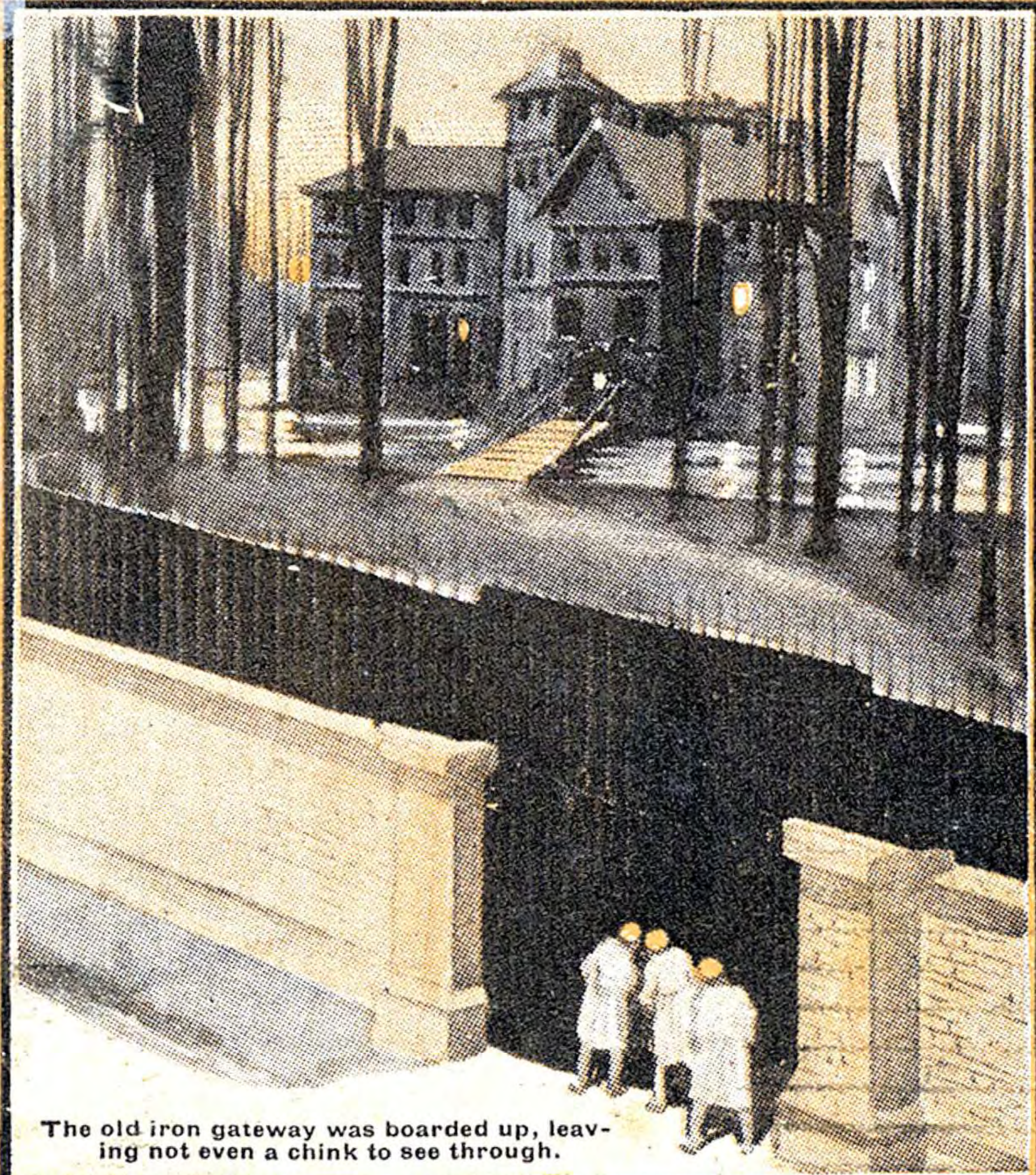


GRAND NEW SERIES STARTS TO-DAY!

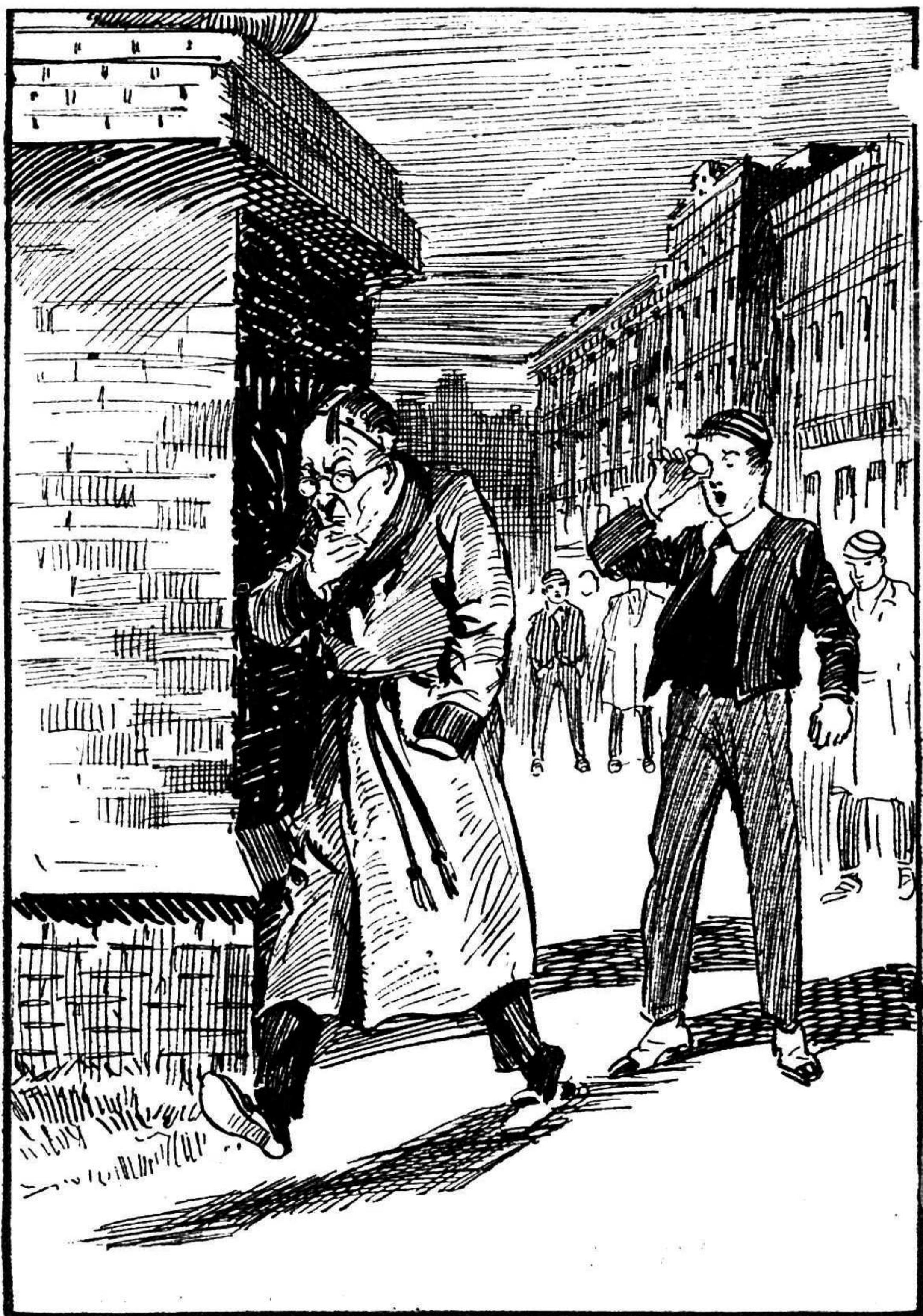
The **NELSON** AND ST. FRANK'S **LEE LIBRARY** MAGAZINE **2**



The old iron gateway was boarded up, leaving not even a chink to see through.

The School of Hidden Dread.

A Powerful New Series of the
Boys of St. Frank's and the
strange mystery of the MOAT
HOLLOW SCHOOL, BEGINS
THIS WEEK.



Professor Sylvester Tucker was calmly and deliberately walking out of the gateway attired in his dressing gown, slippers and smoking-cap.



The School of Hidden Dread!

THE OPENING STORY OF
A POWERFUL NEW SERIES
OF THE BOYS OF ST.
FRANK'S.

Sir Vivian Watson, the father of Tommy Watson, the well-known St. Frank's junior, has suffered serious financial losses in the City, and is unable to keep his son at St. Frank's. There is another school near St. Frank's, known as the Moat Hollow School, formerly the River House School, but now under entirely new control. The fees at this school are much less than at St. Frank's, and so Sir Vivian decides to send his son to the Moat Hollow School, where he can be near his former chums. Mr. Grimesby Creepe is the principal of the Moat Hollow School, and satisfies Sir Vivian that his son will be well treated at his establishment. But there is something sinister and mysterious about the Moat Hollow School, and Tommy Watson is soon to learn that life at his new school is very different to what Mr. Creepe described it to be to Sir Vivian Watson.

THE EDITOR.

By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

CHAPTER I.

THE NEW MOAT HOLLOW.

"HALLO! What's this?"

Edward Oswald Handforth paused in astonishment, and stared round the bend of Edgemoor Lane. Church and McClure were equally surprised, and for a moment they had nothing to say.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" went on Handforth. "Who's been messing about with the old River House? I wouldn't have recognised it as the same place! They've ruined it!"

The leader of Study D spoke with his usual vehemence. The three St. Frank's Fourth-Formers had only just passed through Bellton, on their way from the station.

It was the first day of the new term, and the celebrated old school was humming and bustling with renewed life. After lying dormant throughout the Christmas holidays, St. Frank's was awakening for the winter term.

It was a clear, crisp January afternoon. The ground was hard with frost, and the River Stowe—over which Handforth and Co. had just passed—was already covered with a preliminary film of ice.

"It doesn't look the same," remarked Church thoughtfully, as he continued staring. "Of course, we knew the old place had been taken over by somebody, even before the holidays——"

"How did we know?" demanded Handforth.

"My hat! Don't you remember seeing some workmen on the job?" asked Church. "They were excavating near the house itself—re-making the moat, or something. But who would guess a result like this!"

"Nobody!" said McClure. "The place looks like a prison!"

The juniors were gazing at the rambling old property which had formerly been the headquarters of Dr. Hogge's Academy. But the River House School was now situated further up the lane—midway between the village of Bellton and the Hamlet of Edgemoor. Hal Brewster and his chums were enjoying the luxuries of a palatial new school-house.

And the old building was now known as "Moat Hollow." In the distant realms of the past the house had been a kind of manor, and had passed through all sorts of vicissitudes before becoming a school. And after Dr. Hogge's departure the old build-

ing had remained empty and desolate for months.

But now, apparently, it had taken on a new lease of life.

The grim old house was hardly visible, standing amid the gaunt and ancient trees, which rose up like stark and ugly sentinels. For the school wall had changed.

Originally six feet high, it had permitted a clear view of the house from the corner of the lane. But the wall was now ten or twelve feet high, the upper section being really of wood. But it was stout and strong and roughly tarred. And along the top were cruel iron spikes—enormous things which projected seven or eight inches upwards in profusion.

"Let's go and have a look!" suggested McClure.

"Yes, we can squint through the gates," said Handforth.

The main entrance to Moat Hollow was only a few steps down the lane, and the three juniors soon covered the ground. But another surprise awaited them. The old-fashioned wrought-iron gates were tightly closed. But this was not all.

Since the juniors had seen them last, the gates had been boarded up, and the task was so thoroughly done that there was neither a crack nor crevice to peer through. The boards were high—indeed to the level of the additional fencing. And everywhere the boards were smooth and tarred, so that even the most venturesome spy could not climb up.

"Well, the chap who's bought this place believes in privacy, anyhow," remarked Church drily. "Just look at the locks! Two of 'em! And there's not a sign to indicate what the place is meant to be."

Handforth looked keen.

"I've got it!" he exclaimed tensely. "The man who's bought this old show is an inventor!"

"A which?"

"An inventor!" said Handforth confidently. "He's going to make experiments, and he's afraid of people spotting him! A new kind of aeroplane, probably—one of those machines that fly straight up into the air! He means to build his aeroplane here and—"

"I say, hold on!" grinned McClure. "This is a bit swift, isn't it?"

"Rats!" said Handforth. "You can't spoof me! I know what I'm talking about, my sons. What's more, I mean to investigate this mystery!"

Church and McClure inwardly groaned. Their celebrated leader was always eager to "investigate" anything new under the sun. Handforth had a mania for amateur detective work.

"Yes, but it wouldn't be right!" urged Church. "You can't go about prying into other people's affairs, old man!"

Handforth glared.

"If you're calling me a spy, Walter Church—" he began.

"Nunno! - Not at all!" said Church hastily. "Let's get on to St. Frank's—it'll be tea-time soon, and we want to get settled down in Study D before dusk. Come on! Blow this old show!"

To the relief of Church and McClure, their impulsive leader merely grunted and walked back to the road. A superb Daimler saloon came gliding smoothly along from the village, and slowed down.

"What ho! Greetings, old cock robins!" came a languid hail. "What about a good old lift? Anything to save the leg muscles, what? Kindly flow in, laddies, out of the cold and cruel atmosphere!"

Archie Glenthorne, of the Fourth, had just arrived. As usual, he came in style. Phipps, his valet, sat sedately next to the chauffeur. And Archie lounged luxuriously at the rear.

"Good man!" said Handforth heartily.

He wrenched open the door, and tumbled in. Church and McClure followed. And the chums of Study D finished their journey to St. Frank's in comfort.

CHAPTER II.

A SHOCK FOR SIR MONTIE.



ST. FRANK'S was very much alive.

Both the Ancient House and the Modern House teemed with activity, and echoed and re-echoed with noisy shouts.

Being the first day of term, everything was more or less chaotic.

Fullwood and Co. lounged near the Ancient House steps, and the Nuts of the Fourth looked on enviously as the celebrated Glenthorne Daimler rolled smoothly into the Triangle.

"Lucky beast!" growled Gulliver, leaning his weedy frame against the stonework. "Why the dickens should he have all this luxury? We don't come here swanking in whacking great cars!"

"No, but you'd like to, wouldn't you?" grinned Johnny Onions, who happened to be near by. "And so would I, if it comes to that! But I'm not jealous—I'm satisfied with life!"

"Go and eat coke!" snapped Gulliver. "Who's talkin' to you?"

"Nobody!" said Johnny blandly.

Gulliver glared, and shrugged his narrow shoulders. He turned back to his chums with a sneer on his thin lips. Fullwood and Bell were watching Handforth and Co. disembark with obvious envy.

"So here we are, what?" said Archie Glenthorne, as he stepped out, and beamed round. "Bally good! The dear old place is looking topping! To tell the truth, I'm dashed glad to be back! The peaceful life once again, by gad! I mean to say, these holidays are too poisonously strenuous for absolutely anything!"

"Thinking of the panto, Archie?" grinned Jack Grey, strolling up.

Archie Glenthorne winced.

"I say! Dash it!" he protested. "Kindly refrain from reminding me of such strenuous occasions! I mean, that pantomime was absolutely priceless, but the old energy was sapped dry. Good gad! It'll take me three or four dashed weeks to revitalise the old tissues!"

And Archie, with the imperturbable Phipps in attendance, sailed majestically into the Ancient House. In the lobby he came face to face with Sir Montie Tregellis-West, of Study C—a kindred spirit. For Sir Montie closely rivalled Archie when it came to magnificence of attire.

"Greetings, old cherub!" beamed Archie amiably.

But for some reason Tregellis-West walked straight past without giving Archie the slightest sign of recognition. Archie stood there looking absolutely blank as Sir Montie passed out into the Triangle. He bestowed an appealing look upon Phipps.

"Oddslife!" he murmured. "Did you observe, old lad?"

"Yes, sir," said Phipps smoothly.

"But, I mean—the good old cut direct, what?"

"I hardly imagine so, sir——"

"Oh, but come!" protested Archie. "Dash it all, Phipps! I mean, the chappie positively staggered by without returning the old greeting! I am distressed, Phipps! In fact, the young master is wounded!"

"Quite unnecessarily, sir," said the valet. "Master Tregellis-West was deep in thought, and I am certain that no slight was intended. I have seldom seen Master Tregellis-West so abstracted."

"Oh, well, if you say so, Phipps, I suppose you must—er—say so, what?" observed Archie. "We'll let it pass, laddie, and proceed to the old lounge. It seems to me that forty of the best are prescribed!"

In the meantime, Sir Montie was in the Triangle.

Phipps' explanation was quite correct. Tregellis-West was so engrossed in his own thought, that he had no knowledge of his immediate surroundings. The usually urbane Sir Montie wore an intensely worried look.

He started violently as a hand clapped him heartily on the back—so heartily that his pincenez were nearly knocked off. He looked round eagerly, and then his expression dropped.

"Begad. You startled me, dear old boy," he said. "I thought it was Tommy!"

"Sorry!" said Reginald Pitt, with a smile. "But you looked so forlorn that I wanted to buck you up a bit. What's wrong, old man? Why the creases and wrinkles in the forehead? Confide in me, O sorrowing one!"

"I'm worrying' about Tommy Watson," replied Montie. "I arranged to meet him at Victoria, and the awful ass wasn't there. And he hasn't turned up even yet. It's most distressin', Pitt—it is, really!"

Reggie grinned.

"He'll turn up soon," he said cheerfully. "I expect he lost the train, and is coming down by the next."

"But there have been two nexts already, begad!" said Sir Montie, with his worried expression increasing. "Tommy and I always come down together, you know. I think somethin' must have happened."

Reggie looked suddenly grave.

"About—about his people, you mean?" he asked, with concern.

"Somethin' like that," replied Sir Montie. "You remember the big sensation about Sir Vivian Watson? You know, old boy, while we were at Jack Grey's place? Tommy's pater had a frightful blow, I imagine."

"Yes, there was a financial crash, wasn't there?" asked Pitt. "Sir Vivian Watson had lent his name to an enormous company-promoting scheme, or something, and it went bust. As far as I remember, Sir Vivian wasn't actually responsible, or even liable to a penny, but he placed his entire fortune in the hands of receivers. A wonderfully honourable man, Montie!"

"Begad, rather!" agreed Tregellis-West. "The affair seems to have died out of the papers now, and I haven't seen Tommy since we left Grey Towers. I'm awfully keen to question him—I am, really!"

"Oh, well—he'll turn up soon," said Pitt reassuringly.

But Tregellis-West's search met with no success. For a time he hung about the gates, but there was no sign of the absentee. And at last the anxious Sir Montie wended his way to the Fourth Form passage in the Ancient House, and entered Study C.

The little apartment was warm and cheerful. A fire was glowing in the grate. But, somehow, the room struck Sir Montie as being chill and desolate. He caught sight of something on the mantelpiece—a letter.

And then, with a quick intake of breath, he seized it. He recognised the handwriting—it was from Tommy Watson. It had been posted the previous night, in London. And this fact alone was significant.

With shaky fingers, Sir Montie tore open the flap, and extracted the letter. He stood there reading, and his face gradually became pale and drawn. And when he had finished, his expression was miserable and forlorn.

CHAPTER III.

THE FATEFUL LETTER.



SIR MONTIE TREGELLIS-WEST was still standing in exactly the same position three minutes later, when Willy Handforth, of the Third, magically appeared.

He whisked in at the doorway like a kind of gnome.

"Hallo! Sorry! he said briskly. "Thought you weren't here! Just came in to borrow a dictionary! Our table-leg's short!"

Willy was always perfectly frank, and he calmly went across to the bookcase and selected a volume that struck him as being the correct size for the necessary adjustment.

"This'll do fine!" he announced. "It's only a rotten history-book—nobody ever reads it! Thanks, Montie—Hallo! What's wrong?"

His brisk manner altered. One keen glance at Sir Montie's face had shown Willy that something was very much amiss. But the study was rather gloomy in the dusk, and the fag hadn't noticed anything unusual at first. He switched on the electric light.

"My hat! You're all groggy!" he said, staring. "What's up, Montie? Feeling a bit queer after the train journey—"

"Begad!" murmured Sir Montie. "He's left!"

"Left? Who's left?"

"Tommy Watson—he's not coming back this term!" muttered Tregellis-West.

Willy Handforth whistled.

"Tommy Watson not coming back?" he said, with sympathy. "I say, that's rotten! I'm awfully sorry, Montie. If there's anything I can do, just say the word."

