have been so jolly polite that I could hardly keep my face straight. Thank goodness it's over!"

Norman Berkeley had changed in a subtle kind of way. The effeminate look had vanished. He was still as slim and slight as ever, but the demure expression had gone, to be replaced by a boyish grin.

It was apparent to the juniors that he had been acting a part, and that he had been acting it remarkably well. His resemblance to his sister was striking, but now that they were standing side by side, it was obvious that he was a boy.

"I fooled one of these St. Frank's chaps even before I got here," he grinned. "It was just outside the gates of your school, Doris. He spotted me kissing you, and for a minute I thought the game was up. Then I found that he took the bait, and as he was cheeky, I slapped his face."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I felt like punching him, of course, but I wanted to act the girl properly, so I slapped him instead!" grinned Norman. "I say, you fellows, don't blame me, you know. Sis made me do it, and you know she's irresistible, don't you?"

"She's a terror!" said Reggie Pitt, with conviction.

"Thanks for the compliment," chuckled Doris.

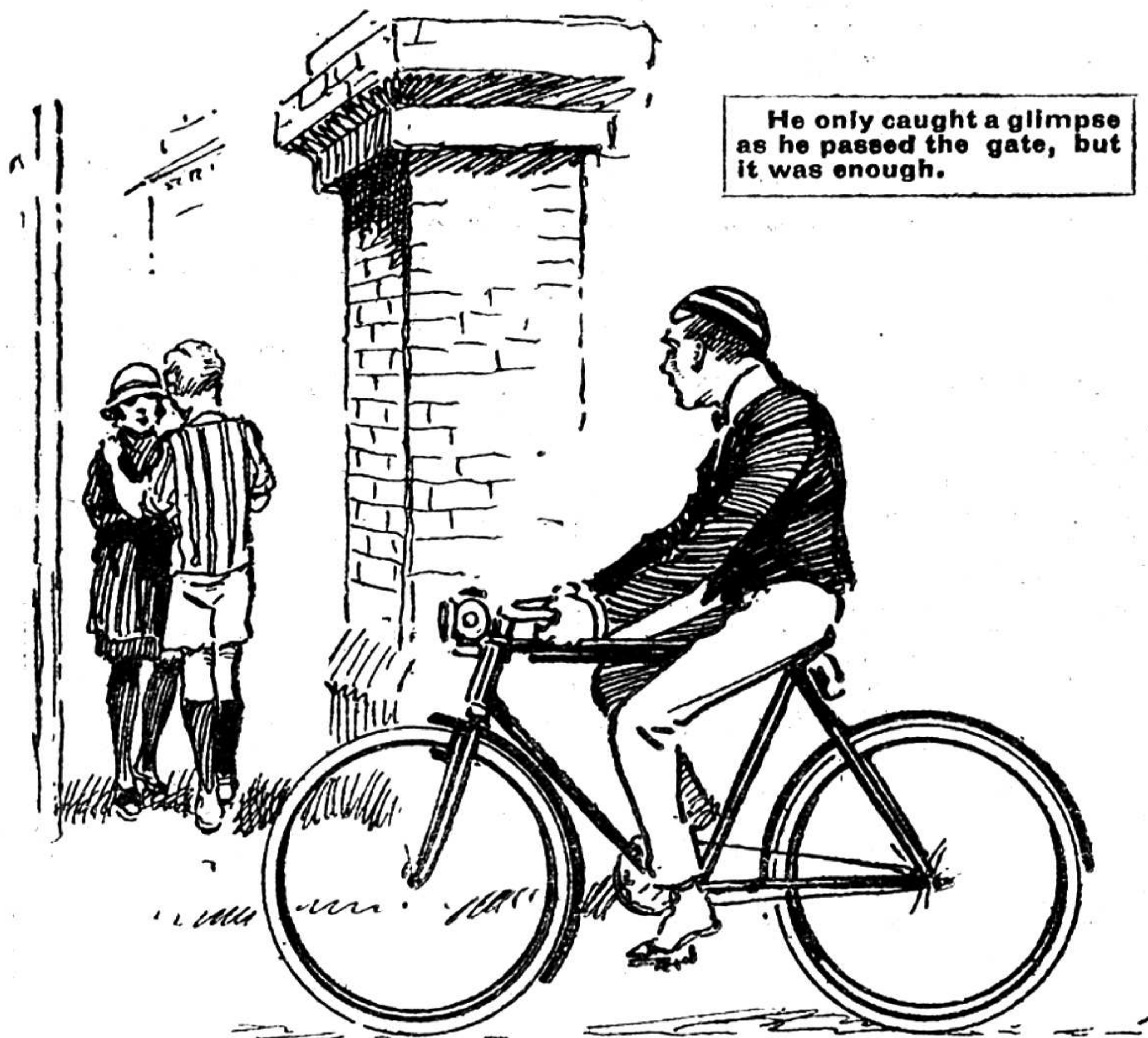
"But why on earth did you do it?" asked Jack Grey.

"Oh, just for a lark!" replied the girl cheerfully. "Norman looks so much like

"Pretty good!" echoed Christine. "My only Sunday topper!"

"I don't suppose I shall reproduce to-day's form for weeks to come, if I ever do it again," went on Norman. "I was on tip-toe all the time, you know. And as I'd promised sis that I wouldn't let anything pass me, I was on my giddy mettle. But, I say, you gave me a frightful twisting. You're a hot lot, and no mistake!"

The girls were all overjoyed at the success of their little joke, and Doris was particularly delighted. The Fourth didn't quite know whether to be pleased or otherwise.



me that I thought I could have some fun. You see, he's just come to the River House School, and I thought it would be a good idea to work the wheeze before you met him in the ordinary way."

"And what was he before he came to the River House—goalie for the Corinthians?" asked Bob Christine.

Norman chuckled.

"Hardly," he replied. "But I always kept goal for my old school, and I was reckoned to be pretty good at it."

But something would certainly have to be done.

The Fourth Form at St. Frank's had been deliberately japed by a girl! It was an unheard-of business; and it was thereupon decided that the girls would have to be japed in return. The Fourth couldn't possibly allow such a thing as this to stand unchallenged.

But it was generally agreed that nothing could be done immediately. The Christmas holidays were near at hand, and any retaliation

tion would have to stand over until the new term.

A welcome surprise came from Colonel Glenthorne, Archie's genial pater.

A big Christmas party was to be held at Glenthorne Manor, and a large number of St. Frank's juniors were invited. And when it became known that Irene & Co. were also included in the guests the interest in the party became more pronounced.

"There's no telling," said Reggie Pitt thoughtfully, a few days after the eventful football match. "We may be able to get our own back on the girls at this party."

I'm jolly glad that Doris isn't a footballer; but she's got nerve enough for a dozen!"

"Footballers?" smiled Jack Grey.

"No, schoolboys," replied Pitt. "She may be a girl, but, by Jove, she's got more spirit than ten ordinary chaps. She's a giddy terror!"

And there wasn't a single fellow in the Fourth Form who disagreed with this verdict. But although Doris had japed the Fourth so completely, her popularity was greater than ever from that momentous day.

THE END.

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CHAPTER I.

REVEALED BY LIGHTNING.

NIPPER drained his tea-cup, and gave a little sigh of satisfaction.

"That's better, guv'nor!" he exclaimed contentedly. "Nothing like a good drop of tea to make a fellow feel fit on a night like this! We needed something nice and hot to take the chill out of our marrow-bones!"

Nelson Lee, the famous criminologist of Grays' Inn Road, nodded his agreement.

"We did, young 'un—and I have enjoyed the beverage immensely," he said. "Our afternoon's work was a decidedly chilly experience, but it is some satisfaction to know that we have been successful in catching our man. Mr. Patrick Nolan proved a somewhat tough customer to deal with—but I fancy that he will not trouble us again for a year or so."

Nipper grinned.

"He'll get a ten-year stretch if he gets a day!" he declared. "But what's the programme now, sir—home?"

Nelson Lee and Nipper were seated in a cosy restaurant in the ancient Hertfordshire city of St. Albans, where they were just finishing a well-earned meal.

Their visit to this locality had been strictly professional—for the detective, during the past few days, had been busily engaged in tracking down a particularly troublesome Irish criminal—the man to whom he had just made reference.

Mr. Patrick Nolan was "wanted" for burglary and manslaughter—and Nelson Lee, as a result of his investigations, had traced his man to an isolated little cottage on the outskirts of St. Albans. Here the criminal, finding himself neatly trapped, had put up a very determined resistance, and had caused Nelson Lee and the police a good deal of trouble by barricading himself in the cottage, and firing through holes in the shuttered windows.

For a couple of hours he had managed to

hold the enemy at bay. But then the little house had been forcibly stormed, and Nolan arrested. He was now safely in the lock-up, and Lee and Nipper—having concluded their business—were on the point of starting back to London.

"Yes, my lad—we'll get off at once," replied the detective, in response to Nipper's query. "There's nothing more to be done here, and I am anxious to get back to Gray's Inn Road. I am expecting further developments in that affair of Lady Connington's jewellery this evening, as you know."

Nipper nodded.

"I know that, guv'nor—but we're going to have a pretty rough homeward trip in the car if you ask me anything!" he said. "The weather's cold enough to freeze the tail off a monkey, and I reckon we're in for a storm. What do you say?"

"I think you're probably right, my lad," returned Lee, rising from the table and buttoning his overcoat. "The wind is in a stormy direction, and appears to be rising rapidly. However, I don't suppose it will make a great deal of difference to our journey."

The detective, as it happened, was wrong—for the storm was to be responsible for a good deal of delay in their homeward trip. Incidentally, it was also to be the means of introducing Nelson Lee and Nipper to one of their strangest and most mysterious cases.

Having paid their bill, and left the restaurant, the pair climbed aboard their powerful racing car, and commenced the journey back to London. And with every furlong they covered, it became more and more evident that the coming storm was going to be what Nipper termed a "shorter."

The wind howled and shrieked through the trees as Lee's car ploughed its way through the dark countryside, with headlights throwing a great white beam of radiance ahead. The rain, so far, had held off—but within

the next ten minutes it came down in an almost blinding sheet.

Any great speed was impossible in such conditions, and Lee throttled down to a steady twenty miles an hour. Even at this speed the going was not exactly safe—for the rain beat against the wind-screen so fiercely that the patent electric "wiper" was practically useless.

The great headlights, however, illuminated the road ahead so adequately that the detective was able to keep the car on the crown of the road without much trouble, and to see through the rain-splashed wind-screen with a fair amount of ease.

Nipper sat beside his master, rather enjoying the experience. He had the most sublime faith in Lee as a driver, for he knew that there were very few men who could beat the detective when it came to controlling a car in the event of sudden emergency.

Strangely enough, the lad was to receive another instance of this within the next minute or two—although he was quite unaware of it.

They were now within a mile or so of Watford, and the storm was raging as fiercely as ever. The wind, if anything, seemed to be increasing, and it howled and roared through the trees and hedges with tremendous power. Now and again the travellers felt the wind strike their car broadside, and the sensation was not a pleasant one.

"What a night!" shouted Nipper, into Lee's ear. "If this wind gets much higher, guv'nor, we stand a jolly good chance of being blown clean off the road—Great Scott!"

Nipper broke off with a startled gasp, for Lee had applied his brakes with great suddenness—causing his assistant to clutch hard at the back of his seat to save himself from being thrown forward. The car, at the moment, had been rounding a bend—and Nipper instantly saw what had caused Lee to pull up so promptly.

A huge tree lay right across the road, having been blown down by the wind, thus causing a complete blockage of the thoroughfare. Such an obstruction was decidedly a great menace, and it was only through Lee's quickness that a disaster had been averted.

"A near thing, my boy!" said the detective quietly. "I am very glad that our headlights were in working order, for otherwise we should have hit that tree—with disastrous results!"

Lee climbed from the car as he spoke followed by Nipper, and the pair commenced walking the few yards which separated them from the fallen tree.

Nipper looked at the massive trunk, and snorted.

"This has just about put the lid on things, guv'nor!" he exclaimed. "We can't possibly shift this thing! It weighs tons and tons!"

The detective nodded.