Sir Montie abruptly sat down.

"I'd like to be alone, old boy," he said quietly.

"Right you are—I know the feeling!" said Willy, nodding. "I was just the same when I lost old Ferdinand. My ferret, you know," he explained. "Until I found him hiding in Chubby Heath's topper, I was as miserable as the dickens."

Willy cleared out, leaving Sir Montie alone.

And the sole occupant of Study C took up the letter, and read it through again. It wasn't particularly long—Tommy Watson being no great hand at letter-writing.

16, Mounteroft Gardens,
Regent's Park, N.W.

"Dear old Montie,—Isn't it absolutely rotten? I'm not coming back to St. Frank's any more! I thought I'd better let you have it straight from the shoulder in the first line.

"There's no need for me to say much, is there? You know all about the pater and that ghastly dud company business. Well, the pater's just about ruined—unless things turn out better after the inquiry. Anyhow, my dad has done the honourable thing, and we can hold our heads up as much as ever.

"It came as a rotten shock to me when I knew that I couldn't come back to St. Frank's this term. I don't know where I'm going yet—but you can bet I'll write

as soon as I possibly can, and tell you all about it.

"My new school's bound to be a horrible place, but I suppose I shall have to grin and bear it. So long, old son! We'll see one another in the holidays, anyhow.

"Your Old Chum,

"TOMMY."

"P.S.—Don't forget to write as soon as you can."

Sir Montie's misery was understandable. He and Tommy Watson had been staunch chums and study-mates ever since they had come to St. Frank's. Even in the old fag days they had fought with one another daily, and had displayed every other sign of close friendship.

This piece of news, coming so suddenly, was an enormous shock. Montie could scarcely believe it. He found himself looking round Study C in a dazed, dreamy kind of way.

"Tommy not coming back!" he murmured. "Begad! I can't believe it! If he doesn't come, I can't bally well exist! It's going to be frightful here all alone—it is, really! I don't know what to do, begad!"

He rose from his seat, and walked round the study restlessly. And while he was in this desperate state of mind, there came a gentle tap at the door, and Mr. Beverley Stokes looked in. The housemaster entered the study, and softly closed the door.

"I was hoping you'd be alone, old man," said Mr. Stokes. "Feeling a bit down in the dumps, eh?"

"Yes, sir," muttered Sir Montie. "It's about Tommy Watson, you know—"

"Poor old Tommy!" said Mr. Stokes, laying a hand on Tregellis-West's shoulder. "It's a bit rough on you, Montie—but just think of Watson! It's rougher for him, isn't it?"

"Begad, rather, sir!" said Sir Montie huskily.

"Dr. Stafford told me this morning that Watson wouldn't be coming back, so I thought I would like to have a word with you as soon as possible," went on the housemaster gently. "Cheer up, Montie! You'll be horribly miserable for a day or two, but there are plenty of other good fellows in the Fourth."

"Yes, sir, but—Tommy, you know—"

"Tommy was your particular chum, wasn't he?" murmured Mr. Stokes. "I understand, old fellow! Well, you've got to be brave about it, Montie, and keep smiling. If ever you feel lonely, just pop along to my quarters, and—Not that I shall be much consolation," he added ruefully. "Still, I'll do my best."

"Thanks awfully, sir!" muttered Sir Montie. "You're a brick, begad!"

And Mr. Stokes, realising that he had said all that was necessary, at the moment, took his departure.

**CHAPTER IV.
THE ALTERNATIVE.**



TOMMY WATSON stared moodily out of the window of the morning-room of his father's house in Mountcroft Gardens. Regent's Park was visible from his window, but the aspect was not cheering.

Rain was descending in a fine, depressing drizzle. Everything was soaked and dripping, and the dull afternoon was drawing to a close. London had seldom looked so forlorn and cheerless.

Watson flung himself gloomily into the nearest chair, and tried hard to stifle the lump which persistently lodged in his throat. He had tried to analyse his feeling several times of late, but had never met with any success.

At other times, the prospect of staying at home instead of going to school would have delighted him. But now that it actually came to the test, he was longing for St. Frank's.

He felt that he was left out in the cold. Being human, he was more sorry for himself than for Sir Montie. The latter was a cheerful, good-natured sort of ass, and would soon get over it.

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Tommy Watson turned away from the window with a sigh.

"Second day of term!" he muttered glumly. "All the chaps will be just settling down now. Poor old Montie! I'll bet he's having a rotten time of it—all alone in Study C!"

He gave a short, bitter laugh.

"But he'll soon get over it!" he went on miserably. "With all those other chaps there—Pitt and Handforth and the rest—it won't take him long to get cheerful again. I expect somebody's joined him in Study C by now. I'm a back number—a giddy has-been!"

But for Watson there was a gloomy prospect indeed.

His father hadn't said much to him, but he understood that he would soon be packed off to a third-rate boarding school in the neighbourhood of Richmond. Sir Vivian was making the necessary arrangements. Indeed, he had hinted that he would let Tommy know something definite that very afternoon.

The junior had been very much alone during the past few days, and this, no doubt, was partially responsible for his present disconsolate condition. Sir Vivian had been away in the City from morning till

night, and Lady Watson was confined to her own rooms—the shock of the great financial blow having prostrated her.

"Well, Tom, all alone?"

Watson jerked himself out of his chair as the greeting fell on his ears. The door had just opened, and Sir Vivian Watson had entered. His tall figure was as straight as ever, and he was bearing the blow well. Only the tell-tale lines of his face indicated his acute mental strain.

"I—I was just thinking about St. Frank's, dad," said Tommy miserably.

"Poor old chap!" murmured his father. "Come along to the library, Tom—I want to have a little chat with you. It's about your new school."

Tommy followed his father without a word, and they were soon in the library. Sir Vivian closed the door, and his son turned on him eagerly and with a flush on his cheeks.

"I say, pater!" he burst out. "Can't it be done? Can't you send me back to St. Frank's? I'll do anything——"

"You don't understand, my boy," interrupted Sir Vivian, more pained than he would reveal. "The fees at St. Frank's are enormous. Ordinarily, they were a trifle to me. But after this crash there is not one penny I can call my own——"

"But if we still live in this great house, dad——"

"By the time you come back from your first term at the new school, Tom, there will be no more of this great house," interrupted Sir Vivian quietly. "Your mother is going abroad—to Italy. One can live there, and keep up an appearance, on a mere pittance. I shall remain in London—I have already taken an inexpensive set of chambers. This house and everything in it is no longer mine. To be blunt, Tom, my liabilities are far in excess of my assets. I am worse than penniless!"

Tommy looked rather scared.

"Couldn't I go to work, pater?" he asked huskily. "There might be something I could do——"

"Good heavens, boy, what are you talking about?" said his father gruffly. "You will go to school—not to St. Frank's, but to a quiet, private boarding school, where your education will be completed. I may not be able to afford the heavy expense at St. Frank's, but——"

"What school, dad?" broke in Tommy eagerly. "That one at Richmond?"

Sir Vivian looked rather grave.

"It all depends," he replied. "There are two schools to which you can go, Tom—and I shall leave the choice to you. Both establishments are modest and inexpensive—in fact, the fees are paltry compared to what I have been paying for you at St. Frank's. But I can afford nothing better, Tom, and you will have to make the best——"

"I shall be all right, dad!" interrupted Tommy quickly. "After all, a small school may be just as good as a big one. It depends on the chaps in it. Please tell me about these two places."

Sir Vivian coughed.

"One is at Richmond, as you know—but the other——" He paused, as though reluctant to continue.

"The other, dad?" asked Tommy curiously.

"The other school is situated in the village of Bellton," said Sir Vivian at last. "It is quite a small establishment——"

"Bellton!" gasped Watson. "But—but I don't understand, dad! Bellton's right near St. Frank's! You're kidding me, dad——"

"On such a grave matter as this I would not attempt to deceive you, my boy," said Sir Vivian softly. "You must make your choice—and you must think carefully and thoroughly before deciding. But the alternative is there if you want to take advantage of it."

CHAPTER V.

TOMMY WATSON'S CHOICE.



TOMMY WATSON'S brain was in a whirl.

"Bellton!" he repeated breathlessly.

"Bellton! But there isn't another school—— Oh, yes! Dr. Hogge's place——"

"No, no—not the River House School," put in Sir Vivian sharply. "I would like to send you there, Tom, but Dr. Hogge's terms are prohibitive—his school is one of the most exclusive private academies in the country. Indeed, the fees are only slightly less than those of St. Frank's."

Tommy Watson nodded gloomily.

"That's what I always thought, dad," he replied. "Those River House chaps—particularly Wellbourne and his crowd—are always boasting about the exclusiveness of the place. But—but there's no other school at all, dad. You must be mistaken——"

"The school I have in mind is a new one," interrupted Sir Vivian. "That isn't quite correct, either. It is new to Bellton, but is actually a well-established academy. Mr. Creepe has conducted his school for many years in rural Kent, but was compelled to seek a new locality owing to a new arterial road being constructed in that district. His property has been sold from under his feet—the Government has full power to adopt such methods," he added rather bitterly. "But all this is beside the point. Mr. Grimesby Creepe has purchased an old mansion in Bellton, and has converted it into a well equipped, up-to-date private boarding-school."

Tommy looked at his father wide-eyed.

"My only hat!" he exclaimed breathlessly

"An old mansion in Bellton! But there isn't one, dad—"

"The house is known as Moat Hollow," said Sir Vivian.

"Moat Hollow!" gasped Tommy. "Well, I'm blessed! Why, that's the old River House School, dad! Hhat's the place that Dr. Hogge used to have! Why, it'll be lovely—"

"One moment—one moment!" interrupted his father. "You must not come to any impulsive decision, Tom. This matter requires very careful thought. The new term at Moat Hollow does not commence until the day after to-morrow, so you have plenty of time to think—"

"But I don't want to think, dad!" interrupted Tommy eagerly. "I'd love to go there!"

"Would you?" asked Sir Vivian, a grim note creeping into his voice. "That's just the question, Tom. Would you? Let me point out one or two obvious drawbacks which seemed to have escaped you. But first of all we will assume that you are going to the school in Richmond."

"I don't want to go there, dad!" burst out Tommy. "I won't go—"

"Bless the boy!" interrupted his father.

"Calm down, Tom—not so much excitement! This Richmond school is a quiet, unassuming place—but perfectly select. You will enter it as a new boy, and nobody need know that you have ever been a scholar at St. Frank's College. You can keep it entirely to yourself—a secret."

Tommy Watson looked his astonishment.

"But why, dad?" he asked. "There's no reason why I should be ashamed of St. Frank's! I'm proud of having been there—"

"I am glad to hear you say so, Tom—but you are looking at this matter from the

Just near the exit a man was waiting. He was rather a striking individual—a broad-shouldered man of middle age.



wrong angle," said Sir Vivian gently. "I must be blunt—and I am afraid, rather cruel. You are in the unfortunate position of having what is vulgarly termed 'come down in the world.' If it is known by your fellow scholars that you were previously at St. Frank's, they will humiliate you. It is just human nature, my boy. Boys are proverbially cruel, and nothing will please them better than to constantly remind you that you are now the son of a pauper—that your father can no longer afford to send you to a famous public school. You will be made to suffer cruelly."

Tommy Watson took a deep breath.

"I hadn't thought of it like that, dad," he admitted slowly.

"But I had," said Sir Vivian. "And now it is for you to choose. On the one hand, you can go to the Richmond school as a new boy and nobody will know about St. Frank's. You will be saved from any humiliation. On the other hand, you can join Mr. Creepe's school in Bellton, and so be near to your old chums, and amid familiar surroundings—"

"Yes, dad!" said Tommy, his eyes gleaming. "That'll be glorious—"

"Wait!" broke in his father. "Will it be as glorious as you imagine? I am not sure that I am wise in giving you this alternative—but I want you to be happy, my lad. At Moat Hollow your position will be difficult—particularly during this first term. You will be made to suffer far more acutely than you imagine at this moment."

"You mean that I shall be sneered at, dad?"

"Not only sneered at, but far worse than that," said Sir Vivian. "Your downfall in the social scale, indeed, will be a hundred-fold intensified by your close proximity to St. Frank's. Instead of being a scholar at that great school, you will be a mere pupil at a cheap private boarding establishment. And, naturally, your position will be delicate. I am trying to point out the true position, Tom."

"Yes, thanks awfully, dad," said the boy quietly.

"And I strongly advise you to choose the Richmond school," went on his father. "In my opinion, you will be happier there—but I am breaking my own word. I promised you that you would have your own choice."

Tommy Watson laughed light-heartedly.

"I've already chosen, dad!" he replied, his eyes gleaming.

"Upon my soul! And what—"

"Bellton, dad—Moat Hollow every time!" exclaimed Tommy. "My hat, father! I shall be able to see Montie every day—I shall be able to watch the football, even if I can't play—I shall—"

"But have you thought carefully, Tom?"

"I've thought all I need to, father!" replied Watson promptly. "What do I care about sneers and gibes? Fullwood and Gulliver and Merrell may sneer at me—all that gang, in fact. But what the dickens do I care? They're always sneering—they can't help it! And their beastly tongues can't hurt me a bit!"

"Well, of course, if you really think—"

"Think!" interrupted Tommy happily. "Why, dad, you've made me as merry as a giddy sandboy! I don't mind leaving St. Frank's now—I'm almost as well off as I was before! Montie and Handforth and Pitt and Archie and De Valerie and Boots—Why, all those chaps will be as decent as ever. They're real sportsmen, dad—and

they'll treat me as if nothing had happened. As for the rest, they can gibe all they like and go and eat coke!"

Tommy Watson's decision was taken.

CHAPTER VI.

THE TELEGRAM.



"GOOD gad!" Archie Glen-thorne paused on the Ancient House steps and stared blankly. He adjusted his monocle as though half suspecting that his eyesight was deceiving him. But it wasn't.

Professor Sylvester Tucker, the Modern House science master, was calmly and deliberately walking out of the gateway attired in his dressing-gown, slippers, and smoking-cap.

"I mean to say!" murmured Archie. "Somewhat poisonous attire for appearing on the old highway! The dear old lad must have forgotten, dash it! Something, as it were, must be done! Something has absolutely got to happen!"

Archie was well aware of the professor's notorious absent-mindedness. And the swell of the Fourth gazed round rather helplessly—looking for someone who could run after the professor and bring him back.

It never occurred to Archie that he had two legs of his own. But the Triangle seemed rather deserted at this particular hour. It was the first half holiday of the term, and early in the afternoon. The juniors were mostly flocking on to Little Side and the playing-fields generally.

"What ho!" said Archie desperately. "Phipps, dash you! Where the dickens are you, laddie? Good gad! I shall positively have to do the old chasing business myself! Rather ragged at the edge, what?"

Archie gathered himself together, and ran across the Triangle in a manner which proved that his languor was more imaginary than real. Turning out of the gateway, he observed Professor Tucker some distance down the lane. And Archie came to a dead halt, startled.

"This," he said, "is too frightful for mere words!"

For the professor was walking straight into Irene and Co., of the Moor View School. There were six of the girls, including Doris Bentley, Tessa Love and Winnie Pitt.

Archie was not lacking in courage, but this situation was too much for him, and he stealthily crept back into the Ancient House. The professor, in the meantime, was toddling on complacently.

"Well, my hat!" said Doris, under her breath. "What's this—a new winter overcoat? It's the old professor! I say, girls, we'd better tip him the wink, you know."

"Yes, rather!" agreed Irene. "He must

have walked out without realising his get-up! Slippers, too!"

The professor beamed as he was about to pass the young ladies.

"Good afternoon, professor," said Doris cheerfully. "Won't you be cold without an overcoat?"

"Ah, to be sure!" said the professor. "I beg your pardon! I think you made some reference to my cold? I am glad to say it is slightly better. There is no doubt that fresh air is most beneficial."

"I'm afraid you're getting too much fresh air, professor," put in Irene. "That dressing gown isn't very thick—and your slippers are only felt. It's a good thing the ground's dry—"

"Slippers—slippers?" repeated Professor Tucker. "What on earth— Good heavens!"

He broke off blankly as he gazed at his feet. And then, for the first time, he became aware of his remarkable attire. Irene and Co. watched him with much amusement.

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated the professor. "This is appalling! I distinctly remember going up to my bed-room to change. And then, of course, I was disturbed—yes! And I must have forgotten to change my shoes. Thank-you, young ladies—thank-you! I must return at once!"

He felt for the rim of his hat, in order to raise it, but as he was only wearing a smoking-cap, the result was rather comic. The girls did their utmost to maintain a becoming gravity.

"Dear me!" ejaculated the professor, in surprise. "What an extraordinary thing! The rim of my hat appears to have mysteriously disappeared. However, no matter! Good-afternoon—good-afternoon!"

He walked on—straight down towards the village.

"But aren't you going to change, professor?" laughed Doris.

"Good heavens!" I'd completely forgotten!" gasped the old gentleman. "How remiss of me! One of these days I shall really forget something of importance!"

He returned to the Triangle, and Irene and Co. followed him, laughing merrily. They invaded St. Frank's in quite a familiar, free and easy way. It was nothing new for the girls to do this.

"Now, we've got to find Montie," said Irene promptly. "We can't do better than go straight to his study. If he isn't there, we'll try Little Side."

The girls marched into the Ancient House, and made their way to the Fourth-Form passage quite boldly. They were always welcome at St. Frank's.

Arriving at Study C, Irene tapped, and peeped in.

Sir Montie Tregellis-West was there. He sat in the easy-chair before the fire, gazing gloomily into the burning embers. Pitt had urged him to turn out for football practice—but Sir Montie had refused. He wanted to be alone—he wanted to keep to himself.

He had been hard hit, and although two or three days of the term had sped by, the loss of his bosom chum was felt more acutely now than ever before. He jumped hastily to his feet as he caught sight of the girls in the doorway.

"Oh, I say, begad!" he ejaculated. "I didn't know—"

"It's all right, Montie—don't disturb yourself!" interrupted Irene quickly. "We've just come from the post-office, and the postmistress asked us to deliver this telegram. The boy fell off his bicycle this morning, and the whole post-office is upside down!"

"A telegram!" repeated Montie. "Begad! For—for me?"

"Yes, here it is; we thought we'd like to deliver it straight away," said Irene Manners.

She put it on the table, and then gave her chums a little nod. They knew all about his loss, and were full of sympathy. The girls displayed rare feeling for the unfortunate junior by stealing silently away.

CHAPTER VII.

TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE.



SIR MONTIE TREGELLIS WEST was excited.

Such a condition in the urbane junior was almost unknown. Nothing ever ruffled his serene calmness. Nothing ever disturbed the tranquil placidity of his demeanour.

At least, nothing except this telegram. He stood against the table, holding the flimsy form in his hand, and staring at it in a blank, dazed kind of way. He had opened it listlessly—suspecting that it came from his aunt or uncle.

But it was from Tommy Watson, and ran in this way:

"Coming to Bellton. Can you meet train Helmford? Arrive there 3.10. Would love to have chat before reaching Bellton. Will explain everything. Best of news.—Tommy."

"It's impossible!" murmured Sir Montie, taking a deep breath. "Begad! There must be some frightful hoax about it!"

In spite of his joy, he couldn't help suspecting that some evil-intentioned junior had played a cruel practical joke. Fullwood, perhaps, or—

"No, I don't believe it!" murmured Montie. "Nobody would play such a frightful trick. They couldn't be so beastly mean—they couldn't, really. It's from Tommy—Tommy himself. An' he's comin' down to Bellton with the best of news! How absolutely rippin'!"

He suddenly remembered the request in the wire, and glanced at his watch.

"Three-ten, Helmford!" he murmured. "Begad! There's a train from Bellton in a quarter of an hour—an' I believe it gets into Helmford at two-fifty-five! I can just do it!"

He didn't pause to wonder at the strangeness of Tommy Watson's request. He didn't stop to consider why Tommy should ask him to make this twenty-mile trip to meet him, when he was coming to Bellton, in any case.

Sir Montie simply flew off to the station without a second's delay.

He arrived in good time, and was soon speeding towards Bannington in the local train. Here he changed on to the main line, and was duly deposited in Helmford just before three o'clock.

This left him plenty of time to cross to the other platform, and so be ready for the express from London when it arrived. This latter was a good train, and went straight through to Bellton. It was due to arrive there at 3.40.

Sir Montie looked eagerly up and down as the train slowed down to a standstill against the platform. Now, at the last moment, all his old doubts were returning. He had a fear that he would not see his chum. It was some cruel practical joke, after all—

"Ahoy, there, Montie!"