"There's nothing for it but to make a

detour," he replied. "Such accidents as these cannot be prevented, and it is no use grumbling—pon my soul! Did you hear that scream, Nipper?"

Nelson Lee broke off as a sudden, piercing scream floated along on the gusty air—a scream which seemed to be somewhat muffled, but which was charged with terror and fright.

Nipper nodded, his face going a shade paler.

"Yes, rather, guv'nor—it sounded like a soul in torment," he replied, looking round quickly. "It seemed to come from the other side of the road—Yes, by jingo! There's a house there, sir!"

He pointed as he spoke, and Lee glanced across the dark road. Sure enough, he perceived the dim outline of a large house—a building which stood well back from the road, almost hidden behind a dense mass of trees and evergreens.

And as the pair gazed towards the mysterious dwelling, the scream was repeated. It came distinctly to their straining ears—a fear-laden cry of sheer terror.

With one accord Lee and Nipper raced across the rain-sodden road, and quickly discovered a gateway leading on to a weed-grown drive. Without troubling to open the gate, they hurriedly climbed over it, and continued their dash towards the house.

Before they had covered half the distance, however, a vivid flash of lightning sizzled across the black sky, and its brilliant flash revealed an awe-inspiring sight to the hastening couple.

For, just as that bright flash of lightning zipped out, Nelson Lee and Nipper saw the front door of the house flung violently open, revealing the form of a girl.

She uttered another terrible scream, and then—just before the lightning flickered out—Lee and Nipper saw her reel blindly forward.

Then she staggered drunkenly, swayed uncertainly for a second, and fell to the ground with a sickening thud.

The next instant everything was blotted out by the darkness once more.

Such a scene as Lee and Nipper had witnessed seemed altogether too unreal to be true—but they were soon to discover that they had not been a prey to imagination.

For the lightning-flash had revealed a picture of actual fact.

CHAPTER II.

DR. JEREMY NICHOLSON.



NELSON LEE, who had paused involuntary as the tense little drama had been enacted, gave voice to a startled ejaculation.

"By James, Nipper—this looks like a ghastly tragedy!" he exclaimed, with a grave face. "The expression on that

poor girl's face was frightful in the extreme. I saw it most distinctly."

Nipper nodded quickly.

"So did I, guv'nor," he said. "It—it was simply beyond description! I've never seen anything so awful in all my life! The girl seemed to be absolutely demented by fear! I wonder what caused her to come rushing out into the storm as she did?"

"I don't know, young 'un—but it is useless for us to remain here, talking," said the detective, striding forward as he spoke. "That girl is very obviously in need of attention, and there appears to be nobody here but you and I. And yet it seems strange that she should be in such a house as this—alone."

The detective's remark was caused by the fact that the front of the building was in total darkness. Not a glimmer of light came from any of the windows, and even the open front door showed no indication of occupation beyond. The whole place, so far as outward appearances were concerned, was completely given over to the darkness of the pit.

Lee and Nipper reached the fallen girl's side in a very few moments, and the detective at once drew an electric torch from his pocket, and switched it on. Then he bent over the girl, and looked into her face intently.

Her features were contracted into an expression of the most acute terror, and her wide-open eyes mutely told the two newcomers that the unfortunate young woman had passed through some sort of dreadful experience.

Nipper stared at her with a white face and trembling lips, and he needed no telling that this girl had been the victim of a terrible fright. Her features were ghastly in their pallor—but it was the awe-stricken expression upon them which made the lad's blood run cold.

Nelson Lee was almost as greatly affected—but he preserved an outward appearance of grave calm as he quickly examined the unfortunate girl. She was lying just clear of the doorstep upon the sodden, weed-grown pathway, and she was completely motionless.

The detective knew the worst in a few seconds, and he turned to Nipper and spoke in a low voice.

"I'm afraid the worst has happened," he murmured. "This poor girl is dead, my lad, and there can be no doubt that she was—Oh! There are other occupants of the house, then, after all!"

Nelson Lee broke off abruptly as two or three figures emerged from the dark doorway, and came hurrying to the spot. The foremost of them was a curious-looking old man with grey hair and an untidy beard—a man who, nevertheless, looked like a highly intellectual individual of the professor stamp. His two companions, obviously, were servants—a man and a woman.

"What is the matter here, eh?" asked the old man testily. "Who are you, sir,

and why have you seen fit to interfere in my affairs? That servant girl has evidently fainted, and—"

"The girl is dead!" said Lee quietly.

"Dead!" repeated the old man, in a startled voice. "Good gracious me! This—is this most unfortunate and tragic. Poor Ellen was always nervous and highly-strung during stormy weather, and I can only conclude that she has succumbed to a weak heart. Dear me! Dear me! This is terrible—terrible! We will take her indoors at once."

He bent down without more ado, and grasped the dead girl's ankles, while Nelson Lee placed his hands under her shoulders, and assisted the old man to carry the young woman into the house.

A lamp had now been placed in the hall, and by the light of its feeble flame the detective was able to find his way across the hall to a couch, upon which the dead girl was laid.

He then introduced himself to his host, who, in return, volunteered the information that he was Dr. Jeremy Nicholson, and that the name of the house was Hollowdene Manor. The old man seemed to give the simple facts with a grudging reluctance which seemed curious in the circumstances; but he could do nothing less.

"This is a most appalling state of affairs, Mr. Lee," he said, looking at the detective with his shifty, restless eyes. "Ellen—the girl who is dead—frequently exhibited signs of distress during thunderstorms, but I have never known her to become so terror-stricken as she obviously was to-night. Her heart, no doubt, became affected—"

"But why did she scream so terribly, sir?" asked Nipper. "The guv'nor and I were forced to stop outside this house because of a tree which has blown across the road, and the first thing we heard was the girl's frightened scream."

Dr. Jeremy Nicholson looked puzzled.

"Scream?" he repeated. "I heard no scream, my lad! You must have been mistaken—"

"I think not," put in Lee. "I distinctly heard the girl scream, Dr. Nicholson, in addition to Nipper. I gathered that she had received some sort of scare—"

"Nonsense—nonsense!" said the doctor quickly. "Ellen was frightened of the storm, I tell you, and nothing else! Her death is very, very regrettable, but I am quite sure that it was caused by a weak heart. I am extremely obliged to you, Mr. Lee, for the interest you have taken, and I trust you will be willing to further add to your kindness by informing the police in the village. You will pass through it as you resume your interrupted journey."

There was no doubt that Dr. Nicholson seemed very anxious to get rid of his visitors. He was still standing with Lee and Nipper in the hall beside the couch,

but there was no sign of the two servants who had been there a few moments ago.

And the detective, seeing how matters stood, promised to call at the police-station as requested.

A minute later he and Nipper had taken their leave of Dr. Jeremy Nicholson, and were soon walking down the dark drive towards their motor-car.

The pair were very thoughtful, for they had both gained the impression that there was something sinister and mysterious about Hollowdene Manor and its curious tenant.

CHAPTER III.

ON THE TRACK OF A MYSTERY.



NIPPER grunted. "Well, guv'nor, that old fellow is a queer card, if ever there was one!" he exclaimed. "Did you notice the way he practically

kicked us out?"

Nelson Lee nodded grimly.

"I did, young 'un," he returned. "And I am fairly certain that Dr. Jeremy Nicholson is particularly anxious to conceal the cause of that poor girl's fright."

"You don't believe his yarn that she was scared by the storm, then?" asked Nipper.

"Scarcely!" said the detective. "Such an explanation is ridiculous on the face of it. There are many people, I know, who show very visible signs of nervousness during severe thunderstorms; but I have never heard of one who screamed in such an obvious grip of fear as the girl who has just died. Her death, Nipper, was nothing whatever to do with the storm, in my opinion."

Nipper pursed his lips.

"Then it looks jolly serious for Nicholson!" he declared. "But are you sure you're right, sir? Couldn't the girl really have been frightened by the storm?"

Nelson Lee shook his head.

"Not to such an extent as the terror we witnessed," he declared. "If the girl had really been scared by the storm, the very last thing she would have done would be to dash out of the house. But she did dash out of the house, Nipper—screaming with fear!"

Nipper nodded, and looked at his master with a keen glance.

"You mean that she was frightened by something inside the Manor, guv'nor—not by the storm outside?" he queried.

"Exactly—that is my opinion," said Nelson Lee. "That would account for Dr. Nicholson's anxiety to get rid of us, in addition to his very obvious hope that we should believe his statements. The matter seems to be decidedly mysterious, young 'un—very mysterious indeed. Those screams

were made by a person who was literally frightened to death, and the terror depicted upon her features indicates quite plainly that the girl's fear was caused by something she witnessed—something ghastly and terrible, I should think. A mere thunderstorm could never have that effect, however severe it was."

The pair by this time had again reached their car, and Lee lost no time in turning it round. The fallen tree, of course, made it impossible for them to continue their journey along the main road, and within a few minutes they were returning on their tracks.

By taking the next side-turning, however, and pulling up at the first house they came to, they soon learned that they could easily reach the village of Little Barling by continuing, and re-entering the main road about a mile further on.

The storm was still raging fiercely, but Lee and Nipper pressed onwards towards the village, their thoughts busily occupied with the tragedy they had just witnessed.

Little Barling proved to be a mere handful of a place, and upon arrival Lee drove straight to the police-station—which was also the dwelling-place of the constable. As luck would have it, the visitors found a sergeant within the building, and Nelson Lee lost no time in telling the official of what had taken place at Hollowdene Manor.

The sergeant listened attentively, and made several notes in his note-book. Then he turned his weather-beaten, ruddy countenance to the detective, and nodded wisely.

"I don't rightly know what to make o' this," he said, tapping his note-book thoughtfully. "I knew that girl, Ellen Bennett, pretty well, an' she didn't strike me as bein' one o' the nervous sort. I must go an' see Dr. Nicholson at once, an' hear what he's got to say."

Nipper smiled.

"You won't get much more out of him than the guv'nor did, sergeant," he declared. "He seems to be a queer old chap, doesn't he?"

The policeman nodded.

"You're right—he's the queerest old chap we've got in these parts," he said. "He always seems to be irritable and moody, an' generally snaps off a body's head if you attempt to talk to him! An' the Manor's a queer sort o' place, too. There's never a visitor goes there from one month's end to another."

"What is Dr. Nicholson?" inquired Nelson Lee. "A scientist or a medical man?"

The sergeant shook his head.

"It ain't any good asking me that, sir," he confessed. "Nobody knows anything about him. He's a sort o' mystery, an' I wonder that he gets any servants to stop at the Manor. There's a butler and his wife an' two maids, an' I've heard that they get

good money in return for doin' their duties, which ain't heavy. I've never been inside Hollowdene Manor—but I reckon I'll get in to-night. Some people seem to think that Dr. Nicholson is a harmless sort o' lunatic—"

"Then they're mistaken!" cut in Lee crisply. "He's sane enough, sergeant, and an exceedingly clever man, unless I'm greatly at fault. Well, I don't think Nipper or I can assist you further, and we may as well be getting off."

Lee had already told the sergeant about the fallen tree, and the official intimated

CHAPTER IV.

NELSON LEE'S PLAN.



"NATURAL causes," said Nipper, looking up from the newspaper and glancing at Nelson Lee disgustedly. "What do you think of that, sir?"

The detective frowned.

"I think the verdict is entirely wrong, young 'un; but I'm not in the least surprised," he returned. "Country people are



She uttered another terrible scream, and then—just before the lightning flickered out—Nelson Lee and Nipper saw her reel forward blindly.

his intention of having warning lights placed against the obstruction without delay.

On the way home Lee and Nipper found plenty to talk about regarding the mystery of Hollowdene Manor—but they little guessed that they would be called upon to take a very interesting and active part in its solution.

There were some strange events brewing in connection with Dr. Jeremy Nicholson and his queer household.

frequently easy to convince, and a local jury would have no difficulty in believing that Ellen Bennett was scared to death by the thunderstorm. But I strongly hold the belief that there was something much more sinister behind her tragic death."

Three days had elapsed since Lee and Nipper had experienced their curious adventure on the Watford road. And now there appeared a brief report in the paper concerning the inquest which had been held upon the dead girl.