He twirled round, and saw Tommy Watson leaping out of a third-class compartment a little further down the train. And Tregellis-West hurried up, and the pair clasped hands rather awkwardly.

"Begad!" ejaculated Sir Montie. "Frightfully glad to see you, dear old boy. I was gettin' worried—"

"Good old Montie!" interrupted Watson. "Come on in—the pater's here. You know him, don't you?"

Tregellis-West was astonished to see Sir Vivian Watson in the compartment. He politely raised his cap, and Sir Vivian acknowledged the salute. Then he retired behind his newspaper again, knowing that the two boys would prefer to talk alone.

Sir Montie was overjoyed to see Tommy Watson, but now that the pair were together, he hardly knew what to say. But they understood one another perfectly. They were not very demonstrative, but their feeling was deep.

"I expect you want to know all about it, don't you?" asked Tommy, as the train pulled out. "Well, in the first place, Mr. Creepe is going to meet the train at Bellton, and that's why I sent you that wire. That's why I wanted you to come here."

"Oh, rather, but—"

"Unless you came, I should hardly have had a word with you," went on Tommy. "We couldn't talk much in the short walk from Bellton Station to Moat Hollow—especially with the pater and Mr. Creepe with us."

"Mr. Creepe!" muttered Montie dazedly. "Moat Hollow! My dear old Fellow, I

don't know what you're talkin' about—I don't really! Who is this frightful chap named Mr. Creepe?"

"He's the schoolmaster—"

"Begad!"

"Mr. Grimesby Creepe," said Watson. "It's a bit of a dud name, but the poor old chap can't help that. He's the owner of the new Moat Hollow School. You know—the old place that used to be the River House—"

"The Moat Hollow School!" echoed Sir Montie dreamily. "Begad! We've all been wonderin' what the place was turned into. And—and are you goin' to be there—at this new school?"

"Yes," said Tommy eagerly.

"How rippin'!" exclaimed Montie. "I was thinkin' that you were comin' back to St. Frank's again—until you mentioned Mr. Creepe. But it's all the same, dear old boy. You'll be near us, won't you?"

"That's just it!" declared Watson. "We can see one another each day—you can come to tea with me sometimes, and I can buzz along as often as you like as your visitor—in dear old Study C!" he added wistfully.

"It's a rippin' idea," said Sir Montie heartily. "Begad! It's the next best thing to bein' at St. Frank's. We shall have to make a few plans, an' arrange meetin's, an' all that sort of thing."

And while the train sped towards Bellton, the re-united chums discussed the whole position in detail, and concluded that life wasn't so very bad, after all.

CHAPTER VIII.

MR. GRIMESBY CREEPE.



BELLTON was reached all too soon.

Getting out of the train, Sir Vivian Watson stepped on to the hard, frosty platform with the two boys at his heels.

They looked up and down, and Sir Vivian nodded to himself.

Just near the exit a man was waiting.

He was a rather striking individual—a broad-shouldered man of middle age. His face was clean-shaven, and unusual in type. The flesh hung in folds, heavy and flabby. His eyes were deep-set, with heavy, black brows.

The man was scrupulously attired, and as he hurried forward to meet the new arrivals his face broke into a genial, engaging smile. Sir Montie Tregellis-West, watching him, felt somehow distrustful. There was something about the stranger that Sir Montie almost feared.

"Ah, Sir Vivian! Splendid—splendid!" said the man on the platform. "I am delighted to meet you, sir! And your son? Dear me! I understood that you had but one boy—"

"This is my son, Mr. Grimesby Creepe," said Sir Vivian, indicating Tommy. "This

other lad is a St. Frank's scholar—an old chum of his. He came to meet us further along the line."

"Ah, yes," said Mr. Grimesby Creepe. "How very wonderful! How expressive of true friendship! There is nothing I love to see better, Sir Vivian, than the deep friendship of two dear boys. And you, young man—you are to be my new scholar?" he added, turning to Watson. "I am overjoyed to make your acquaintance."

"Thank you, sir," said Tommy, feeling somewhat awkward.

"Possibly you imagine that I am a strange schoolmaster, eh?" went on Mr. Grimesby Creepe, with a chuckle. "Well, so I am—to be sure! Before long I want you to regard me as an uncle—a kind of second father, eh? Ah, splendid. We are a wonderful family at Moat Hollow."

"A family, sir?" repeated Watson.

"Just my way of putting it," chuckled Mr. Creepe, his flabby face shaking in its folds. "Just my way of putting it, my boy. All my pupils are my children! And we pull together so harmoniously and so joyously that our little establishment is a constant Hall of Laughter. You will grow to love your surroundings at Moat Hollow."

Mr. Creepe rubbed his flabby hands together, and made a move towards the exit. But his eyes were alert. His gaze wandered up the platform to the guard's van, where the guard was just signalling for the train's departure.

"Your son has baggage?" asked Mr. Grimesby Creepe, almost anxiously. "A box, perhaps—a trunk? I trust he has been supplied with everything necessary for health and cleanliness—"

"My son has two trunks, containing several suits, linen underclothing, and, in fact, everything that is necessary for a boy at school," interrupted Sir Vivian. "Surely, Mr. Creepe, you could not have imagined otherwise?"

"No, no, of course not!" said Mr. Grimesby Creepe. "How absurd of me! And as for you, my dear lad," he added, to Sir Montie, "we will bid you a most reluctant good-afternoon. I would be overjoyed if you could accompany us, but business first, eh? Business before pleasure!"

"Oh, rather, sir!" agreed Montie. "But if I can just come along to Moat Hollow it will be frightfully decent—"

"Quite so—quite so!" interrupted the other. "But, at the same time, out of the question! Later on, my dear lad—tomorrow—yes, to-morrow! You shall come for tea, eh?"

"Thanks very much, sir," said Sir Montie. Mr. Grimesby laughed.

"Nonsense—nonsense!" he exclaimed. "What are you thanking me for? All my dear boys have perfect liberty after their lessons are over. They can come and go as they please—invite friends—visit friends! My school is more of a country residence

than a seat of learning. It's very success has been founded upon those lines."

They all left the station, Mr. Creepe arranging for the baggage to be sent for later. And he took care to sandwich Tommy Watson between himself and Sir Vivian. Montie felt rather out of it. As a matter of fact, he had taken a strong and instant dislike to Mr. Grimesby Creepe.

He didn't exactly know why, for the schoolmaster was genial and breezy to a degree. But, somehow, there was something about Mr. Creepe that Sir Montie recoiled from. He put these thoughts aside, knowing how unjustified they were. And he politely raised his cap, and announced his intention of going his own way.

"Good-bye, Sir Vivian—good-afternoon, Mr. Creepe," said Tregellis-West. "Thanks awfully for what you said a little while ago. So long, Tommy—see you later on!"

"Yes, rather!" said Tommy eagerly.

And Sir Montie went. But his chum didn't mind much—for this parting was only to be temporary. Tommy Watson had come back to the fold—not exactly to St. Frank's, but to Bellton. And it was very much the same.

And he looked forward eagerly to making the acquaintance of his new home.

CHAPTER IX.

LIBERTY HALL.



MR. GRIMESBY CREEPE paused before the high, boarded-up gates of Moat Hollow. And Sir Vivian Watson and his son looked about them curiously.

Tommy was particularly interested.

He had pictured the old house as it had originally been, and he was naturally surprised to see the drastic changes. He was astonished at the enormously high walls, and the obvious efforts to secure privacy.

Mr. Creepe smiled amusedly.

"You are wondering at my precautions, eh?" he asked. "Of course! Everybody is curious! But I have an excellent reason for this unusual privacy—a very excellent reason, Sir Vivian."

"So I should imagine," said Tommy Watson's father.

They were standing before the gates—which were not closed. On the contrary, they were more than half open, revealing the untidy wilderness of the grounds. Originally, these grounds had been kept in neat order. But during the last three or four months—in fact, throughout the summer—they had been allowed to run completely wild.

"It is a whim of mine that no prying eyes should disturb my boys while at

“lessons,” explained Mr. Creepe, as he pushed the gates open wider. “When the boys are at liberty, the gates are naturally opened. But during lessons, and during meal-times, they remain secured and locked. Efficiency, Sir Vivian. My pupils have no distractions during their working hours.”

“Quite an excellent plan, Mr. Creepe,” said Sir Vivian approvingly.

By this time they had reached the moat.

This was another surprise for Watson. There had been no moat the last time he had seen the old house. It was a wide stretch of water which entirely surrounded the house. At the present moment it was partially frozen over—although, for some reason, the ice had recently been broken up. The water looked dark and sinister in the fading light of the winter’s afternoon.

Mr. Grimesby Creepe shrugged his shoulders disparagingly.

“A dreadful state of affairs—and I regret it exceedingly,” he apologised. “But I have only just taken over this house, Sir Vivian, and matters are still more or less chaotic. The garden is in a deplorable state; but within a few weeks it will wear a different aspect. I intend to make this place a miniature paradise.”

“It is picturesque, at all events,” said Sir Vivian. “But I confess that I am rather puzzled by the moat, Mr. Creepe.”

“Ah, that is all part of my beautifying scheme,” smiled the schoolmaster. “We shall not see the charm of that until the spring comes along—and then the summer. I have many ideas in my head, Sir Vivian. But we must walk before we run, eh? I am sure you will agree with me.”

The front door was reached by crossing over a narrow drawbridge. It was ancient in appearance—but was actually a newly-built contrivance. They passed over and entered the building.

“Allow me to welcome you to Liberty Hall!” smiled Mr. Creepe, with an elegant bow. “A home, Sir Vivian! A real home compared to the barren desolation of the average public school.”

Watson was interested in the place far more than he could say. When it had been controlled by Dr. Molyneux Hogge, he had often visited it as the guest of Hal Brewster & Co.

But now the place was different—amazingly different.

It reminded Watson of a glorious country hotel. Both he and his father were joyously surprised. For they had felt just a little dubious when viewing the exterior.

A great fire crackled and glowed in the hall. Lights were beginning to appear in the adjoining rooms, and a number of boys were lounging about, at ease, and like guests in a country house.

They were boys of sixteen or seventeen—bigger boys than Tommy Watson. And although he didn’t quite like their appear-

ance, he judged that this was because they were strange to him.

“You intend to stay long, Sir Vivian?” asked Mr. Creepe eagerly.

“Half an hour—but no longer, I am afraid,” replied Sir Vivian. “I must catch the early evening train back to London—”

“A pity—a thousand pities!” muttered Mr. Grimesby Creepe. “I was so hoping that you would stay for tea—and then for dinner. We have late dinner at Moat Hollow, Sir Vivian. And after that the boys generally amuse themselves with wireless, miniature billiards, indoor tennis, and so forth. My gymnasium, too, is superbly equipped.”

They passed into the big dining-hall, and Watson’s eyes gleamed. The long table was set in the most elaborate fashion. The linen was snowy white, there were flowers, and the table glittered with plate and silver.

“There don’t seem to be many other fellows about, dad,” murmured Watson.

Mr. Creepe caught the words.

“Most members of my school are due to arrive by the later evening train,” he explained, rubbing his hands together noiselessly. “This, you see, is our first day of term. I like to allow my boys all the liberty possible—especially the older pupils.”

There were one or two other new boys, Watson judged—for they were walking along with their parents. One elderly lady had two frail-looking boys with her, and her expression was an obvious reflection of her pleasure. She was very satisfied that her sons were to be so well looked after.

There was a man with three sons, it appeared. Two were between twelve and fourteen, but the other no older than eight or nine. Watson was rather surprised at this. He had not expected to have such youthful schoolfellows.

He was standing by, while Mr. Creepe talked with his father, when one of the elder boys came over and quietly nudged him.

“New chap?” he asked, in a whisper.

“Yes,” said Watson.

“What do you think of the old show?”

“Well, it seems jolly fine, by what I can see,” replied Tommy. “I hadn’t expected anything quite so home-like—”

“Just you wait, my lad!” chuckled the other. “My name’s Kirby—I’m one of the monitors. You’re going to have the time of your life in this place. Old Creepe is the limit! Let’s us do what we like!”

“That’s interesting, anyhow,” said Watson, smiling.

“It’s not like school at all—you’ll think you’re in a summer hotel!” said Kirby confidentially. “Of course, he’s a bit hot on lessons, but otherwise the Head’s a brick!”

“The Head?” said Watson. “Are there any other masters, then?”

“Yes—one,” replied Kirby. “You can take it from me that Mr. Creepe is a tip-topper!”

We feed on what we like, and have a royal time generally. Miles better than that barn of a place up the road," he added, with a contemptuous nod in the direction of St. Frank's.

Watson resolved that he did not quite like Master Kirby.

CHAPTER X.

AMONG FRIENDS.



SIR VIVIAN WATSON was ready to go.

He had made a tour of the school—Mr. Grimesby Creepe had insisted upon this. And Sir Vivian was more than de-

lighted. Now he was having a few final words with Tommy.

"Well, young man, how do you like it?" he asked, as the pair stood in private near the big hall fire.

"It seems pretty good to me, pater," said Tommy. "Of course, I'm not used to it yet—it's so different to St. Frank's. It isn't like a school at all. It'll take me some time to shake down."

"Nonsense," laughed his father. "In a day or two you'll be more at home here than you ever were at St. Frank's. I'm convinced of that. In fact, I don't mind telling you that I'm amazed."

"Amazed, dad?"

"Yes, Tom. Why, your fees at this school are a mere song compared to the fees at St. Frank's," said Sir Vivian. "And yet, by all that I can see, you will be much happier here than in the big college. Mr. Creepe is a man who believes in treating his boys with personal attention. He likes you to regard him as a kind of uncle."

"Yes, that's what Mr. Creepe said himself," replied Tommy. "It'll be ripping for me, because I'm so near to St. Frank's. I can always pop up and see the crowd. I hope you'll write, dad," he added, earnestly. "There's sis, too. You'll get her to write, won't you? And mater—"

"We'll all write, Tom—don't you worry," smiled Sir Vivian. "Your sister Violet is staying with your Uncle Benjamin just now—until I know better where I stand. I was hoping to be able to send her to the Moor View School—but that will have to stand over for a bit."

Sir Vivian's brow clouded for a moment. He had been attempting to conceal his anxiety and worry. But now and again it crept out in spite of himself. Tommy had no idea what a strain it had been for his father to come down at all. But Sir Vivian had been determined to see that his son was comfortably settled.

"Well, well?" inquired Mr. Creepe, walking up briskly, with that big, expansive smile on his flabby face. "I'm sure I don't

like to hurry you, Sir Vivian; but the train won't wait—"

"Yes, I must be going at once," said Sir Vivian. "I am more than delighted, Mr. Creepe, with your school. And I can see that my son will be happy and content under your control."

"Too hard, sir—too hard! It would be better to say under my wing!" laughed Mr. Grimesby Creepe. "To be sure—under my wing! I watch over my boys as a hen watches over its brood! I regret that the trap is out at the moment, or I would take you to the station—"

"Don't bother, Mr. Creepe," interrupted Sir Vivian, consulting his watch. "I have plenty of time—over fifteen minutes. And the distance can be easily walked under ten."

"Can I see my father off, sir?" asked Tommy Watson.

Mr. Creepe patted him paternally on the shoulder.

"What a question!" he chuckled. "Can you see your father off! Dear, dear! What next? Of course you can, my dear lad. See your father safely away, and then amuse yourself as you like. I only stipulate that you shall be in before locking-up—that is, seven-thirty."

"Oh, thanks awfully, sir!" said Watson.

Three minutes later he and his father were marching briskly down the dark village street towards the station. They were both feeling very satisfied. Tommy, in fact, was glowing with enthusiasm.

"He's a queer old stick, dad!" he remarked. "I thought I wasn't going to like him at first. But I do now—he's a brick! After seeing you off, I shall have time to pop up to St. Frank's, and see all the chaps!"

"Splendid!" said his father. "Yes, Tom, I really think that you are going to be happy. It was a lucky moment when I caught sight of Mr. Creepe's advertisement in the newspaper."

They arrived at the station three minutes before the train came in, and Tommy was grinning cheerfully when it steamed out. He waved to his father, and concluded that being the son of a ruined man wasn't so terrible, after all.

Sir Vivian himself went away relieved and delighted. He was convinced that he had left his son in excellent hands. It was a load off his mind.

Tommy Watson waved until his father withdrew into the carriage, and then he turned to the station exit with a glad sigh. In one way, he was rather relieved that his parent had gone. Now he would be able to shoot up to St. Frank's, and join the good old crowd!

"My hat!" murmured Tommy. "This is ripping!"

He hurried through the booking-office, and emerged into the dark station yard. Two

forms closed in on him with startling abruptness. He half paused, wondering.

"What the dickens—" he began.

"It's all right, Watson," said a soft voice. "Don't make a fuss—you're coming with us!"

Watson peered at the speaker, and saw that he was Kirby, the big fellow he had spoken to in the hall at Moat Hollow. The other was another of the Moat Hollow monitors.

"What's the game?" asked Watson, staring. "It isn't six yet—and Mr. Creepe said that I needn't be in before half-past seven! Trying to be funny, or what?"

Kirby laughed contemptuously.

"Poor little innocent!" he exclaimed. "This way, Watson! Never mind what Mr. Creepe said. You're coming with us! Understand—you're—coming—with—us!" he added deliberately. And he and the other monitor seized Tommy Watson firmly on either side.

CHAPTER XI.

AT ST. FRANK'S.



TOMMY WATSON was startled.

"You're dotty!" he said gruffly. "Lemme alone! I tell you, Mr. Creepe gave me permission to stay out until—"

"And we tell you that you're coming with us!" interrupted Kirby. "Hold him tight, Tarkington! I believe he's a bit of a caution! And we don't want any fuss out here."

"All right—I'll hold him——"

Watson was angry now. He could see that these two were determined to detain him—obviously on their own hook. They evidently didn't know anything about Mr. Grimesby Creepe's instructions, and had followed Watson and his pater to the station.

In ten seconds it would be too late. So Watson acted.

With a swift lunge of his left foot, he hooked it round Kirby's ankle, and the next second Kirby went flying. It was a neat trip—fully justifiable under the circumstances.

With one wrench, Tommy freed himself from Tarkington, and sped off in the darkness. He half turned, laughing.

"How's that?" he yelled derisively. "Like your nerve!"

He sped down the village street, aware of rushing footsteps behind him. But he was in fine condition, and fled like the wind. He was, moreover, anxious to get to St. Frank's

as soon as possible. He would only have a little over an hour—and he wanted to make the most of it.

Long before he got to the end of the village the sounds of pursuit had died away. He slowed down to a more sedate pace, and chuckled to himself.

"The fatheads!" he muttered. "One of their little games, I suppose. Trying to be funny—just because I'm a new kid. Blow 'em! I'll bet the rotters'll make it hot for me when I turn up. Monitors, eh? Why can't they call 'em prefects? Same thing, I suppose."

He arrived at St. Frank's breathless, and a thrill assailed him when he entered the Triangle. It was more or less of a pang. He hadn't realised until this moment that he would miss the dear old school sadly.

There was something warm and cheery about the gleaming electric lights in the Ancient House and the Modern House. A piano was drumming out some lively music somewhere.

"Old Jarrow, I expect," murmured Watson. "And I can hear Handy, too—having a row in Study D, I'll bet!"

He grinned, and sped lightly up the Ancient House steps. In the lobby he came face to face with Archie Glenthorne.

"Good gad!" ejaculated Archie. "What, I mean to say, is this? Dash it all, laddie, you absolutely startled me! Some foul cove sent the word round that you weren't appearing this term. And here, as it were, you are!"

"Only for an hour, Archie!" grinned Watson. "Can't stop now—in a hurry! Still the same old slacker, eh?"

He hurried off, leaving Archie somewhat blank.

"A frightfully decent sort of cove, but somewhat personal!" he murmured. "The next time I meet him, dash it, I shall tick him off somewhat severely. I mean to say, a slacker! Such words, by gad, to a fighting Glenthorne!"

In the meantime, Tommy Watson was in the Fourth Form passage. He ran into Reggie Pitt and Jack Grey, and they gave him a warm welcome. Sir Montie came dashing out of Study C in the middle of it.

"This is rippin', dear old boy!" he exclaimed. "Begad! I wasn't hopin' to see you until to-morrow! So you managed to give old Creepe the slip?"

"The slip!" echoed Tommy. "It wasn't necessary. He's a decent old bird—one of the best!"