There had been evidence called to prove that Ellen Bennett had suffered from a weak heart, and this fact—coupled with Dr. Nicholson's statement that the girl was scared of thunderstorms—had caused the jury to bring in the verdict which Nipper had quoted.

"It's all rot!" said Lee's assistant indignantly. "Those fatheaded jurymen don't know what they're talking about, guv'nor! I'll bet they wouldn't have returned a verdict like this if you'd been called as a witness, and I can't understand why you were left out—"

"For the simple reason that I desired to be left out," cut in Lee smoothly. "As soon as I can spare the time I intend to interest myself in the affairs of this mysterious Dr. Nicholson, and to make an attempt to clear up the obscure circumstances of that poor servant-girl's death. At present I am much too busy to devote the time to it, and I am not at all sorry that the inquest has resulted in a verdict of 'natural causes.'"

"Why?" demanded Nipper.

"For the simple reason that Dr. Nicholson is now perfectly at his ease," replied the detective. "If, as I suspect, he was in some way responsible for Miss Bennett's death, he will now consider himself free from suspicion—and that will give us a splendid opportunity to catch him unawares. Of course, it is quite possible that I am entirely mistaken, but I cannot get rid of the impression that Hollowdene Manor contains some mysterious secret or other."

Nipper nodded. He had thought it curious that neither he nor Lee had been called as witnesses at the inquest—for they had actually witnessed the death of the unfortunate girl.

But Lee had especially requested the authorities to refrain from enlisting their services, and the wisdom of this move was to become amply apparent at a later stage.

A few hours later Nelson Lee and Nipper received a striking confirmation of the detective's suspicions regarding Hollowdene Manor. The pair had just finished their lunch, and were about to leave the house, when Mrs. Jones, the detective's housekeeper, ushered a visitor into the consulting-room.

She proved to be Miss Betty Aldridge, one of the maids employed by Dr. Jeremy Nicholson, and she lost no time in stating her business. She seemed to be a sensible, level-headed sort of girl, and she was dressed in a neat black costume.

"I have come to see you, sir, because I heard that it was you who came to the Manor on the night that poor Ellen Bennett died," she began, without any beating about the bush. "There was an inquest this morning, and the jury brought in a verdict which doesn't satisfy me—"

"You don't believe that your fellow-servant died from natural causes, eh?" queried the detective keenly.

"No, sir, I don't," replied Betty Aldridge emphatically. "I believe that poor Ellen was scared to death by some of the master's mysterious doings! Hollowdene Manor is a terrible place to live in, and I have come up to London to fetch my sister to take Ellen's place. I can't stand being there any longer alone! I'd leave altogether if it wasn't for the fact that my young man is employed near by!"

Lee nodded.

"I understand," he said. "But what do you mean by your master's mysterious doings?"

"Well, sir, it's hard to explain," answered Betty Aldridge. "You see, Dr. Nicholson isn't like other men—he is a mystery man, always in one room, pottering about at his own affairs. I've never actually seen anything that might have scared Ellen that night, but I know that she must have received a tremendous shock owing to the way she rushed out of the house."

Nelson Lee looked at the girl keenly.

"Tell me," he said, "have you ever known Ellen Bennett to be so affected by a thunderstorm that she gave way to piercing screams?"

Betty Aldridge shook her head emphatically.

"No, sir," she declared. "She was certainly a little bit nervous of the lightning—but that was all. Plenty of girls are more frightened of storms than she ever was."

The detective nodded.

"Quite so," he murmured. "So you think that Miss Bennett was frightened by something she saw within the Manor—something which so terrified her that she screamed, and dashed out of the front door?"

"Yes, sir, that's what I think!" agreed the visitor.

"Have you any idea what it could have been?"

"No, sir; no idea at all," said Miss Aldridge. "But ever since that night I've had a creepy feeling, and I've been too scared at what might happen to go about the house after dark! That's why I've come to fetch my sister—just to have her as a companion."

Nelson Lee was silent for a few moments. A sudden thought had just entered his brain—a notion which, if he could put it into operation, might provide a means of solving the mystery of Hollowdene Manor.

As things now stood the detective could see that many difficulties would have to be faced if he were to penetrate into the heart of things; but this new scheme would disperse those difficulties to a very large extent.

He looked at the girl again.

"Have you arranged for your sister's journey yet?" he inquired. "I mean, is she to return to Hollowdene Manor with you this afternoon?"

"I haven't seen her yet, sir," admitted Miss Aldridge. "I thought it best to call upon you first. You see, sir, my sister is in service in London, but I'm going to ask her

to throw up her place now, and come back with me. I think she'll do it, even if it means the loss of a month's money—"

"Splendid!" cut in Nelson Lee briskly. "It is very fortunate that you came here before calling on your sister, because I want you, Miss Aldridge, to allow me to make a slight alteration in your plans. Obviously, you are anxious to clear up the mystery which evidently surrounds Miss Bennett's death, and you will be helping very greatly to do so if you will consent to a lady assistant of mine accompanying you in place of your sister."

Nipper looked up quickly.

"Great Scott! That's a good wheeze, guv'nor!" he ejaculated. "You mean Miss Eileen Dare, of course?"

"Exactly, young 'un!" agreed the detective. "If Miss Dare will undertake the task, I think she will prove a very valuable ally. With her installed as a maid within the walls of Hollowdene Manor, I don't fancy the mystery will remain obscure for very long!"

CHAPTER V.

EILEEN DARE'S TASK.



BETTY ALDRIDGE looked at Nelson Lee eagerly.

"Oh, sir, I've often heard of Miss Eileen Dare!" she exclaimed. "She's very clever, and I'm sure that she would be able to find out what caused poor Ellen to die of fright!"

The detective nodded.

"I think so, too," he agreed. "Then I may take it, Miss Aldridge, that you are agreeable to the arrangement? Miss Dare, remember, would accompany you as your sister, and would sustain that character until her task was finished."

"Yes, sir, I understand," replied the maid. "And I am quite agreeable. I would much rather have Miss Dare in the house than my sister!"

Nelson Lee was elated, and he at once grasped the telephone, and got into communication with his famous lady assistant at her London flat. Eileen Dare had been associated with the detective in countless intricate cases, and he had found her to be an extremely reliable and courageous young lady.

Upon receiving Lee's message she promised to come to Gray's Inn Road without delay, and she arrived in a very short time—looking prettier and more dainty than ever. Eileen Dare was a charming girl in every way, small, and with a perfect figure. She was about twenty years of age, and possessed a pair of roguish brown eyes, which were usually full of merriment. But they were frank and open, and extremely keen.

"Hallo, Mr. Lee!" she exclaimed heartily, as she entered the consulting-room, and shook hands with the detective and Nipper. "I was wondering when you were going to remember my existence! I'm simply bursting to help you in some more of your cases again, and I hope that your telephone message means that you've got something for me to do?"

"It does, Miss Dare," said the detective, with a smile. "I want you to undertake a rather intricate investigation—one that may possibly entail a certain amount of risk—"

"I don't mind the risk, Mr. Lee, as you know well enough," cut in the girl keenly. "Please explain exactly what you mean."

Nelson Lee did so. He told Eileen Dare everything possible in connection with the Hollowdene Manor affair—describing how he and Nipper had witnessed the death of Ellen Bennett, and the subsequent events which had taken place. He concluded by saying that a splendid opportunity was provided for Eileen's entry into the house owing to Miss Aldridge's determination to enlist the companionship of her sister, and suggested that Eileen should go in her stead.

And Eileen, once she had heard the details, was not only willing to go, but eager to do so, saying that she wanted some excitement and adventure. She promised to do everything in her power to fathom the mysterious fright which had killed the unfortunate maid, and to report to Nelson Lee at the earliest opportunity.

How she would carry out her task remained to be seen, but she left London within a few hours as Betty's sister, and was soon installed within the sinister walls of Hollowdene Manor.

And Nelson Lee and Nipper had an idea that developments would soon follow as a result of the lady detective's courage and resource.

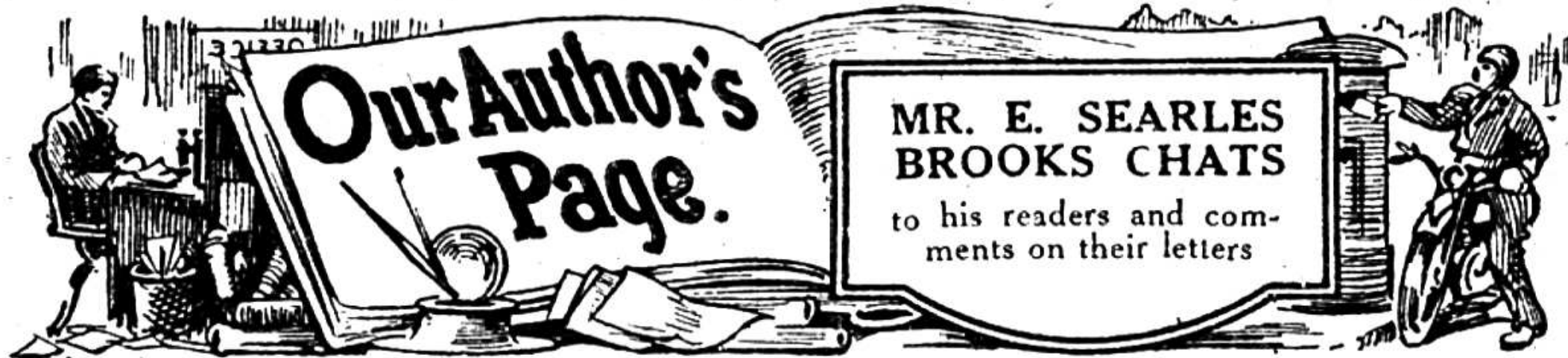
THE END.

**What is the sinister
mystery of Hollowdene
Manor?**

See NEXT WEEK'S Story

**"DR. NICHOLSON'S
STRANGE FEAR!"**

**Introducing the popular
girl detective EILEEN DARE**



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

Letters received: D. Ward (Cardiff), F.R.A. (Birmingham), Frank Hollingworth (Oldham), W. J. Sparks (King's Cross), Loyal Reader (Liverpool), Sheawb (Bildeston), G. Daws (Anerley), Harold Doughty (Chesterfield), F. G. Bendell (Lymington), W. Taylor (Norbury), Cynthia Martin (Gravesend), Norman C. Moss (Newark), Ernest Brown (Rhondda), E. Seabourne (Newport, Mon.), E. S. Lawrence (Bromley), Jack Ricketts (Hayle), R. Thompson (Burnley), F. Page (Newbury), E. J. R. (Leyton), B. Hallows (Wirksworth), James Duncan (Huntly), and Ernest E. Dunckley (Chiswick).

As a matter of fact, I've got a lot more letters than the ones from you fellows mentioned above. But if I put all your names down here, I shan't have much of my page left for anything else. I think I shall have to adopt the suggestion which several readers have made to me, to increase my chat to two pages. I shall have to get on the right side of the Editor, and get him to wangle it somehow. - But it's on your own heads, remember!

I have noticed that a few of you address your envelopes to the Editor, and the letter proved to be for me. In fact, several of you have addressed yourself to the Editor throughout, as though he wrote the stories. His time is quite monopolised without having to write stories in addition. Let me whisper to you that your Editor is a hard-working man.

No, you've made a mistake—some of you. The Editor and myself are two distinctly different individuals. But it wouldn't be a bad idea on my part if I could get the

Editor to take on this page. After all, it's more in his line than mine, and if he answers all your questions it would come to the same thing, wouldn't it? He's very good-natured, so I think I'll suggest it to him after he's had a good lunch. That's when he's in a sweet temper.

There's nothing I love better than sitting down to write these few notes to you all, and I needn't mention that the perusal of your letters gives me endless pleasure. Still, you can keep on writing to me if you want to. There's nothing to prohibit you doing that. I shall always be delighted to hear from you all, as often as you please.

Mind you, I haven't definitely made up my mind yet. Strictly speaking, it's for the Editor to definitely make up his. If he doesn't care to take on the job, you'll be condemned to have me, after all. You'll hear more about this next week.