"Really, Tommy boy?" asked Tregellis-West. "I must confess that I'm surprised—I am, really. A thousand apologies to Mr. Grimesby Creepe, but I thought he was several kinds of a slimy bounder!"

Watson shook his head.

"Not likely!" he replied. "Mr. Creepe's a sportsman. I was a bit doubtful at first, but you soon get to know him. As for the school, it's a really wonderful place——"

ANSWERS
EVERY MONDAY...PRICE 2:

"Let's go into the Common-room—the whole crowd will want to hear this!" sang out Pitt. "Might as well make a fuss of you while we've got you, Tommy!" he added. "Of course, Montie told us all about it—it's ripping having you so near by. Good luck, old son!"

"Thanks!" said Tommy, flushing slightly. He knew why Pitt had spoken in that way. He had set a lead to the others. As Captain of the Fourth, Reggie had clearly indicated that he accepted Tommy Watson in just the same way as of yore—although he was now no longer a St. Frank's fellow in any shape or form.

Pitt. "Of course, if you care for tea with free fights as the central course, that's your affair! But I've always found that tea in Study D means tea in the neck—and jam tarts on the nose!"

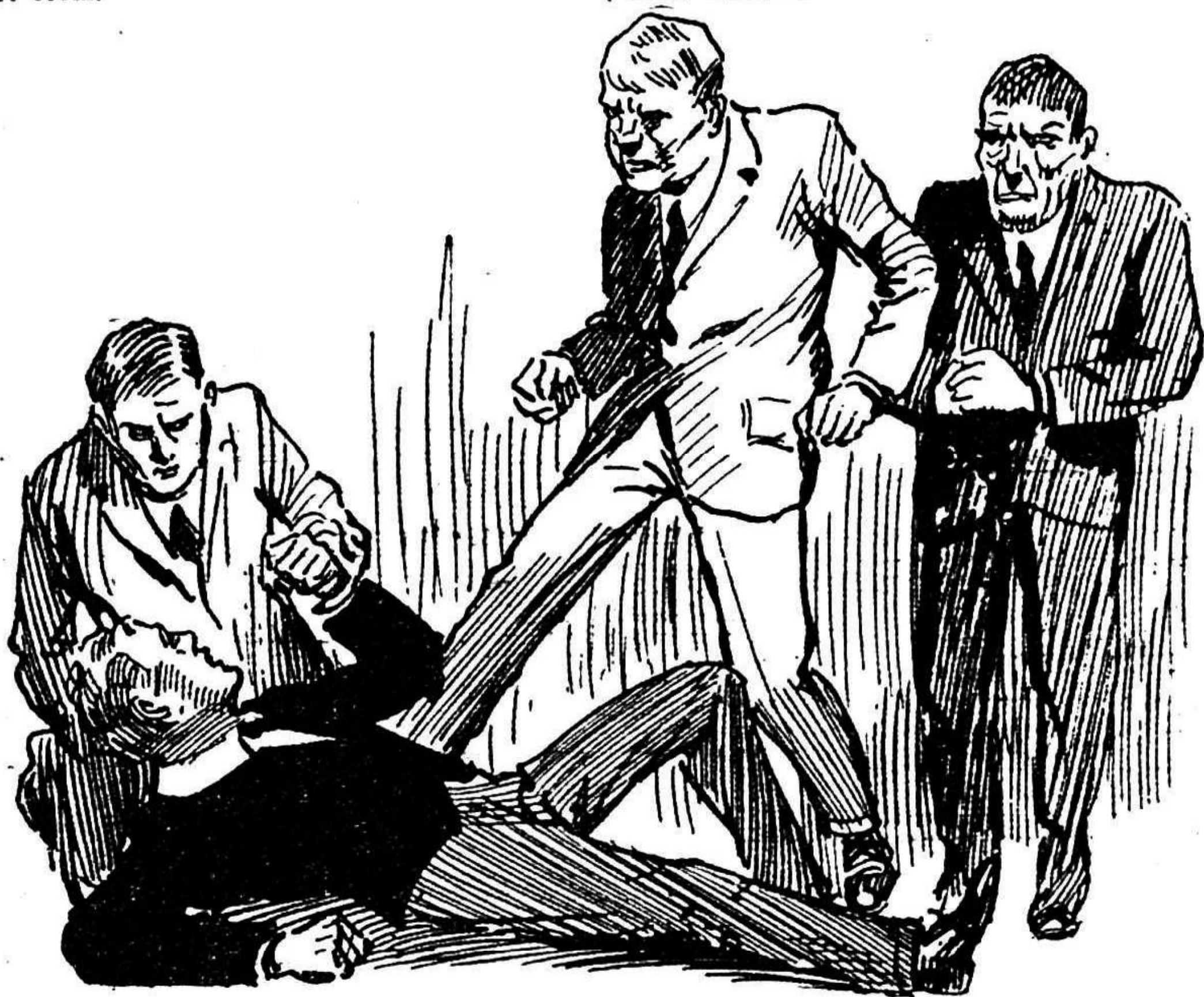
"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Funny fathead!" said Handforth sourly.

"Order!" commanded Pitt. "Mr. Thomas Watson will now make a speech! He returns to us as a visitor—but just as welcome for all that! He intends to give a few remarks on the subject of Moat Hollow."

"Silence for the speaker!"

"Go it, Tommy—we're dying to hear about Moat Hollow!"



They got him down, and while he was helpless on the floor, Kirby delivered kick after kick—vicious, cowardly blows.

Handforth and Co. were down in the Common-room when the crowd arrived. And his first action was to grab Tommy Watson's hand, and pump his arm up and down like a handle.

"Jolly glad to see you again!" said Handforth heartily. "So you're going to be near St. Frank's after all? Come up and have tea in Study D as often as you like, my son!"

"Thanks awfully," said Tommy.

"Don't you take any risks!" chuckled

CHAPTER XII.

STILL ONE OF THE CROWD.



EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH looked round with an important air.

"Now we're going to hear something!" he declared.

"I've always had my suspicions about Moat Hollow, and now you'll

hear them justified! There's something squiffy about that place——"

"Yes, it belongs to an inventor!" said Church casually.

"Eh?"

"An inventor who's got a marvellous new flying machine!" went on Church. "He's going to make experiments——"

"What rot!" interrupted Handforth tartly. "Who told you that piffle?"

Church turned red.

"Why, you fathead, that's your theory!" he snorted.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My theory!" howled Handforth. "Oh, yes! By George! I do seem to remember saying something—— But that's done with!" he added, waving a hand. "That was only a preliminary suggestion. Even at the time I was pretty sure that the place was going to be opened as a school!"

"Good old Handy!" chuckled Reggie Pitt. "But we can't waste the whole evening talking to you. So be good enough to retire into the undergrowth, as Archie would put it."

"What do you think I am—an earwig?" roared Handforth.

"If I expressed my thoughts aloud, there would be a disaster," replied Pitt calmly.

"But is Watson going to make this speech, or not? Dry up, Handy—you're too noisy!"

Fullwood laughed sarcastically.

"A good thing, too!" he remarked. "It's the first time I've approved of Handy bein' noisy. But anythin's better than lettin' that beastly son of a pauper get up an' spout!"

Watson turned rather pale at the words. He had been treated so well by the juniors that he had momentarily overlooked the fact that the cads of the Fourth would treat him with contempt.

"If you've got anything rotten to say against my father, say it straight out!" he exclaimed passionately. "Go on! And I'll knock you down!"

Fullwood backed away.

"I wouldn't soil my hands by touchin' you!" he sneered. "You've got no right in this place at all—you belong to that rotten mud heap down the road. It's only a cheap, common hole—no better than a Council school, an' it's a disgrace to St. Frank's that you should be allowed here."

"By George!" roared Handforth. "You—you—Hi! Lemme go, you fatheads!" he gasped, as he was firmly held. "I want to smash this cad——"

"If anybody's going to smash him, it'll be Tommy!" interrupted Pitt grimly.

"No—thanks all the same," said Watson, holding himself with difficulty. "I'm not a St. Frank's fellow now—I'm just a visitor here. And it wouldn't be the thing to fight."

Pitt nodded approvingly—Tommy was right.

"Afraid, I suppose?" sneered Fullwood, with contempt.

"No, I'm not afraid!" retorted Watson bluntly. "Just come outside into the lane—

on public ground—and I'll fight you! You miserable cad! Come outside, where I shall have a right to knock you down!"

But Fullwood shrugged his shoulders and laughed.

"A fine, easy excuse!" he jeered. "I wouldn't move a yard to oblige a cad like you! What's your father? A swindling beast who ought to be sent to penal servitude——"

Handforth wrenched himself away by sheer force.

"I haven't got to get you outside, you rotter!" he bellowed. "Take that!"

Biff!

Fullwood had over-reached himself, and the next moment he received a punch from Handforth which sent him hurtling over backwards. That one blow was enough. Fullwood was dazed and dizzy, three of his teeth were loosened, and his lip was cut.

"He's settled, anyway!" said Reggie Pitt. "It's rather a pity Handy hit him like that, though."

"A pity?" repeated Grey, staring.

"Yes—I wanted to do it myself!" replied Reggie blandly. "Now, Watson, old son—let's hear about Moat Hollow. And don't forget that you're still one of us—still one of the crowd!"

"Thanks awfully," said Watson huskily.

"Of course, you can easily afford to ignore these little-minded cads!" went on Pitt. "You're always welcome at St. Frank's, Tommy—and the more you come, the better we shall like it."

"Begad, rather!" said Sir Montie heartily.

Watson was rather overwhelmed by the shout of approval which greeted Pitt's remark. Everybody was acting so decently towards him. He hadn't hoped for it, although he had believed that his own especial chums would treat him in the same friendly way as of old.

He made his speech at last, and gave a glowing description of Moat Hollow. Indeed, by the time he had finished many of his listeners were quite envious.

"Lucky beggar!" said Owen major.

"Well, I'm blessed!" snorted Handforth. "The chap's going to have a better time at Moat Hollow than we're having here. Of all the nerve!"

"Somebody had better go along and tell Mr. Creepe that he's too kindhearted," suggested Pitt. "Tell him to come to St. Frank's, and then mould his giddy school on this one!"

"It's good enough for me as it is, thanks," chuckled Watson. "Well, I shall have to be getting off now—it's close on time, and I don't want to be late for locking up on my first day."

And five minutes later he took his departure, light-hearted and happy. Sir Montie accompanied him to the gates, and they clasped hands warmly.

"See you to-morrow, Montie," said Watson, cheerfully.

"Rather, Tommy boy!" said Montie, with a smile.

And they parted. As Watson hurried down the lane in the darkness of the winter's evening, he little realised that it would be well past the morrow before he saw Sir Montie Tregellis-West once again.

CHAPTER XIII.

A BOMBSHELL FOR TOMMY.



MOAT HOLLOW was wrapped in silence when Tommy Watson arrived.

He couldn't help feeling just a little shiver as he stood outside the enormously high-boarded gateway. The place was certainly like a prison. And in the gloom of the night it seemed more forbidding.

Watson had expected to find the gates open. His watch assured him that the time was only just 7.23, and he had compared his watch to the school clock before leaving the Triangle.

"Rummy!" he murmured. "Mr. Creepe said locking-up was 7.30. What's the idea of this—Hallo! My hat! You gave me a start!" he added, as a black form loomed up out of the shadows.

"Oh, so you've come back, have you?" said the shape.

Watson recognised Kirby's voice, and he was just a little annoyed. This appearing out of the blackness was a favourite trick of Kirby's, apparently; and Tommy had really been startled.

"What's the idea of creeping about like a ghost?" he asked warmly.

"I've been waiting for you, my lad," said Kirby aggressively. "What do you mean by sneaking off like that? What do you mean by escaping from us at the station—"

"Escaping be blowed!" interrupted Watson. "Mr. Creepe told me—"

"Never mind that!" interrupted the other. "You'll have to pay for your confounded nerve!"

As he spoke, he pulled out a key and opened a little wicket gate which was set in the boarded-up entrance. It was extremely narrow, for the carpenters had been obliged to make it fit between two of the iron bars of the original gate.

"Go on—in with you!" said Kirby harshly.

Watson squeezed his way through, more than ever surprised. After his first experience of Moat Hollow this treatment was unexpected. He had been picturing all sorts of pleasant things to himself as he had walked down the road.

Now that the excitement was over, he realised that he was ravenously hungry.

He hadn't eaten any tea, and, in fact, he hadn't had a meal since breakfast.

But he remembered that dinner was served late at Moat Hollow, in the evening, presumably at about eight o'clock, since locking-up was at seven-thirty. And the thought of that beautifully-laid table made him smack his lips.

And after that a little recreation, reading, or something like that, in front of one of the big cheerful fires. And Watson was further charmed at the thought of his bed-room.

Both he and his father had been shown this. All the boys at Moat Hollow were allowed their own private bed-rooms, and Tommy's had proved to be a cosy, delightful apartment overlooking the river. There was electric light, and a stout wooden bedstead with a soft feather bed. Such luxuries were unknown even at St. Frank's.

This behaviour on the part of Kirby therefore took Watson all the more by surprise. He decided that he would complain to Mr. Grimesby Creepe as soon as he saw him again. The monitor was obviously exceeding the full power of his duties.

Watson was led across the drawbridge and over the moat. He felt slightly surprised at the darkness which surrounded him. There were no gleaming lights pouring from the school windows, as there had been when he had left to accompany his father at the station.

At this early hour of seven-thirty Moat Hollow was practically in darkness.

He was literally pushed into the big hall, and he wondered if he was dreaming. Instead of the blazing electric lights, a candle was burning on a side table, shedding a weak, flickering glow. It occurred to Watson that the current had failed for some reason.

But the fire, too, had failed. It had not only gone out, but all trace of it was removed. The fireplace was cleaned up and barren. And although the hall retained a certain amount of warmth, it was rapidly becoming chilly.

"You'd better go and have your supper first, and then Mr. Creepe will talk to you," said Kirby grimly. "He's having his dinner at the minute, and mustn't be disturbed."

"Supper?" repeated Watson.

"Yes, supper!"

"But I thought Mr. Creepe said we all had late dinner here?"

Kirby looked at Watson pityingly in the dim light.

"You young fool!" he exclaimed harshly.

He grasped the surprised junior by the shoulder and pushed him before him into the dining-hall. Watson was becoming rather bewildered. Everything was so staggeringly different to what it had been.

And a further shock awaited him.

That vision of snowy-white linen and glittering plate had vanished. Like everything else, the dining-hall was transformed. No longer was it a place of delicate lights and exquisite table furnishings.

The table was there, but it was now covered with cheap kitchen oilcloth, worn and stained, and with many holes. Upon it was set an assortment of odd plates and dishes. And along the centre the dishes were piled with thick, unhealthy-looking slabs of bread-and-butter.

The only light was provided by a smelly paraffin lamp which hung on the wall. There was no fire, and the room was miserable in the extreme. Kirby pushed Watson down upon a form.

"Now then, get your supper!" he snapped. "And you'd better look sharp, because if you haven't done when the bell rings you'll get no further chance! You've got about five minutes!"

Watson took a gulp, and wondered when he would wake up.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE SCHOOL OF AMAZEMENT.



FOR the first time Watson realised that he wasn't alone.

The dimness of the dining-hall had prevented him from noticing his companions at first, and they were so uncannily silent that he had heard nothing of them.

But when he turned round to look down the long tables, he saw there were many figures seated there, boys of all shapes, sizes, and ages. There must have been nearly a couple of dozen.

And yet at first he had not even seen them.

Tommy Watson began to feel a creepy sort of sensation. Why didn't these boys speak? Why did they act so mysteriously? He peered down the table curiously, rather horrified.

The light was so dim that he couldn't see much. But when his eyes became accustomed to the gloom he noticed that most of the boys were much younger than him, probably not more than twelve or thirteen.

And they were a strange looking lot.

Some had great, protruding ears or misshapen mouths. Two at least had such appallingly prominent teeth that they were practically deformed. Another boy had only one eye. They seemed to be a collection of pitiful freaks.

Kirby stood close behind the form where Watson sat. A little further down the room Tarkington was standing. And there were other monitors there, obviously on duty. And the queer crowd of boys at the table

partook of the bread-and-butter in silence.

"Better hurry up!" muttered Kirby. "There's only two minutes!"

"But—but I don't understand!" exclaimed Watson. "I—I thought we were going to have dinner—"

"This is all the dinner you'll get, you young fool!"

"But it's like a prison!" burst out Watson. "Who are these boys? Are they dumb, or what? Why don't they speak?"

"Because they know their manners!" retorted Kirby. "You'll know yours before you've been here three days. You'd better not speak while the Head's about; he'll half kill you!"

"Mr. Creepe?" asked Watson blankly.

"Yes—Mr. Creepe!"

Watson had nothing further to say. Although he was famished he didn't even think of taking a slice of that unwholesome-looking bread-and-butter. His mind was in a state of complete chaos.

He had told the St. Frank's fellows that the Moat Hollow School was even better than St. Frank's. He had almost boasted of the late dinner and the cheerful fires and the geniality of Mr. Grimesby Creepe.

And now, all in a flash, the whole picture had faded away, to be replaced by this forbidding reality. The bombshell was a fearful one. Tommy vaguely wondered what his father would say when he knew of this transformation.

And where had these awful-looking boys sprung from? Watson decided to get at the truth at once.

"Did all these chaps come down by the evening train?" he asked huskily.

"Evening train?" sneered Kirby. "If you want to know, you fool, they were packed down the cellar!"

"The cellar?"

"Where else?" jeered Kirby. "Do you think Mr. Creepe wanted a crowd like this to be seen by your father and those other people? You'd better make up your mind at once, Watson; this school isn't a picnic. The time for fooling is over, so it doesn't matter about telling you the truth!"

"The truth!" muttered Watson blankly. "But I don't seem to—"

A bell sounded down the passage. On the instant the two lines of boys rose with shuffling feet. They stood there at attention, a sorry-looking crowd.

"Bedtime!" announced Tarkington curtly.

"Bedtime!" gasped Kirby. "But it isn't eight o'clock—"

"Keep your mouth shut!" broke in Kirby.

"But—but—"

Crash!

Kirby brought the back of his hand across Watson's cheek with stinging force, and the startled junior reeled back against the table. At the same moment the double line of boys filed away and out of the dining-room at the other end. Watson

pulled himself back, flaming with anger and resentment.

"What was that for?" he asked fiercely. "You bullying cad——"

"One more word from you and I'll soon settle your hash!" snarled Kirby. "Get upstairs to bed with the rest——"

"But I've had no supper yet!" shouted Tommy Watson.

"Get upstairs to bed!" roared Kirby.

"What's this—what's this?" came a voice from the rear. "Dear me, Kirby! Is this boy causing any trouble?"

Watson swung round, and found Mr. Grimesby Creepe standing there. There was even a startling change in the schoolmaster himself. He was no longer immaculate. His fine clothes had gone, and, instead, he was wearing a rusty old morning-coat, a dirty collar, and a much-worn tie. His trousers were baggy and soiled, and he looked seedy in the extreme.

He stood there, regarding Watson with a totally new expression on his face. It was wholly evil and vindictive. His eyes were almost hidden under his bushy brows, and he made no remark. He just stood there, picking his teeth with an enormous quill.

Tommy Watson wanted to shout, but his voice failed him. He had an uncontrollable sensation that this whole affair was a ghastly nightmare.

CHAPTER XV.

THE METHODS OF MR. GRIMESBY CREEPE.



MR. GRIMESBY CREEPE gave vent to a soft chuckle.

It was utterly unlike his former chuckle. There was something wicked about it—something which sent a shiver down Watson's spine. The man reminded him of a great, fat spider sitting in his web.

"So, Watson!" said Mr. Creepe at last. "So! You have been good enough to return to us, eh? After leaving us desolated by your absence for nearly two hours, you return to the fold!"

Watson gave a gulp.

"I—I don't understand, sir——" he began.

"Probably not—probably not!" interrupted Mr. Creepe. "But you soon will, Watson. Possibly our establishment does not seem quite so attractive to you as before, but you will soon grow accustomed to that. We are just one compact little family. You understand? We are within a stone's-throw of the village, and yet isolated to ourselves. Could anything be nicer? Could anything be more peaceful or tranquil?"

"But—but the place isn't the same, sir!" blurted out Watson. "You told my father that——"

"Ah, a regretful, but necessary step!" interrupted Mr. Creepe silkily, as he stuck the quill between two of his teeth and held it there. "I am glad, Watson, that you have had your supper——"

"But I haven't, sir!" broke in Watson. "I haven't eaten a thing!"

"A pity—a thousand pities!" said Mr. Creepe, shaking his head. "It is a sad thing to go to bed on an empty stomach. But you had your chance, Watson, and you have only yourself to blame. I provide a substantial, wholesome meal, and you neglect——"

"This!" shouted Watson, indicating the table.

"Your attitude is offensive!" said Mr. Grimesby Creepe. "If you expect rich foods in my establishment, boy, you will expect in vain. But enough concerning dinner. Why did you not return direct from the station with the two monitors I sent for you?"

"You gave me permission to stop out till 7.30——"

"Tut-tut! A quibble, boy—a mere quibble!" interrupted the schoolmaster. "Did not my monitors inform you of my orders?"

"Yes, sir, but——"

"Then you have no excuse—you have not the slightest shred of justification," said Mr. Creepe. "I have only one alternative—I must punish you. And yet I cannot be harsh. This is your first day, and I desire to be lenient. What shall it be, Kirby?"

"I'll leave it to you, sir," said Kirby with a grin.

"A fine, eh? What about a fine?" suggested Mr. Creepe, putting the quill in his waistcoat-pocket and rubbing his hands slowly together. "Yes, I am afraid it must be a fine, Watson."

Tommy Watson was too amazed to speak.

"Turn your pockets out, boy!" said the schoolmaster.

"My—my pockets, sir!" gasped Watson.

"Yes—your pockets!" said Mr. Creepe. "I advise you to obey me, for if you do not I shall be compelled to instruct my monitors to use force. And that would be distressing. Remember, Watson, that in this house we are a happy family, and quarrelling is always regrettable."

Watson backed away. It was an unheard of thing to be fined. He had just over sixteen shillings on him—the remains of a pound his father had given him for pocket-money. Instinctively, he put his hand into his pocket, and held it there.

"I am waiting," said Mr. Creepe softly.

"I won't! I won't!" shouted Watson passionately. "It isn't fair! There's some trickery about this—you're fooling me! I thought this place was a school, but it's a horrible——"

"Quick, Kirby—quick!" rapped out Mr. Creepe. "Silence the young cur, and take whatever money you find on him and hand it to me! His fine shall be doubled for this insubordination!"

Watson thought he was going mad. This treatment, after the rosy time he had expected, was surprising him more and more. And now a wild alarm and anger was taking possession of him. Usually stolid and blunt, he was almost panic-stricken now.

"Don't touch me!" he shouted desperately. "There's something wrong with this place. I believe it's a lunatic asylum! Those boys—those awful-looking deaf mutes——"

He was not allowed to say any more. Not only Kirby, but another monitor, pounced upon him and threw him to the ground. Watson struggled desperately—feverishly. He fought with all his strength. But his opponents were in no way particular.

They got him down, and while he was helpless on the floor, Kirby delivered kick after kick—vicious, cowardly blows. The unhappy junior was nearly knocked senseless. He was bruised, battered, and bleeding.

Dazed and half-unconscious, he was only dimly aware of what took place. His pockets were wrenched inside out, and every single thing was taken away, including his watch and chain, and such trivialities as a favourite pocket-knife and silver pencil.

He was dragged to his feet and held there, supported by the cowardly monitors. Surprisingly enough, Mr. Grimesby Creepe made no comment. He obviously approved of this vile treatment.

He had seen Watson kicked as he lay on the ground, and yet he had made no remark. Yet he greedily took possession of the objects which had come from Watson's pockets.

"Sixteen shillings and fourpence!" he exclaimed, with a little glint of satisfaction in his eyes. "A paltry amount, Watson, and I must fine you more—much more!"

Watson heard the words through a kind of haze.

"This watch," went on Mr. Creepe. "H'm! Gold! Yes, we must appropriate it for the remainder of the fine. These other little articles are worthless—you can retain them, Kirby. And put this young ruffian to bed."

And Mr. Creepe pocketed the silver, chuckled over the gold watch in his hand, and moved heavily away into the shadows of the hall.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE PLACE OF DREAD.



TOMMY WATSON felt faint and sick.

He had several ugly bruises on his legs and body as a result of the kicks. His lip was cut, his left ear was gashed, and the inside of his mouth was lacerated where Kirby's heel had struck his face.

The unfortunate junior was in a pitiable condition.

He had been deliberately robbed; he knew it. Under the pretence of fining him for an imaginary offence, the master of this astounding school had stripped him of every article he possessed.

And he was too sore and faint to utter any vigorous protest. And the stupefied amazement which filled him further bereft him of his physical powers. He was quite listless as the two monitors pushed him into the hall.

Again and again Watson vaguely told himself that it was a nightmare. He remembered the scene as he and his father had first seen it—the smiling Mr. Creepe, the blazing fires, the softly glowing lights, the grateful warmth. All had gone.

And in its stead there was this continuous horror.

As Watson was forced upstairs, he even began to doubt the existence of that comfortable bed-room. And there was no question that his doubts were fully justified.

He found himself pushed along a gloomy corridor, and then through a doorway. There was no cosy bed-room here. Instead, he found himself in a long, cold room—one that he vaguely remembered. It had formerly been the Fourth Form dormitory of the River House schoolboys.

But what a change now!

The room itself was the same—even Mr. Grimesby Creepe could not alter the walls themselves. But the floor was bare, the walls were grimy and stained, and the only light was provided by the tiniest of miniature candles.

There were two double rows of beds. Watson could dimly see them, but that was about all. Most of them were already occupied, although the forms within them were uncannily silent.

"Now then, confound you!" muttered Kirby. "Undress!"

"I won't!" panted Watson. "You brute! You cowardly hound——"

Crash!

Kirby's fist drove itself with blinding force into Watson's face, and the junior fell staggering over the nearest bed. A frightened squeal came from the occupant, who huddled himself up, shivering.

"Now—undress!" snarled Kirby.

Although half-dazed by the blow, Watson

pulled himself together, and swung round. He hardly knew what he was doing. But for Kirby he had a blinding, passionate hatred.

Crash!

This time it was the other way about. With all his force, Watson punched at Kirby's leering face. It was a terrific blow. The monitor struck the floor with a thud which shook the whole room. He lay there, screaming, and Watson stood over him, swaying dizzily.

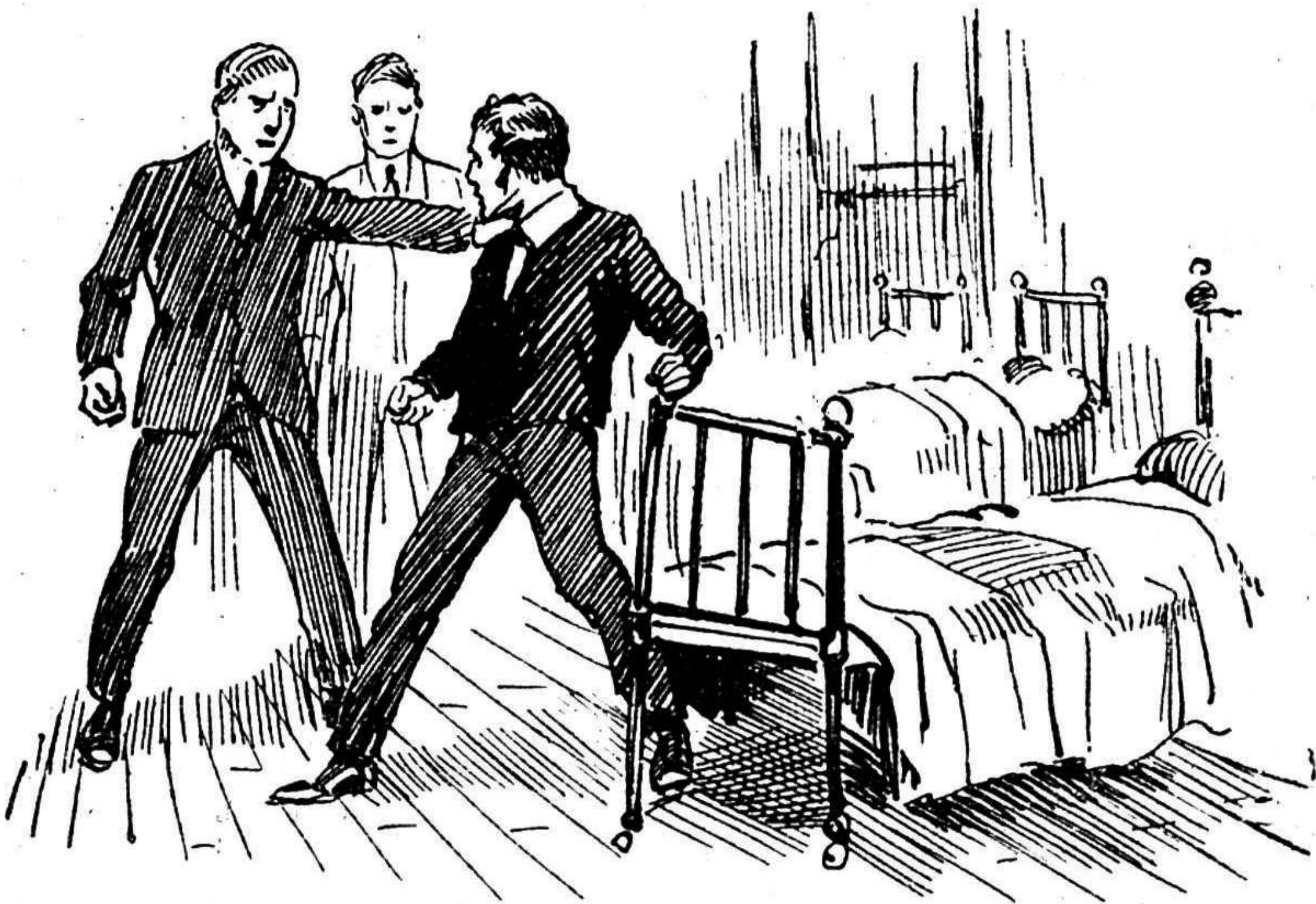
"You asked for it!" he muttered. "You can't bully me—"

He paused, for Mr. Grimesby Creepe had entered the room. With him were two of

coarse, inadequate blankets. And Tommy Watson lay there, unable to sleep owing to excessive exhaustion.

And gradually he recovered some of his former spirit. He forgot about his hunger—he forgot everything except the fact that this establishment was no ordinary school, but a place of hidden, awful dread.

Next to him, Kirby was sleeping, but Kirby had a bigger bed than the others—a bed that was provided with springs and sheets and warm blankets. Distributed throughout the dormitory were similar beds—all occupied by monitors. The rest were identical with Watson's.



"Now then, confound you!" muttered Kirby. "Undress!"
 "I won't!" panted Watson. "You brute! You cowardly hound——!"

his monitors. The schoolmaster took in the situation at a glance.

"Cease that infernal noise, Kirby!" he snapped. "Tarkington, take that boy and undress him! And then put him to bed! By Heaven! If he causes trouble to-morrow he will suffer dearly!"

The blow that Watson had delivered had taken all the strength out of him. He hardly remembered being undressed. His clothes were torn from him, and then he was flung upon a hard, unsympathetic mattress.

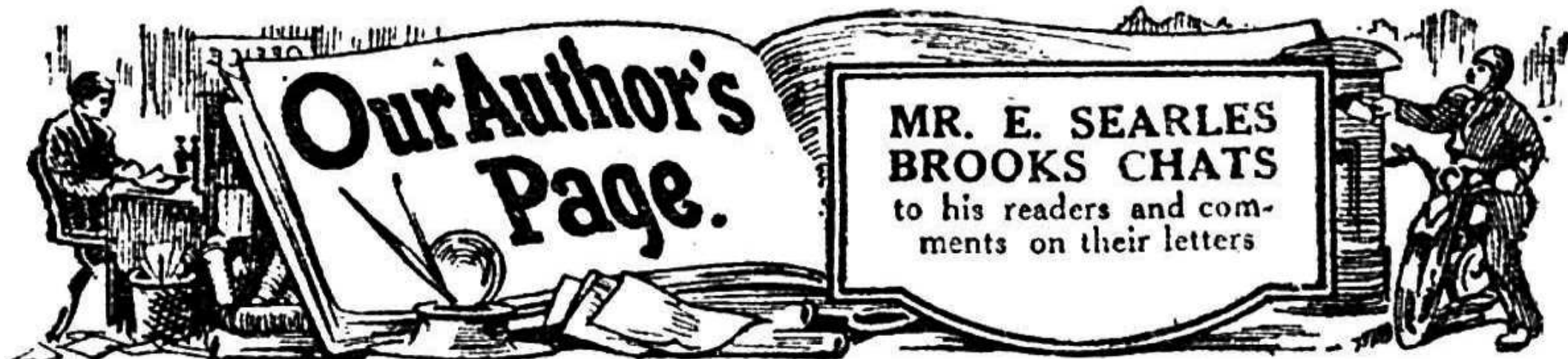
There were no springs, and the pillow itself was a mere travesty for a pillow. Indeed, the bed had no sheets—nothing but

And at the end of the long room one of the monitors sat on guard. Watson dimly realised that this guard was changed at different intervals. Throughout the night a monitor was always on the watch. These fellows were like warders. The whole place was little better than a prison!

And then, at length, oblivion came to the unhappy St. Frank's junior.

He slept, and mercifully forgot his troubles. But they were destined to return on the morrow—when further shocks would come. Tommy Watson was only at the beginning of his extraordinary ordeal!

THE END.



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

Letters received: Frank Nichols (Carnalton), "Margaret of Sheffield," A. H. Searle (Birmingham), "An Old Reader" (Stockport), E. G. S. (Walworth), "Critic" (Putney), Fred Allen (Ipswich), A. J. Parkinson (Grimsby), Miss B. L. Tipper (Chelsea), T. Treadwell (E.C.2), Frank L. Herring (Leytonstone), Arthur Riley (Leicester), Leslie W. Adams (Birmingham), John Franklin (Manchester), "N. L. Reader" (East Ham), "An Old Reader" (Wallsend-on-Tyne), J. Deeley (Barnsley), "An Old Reader" (Manchester), Lilian Clark (Blyth), Joe Beckett (Manchester), Godfrey Murray (Southampton), P. Hopper (Hull), "Irish Pat" (Birtley), "Prince Charles" (Whitehaven), "O. Twist, Jr." (St. Leonards), James M'Alinden (Dublin), Leslie Pawson (Harrogate), C. J. B. (Kidderminster), W. F. Dickinson (Bootle), Wm. R. Allsopp (Dudley), F. V. L. Thorpe (Aylesbury), John Balderson (Stretton).

Glad to hear, Frank Nichols, that since your father has read some copies of the Old Paper he no longer regards them as "Penny Dreadfuls." I wish a few thousand other fathers would follow his example!

Plenty of readers agree with you, Margaret, of Sheffield. You needn't worry—the Magazine is not going to be stopped, although, in response to universal demand, the Editor may curtail it soon, in order to increase the length of the St. Frank's yarn. This means more work for me, but I'll stick it!

You raise an interesting point, Frank L. Herring. I don't quite see how we can arrange matches between St. Frank's, Rookwood, St. Jim's, Greyfriars, etc.—these remarks are addressed to you two fellows, too,

James M'Alinden and P. Hopper. You see, our big public schools form themselves into groups, where sports are concerned. For example, Harrow, Eton, and Winchester comprise one of these. In the same way, Bedford, Tonbridge, Dulwich, Haileybury, and St. Paul's form another group. Similarly, Rookwood, St. Jim's, and Greyfriars generally keep to themselves. And our own particular group includes such famous schools as St. Frank's, Helmford, Redcliffe, Hazlehurst, and Barcliffe. It isn't usual for the different groups to butt in upon one another's fixture lists. See what I mean?

May you write again, Arthur Riley? Of course you may! I'm only too delighted to hear from individual readers as often as possible—although I can't guarantee any individual reply unless the subject is likely to be of general interest. All the same, I welcome and treasure every letter.

Yes, go ahead, Leslie Adams! My advice to you is to go in and win.

Are you sure you've got that name right, John Deeley? As far as I can see, "Konongo" isn't on the map of Africa. But it may be a small place, too insignificant to be mentioned in any reference book. Sorry I can't help.

Now, this is to everybody. A reader named F. W. Dickinson is anxiously looking for back numbers of the Old Paper. He wants Nos. 1 to 145 very particularly. I am quite game to lend him a hand. If any readers are willing to part with their back numbers, please write to me, naming what numbers they possess, and the price asked. Then I can either put them in touch with Master Dickinson direct, or buy them myself personally. I have an idea he'd like that better—I shan't want any profit on the deal! And there's another thing, just between ourselves—I wouldn't mind some back numbers (especially the very earliest numbers) for my own files. I've got the Old Paper bound from No. 1 onwards, of course, but—let me whisper this—I've caught the fever to have each series of yarns bound independently. In that form they'll be very useful to me for reference. So rally round, as Archie might say, and set something absolutely buzzing, what?



Eileen Dare's Peril!

A Gripping Story of the strange Dr. Nicholson, introducing **EILEEN DARE**, the plucky girl detective, and the famous detective, **NELSON LEE**, and his brilliant young assistant, **NIPPER**.

CHAPTER I.

NELSON LEE'S SCHEME.

A QUEER business—a very queer business!" murmured Nelson Lee, looking at his lady assistant with a thoughtful expression. "Dr. Nicholson and his mysterious doings are becoming more absorbing than ever! Tell me, Miss Dare, all you possibly can about the yellow-faced individual you mentioned——"

"But I have already told you everything there is to be told, Mr. Lee!" cut in Eileen Dare quickly. "I simply saw a secret panel open in Dr. Nicholson's room, and a ghastly yellow face peer out at me—a terrible, appalling face, the mere sight of which almost turned my blood to ice! It—it was awful!"

"Good heavens!" muttered Nipper, staring at the girl detective curiously. "If you were just an ordinary girl, Miss Dare, I should imagine that you'd been fancying things—but you're not that sort!"

Eileen smiled.

"No—I didn't fancy it, Nipper," she agreed. "The thing was too horribly real to be merely imagined, and I will confess that I was badly startled. But after the first shock was over I plucked up courage and tried to find the opening where the face had appeared; but I couldn't do it, in spite of my efforts. And so I got Mason to help me to find you and Mr. Lee."

The famous detective of Gray's Inn Road, with his two assistants, was standing at the edge of the gloomy common which bordered the London and St. Albans road.

Almost opposite them, nearly hidden amongst the trees and shrubs stood Hollowdene Manor—a mysterious dwelling which sheltered an equally mysterious individual known as Dr. Jeremy Nicholson.

Both the doctor and his abode were shrouded in sinister and impenetrable

mystery, and Nelson Lee and Nipper had taken upon themselves the task of solving the various riddles which confronted them.

The pair had originally encountered Dr. Nicholson by the merest chance a few nights ago; but since then a large number of stirring and inexplicable events had taken place in and around the old house.

In the first place, a maidservant named Ellen Bennett had flown from Hollowdene Manor during a thunderstorm, and had collapsed and died upon the drive—just at the moment when Lee and Nipper had brought their car to a standstill owing to a fallen tree.

An examination of the dead girl had assured Nelson Lee that she had been killed by sheer fright; but Dr. Nicholson had asserted that the servant, being subject to heart attacks, had succumbed to a collapse owing to the effects of the storm.

But the detective did not credit this—being perfectly convinced that the girl had been killed by something more dreadful than a mere thunderstorm. And, in order to verify his suspicions, Nelson Lee had taken steps to instal his lady assistant within the Manor in the capacity of maid. Eileen Dare was known at Hollowdene as Mary Aldridge, and was accepted by Dr. Nicholson and the other servants as the sister of Betty Aldridge—a maidservant who had been with the doctor for a considerable time.

And, while Eileen kept her eyes and ears open within the Manor, Nelson Lee and Nipper were by no means idle, attending to the exterior investigations. Already they had gained ample proof that Dr. Nicholson was a mystery man in every sense of the word, and that he was the centre of attraction for at least four individuals who appeared to be greatly interested in him.

Two of these were well-known London burglars—Bill Jenkins and Walter Hayes—

and Nelson Lee had discovered that their purpose was to blackmail Dr. Nicholson.

The other two who were haunting the neighbourhood were Chinamen. Who they were, and what their purpose could be, was at present a mystery—but that they were very determined had been amply proved within the last hour or so.