Now, I'd like to take this opportunity to wish you all the Happiest Christmas you've ever had—with plenty of good cheer and jollity and downright joy. I'm saying this now in case I have no further chance, and I'd like you to know that my thoughts are with you. I'm a bit of a youngster myself when it comes to Christmas parties, and there's nothing I'd like better than to have the whole lot of you with me at Christmas. What a party, eh? I'm afraid we should need something as big as the Stadium at Wembley, or the Crystal Palace, to accommodate us all!

But you know what I mean, don't you?

I've got all sorts of fresh ideas up my sleeve, and I can promise you some of my best work in the New Year. For instance, the special new series which starts in No. 501, will, I believe, please you more than any of my stories have done for months past. I hope so, anyway. And in No. 500—the week before the new series starts—I've given you a bit of a novelty. But I mustn't say anything more about it now, or the Editor might get wild with me. I expect he wants to tell you this little surprise in his own way.

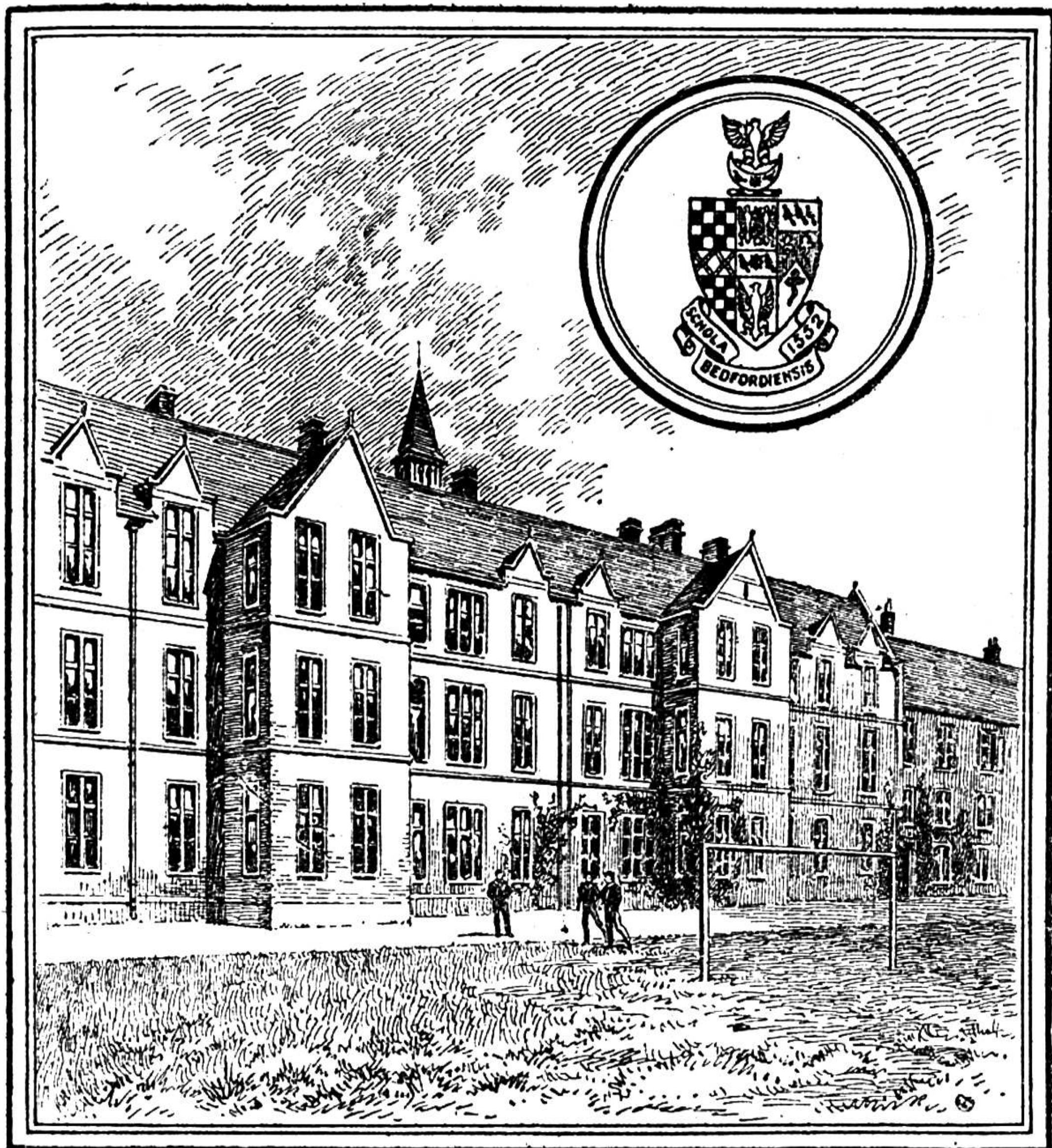


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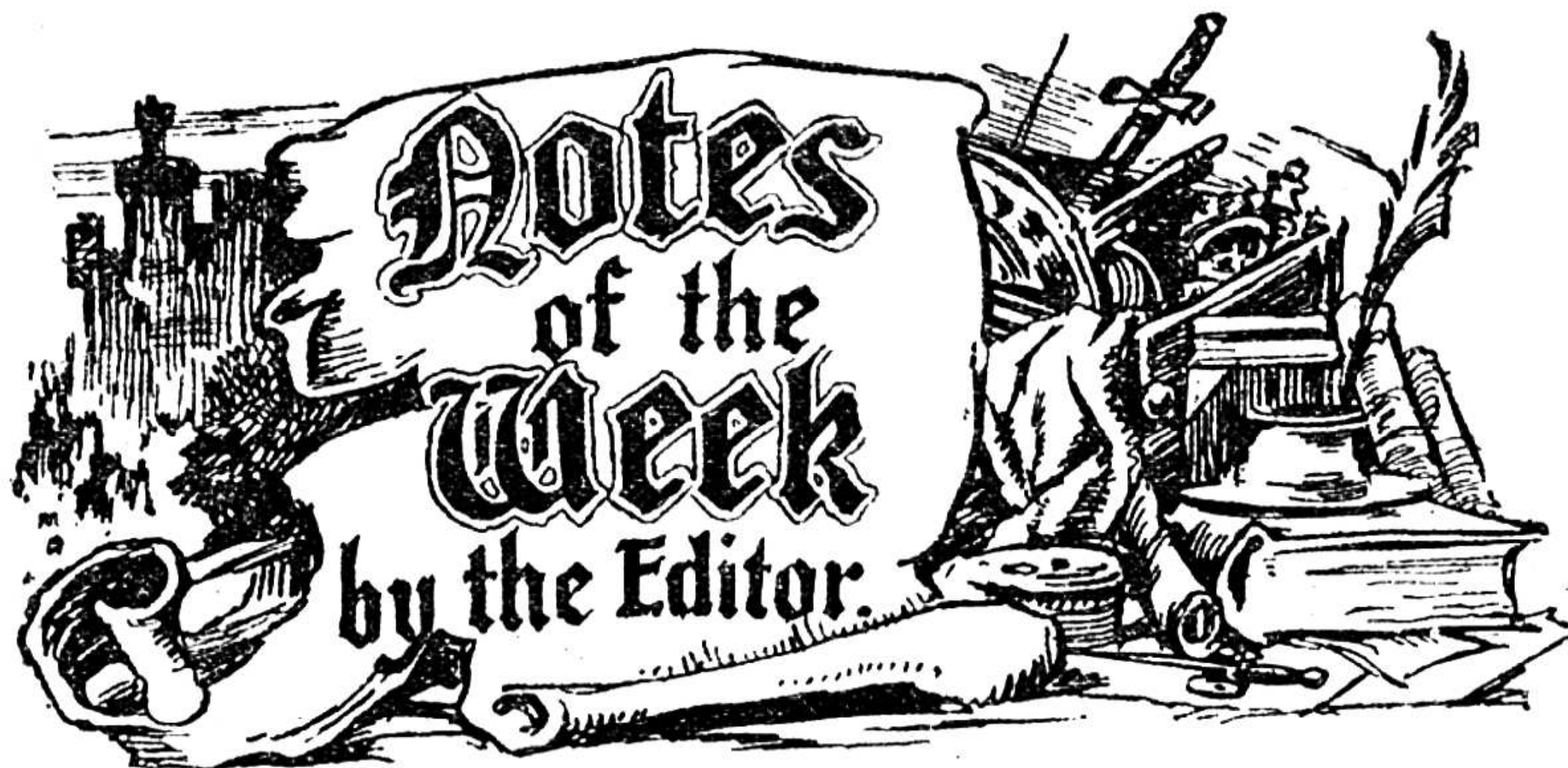
December 13, 1924.



OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS SERIES OF ART SKETCHES.

No. 57.—BEDFORD SCHOOL.

Bedford School, granted Letters Patent by Edward VI, in 1552, is said to date back to before the Conquest. The school was afterwards endowed by Sir Wm. Harper, Merchant Taylor, Sheriff, and Lord Mayor of London in 1566. In 1892 the school was transferred to a new site, the new buildings of which were open on 29th October, 1891. Games and sports followed are cricket, Rugby football, fives, and boating.



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

My dear Chums,

After our disastrous experience in the footer match on Saturday against the River House School, we might seriously consider sending out a challenge to the girls of Moor View School. We owe our defeat largely to the splendid goalkeeping of Norman Berkeley. Time after time he stopped all our efforts to get the ball through the goal-mouth. If the River House can produce such a wonderful goalie, they should be able to hold their own against any other school. We shall have to arrange a return match next term. In the meantime, there must be no more slacking in the Fourth eleven. Hard practice and strict training will be necessary if we are going to wipe out our licking by the River House team.

CHRISTMAS AT GLENTHORNE MANOR.

Archie has been sending out invitations for his Christmas party in vast quantities to all and sundry at St. Frank's and the Moor View School. A good many of the fellows naturally will not be able to go, but the Fourth Form will be represented by all the leading lights. As to the arrangements for this huge festive gathering of schoolboys and schoolgirls, we can trust Archie's people not to spare any trouble or expense in providing their young guests with the best of everything. One of the most excited juniors is Fatty Little. For once in a way he hopes to satisfy his abnormal appetite, and to see Fatty in such a state of repletion as to be unable to find accommodation even for an additional mince-pie will be truly a sight for the gods to look upon. But for those whose interests are not wholly centred on food, there will be plenty of fun, entertain-

ment and excitement, such as one loves to associate with a real, old-fashioned Christmas. Glenthorne Manor, by the way, is believed to be haunted by the spirits of long since departed Glenthornes. It is fairly certain that some of the fellows, eager for thrills, will want to investigate and lay the alleged ghost. Anyhow, ghosts or no ghosts, there are few places in England to-day where one would find a more likely hunting ground for spooks and such-like than in the ancient, ancestral home of the Glenthornes.

NEXT WEEK'S SPECIAL CHRISTMAS NUMBER OF THE MAG.

I must now say a few words about our Special Christmas Number, which will make its appearance next week. Most of the regular features, such as "Who's Who," "In Reply to Yours," etc., will be discontinued temporarily, and replaced by stories and articles written specially for the occasion. Goodwin, in his "How to Do It" articles, is devoting three pages to "Conjuring," "How to Make Simple Conjuring Apparatus," and "Some Puzzles to Make," all of which will come in very useful to those boys who would like to entertain their friends without making a hole in their pocket-money—an important consideration at Christmas-time. All the conjuring apparatus and puzzles given in the articles are simple to construct, and are made from quite ordinary materials. They are none the less mystifying to the uninitiated. The following juniors are contributing special Christmas stories, articles, etc.: E. O. Handforth, Jack Grey, Willie Handforth, Archie Glenthorne, and Clarence Fellowe. Altogether, it is going to be a top-hole number—so don't miss it!

Yours to a cinder,

REGGIE PITT.



IN QUEST OF GOLD!

A Marvellous New Serial of Breathless Adventure in the Klondyke and Alaska.

By the Celebrated Author
Edward Oswald Handforth

MEMORIES REFRESHED HERE!

Bob Brave and Claude Courage are two sturdy British lads who are seeking their fortunes in the goldfields. They pass through fearful adventures, and they are beset by two dastardly miscreants named Cross-Eyed Carl and Six-Chamber Sid. The plucky boys have just staked out their claim, and they have discovered pots of gold. And then the villains spring out of the forest, and advance to the attack. They are about to jump the claim!