For the Chinamen had succeeded in kidnapping Dr. Nicholson, and had taken him to a dilapidated hut upon the common. Here they had threatened to torture him unless he revealed the hiding-place of "the Captain"; but this outrage had been prevented by the arrival of the two burglars, who caused the Chinamen to flee.

Then Jenkins and Hayes had attempted to blackmail the doctor, but had been promptly captured by Lee and Nipper. Later, the two Chinamen had reappeared, and had managed to turn the tables completely—securing Nicholson, the two burglars, and Nelson Lee and Nipper as prisoners.

Meanwhile, Eileen Dare had made the most of the doctor's absence from the house to make a search of his rooms, and had seen a secret panel open in the wall, and a terrible yellow face peer out at her. It disappeared instantly, and she had been unable to discover any means of opening the panel.

Therefore, she had gone out—in company with Mason, the butler—to find Nelson Lee and Nipper. And, while they had been searching the grounds, they had heard a shot fired from the hut on the common.

Subsequently, they learned that the shot had been fired by one of the burglars, who had freed a hand and had thus gained the mastery over the Chinamen, who had been about to commence torturing operations. The two Chinks had promptly fled, and Jenkins and Hayes had freed themselves from their bonds.

Before Eileen and Mason arrived at the hut, however, the burglars had also escaped, and when Lee and Nipper and Dr. Nicholson had been released, the doctor refused to give an explanation of the events, merely stating that the Chinamen were on the wrong track, and expressing a desire to hurry back to the Manor.

He had at once left with the butler, leaving Lee and Nipper and Eileen Dare to follow. They had done so in a leisurely manner, comparing notes as they went, and trying to penetrate the cloud of mystery which hung over Hollowdene Manor and its occupants.

Now they were standing on the edge of the common, having a few last words before "Mary Aldridge" returned to her duties within the old house. Eileen's action in hurrying to the hut had been a most fortunate one—for otherwise Lee and Nipper would still have been prisoners, securely roped up in company with Dr. Nicholson.

They realised this to the fullest extent,

and had already thanked and complimented the girl detective upon her achievement. But Eileen had only been too pleased that she had been able to assist.

"This yellow-face matter is extremely interesting," said Nelson Lee. "It proves, beyond all doubt, that Dr. Nicholson is keeping somebody in concealment within the Manor—somebody whom he is tremendously anxious to keep from sight. That, of course, explains his desire for privacy in his own rooms, and also his reluctance to make any explanation—"

"But who the dickens can he be keeping such a close prisoner, guv'nor?" interrupted Nipper curiously.

Nelson Lee shook his head.

"That is a question I am quite unable to answer," he returned. "But it seems obvious that Dr. Nicholson's prisoner is the man whom the Chinamen are so anxious to find. The thing is a complete mystery—but I fancy that we shall be able to fathom it before long. It is seldom that we have been faced with such a queer series of events, and I will not deny that I am curious to get to the bottom of the business."

"So am I, Mr. Lee," agreed Eileen. "But I am puzzled about Jenkins and Hayes. How do they enter into the matter?"

Nelson Lee smiled.

"It is quite evident that Jenkins and Hayes have in some manner become acquainted with some of Dr. Nicholson's doings," he answered. "They are merely here for purposes of blackmail, and have no connection whatever with the two Chinamen. That, at least, is my opinion."

"And I'll bet you're right, guv'nor!" declared Nipper. "But how are you going to bring matters to a head—that's what I want to know? At present we're at a loose end, without a single clue to go on! We know that there are two Chinks and two burglars up against Nicholson, but beyond that we know very little—"

"Exactly, young 'un!" agreed Lee, with a nod. "But it is obvious that Dr. Nicholson needs protection, although he won't admit it. His stubbornness in refusing any explanation regarding the situation is adding to our difficulties very considerably, and I think my best plan will be to arrange to get into the Manor and to work side by side with Miss Dare. A scheme of that sort should bring better results than we are getting at present, at all events."

Eileen and Nipper agreed enthusiastically to the detective's plan, and they arranged the details there and then.

The time had now come for more drastic measures to be taken—and Nelson Lee intended to take the shortest cut to a solution of the mysteries which surrounded Dr. Jeremy Nicholson and his eerie residence.

CHAPTER II.

JENKINS' DETERMINATION.



"OUR luck's out, Bill, and the best thing we can do is to skip!" said Mr.

Walter Hayes, looking at his companion anxiously. "Every blamed thing we do goes

wrong, and now that blinkin' detective is here it ain't safe to stay!"

Bill Jenkins scowled.

"Skip be blowed!" he grunted savagely. "I'm not going to move from here until we've made old Nicholson pay up! It's a chance in a thousand, and we'd be fools to let it slip away!"

"We'd be bigger fools to get ourselves copped!" said Hayes practically. "We only escaped last night by the skin of our teeth!"

Jenkins nodded.

"That's true enough—but it isn't likely that things'll turn out that way again," he said. "To-night we'll act in a different way. It's my idea to go about the thing in a bold manner; simply enter the Manor, grab old Nicholson, and rush him across the common to the hut. Then he'll be at our mercy, and we can make him do anything we please! We got him almost to the point of giving way before, and this time he'll be like butter in our hands!"

Hayes was by no means as enthusiastic as Jenkins, and the latter had to use a good deal of persuasion before Hayes would consent to the expedition to the Manor. He did so at last, however, and the two scoundrels left their room at the King George Inn at Little Barling, and set out for their destination.

The night was dark and fine, with no moon—an ideal evening for such an outrage as the two scoundrels proposed to commit. And it really seemed as if their luck had turned at last.

For, upon creeping through the grounds towards the house, the first person they saw was the very man they most desired to see—Dr. Jeremy Nicholson himself.

He was seated upon a chair in the library, poring over a book by the light of a reading-lamp, obviously too absorbed to pay any attention to anything but the printed words before him. The blinds of the room were not even lowered, and Jenkins grinned with delight as he nudged his companion.

"What did I tell you?" he murmured. "Nothing could be easier for our purpose than this. Walter! Old Nicholson's in the library, all alone, and all we've got to do is to go in and grab him! Come on! Now's the time!"

Hayes nodded. He had not anticipated anything quite so simple as this, and he was now quite willing to back up his colleague without further demur.

With cautious strides, the two men edged towards the library window, which was of the French pattern. Jenkins felt pretty sure that the catch would be secured upon the inside; but he had come prepared for an emergency of this sort, and he did not allow such a trifle to deter him.

Upon reaching the window he applied a sheet of prepared paper to the glass—paper which had been thickly smeared with a sticky substance of Jenkins' own invention. He managed this part of the programme without attracting the attention of Nicholson, and then, with a sudden, quick movement, the burglar pushed his fist through the glass, breaking it beneath the prepared paper with scarcely a sound.

Before the occupant of the library had time to do more than look round, Jenkins had inserted his hand through the aperture and had unhooked the catch. A second later both he and Hayes were within the room—Jenkins running towards their victim, and Hayes streaking towards the door, with the object of locking it against intruders.

Thus the old recluse was taken completely by surprise, and he appeared to be altogether too startled to do more than offer the feeblest resistance. Within ten seconds he was firmly grasped by the two intruders, and unceremoniously jerked to his feet.

Jenkins sharp eyes observed a cheque-book upon a desk, and he quickly picked it up and put it in his pocket. Then he and Hayes half-dragged and half-carried the quaking old man into the night, and set off for the dilapidated hut upon the common—the hut which had already acted as the stage for the performance of several thrilling dramas.

Jenkins and Hayes were jubilant at the success of their raids. They had captured their man without rousing the rest of the household, and they had everything their own way.

That at least is what the two scoundrels supposed; but their jubilation would have received a somewhat rude shock if they could have known that no less than three pairs of keen eyes had been watching their every movement.

Two pairs of these eyes were owned by the mysterious Chinamen, who had concealed themselves in the grounds, and who had seen everything which had taken place.

The remaining pair belonged to no less a person than Nipper, and Nelson Lee's alert young assistant lost no time in stealing off in the wake of the two burglars, intent upon trailing them to their lair.

Why Nipper had been watching in the grounds in this way was something of a mystery but the lad had no intention of losing sight of the two kidnappers. Like a shadow he followed them towards the hut upon the common, and neither Jenkins nor

Hayes had the faintest idea that he was so close behind them.

The prisoner, when about halfway to the shack, showed signs of becoming a trifle restive, and his captors promptly halted, and proceeded to bind him securely with rope, gagging him at the same time by means of a scarf. Then the journey was resumed, Jenkins and Hayes lugging their captive along silently and determinedly.

Upon arrival at the hut Nicholson was dumped upon the floor, and Jenkins lit a candle. Then he turned to the prisoner with a cunning grin upon his face.

"Now, Dr. Nicholson, it's our turn!" he said pleasantly. "We've had more than a little trouble to get you into this position, and I think you'll admit that we've got the upper hand at last!"

The prisoner made a mumbling sound and shook his head.

"You don't agree?" went on Jenkins. "Well, we'll see about that in a moment. Possibly you failed to notice it, but I took the liberty of bringing your cheque-book along. Here it is!"

Jenkins pulled the cheque-book from his pocket as he spoke and waved it before the eyes of the helpless man.

"It's up to you now," continued the triumphant burglar. "I'm going to unbind your right hand in a moment, and you can take your choice of two alternatives. Either you sign a cheque for five hundred, or have your secret given away to those two Chinamen who are so anxious to know the whereabouts of a certain party. You can choose which you like; but if you're sensible you'll consent to sign the cheque!"

Jenkins' voice took on a menacing tone, and the prisoner writhed.

It looked as if Dr. Jeremy Nicholson was cornered at last, and that Jenkins and Hayes were about to achieve their object.

CHAPTER III.

THE CHINAMEN RESORT TO DRASTIC ACTIONS.



EILEEN DARE, within the Manor, was very much on the alert.

On this occasion she had attired herself in a somewhat unusual costume—a sort of pierrot outfit, made of dead black material, which completely covered her from neck to toe. And over her head she wore a dense black veil, through which she could see quite plainly but which concealed her features with great effectiveness.

Arrayed in this bizarre attire, the lady detective could move about the Manor almost with impunity, knowing that she was practically invisible against the sombre walls and furniture of the old house.

To-night she had made up her mind to solve the secret of Dr. Nicholson's private room, and to discover a means of opening the secret panel where she had seen the ghastly yellow face.

For the last hour she had been waiting in a dark corner close to the doctor's rooms, and at last she had the satisfaction of seeing him emerge and take himself off to another part of the house.

And now that the moment for action had come, Eileen did not hesitate an instant. Like a black shadow, she crept into the forbidden chamber, closed the door behind her, and darted across it to the bed-room.

Arrived at this inner sanctuary of the old doctor's, the girl detective made a beeline towards the spot where she had seen the yellow face, knowing that there must be some means of discovering the mechanism which operated the secret panel.

Halfway across the room, however, her attention was directed to a bright object which had been flung upon a chair, and Eileen paused. The colour of the object was bright yellow, and with a little intake of breath the girl wondered what it could be.

In order to make quite certain, she determined to examine it, and a moment later she had the thing in her hands. Unfolding it curiously, she was surprised to see that it was nothing more nor less than a yellow mask—a large, cowl-like affair which had evidently been made to slip over the head.

"So this is the explanation of the yellow face!" she muttered to herself, with a little smile of contempt. "This—this little piece of cloth was the thing which gave me a fright! Well I never!"

The lady detective felt a trifle shamefaced as she realised that she had been taken in by such a simple ruse. Obviously, the yellow face had been caused by this mask, worn over the features of the person whom Dr. Nicholson was hiding in the secret apartment.

Who this person was she had no means of knowing at present, but it was a relief to her to realise that the doctor's mysterious prisoner was nothing more formidable than a fellow human being.

With a quick movement the girl turned to the looking-glass on the dressing-table and removed her black veil. Then she slipped the mask over her own pretty features and surveyed herself in the mirror.

The result was astonishing—and revolting.

For the yellow horror which stared back at her was terrible in its repulsiveness. The effect of the mask seemed to change the very character of Eileen's brown eyes, and to make them fiendishly demoniacal. The girl detective actually shuddered at her own reflection.

She was now the exact counterpart of the appalling "apparition" she had seen the previous night, and she stood for some few

moments staring at the ghastly mask in the mirror.

"What a terrible thing it is!" she muttered to herself. "I can understand why Dr. Nicholson should make use of such a grotesque form of disguise for his mysterious companion. I've never seen such a disgustingly horrible mask in all my life. It's perfectly horrid!"

Eileen raised her arms with the intention of pulling the repulsive mask from her head, but before she could do so she found herself gripped simultaneously by two pairs of sinewy hands.

They seemed to materialise out of the gloom behind her, and with a startled gasp she commenced struggling frantically. But the grip merely tightened upon her arms and body, and she found herself being forcibly led towards the door.

Then through the eyeholes in the mask she saw that she was in the hands of the two Chinamen. Neither of them had spoken a single word, and they evidently intended to waste no time over the job they had undertaken.

In a trice Eileen was bundled through the doorway and through the doctor's sitting-



He was seated upon a chair in the library, poring over a book by the light of a reading-lamp—obviously too absorbed to pay any attention to anything but the printed words before him.

room. A moment later she was rushed into the hall and towards the front door, just as Mason, the butler, made his appearance. He had come from the domestic quarters in order to execute some little duty, and he came to an abrupt halt as he observed the two Chinamen rushing along with their yellow-faced victim.

"What the— Good gracious me!" he ejaculated, with a startled gasp.

By the time the exclamation had left his lips the two Chinamen and Eileen had disappeared into the darkness beyond the hall door, and Mason stood staring after them with his mind in a state of stupefaction.

And while the butler stood staring stupidly through the doorway, Eileen was being hurried along by the two Chinamen, completely helpless in their vindictive grip.

CHAPTER IV.

JENKINS RECEIVES A SURPRISE.



"WELL, are you going to be sensible and sign?"

Bill Jenkins grated out the words angrily, and looked at his prisoner with a scowl. For several minutes now he and Hayes had been in the hut on the common with their captive, and Dr. Nicholson showed no sign of complying with their demands.

Several times he shook his head in a cringing manner, and at last Jenkins whipped off the scarf with which he had gagged the old man. The captive gave a sigh of relief as the scarf was taken away from his mouth and he looked at Jenkins in a shrinking way.

"Why—why should I sign a cheque for £500?" he asked in a quavering tone. "Why should I agree to be blackmailed in this outrageous fashion? You have nothing—"

"I told you the other night that I know all about your little secrets, Dr. Nicholson," cut in Jenkins with a grin. "There's no need for me to repeat everything now. If it's not worth the sum I'm demanding, you've only got to say the word and I'll go and find those two Chinks who are so anxious to know a few things. And while I'm about it, I'll let the police know a thing or two about what happened during that recent thunderstorm!"

"Recent thunderstorm?" repeated the prisoner, speaking as if he could not remember. "What—what do you mean—"

"Oh! You know well enough what I mean!" snapped Jenkins, as he unbound the right hand of the captive. "But I'm getting tired of all this waiting! I want that cheque, and I mean to have it, even if I have to keep you a prisoner for a

month. You may as well realise that at once, and save yourself any further trouble by doing as you're ordered. Here's a pen and here's the cheque-book!"

He placed a fountain-pen and the book upon Dr. Nicholson's lap, and waited for the old man to sign the draft. Hayes, meanwhile, looked on with somewhat apprehensive glances.

The prisoner glanced at the book and pen, and then turned his gaze upon Jenkins.

"Suppose I absolutely refuse to do as you suggest?" he asked.

Jenkins grunted.

"Then we'll keep you a prisoner until you do!" he declared. "We'll take you to London, Dr. Nicholson, and keep you locked in a cellar until you come to your senses."

"You speak with a good deal of assurance, my friend!" said the captive, in a tone which did not now betray fear. "Probably you have overlooked the possibilities of help being within my reach. Suppose I take the initiative, and hand you and your companion over to the police—what then?"

Jenkins laughed.

"It's no good your trying to bluff me, Dr. Nicholson," he said easily. "I know that it is impossible for help to be within your reach. Nobody saw us take you from the library, and the common was completely deserted as we came along. You're trapped, and you know it—"

"I fancy you are mistaken, my dear Jenkins," said the prisoner in a totally different voice. "This little weapon has proved to be exceedingly helpful on more than one occasion, and I do not anticipate that it will fail me now. Hands up—both you and Hayes!"

As he spoke the captive quickly dived his free hand into the breast pocket of his coat, and a second later the two discomfited scoundrels saw that it held a small but deadly-looking revolver.

Jenkins gave a gulp of dismay, and stared at his prisoner blankly.

"By Heaven!" he ejaculated. "You're not Dr. Nicholson at all. You're Nelson Lee, the detective!"

"Exactly!" agreed 'Dr. Nicholson' blandly. "You are perfectly correct, Jenkins. You see, I had an idea that you and your friend would attempt to get hold of the doctor again, so I took the liberty of impersonating him. I am sorely afraid that the five hundred pounds which you have been looking forward to will not be forthcoming, but you can console yourself with the prospect of five years imprisonment instead!"

Jenkins seemed about to choke, and he was on the point of throwing himself at Nelson Lee when the detective's sharp voice broke out again.

"Don't be a fool, Jenkins!" he snapped. "My assistant is just behind you, and he

like myself is armed with a revolver. I prepared this trap for you and Hayes, and you have fallen into it in the most obliging manner possible."

Jenkins swung round, and there sure enough stood the grinning Nipper—his revolver held easily in his hand. He had been very close behind ever since "Dr. Nicholson" had been kidnapped, and since their arrival at the hut the lad had been peering through a chink in the rotten wood-work of the walls.

"All right, guv'nor; I've got 'em covered," he exclaimed. "Once you're out of these ropes we'll truss these two beauties up, and get back to the Manor!"

Nelson Lee nodded, and busied himself with the ropes which bound him. With one hand free, it was a simple matter for him to discard his bonds, and while he was thus engaged Nipper kept the two burglars under keen observation, holding his revolver in readiness for instant action.

But all the light was now knocked out of Jenkins and Hayes. From the very commencement of their blackmailing tactics they had met with nothing but disappointment, and this latest catastrophe was the last straw. Just when they had imagined themselves on the point of a triumphant success they found themselves face to face with Nelson Lee and Nipper.

The famous detective was free within a very few seconds, and then he and Nipper quickly bound the two burglars securely, roping their ankles and wrists in such a manner that escape was impossible.

"That will do, young 'un," said Lee briskly. "We have no time now to interrogate these men or to bother about them in any way. They must remain here for the present, while you and I hurry back to the Manor. I am very anxious concerning the doctor's safety——"

"You mean that the Chinks may get busy while we're away, guv'nor?" asked Nipper shrewdly.

"Exactly!" said the detective. "We have now to deal with those two Chinamen, my lad, in order to complete our case, and to relieve Dr. Nicholson from any further menace. I have a strong notion that they will endeavour to complete their plans to-night, and I want to be on hand when they make the attempt. I should never forgive myself if anything happened to the doctor now, at the eleventh hour."

Nipper grunted.

"Well, it would be his own fault if it did," he said. "He shouldn't be so beastly reticent and stubborn——"

"He probably has a very good reason for withholding his explanations," cut in Lee. "Come along, young 'un, we must hurry!"

They left the hut at once and hurried as quickly as possible towards the gloomy Manor, intent upon saving Dr. Jeremy Nicholson from the Chinese fanatics who

were threatening his liberty, and probably his life.

But Lee and Nipper were soon to learn that it was not Dr. Nicholson who stood in need of rescue, but somebody much more dear to them.

CHAPTER V.

WHERE IS EILEEN DARE?



MR. JEREMY NICHOLSON paused abruptly as he was crossing the great lounge hall, and stared at his butler curiously.

"What is the matter, Mason?" he asked, observing the servant's dazed look. "Have you seen a ghost——?"

"No, sir—no!" said Mason agitatedly. "Not a ghost! But I saw two Chinamen dash into the hall from the direction of your rooms——"

"Two Chinamen?" repeated the doctor, with set lips. "Good heavens, Mason, is this true? Do you realise—— Tell me all you know at once!"

"They—they were dragging a third person with them, sir—a person who seemed to be dressed in black, and who was wearing a hideous yellow mask!" went on the butler. "Horrible thing it was——"

"A—a person wearing a yellow mask!" gasped Dr. Nicholson frantically. "Surely—surely they haven't—— Merciful heavens! Have those fiends succeeded at last?"

As he spoke he turned and dashed up to his rooms, exhibiting an amazing amount of energy and activity for so elderly a man. Straight through his "den" he ran until he reached his bed-room. And here he quickly touched the spring which actuated the hidden panel, and peered eagerly into the aperture which slowly commenced to open.

Then he gave a great gasp of relief, closed the panel, and went back to the wondering Mason, who was waiting at the door.

"You must have been mistaken, Mason," said the doctor. "The Chinamen could not have left here with the man in the mask, as you assert——"

"They did, sir—I saw them as plainly as I see you," persisted the butler. "But I don't know whether it was a man or a woman. Perhaps it was Mary Aldridge, sir; I haven't seen her for quite a while!"

Dr. Nicholson frowned.

"Mary Aldridge!" he repeated. "Impossible, Mason! Why should she be wearing a mask——" He broke off, and walked back to the bed-room door, and pushed it open. "But I believe you are right, for the mask which I left on the chair has vanished. This is terrible—terrible! We must do something to save her, Mason!"

Those Chinamen are diabolical fiends, and there is no telling what terrible fate will be hers if she is not saved. Where is Mr. Lee; we must find him at once!"

Dr. Nicholson had no idea why "Mary Aldridge"—the name by which he knew Eileen Dare—had visited his room, nor why she had taken the mask. But it seemed obvious that it was the girl whom the Chinamen had kidnapped.

"Mr. Lee is staying at the King George Inn, sir," said Mason quickly. "I'll go and find him at once."

He started off as he spoke, rushing from the house just as he was, hatless and in his house slippers. But as luck would have it, he met Nelson Lee and Nipper just entering the drive, and the butler gave a sigh of thankfulness as he recognised the famous pair.

"Quick, sir!" gasped Mason. "Those Chinamen have kidnapped Mary Aldridge!"

"What?" asked Lee sharply.

Mason gasped out his news breathlessly,

telling Lee and Nipper what he had seen, and explaining that it must be the missing girl who had been captured by the Chinese fanatics.

Nelson Lee listened with set lips and a grim expression, and when the butler had done, Lee ordered a quick search of the house to be made. But it proved to be fruitless—Eileen Dare had completely disappeared.

"It is our task to find Miss Dare at once, Nipper," said the detective, turning to his assistant alertly. "And if those Chinamen have harmed a hair of her head Heaven help them!"

He turned abruptly as he spoke and left the Manor. He had no idea what had become of his lady assistant, but he was filled with a determination to rescue her from her yellow captors at all costs.

But would he be in time to save her from the fiendish activities of the Chinese fanatic?

THE END.

APPEARING NEXT WEEK!

"THE SCHOOLBOY DRUDGES!"

Another Long Powerful Story of our new absorbing series of TOMMY WATSON'S Adventures at MOAT HOLLOW SCHOOL.

"A MODERN MIRACLE!"

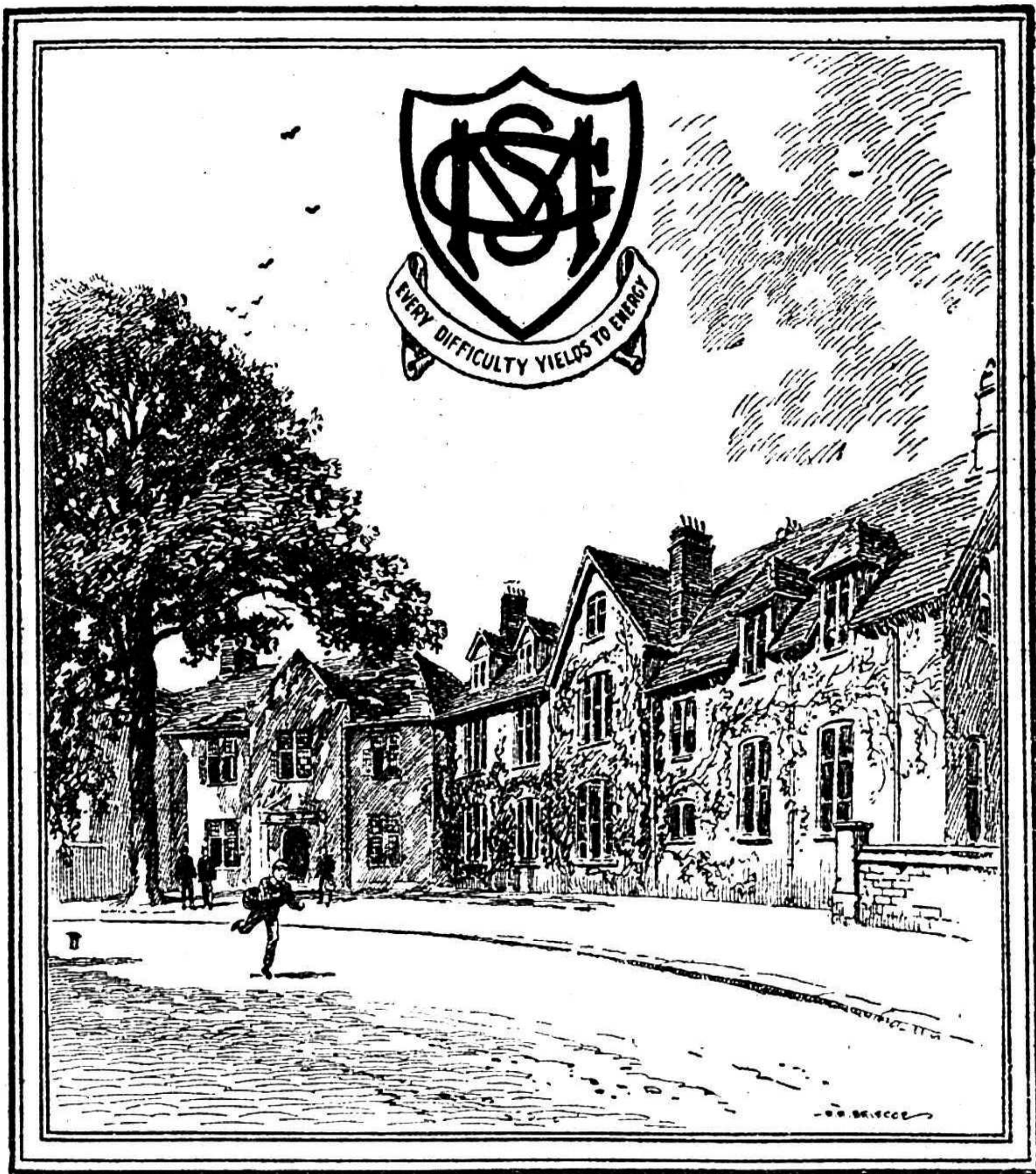
Being the Further adventures of EILEEN DARE, the plucky girl detective, and how she solved the mystery of Dr. NICHOLSON. Introduces NELSON LEE and NIPPER.

THE ST. FRANK'S TABLE FOOTBALL GAME!

A new and realistic table version of the great winter game.

HOW TO MAKE IT and HOW TO PLAY IT.

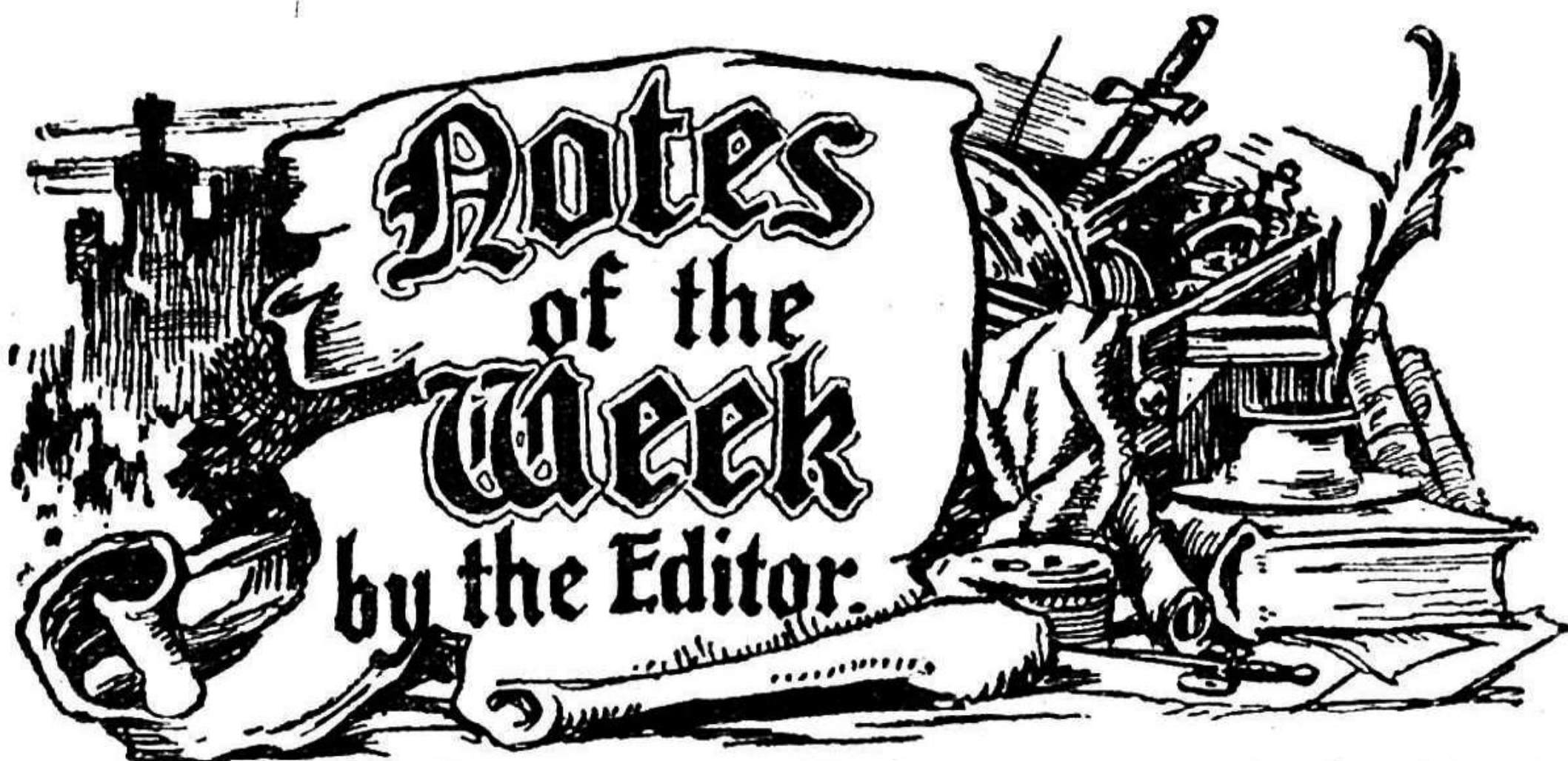
Exclusive in the ST. FRANK'S MAG.



OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS SERIES OF ART SKETCHES.
No. 60. MIDHURST GRAMMAR SCHOOL.

Midhurst Grammar School was founded in 1672 by Gilbert Hannan. The Big School was built a hundred years ago, and the Old House was rebuilt in 1922 on the site of an old building of that name which was

burnt down some years ago. The Right Hon. Viscount Cowdray, P.C., gave the Capron House and new buildings to the school. There are about 200 boys at the school.



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

My dear Chums,

Alas! The Christmas holidays are over, and we are now back at school again. We have had a jolly good time, and I can only hope that you have had the same. Some of you, perhaps, having feasted too well, are a little out of sorts. That will soon disappear. There is no better doctor for these minor ills than the Spartan life we lead at St. Frank's. Fatty Little, marvellous to relate, has gone completely off his food. I fear he is paying the penalty of over-indulgence in mince-pies, Christmas pudding, and other comestibles that clog the digestion.

TOMMY WATSON'S BAD LUCK.

You have all heard about Tommy Watson's rotten luck through his pater, Sir Vivian Watson, losing a fortune in the City. It was not Sir Vivian's fault. He was badly let down by his brother directors, and rather than let the shareholders suffer, he used his own private fortune to meet his firm's liabilities. Briefly, the Watsons have come down in the world rather suddenly, and are now in very straightened circumstances. They have had to sell up their fine house and reduce their expenses considerably. Tommy Watson will have to leave St. Frank's and go to a school where the fees are not so high. Since he does not want to forsake his old chums at St. Frank's, he has prevailed upon his father to send him to the Moat Hollow School, which is a new school in Bellton, on the site of the River House School.

THE MOAT HOLLOW SCHOOL.

Very little is known about this school, except that it is run by a Mr. Creepe, and this gentleman, judging from appearances, does not impress one very favourably. The school itself looks more dead than alive.

The boys are never allowed outside its dismal precincts, and a high wall, made higher by a black boarding, surrounds the school, so that whatever goes on in the school is effectively screened from the public gaze. Since Tommy Watson is to become a pupil at Moat Hollow, we are naturally curious to know what the place is like. And the more we investigate, the more mysterious Moat Hollow becomes. A curious feature of the school is the cutting of a moat around the building by Mr. Creepe, and the fantastic name given to the place in consequence. Is it just a fad or whim of Mr. Creepe's, or is it a part of his scheme to isolate the school from the outside world? In the interests of our old chum we mean to probe the mystery of Mr. Creepe's establishment, and to find out whether it is being run as a school or a kind of prison.

THE ST. FRANK'S TABLE FOOTBALL GAME.

I must really say a few words about this wonderful new game invented by Goodwin. For next week he is going to describe how to make it in the Mag. It is extraordinarily simple, and within the scope of any boy to make. There are several table football games extant, most of which are played mechanically. But the chief virtue about Goodwin's game is that it is the nearest approach to the real game of any I have yet seen, and there is nothing mechanical about it. You can dribble and shoot just as you would in the field. In short, it is a table game that bids fair to oust all others and to become all the rage in the near future. So be sure and get next week's copy of the Mag., and learn how to make and how to play this spanking new footer game.

With very best wishes,
Your sincere chum,

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, one of our heroes, is in the hands of Indian braves, who are about to take his life. But Claude Courage, our other hero, has dashed to Fort Adventure for help. And General McTavish and all his mounted police are whizzing across the prairie to the rescue.

CHAPTER XII.

IN THE NICK OF TIME.

ALL hope was dying out of Bob Brave's manly chest. Dawn had come at last, and the glorious Alaskan sunlight was flooding the prairies. And all round the Indians were ceasing their capers and licking their lips. "Walla—walla!" roared Leaping Elephant loudly.

It was the war-cry of the Redskins, and all the Indians rushed round Bob in countless myriads. The great moment had come! Within a few bare seconds he would breathe his last.

"Claude!" he cried despairingly.

And, as though in answer to his call, a tiny speck of dust appeared upon the horizon. It grew bigger and bigger, unnoticed by the prancing Indians. Bob Brave was cut down, and half a dozen Redskins prepared to throw the paleface lad into the boiling cauldron.

And then, through all the din, Bob heard the faint, muffled sound of hoof-beats on the prairie. At first it was a whisper, then it grew into a steady thudding noise, and finally became a roar. The very earth trembled with the galloping of the approaching rescuers.

All the other Redskins turned and stared, their faces looking like chunks of mouldy cheese. And in the distance they could see the red coats of the approaching force. It was a wonderful moment for Bob Brave.

"Saved!" he panted joyfully.

CHAPTER XIII.

OFF TO SEEK THEIR FORTUNES.

THUNDER, thunder, thunder! The mounted police came thundering into the Indian encampment with a beat of horses' hoofs and the crackling of rifles. There was a terrific fight. The Redskins put up the very dickens of a scrap.

For three solid hours the battle raged, and at the end of that time the Redskins gave it up as a bad job and sheered off. They simply dropped their guns, abandoned all their teepees, and bunked.

"Victory!" roared General McTavish.

"Wonderful, sir!" panted Claude Courage. "I thought it was going to be the finish of us! But you're wounded!" he added, as he noticed a whacking great gap in the general's left arm.

"That's nothing!" said the general lightly. "I'm used to it!"

Just then Claude caught sight of Bob Brave, and the pair rushed up to one another and clasped hands in a long, silent grip. They yelled at one another with joy as they did so.

"You've saved my life, Claude!" panted Bob, his eyes shining like twin stars.

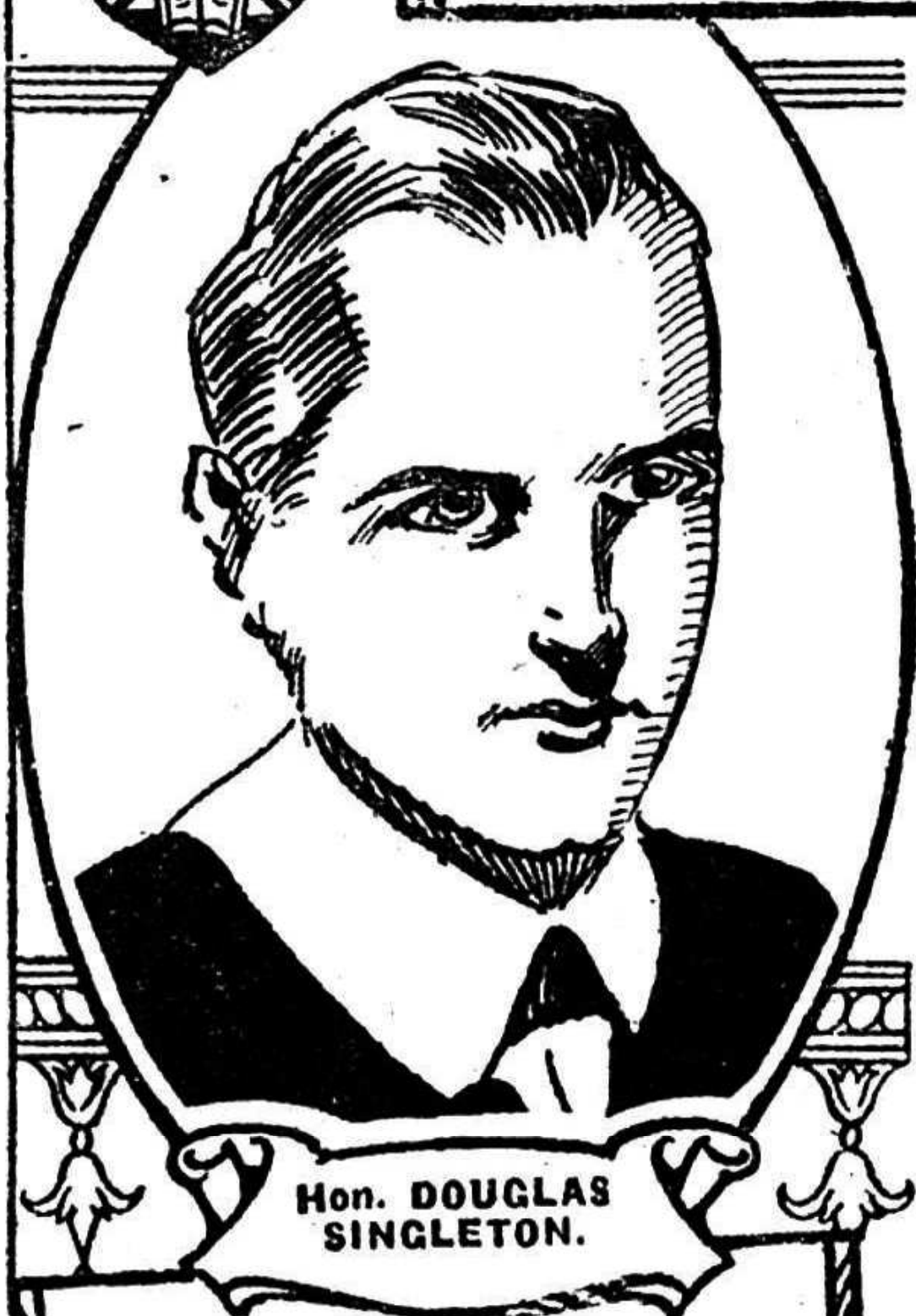
They were mounted on a horse, and then the whole crowd started off back to Fort Adventure. The idea was to stay there for a day or two, and then buzz off back to Roaring Creek.

But hardly had they travelled a hundred miles before they caught sight of something in the distance, far across the prairie. And they stared, fascinated. It was a great train of covered waggons, pressing ever onwards towards the distant goldfields!

(Next week our heroes join the wagon train and meet with fresh adventures.—
AUTHOR.)



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



Hon. DOUGLAS SINGLETON.