CHAPTER IV

THE BATTLE FOR LIFE!

CLAUDE COURAGE halted in his tracks and stood there, rooted to the ground. He was frozen into a statue of stone!

"My heavens!" he breathed. "They're on us!"

He had been about to enter the shack, but in the nick of time he saw the two bad men creeping out from the trees. Instantly Claude Courage leapt into the shack, and slammed the door with a mighty crash.

"Bob—Bob!" he gasped. "The game's up! The bandits are coming to rob us! Load the guns! Prepare for battle!"

Bob Brave turned round, startled. He was stacking nuggets into a corner, piling them up like bricks. And when he turned, his face was the colour of ashes. His eyes leapt.

"We must fight!" he vowed, in a great voice. "Never will we surrender! With our backs to the wall we will meet death like Britons! And after that we'll rout the enemy, and win through!"

"To the defences!" panted Claude valiantly.

And the two brave boys slammed and locked the door, and then they gripped their sturdy rifles. But, even as they loaded up, there came the cracking of revolvers, and bullet-holes appeared in the log walls on every side. In next to no time the shack

was like a sieve. But by some miraculous chance of fate the two chums were untouched by the hail of bullets. Lead whizzed all about them like hailstones during a thunderstorm.

Pluck was triumphing over villainy!

CHAPTER V.

THE REDSKIN HORDE.

CRACK! Crack! Crack! Shot after shot rang out clearly on the still, frosty air. Claude Courage and Bob Brave were fighting desperately. And in less than three hours they forced Cross-Eyed Carl and Six-Chamber Sid to retreat.

The villains were foiled—they went back into the woods, plugged in dozens of places. But the two boys were unharmed. Not a single scratch could be seen on them.

"Hurrah!" cheered Bob Brave victoriously.

"They've gone—and our claim is still safe!" cried Claude Courage, flinging open the door, and gazing out. "Good heavens! But what's this? Look, Bob! We have escaped one danger only to be beset by another!"

The peril was now truly appalling.

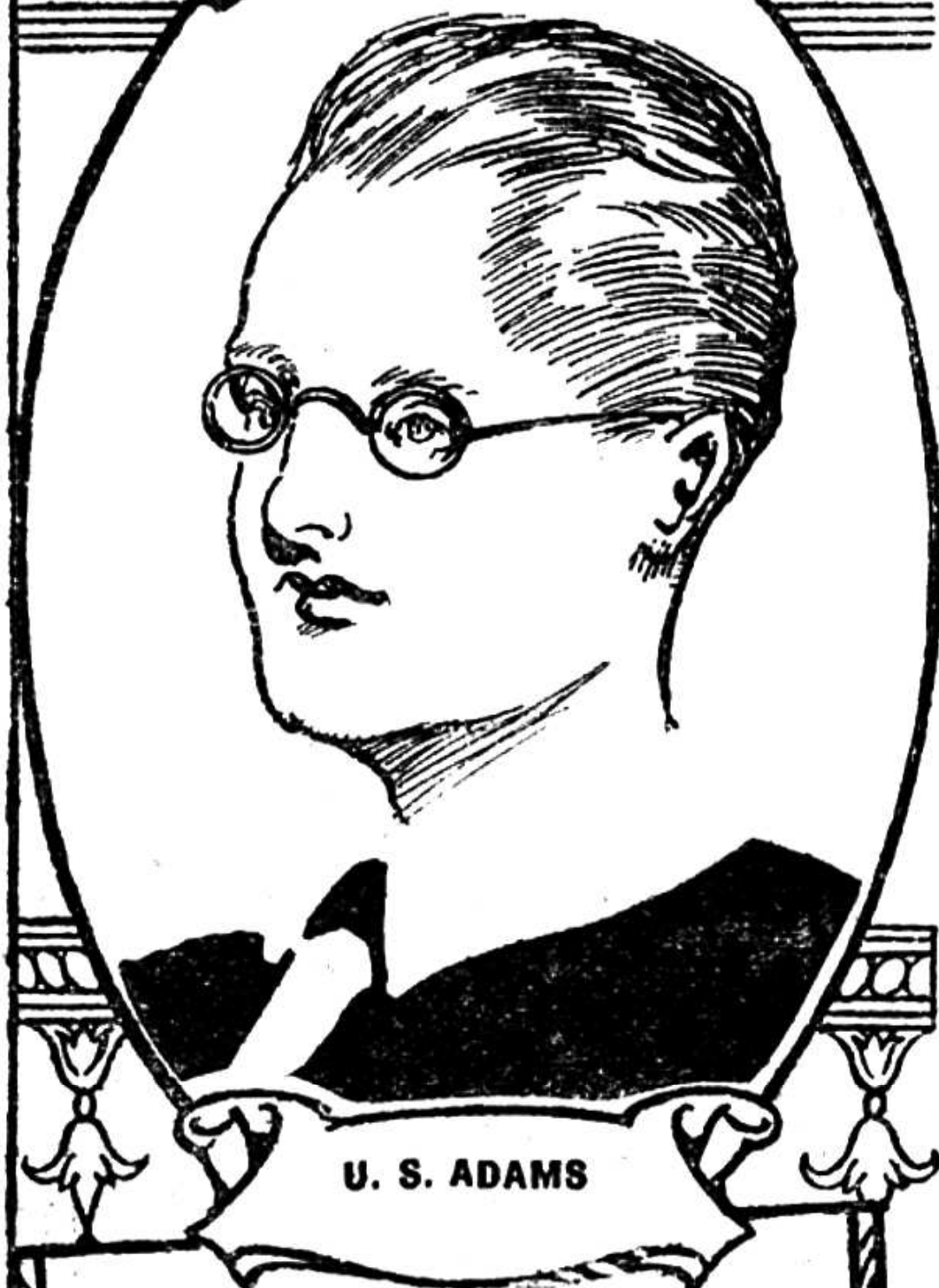
From every side red shapes were appearing. They came crawling over the ground like worms—wriggling and squirming and growing ever nearer. The Indians of the dreaded Flatfoot tribe were on the war-path!

Once again the door was slammed—and only just in time. For a hissing hail of arrows came shooting down upon the shack. One of them whizzed through a bullet-hole in the woodwork, and buried itself in Bob Brave's manly chest!

With a groan he sank to the floor, and outside the redskins howled with triumph!

(This stirring serial will be continued in next week's number. So look out!)

OUR PORTRAIT GALLERY. And WHO'S WHO.



U. S. ADAMS

No. 45.—ULYSSES SPENCER ADAMS.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

Typically American in appearance, with loose-jointed frame, keen, alert features, and a knowing look. Wears tortoiseshell-rimmed glasses. Eyes, grey. Hair, blonde. Height, 5 ft. 3 ins. Weight, 8 st. 12 lb. Birthday, October 9th.

CHIEF CHARACTERISTICS:

In his own words, "a regular guy." Possesses all the American characteristics in a marked degree. Confident, cool, and boastful. Never tires of exhibiting his own cleverness, which is more imaginary than real. On the whole, a really decent fellow.

SPORTS & RECREATIONS:

Regards cricket and football as slow. Prefers baseball. In spite of his big talk, is only moderate in general athletic prowess. Hobby: Singing the praises of his native land at the expense of other countries.

No. 46.—JULIAN CLIFTON.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

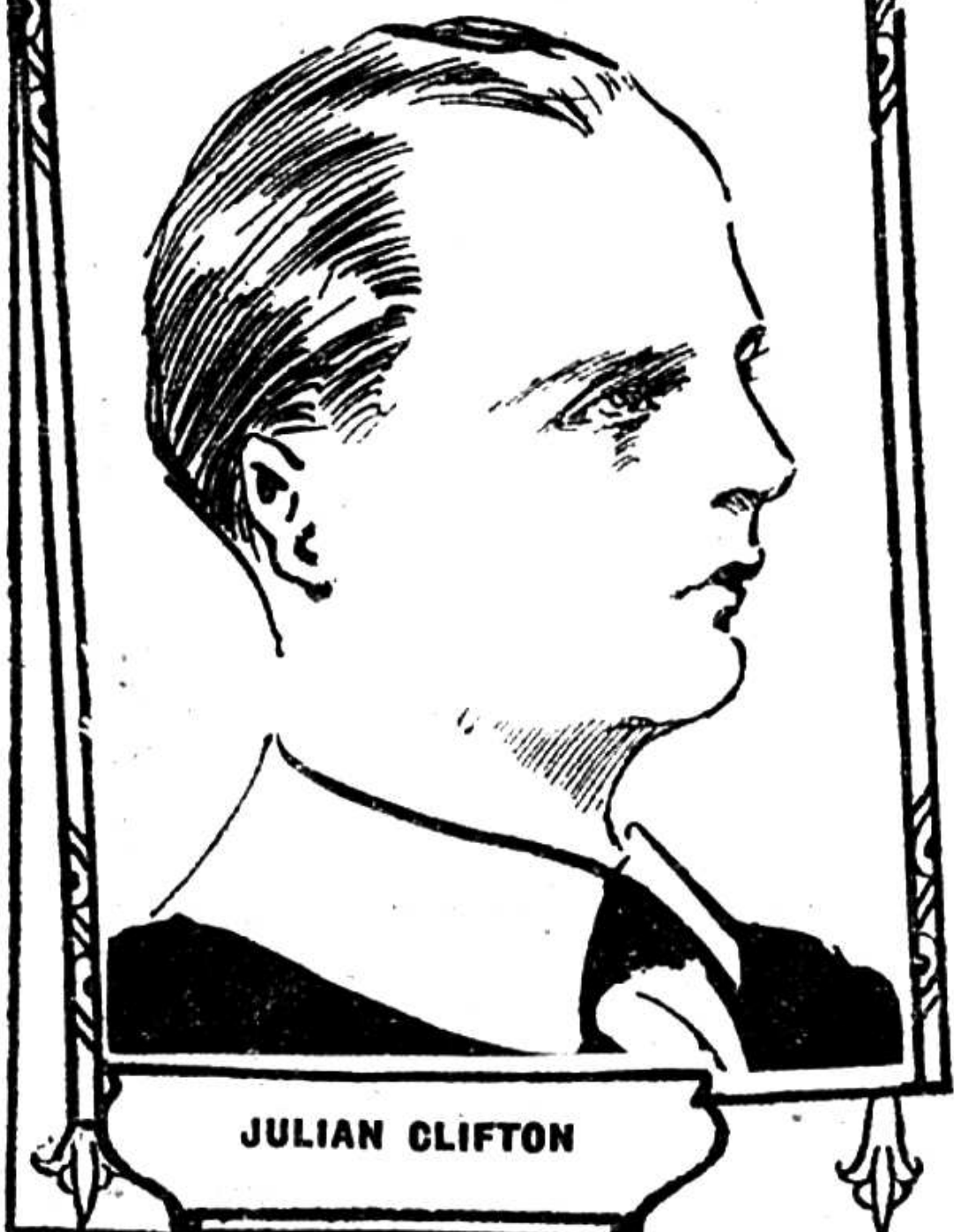
Prim and severe in appearance. Rather small, and inclined to be lean. Aristocratic, but solemn features, with a broad forehead. Eyes, hazel. Hair, brown. Height, 5 ft. Weight, 7 st. 11 lb. Birthday, February 16th.

CHIEF CHARACTERISTICS:

The mathematician of the Modern House Fourth. Is a perfect fiend for figures, and tops the class in this subject. Quiet, studious, and generally grave. Is incapable of appreciating a practical joke, and has no sense of humour.

SPORTS & RECREATIONS:

Prefers algebra to games. Only attends football or cricket practice by compulsion. Hobbies: Inventing intricate puzzles and problems on paper, entering competitions, and solving every kind of puzzle. Wins competition prizes as a mere matter of form, thus greatly increasing his pocket-money.



JULIAN CLIFTON

THE FOURTH At ST. FRANK'S.



No. 47.—THE DUKE OF SOMERTON.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

Well-built, sturdy, and with the figure of an athlete. Aristocratic features, but by no means weak. Amazingly untidy in appearance. Eyes, blue. Hair, curly brown. Height, 5 ft. 2 ins. Weight, 8 st. 9 lb. Birthday, May 23rd.

CHIEF CHARACTERISTICS:

The most careless fellow in the Fourth. Is always untidy, inky, and is never seen without sundry stains and tears in his clothing. Active and energetic, and good-natured to a degree. One of the best fellows imaginable—a sportsman to the backbone, without a trace of swank.

SPORTS & RECREATIONS:

Quite good at football and cricket, and excellent at swimming and running. Hobbies: Reading, cycling, and performing any mechanical task that involves a lot of grimy, grubby work.



THE DUKE OF
SOMERTON

No. 48.—ROBERT SIMMONS.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

Medium-sized and of average appearance—just an everyday schoolboy. Cheerful, ruddy countenance, and merry smile. Eyes, brown. Hair, dark. Height, 4 ft. 11 ins. Weight, 8 st. 2 lb. Birthday, December 13th.

CHIEF CHARACTERISTICS:

A rather happy-go-lucky sort of fellow, always worrying his study-mates, Clifton and Conroy minor, by his untidy habits. The cook of Study 9.

SPORTS & RECREATIONS:

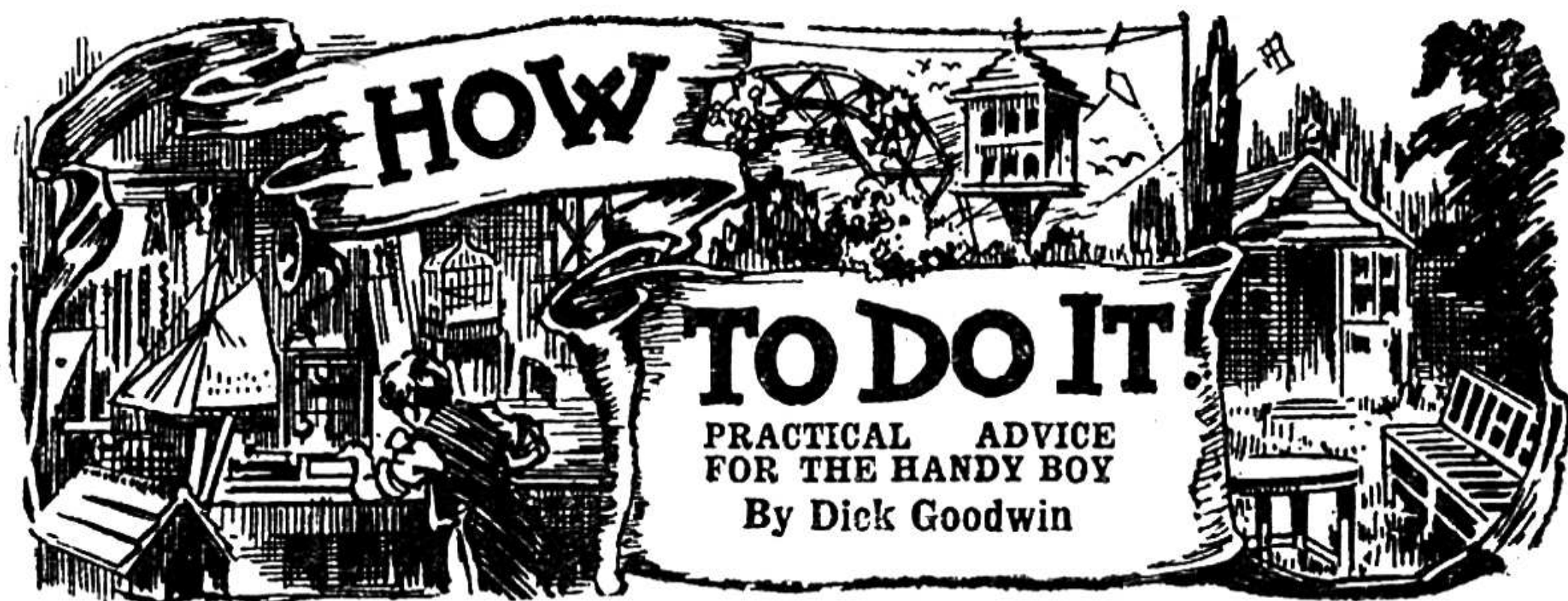
Only moderate at sports, but appears in the Modern House reserve list. Hobby: Devising new forms of cookery.

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.

NEXT WEEK: Timothy Tucker, Cyril Conroy, Enoch Snipe, Hubert Churchman.



ROBERT SIMMONS



HOW TO CUT MITRES.

The joint at the corner of a picture-frame is known as a mitre; this joint is used for many purposes in woodwork besides frames. It is cut with a tenon saw used with a mitre block, and the simplest form of this block is shown at Fig. 1. It is one of the necessary appliances for a woodwork bench, and is usually made from beech, this wood being used because it is hard, close-grained, and not liable to shrink. A piece of beech should be obtained from the timber yard, 2ft. by 2½in. by 1¼in. and machine-planed to 2¼in. by 1in.; it is then sawn in half and the two pieces screwed together with six 2in. screws.

SECURING THE PARTS.

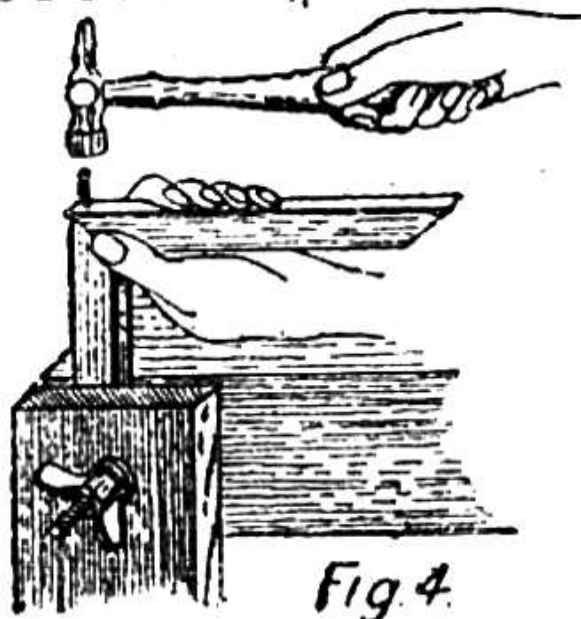
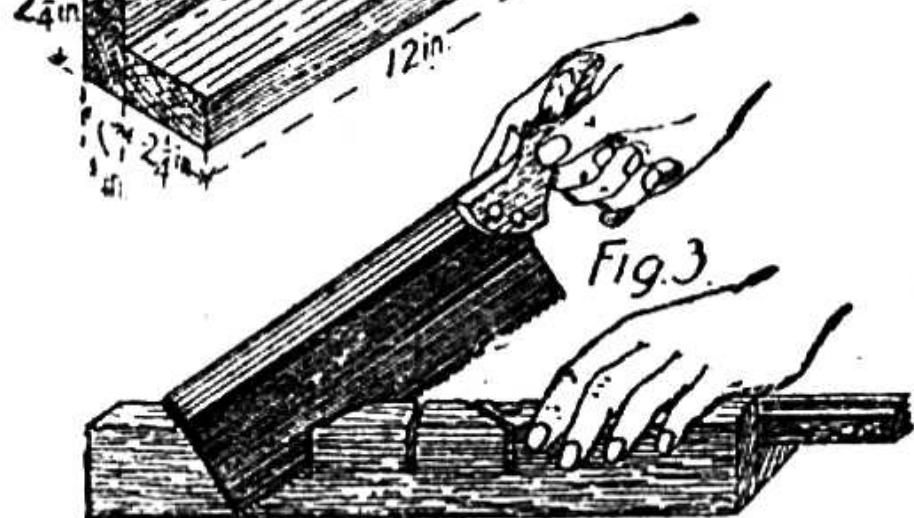
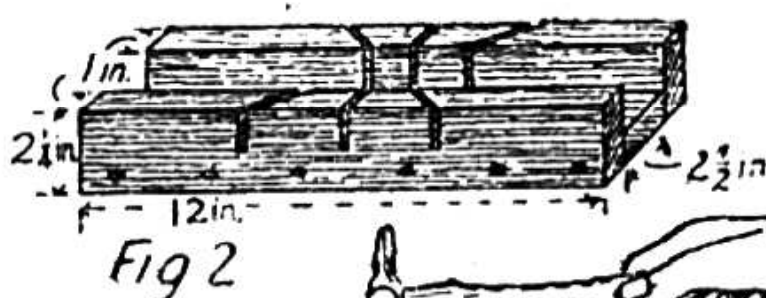
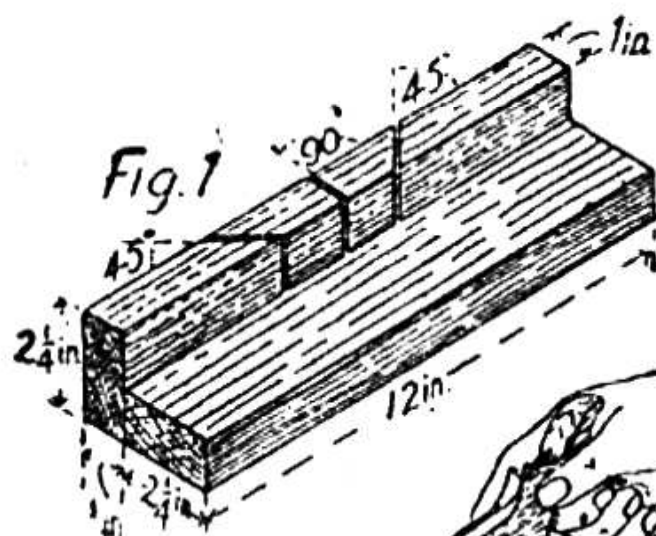
The best way to do the screwing is to mark the six holes at regular intervals on the back piece and then to bore holes the same diameter as the plain upper portion of the screw. Widen the top of the hole with

a countersink bit to allow for the head of the screw, and then place the plain piece of wood in the vice and rest the bored piece on top. Next bore a hole into the under piece with a gimlet through one of the two centre holes and insert a screw, which should be turned almost down. Adjust the top piece quite straight, and then proceed in the same way with the other screw-holes, finally turning the screws quite tight. The wood should now be turned right way up in the vice and a centre line made on the top piece with a try-square.

SETTING OUT THE ANGLES.

Next mark about 1¼in. away and mark two lines at 45°; this can be done with a setsquare or by making a template with a piece of stiff paper, first drawing a square and then a diagonal to it and cutting out the shape with a pair of scissors. The lines are now sawn down perfectly square with a tenon saw as shown.

Another form of mitre block is shown at Fig. 2. If it is accurately made, it will cut mitres quite true without difficulty. The method of holding the saw and moulding is shown at Fig. 3, and represents the commencement of the cut. The saw should be placed in the groove first of all and laid on the moulding in order to see that the cut is in the correct position. The thumb and fingers of the left hand should grasp the moulding tightly.



NAILING THE JOINTS.

When the pieces have been sawn, one piece is placed upright in the vice as at Fig. 4, the left hand should be used to hold another piece in position, and then a nail can be driven in as shown. It will be seen that the top piece projects beyond the upright piece; this is necessary in order

to allow the nail to be hammered in close and to form a tight joint. The amount of projection depends on the size of the moulding. For 1in. wide framing the projection should be about $\frac{1}{2}$ in. It is not an easy matter to nail up a mitre-joint, and it is possible to buy corner-cramps, which will hold the two pieces quite firm while nailing.

HOW TO MAKE PICTURE FRAMES.

There are several methods of framing pictures, but as a rule, I only use three. For large pictures I usually buy lengths of prepared picture-moulding: for small ones—I generally frame them by the method known as passe-partout, which consists of binding the edges with paper, or I make a

ing is show at Fig. 1, and a section of reed moulding at Fig. 2.

MEASURING THE PICTURE.

First of all, I measure the picture and allow the width of the moulding extra. For example, for a picture 12in. by 10in. and a moulding 1in. wide, a length of 4ft. 4in. will

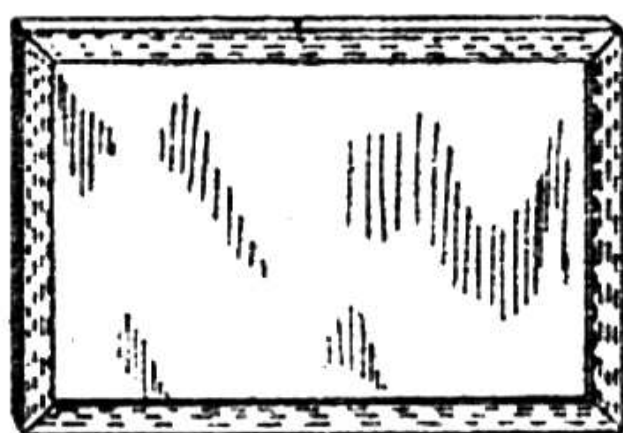
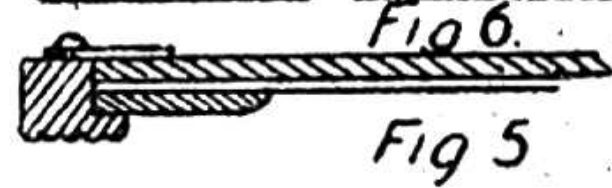
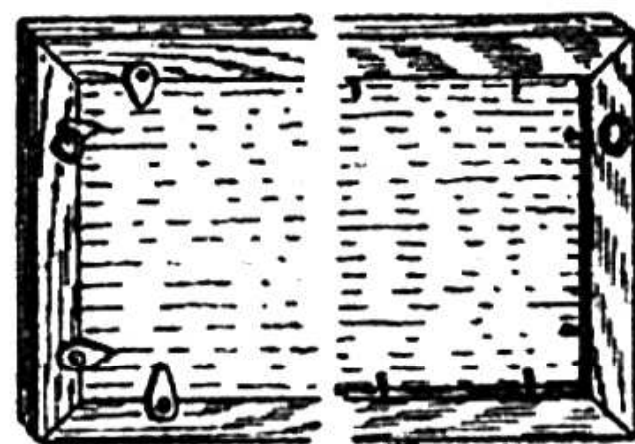
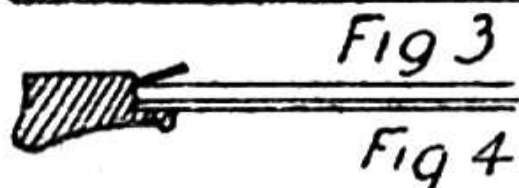
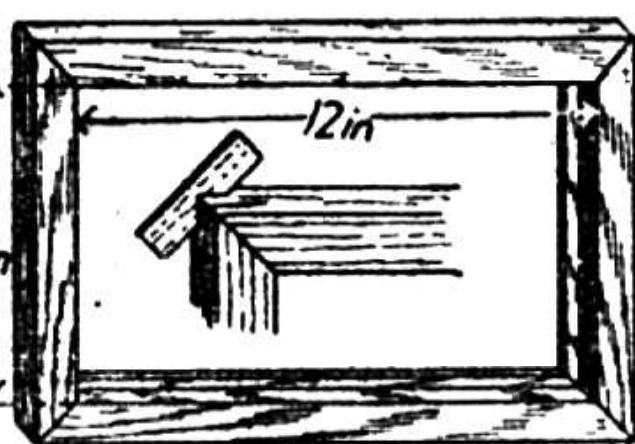
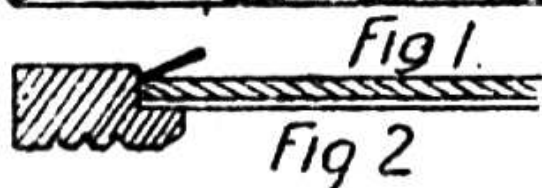
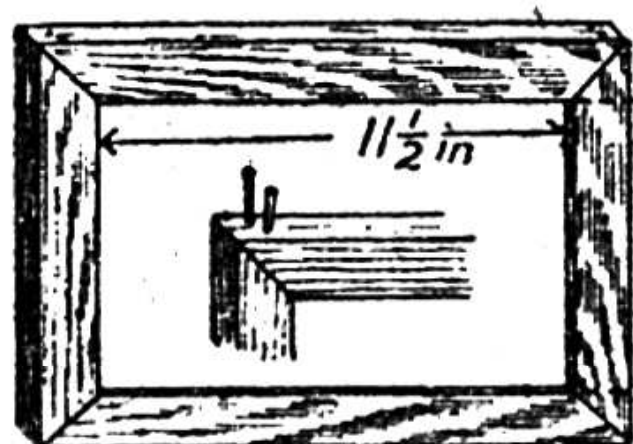


Fig 7

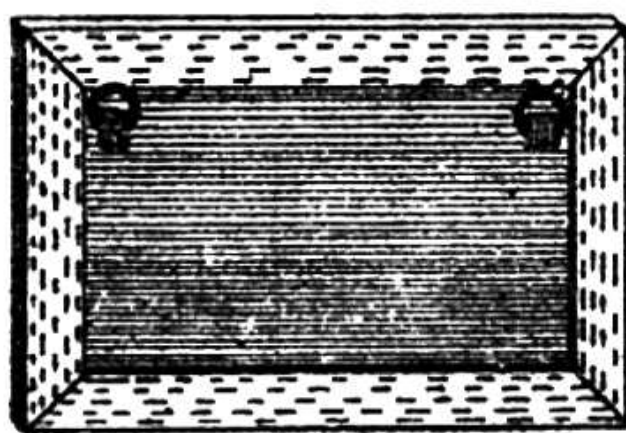


Fig 8

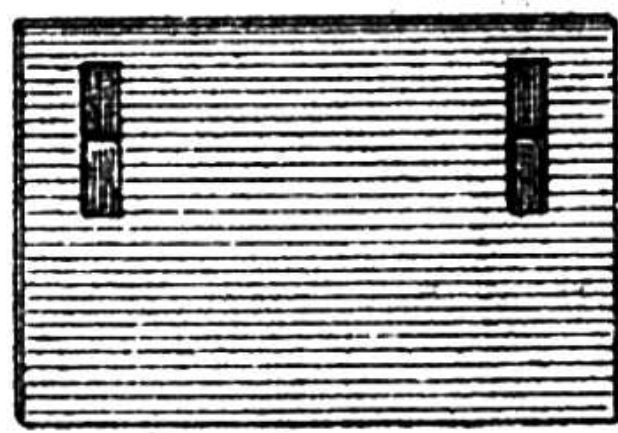


Fig 9

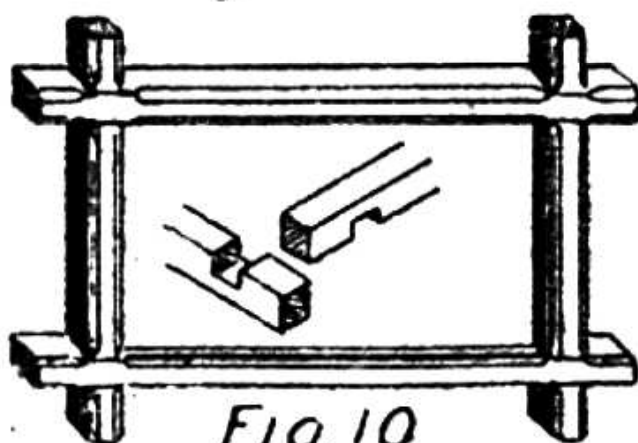


Fig 10

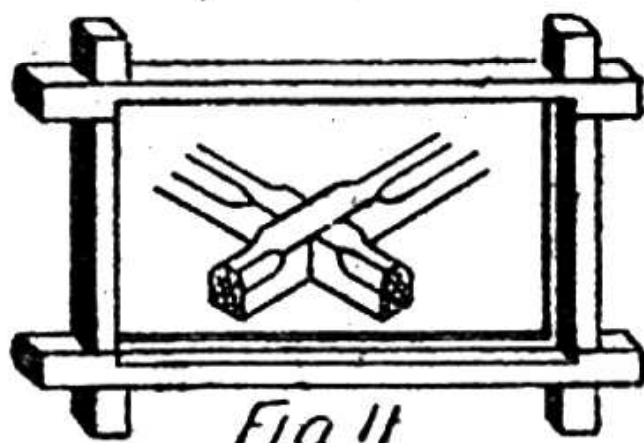


Fig 11

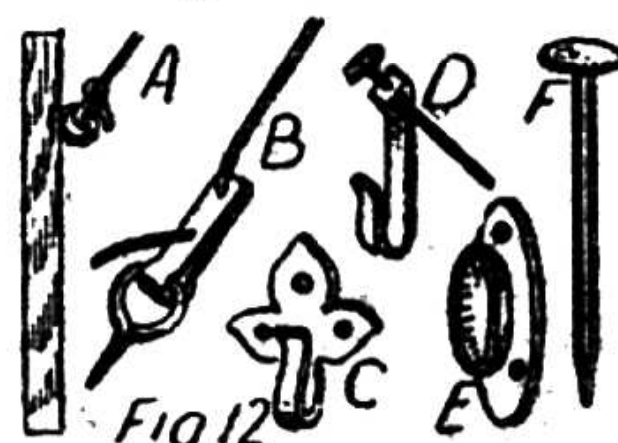


Fig 12

frame with narrow strips of wood jointed at the corners and known as an Oxford frame. Moulding can be obtained in many shapes and sizes, in plain, reeded and shaped oak, walnut and mahogany and in gilt; but for convenience in making and inexpensiveness, I find that a plain or reeded oak moulding is most suitable. The plain mould-

be required, but if the frame is to include a gilt slip, at least $\frac{1}{4}$ in. each way should be added. The moulding can be bought at a picture-frame maker's, and, in marking out, the depth of the rebate must be allowed for. Fig. 1 shows the front opening for a 12in. by 10in. picture, fitting in the back as at Fig. 3. The moulding is sawn on a mitre

block, as shown on page 6, and is nailed at the corner as at Fig. 1. Another method is shown at Fig. 3, and consists in making two slanting saw-cuts, which are filled in with thin strips of wood, both joint and slips being coated with glue; the corners are cleaned off later with a sharp chisel.

THE BACK OF THE FRAME.

The back of the frame can be made with this wood or cardboard, either nailed as at Fig. 4, which shows a spoon moulding, or by thin brass buttons, as at Fig. 5, which shows how a gilt slip or a wide oak slip is fitted. Both these methods are also shown at Fig. 6, together with the method of fitting the small screw eyes for the cord.

The passe partout method is shown at Figs. 7 and 8. A piece of glass is placed on the picture, and a cardboard back pro-

vided as at Fig. 9. This should be slotted so that tapes holding the small brass rings can be fastened at the back with glue. The glass, picture and back are now bound on the edges with gummed paper, two long strips across the top and bottom and two shorter strips, mitred at the corners, on the sides. Black paper is generally used, but brown paper strips look very well.

THE OXFORD FRAME.

The Oxford frame is shown at Fig. 10, the joint in the lapped halving. The top corners are generally chamfered as at Fig. 11, and the rebate for the glass cut out afterwards with a chisel. The methods generally used for hanging pictures are shown at Fig. 12. A shows the method of attaching cord, B the fastening used for wire, C, D and E are wall-fastenings, and F a brass-headed nail for heavy frames.

IN REPLY TO YOURS

Correspondence Answered by Ed. O. Handforth

(NOTE.—Readers of THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY can write to me and I will reply on this page. But don't expect an answer for several weeks—perhaps five or six. Address your letters or postcards to E. O. HANDFORTH, c/o, The Editor, THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. —E.O.H.)

JOHN (Llantwit): Glad you enjoyed your holiday in London. I suppose you sent your postcard all the way to Pontypridd to have it posted? Yes, of course, my pals of Study D are all right. Why shouldn't they be?

A. LAWRENCE (Birmingham): You say you wrote your letter on the mangle? I'm not surprised. It's a pity you didn't put it through the mangle while you were about it. It isn't worth anything better.

OLIVE POULTON (E.C.1.): I say, don't exaggerate! I've never kept anybody waiting six months for a reply. And if you wrote to me before, you were certainly answered. If you're wild about me I can't help it.

DAPHNE A. YOUNG (Brisbane, Australia): If you saw something about Nipper smoking in an early copy of the Old Paper there must have been a mistake. He doesn't smoke at all—even while he's away from St. Frank's.

SERIOUS (Portsmouth): Glad to hear that you're against Trackett Grim and Splinter being left out. But don't worry—I'm writing a special new serial even now, and it's even better than the T.G. stories.

E. H. (Bolton): This time I'm giving you quite a respectable reply. Sorry you only got your name mentioned before. Thanks for forgiving me, old son. You're evidently a sportsman.

CHEEKY (Wayville, S. Australia): My hat! What makes you think you're one of the first Aussies to write to me? I've had dozens of letters from Australia—but never one so full of pure nerve as yours!

IRENE (Wayville, S. Australia): Well, your letter's a lot better than your brother's, and I wish you'd pull his ears, or something, for having the nerve to write such stuff to me. I like your name tremendously.

V. ALFORD (Port Melbourne, Australia): Sorry about the competitions, but I'm afraid all you Colonial readers will have to put up with them as they are. I don't see how we can wangle anything especially for you.

T. W. BEARD (Derby): Your letter's a bit nervy, but as you say that my Trackett Grim yarns are jolly good I can't very well tick you off as I'd like. Some of you chaps seem to think I answer for fun!

D. HAMILTON (Ulverstone, Tasmania): If you think I'm going to answer your fatheaded letter after you've addressed me as "Red Nose," and after saying insulting things about Irene, you've made a jolly big mistake.

J. E. T. (Queensland, Australia): That decision of yours to stick to the Old Paper was fine. Good man! You're one of the right sort, and I hope you'll never regret your choice. Thanks for your nice letter.

BARNEY BEAR (Doornfontein, S. Africa): As you're so fond of Reggie Pitt, you'll probably be glad that he's now our Form captain and sports skipper. I appreciate your remarks about Willy. I agree with every word.

HENRY GEORGE TOWNSEND (Alberton, S. Africa): Hallo, Douglas Twin! How's the old jigger going? Glad to hear from you again. Sorry I made that mistake about the Transvaal. I wish you the best of luck with Marie.

PAT O. B. (Capetown, S. Africa): No, I've never seen Teddy Long wash his ears. There's a rumour that he occasionally does so, but I doubt the truth of it. Thanks for your keen appreciation of Trackett Grim.

ART & ERIC (Manchester): What do you two chaps mean—I ought to be somewhere else instead of at St. Frank's? Where else? And why should it insult me if you named the place? You must be a pair of lunatics!

FELIX (Ramsey, Isle of Man): Is St. Frank's real? Well, I'll tell you it's just as real as I am. That's good enough, isn't it? Glad you like Reggie's nose. But what about mine? I'm not even mentioned!

BUCK JONES (Southend-on-Sea): In your letter you refer to my "idiotic dile." I didn't know I had one. What is it? What are you doing at Southend? The last time I saw you, you were chasing a lot of Indians.

THOMAS GAGE (Epsom): Fathead! How can I see Derby by going to Epsom? Derby's in the opposite direction! Sorry I can't kill Fullwood for you. I draw the line somewhere, you know. I never kill worms on principle.

WELLWISHER (Darwen): I'm glad somebody appreciates my great efforts for the Mag. Am I feeling the effects of working so hard? I should think I am! I've hardly got time, nowadays, to keep Church and McClure in order.

GEORGE BARCLAY (Glasgow): Sorry you were mixed up among thirty-five other chaps last time. Better luck this time. I must say you've acted like a sportsman, and if you write again I'll promise not to swindle you.

SHCAWB (Bildeston, Suffolk): Yes, rather! Your girl has got a jolly nice name—Stella. Not so good as Irene, of course, but a corker. I told Jarrow what you said about his articles, and the ass is jawing yet.

DISGUSTED (West Bromwich): It's a good thing your pen ran dry when it did. After all those insults you wrote it's a wonder it didn't corrode and melt away. You insulting rotter! I'm a lot more disgusted than you are!

ONE OF THE OYSTER BOYS (Colchester): By George! You're right, old man! I should think those drawings of me on the front page are insults! I've argued with Pitt until I'm tired; he only grins, and says they're funny!

JACK (S.W.1): So you're one of our stout supporters? Good for you, Jack! Still, I'll bet you're not as stout as Fatty Little. I'm glad my T.G. stories curdle your blood. That's just what they're meant to do!

BARBARA MARDON (Plymouth): What the— What's all that cipher stuff at the beginning of your letter? It looks like Russian. Yes, you can get the paper in Australia, so don't worry. Happy voyage, and good-luck!

DERWENT DUFF (Dundee): Thanks, awfully. I DID cramp your reply last time, didn't I? Sorry; couldn't be helped. But if you send those green Leetles to Willy I'll make a special journey to Dundee and slaughter you.

HARRY (Balham): Sorry I didn't answer your question about the Moor View girls last time. Yes, they'll appear in the Portrait Gallery. My dear old josser, it wouldn't be complete without 'em. You're welcome to Willy!

LEONARD CLAYTON (Chesterfield): What does it matter whether I write Trackett Grim stories or other literature? As long as the story is from my pen there's nothing to worry about. Could I lick you if you were blindfolded? You fathead! I could lick you with one hand and with MY eyes closed.

THOMAS (Walthamstow): Considering that your letter is one string of insults, I am surprised at myself for answering it. You call me a gargoyle, a chump, an idiot, and goodness knows what else. Dignity compels me to ignore your abuse. You insulting rotter! You ought to be boiled!

MAUD PATTINSON GREEN (Sheffield): Your letter is so long and interesting that I feel ashamed to give you these few lines in reply. Please forgive me—my space is limited nowadays. But I appreciate your delightfully chatty letter very much indeed. I don't think you're a bit too old at seventeen to

read the O.P. Yes, Nipper was originally a street urchin.

M.S. (Southwark): Hallo! Another insulting bounder! Some of you chaps seem to think I'm only here to be made fun of. Like your giddy nerve! I mustn't answer you in a bunch of ten, eh? You poor chump! You don't know how lucky you are to get even mentioned!

FAST TRAIN FIREMAN (Birmingham): You're wrong, old son. Neither Bob Cherry nor Tom Merry would stand an earthly against Lawrence. They're both fine fighters, but Lawrence is a holy terror. Drop me another line when you think of those other things you want to say.

ARTHUR OAKLEY (Bethnal Green): I think you must have been dreaming or something. Why should you ask if Ch ich and McClure are in hospital? You know as well as I do that they haven't met with any accident. Still, as you like my contributions to the Mag., it's obvious enough that you are a brainy, sensible chap. You know a good thing when you see one.

KENNETH (Framlingham): Thanks for the photo. It's a bit small, but it's exactly

like you. Look here, my son! Why don't you buy the O.P. for yourself, instead of borrowing a copy from your pal? If a few thousands copied your example our circulation would drop below the million mark. Now that I've replied let's have that other letter of yours. Don't forget!

ERIC CLAUDE POWELL (Downham Market): Hi! Whoa! Help! Eleven questions and six requests! I say, old man, you evidently want me to give you the whole page. Sorry, but it can't be done. And as I can't answer a quarter of what you ask, it's not much good answering anything. It seems to me that all the boys of Downham Market are chock full of common sense.

ARABELLA (Walmer): Awfully sorry I gave you such a tiny reply last time. No, Willy isn't as good-looking as I am—not by long chalks. In fact, he's downright ugly. But, of course, he bears the famous Handforth family likeness. As for your other questions, I've got an idea that you're trying to pull my leg. You're so sensible that you don't really need any further comment from me. Anyhow, you're a "deal" "walmer" than most readers!

TED.

FACTS LET LOOSE

Our Allsorts Page :: By EUGENE ELLMORE

FERRETS.

These curious animals have a strange attraction for some boys. The ferret is a descendant of the wild polecat. Its fur is yellowy-white, and its eyes pinky-red. There is also a brown kind, which is half polecat. The length of the body is about fourteen inches, with five inches of tail added. A ferret may be tame, but it is never affectionate, and unless it is well fed, or if it is irritated, it may be a very nasty customer. It is ferocious and gluttonous. When used to hunt rabbits it has to be muzzled, or to have what is called a cope, made of twine, fixed round its head, so that it may not kill the rabbit; for if it were allowed to do that it would at once commence to feast on the carcase, get gorged, and go to sleep in the hole.

When it is used for ratting, however, its jaws must be quite free, so no cope is used then. Rats are terrible fighters, and the ferret mustn't be handicapped. A ferret is

as tenacious as a bulldog, and the only way to make it loose its hold on its prey is by strongly pressing its head with the thumb just above the eyes.

Ferrets were used by the Romans for hunting purposes, and they have been known in England for six or seven hundred years. The female has from twelve to eighteen young ones in a year, and as likely as not she may eat them as soon as they are born.

Any boy who wants to keep ferrets should see that they are housed in good hutches, dry and well ventilated, and kept clean, and that they are fed regularly twice a day on bread and milk, and meat. Rabbits' and fowls' livers are very suitable.

SCHOOLBOY MEALS.

Schoolboys are always interested in what they call "grub." Fatty Little and his kind are not the only fellows who think a

good deal about their stomachs, and what they put into them.

Lancing College, near Brighton, has a master who is "professor of gastronomies," and this is surely unique. There 350 boys and 24 masters all dine together, and the headmaster presides. They consume the whole produce of a farm, on which 26 cows and 3,000 hens are kept, and they require a ton of potatoes and 1,800 cabbages a week, so that all the land is required to grow vegetables. In the kitchen there is a meat safe cooled by electricity, and in this 200 pounds of fresh English beef is placed every day. All the bread is made in the college's own bakery.

Wholemeal bread is eaten almost exclusively, and the menu is changed daily, as variety is the motto of the kitchen authorities. So that the boys never know what they are going to have for dinner. Very different from the time when college boys had only three meals a day, and these very indifferent, consisting of "skilly" one day, "bubble and squeak" another, with "dish-water soup," and puddings that nobody could identify, and when every boy knew what was coming on any given day. If they wanted anything outside the regulation meals they had to pay for it.

The Lancing College people claim that their school is the healthiest in England, and that it is so because they recognise that food is a vital matter in the upbuilding of a school-boy, and that they deal with it on scientific and hygienic lines.

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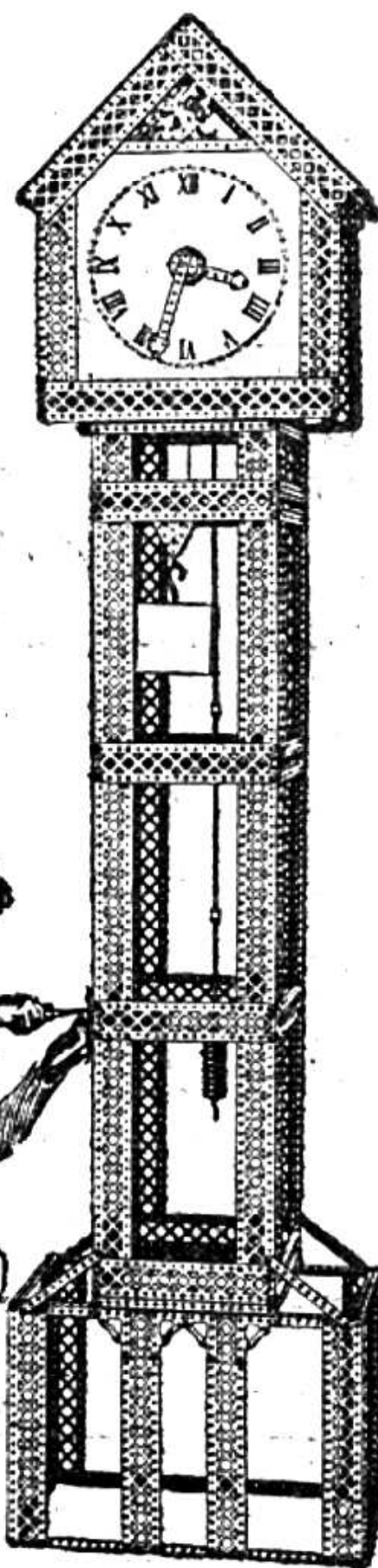
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