No. 53.—The Hon. DOUGLAS SINGLETON.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

Tall, slim and neat in figure. Although not distinctly handsome, his features are aristocratic. Eyes, dark and keen. Hair, black, and brushed straight back from his forehead. Height, 5 ft. 3 ins. Weight, 8 st. 2 lb. Birthday, March 27th.

CHIEF CHARACTERISTICS:

Is always immaculate from tip to toe. Languid by nature, but has plenty of energy when the need arises. Generally tips lavishly, and spends his money with the utmost recklessness. Generous and easy-going, and a slacker in Form. A great gossip.

SPORTS & RECREATIONS:

Too lazy to be prominent in sports, although he takes an active interest in watching the school games. Spends most of his spare time reading, or chatting in the Common-room.

No. 54.—HORACE CROWE.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

Sturdy, average figure. Big, good-humoured face, with a wide smile. Eyes, grey. Hair, fair and curly. Height, 5 ft. 1 in. Weight, 8 st. 4 lb. Birthday, January 7th.

CHIEF CHARACTERISTICS:

Careless and indolent. Always getting new hobbies, and waxing enthusiastic over them, but his interest soon wanes. Never finishes anything he starts, a new hobby claiming him half-way through. Quite a good chap in the main.

SPORTS & RECREATIONS:

A good average athlete, with a modest showing in the Modern House sports. Hobbies: Always varying.



HORACE CROWE.

THE FOURTH At ST. FRANK'S.



No. 55.—HUSSI RANJIT LAL KHAN.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

Slim, slight figure. A dusky son of India, with typical, characteristic features. A gleaming smile, showing perfectly even, pearly teeth. Eyes, black. Hair, black. Height, 4 ft. 11 ins. Weight, 7 st. 6 lb. Birthday, July 23rd.

CHIEF CHARACTERISTICS:

A quiet, studious boy, who generally keeps to his books, and seldom mixes with the Fourth Form games and "rags." Is generally calm, with a smooth, placid manner.

SPORTS & RECREATIONS:

Too much of a scholar to be interested in general sports, but has a passion for cricket. An excellent player, with prospects of being brilliant if getting enough practice.



HUSSI RANJIT
LAL KHAN.

No. 56.—GEORGE WEBB.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

Loose-limbed and gawky, but well-set-up, nevertheless. Thin features, with a comical, permanent expression. Eyes, dark blue. Hair, chestnut. Height, 5 ft. 2 in. Weight, 8 st. 1 lb. Birthday, April 29th.

CHIEF CHARACTERISTICS:

Just the opposite to his study-mate, Crowe. A demon for work—gets his prep done in half the time of other boys. Always busy, but always has plenty of time. A cheerful companion.

SPORTS & RECREATIONS:

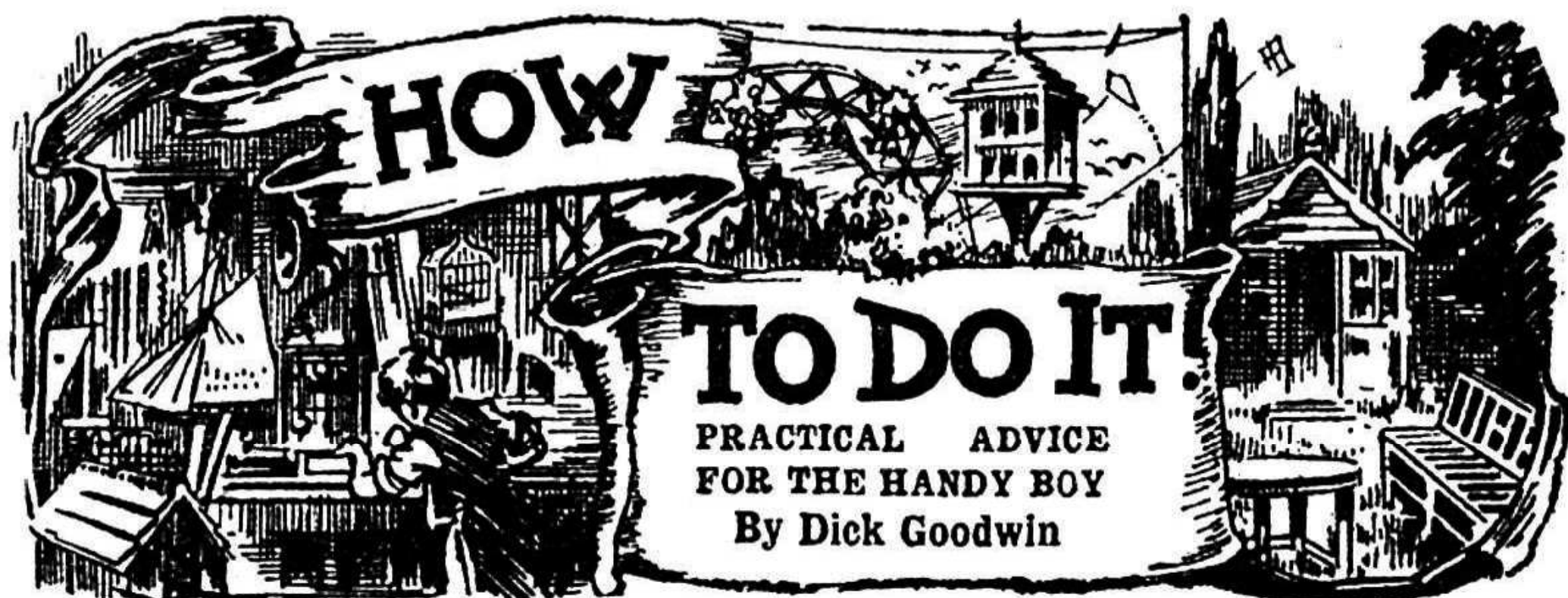
An enthusiastic cricketer and footballer, but too slap-dash to be much use in any sports. Excels as a trap-drummer—a jazz maniac.

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: Clarence Fellowe, Albert Crooks, Alfred Brent, George Holland.



GEORGE WEBB.



A HANDY TOOL CUPBOARD

Tools can be more conveniently arranged in a cupboard than in a chest, so I have made the one shown at Fig. 1 to hang on the wall quite close to the bench. The various parts of the case are shown at Fig. 2 with one of the sides shown separately at Fig. 3.

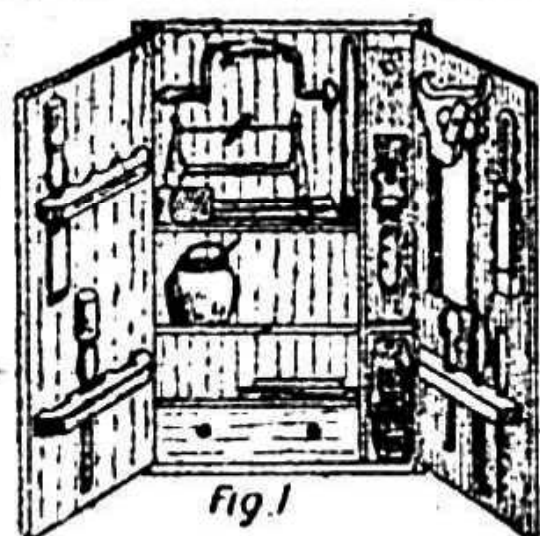


Fig. 1

The method of preparing the sides A, B and the top and bottom C, C is shown at Fig. 4, using 9 in. by $\frac{1}{2}$ in. machine-planed wood. The two sides are $27\frac{1}{2}$ in. long, and

the top and bottom $19\frac{1}{2}$ in. They are joined as shown with the simple dovetail joint, giving an inside space of 26 in. by 18 in. The back D, is $\frac{1}{2}$ in. thick, and fits inside. The partitions are all 6 in. by $\frac{1}{2}$ in., the upright E shown also at Fig. 5 is $26\frac{1}{2}$ in. long and let in $\frac{1}{4}$ in. top and bottom, 3 in. from the side. The lower shelf, H, is $2\frac{1}{2}$ in. up, and let into the side $\frac{1}{4}$ in. as at Fig. 3 and $\frac{1}{8}$ in. into E, making it $14\frac{1}{2}$ in. long. The piece F is the same length, and 8 in. from the bottom. This is also the height of G, which is $3\frac{1}{2}$ in. long. The top shelf H is 5 in. above F.

FITTING THE BACK.

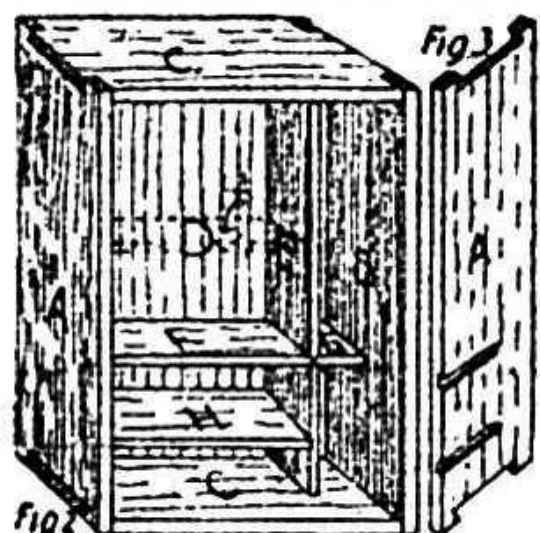


Fig. 2

The grooves must be cut before the sides are glued up, and the back can be fitted in a rebate as at Fig. 4 or can be let in flush and bedded against an angle fillet as at L.

The doors K are 26 in. by 9 in. and hinged with butt hinges to the side, and provided with a lock and bolts. The drawer has a front, M, as in Fig. 5, $14\frac{1}{2}$

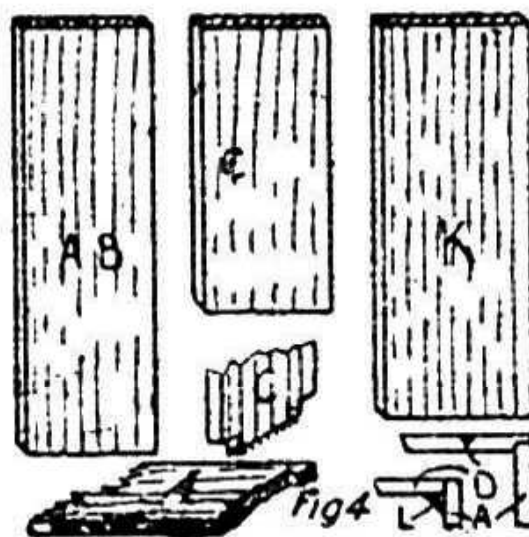


Fig. 4

make two drawers, each $7\frac{1}{2}$ in. wide. Suitable partitions, P, can be fitted to hold nails and screws. Small knobs should be screwed to the front.

INTERIOR FITTINGS.

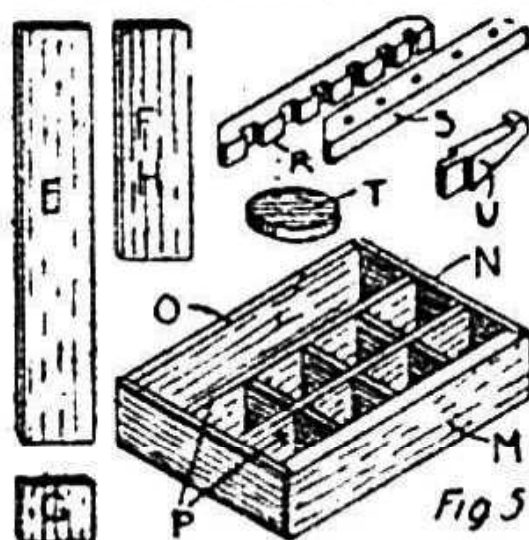


Fig. 5

wood from warping. Suitable pieces are shown at R and S and must be made to suit the tools that are to fit in them. The tenon saw should be hung on the door by making a block to fit inside the handle as at T, the same thickness as the handle, and then to screw on a narrow strip about $\frac{1}{4}$ in. by $\frac{1}{16}$ in., long enough to clip the handle. Tools like the brace and bow-saw can be placed on the top shelf, but it is better to make pegs as at U, so that they can hang, especially the brace. The jack and smoothing planes fit in the recesses alongside E. Spaces will be found for a number of other tools, but they should be so arranged that they are easily removed from the cupboard.

in. by $2\frac{1}{2}$ in. by $\frac{1}{2}$ in., the sides N are $5\frac{1}{2}$ in. by $2\frac{1}{2}$ in. by $\frac{1}{2}$ in., and the back O $13\frac{1}{2}$ in. by $2\frac{1}{2}$ in. by $\frac{1}{2}$ in. Instead of a shallow drawer, one 8 in. from front to back can be made, but care must be taken that the tools on the door do not interfere. The better plan is to

The internal fittings are more or less a matter of arrangement. The handled tools, such as chisels, gouges, screw drivers, files, etc., are fitted in slots or holes cut in strips of $\frac{1}{2}$ in. wood from $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. to 2 in. wide, screwed across the doors; they also help to prevent the

HOW TO MAKE SIMPLE JOINTS AND A SHOOTING BOARD

To give some assistance to those who do not know how to make good corner joint, two methods are shown at Fig. 6, both being suitable for the tool cupboard. The easiest joint is the plained nailed butt, but it is not so strong as a glued joint. The joint on the left-hand side of

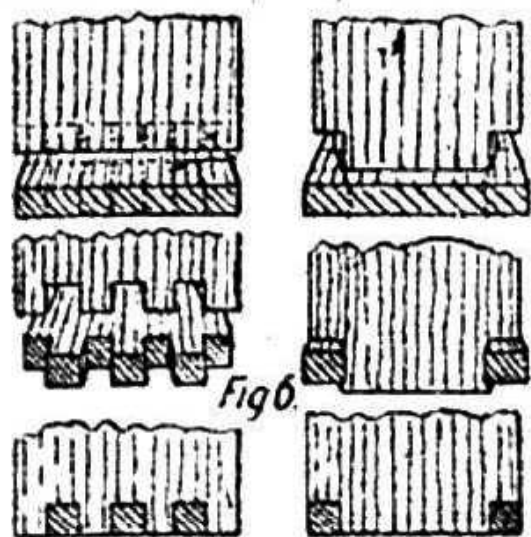


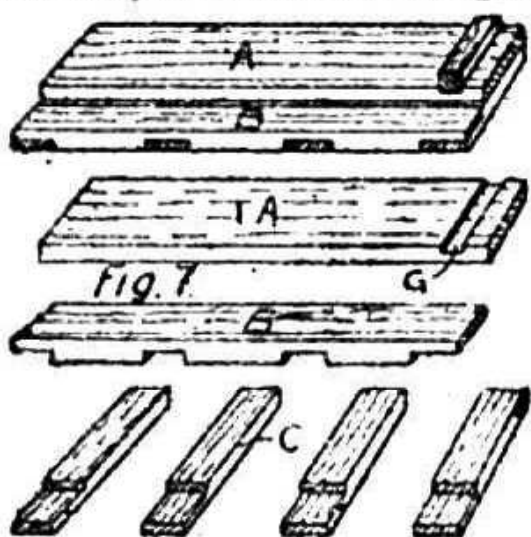
Fig. 6 is known as the lock corner, and it can be made to any size. In this example, the width is divided into five equal spaces, the notches being equal in depth to the thickness of the wood. The wood is marked out with a gauge and try square, one set of markings at a time

being made on all the eight ends. The slots are cut on the waste side of the line with a tenon saw, and then cut out with a chisel.

In making the dovetail joint, first cut the top piece called the pin, place it on the adjoining piece and mark with a pencil. The hole called the socket is sawn and chiselled out, to complete.

MAKING THE SHOOTING BOARD.

In preparing wood for partitions or the ends of thin material for fitting accurately into grooves, it will be necessary to use a shooting board, as shown at Fig. 7. It is composed of the

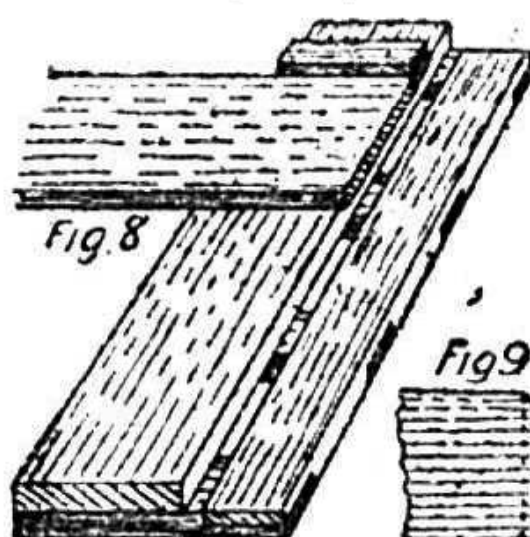


top A, the shelf B, four battens C and the stop, fitting in the groove G. The dimensions are not of great importance, a convenient size being 2 ft. by 8 in. Using these dimensions, the piece A should be 24 in. by 5 in. by $\frac{1}{2}$ in., with a groove about $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. from the

end, 1 in. by $\frac{1}{2}$ in. The stop should be of hardwood such as oak, and glued in position. The ledge is 24 in. by $2\frac{1}{2}$ in. by $\frac{1}{2}$ in., and provided with four slots which are 8 in. by 2 in. by $\frac{1}{2}$ in.; the slots on the shelf and battens being 2 in. by $\frac{3}{8}$ in. The top board should be screwed to the battens, but the joints must be glued.

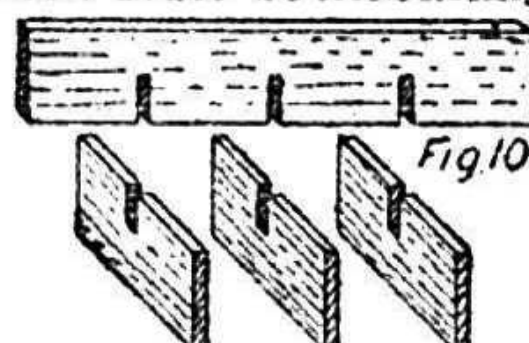
HOW TO USE THE SHOOTING BOARD.

The method of using the shooting board is shown at Fig. 8, the piece of wood to be planed must be held close to the stop and firmly on the board, and the end should project sufficiently to allow a fine shaving to be taken off when the plane is pushed along. The



plane is held in the right hand with the palm of the hand on the upper side and the fingers in the mouth of the plane; a steady pressure must be exerted as the plane is pushed forward in order to keep the face close to the edge of the board A.

To prevent the end of the grain from being split, the far corner should always be cut off with a chisel as at fig. 9. The edges of thin material can be planed in the direction of the grain more accurately than in the vice, but the wood must be held firmly, and the greatest care



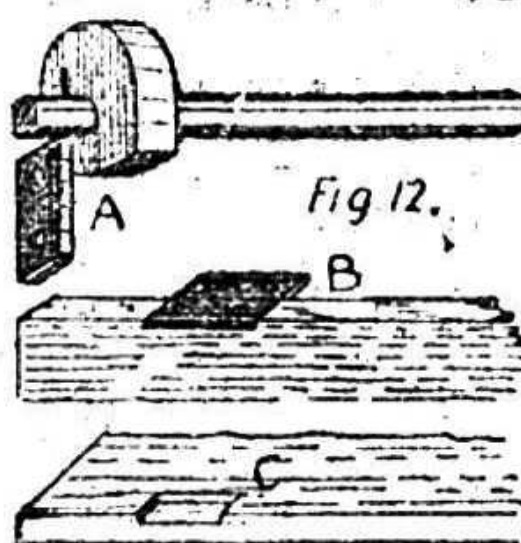
must be taken to avoid placing the fingers near the cutting edge of the plane.

THE CROSS-HALVING JOINT

The cross-halving is a simple joint, suitable for making partitions, as shown at Fig. 10; the suc-

cess of the joint depends on accurate marking and cutting. The width of the grooves must be the same as the thickness of the wood, and the depth equal to half the width.

In cutting the slots always bear in mind the thickness of the saw-cut, and work on the waste side of the line. An alternative is the notching joint shown at Fig. 11. This, again, depends on accurate marking. The method is to use a chisel to form a slicing cut each side of the centre line, both in the groove and on the ends of the partition pieces. (It is a help to make a saw-cut on the centre line of the groove to the required depth before the chiselling is done for the grooves.) This form of joint is very useful for making partitions in small boxes.



The hinge is another form of simple joint, the depth of the groove is found by setting a gauge from the hinge as at Fig. 12 and the slots are then cut as shown; there is no need to give more information than this; the illustration makes it clear.

IN REPLY to YOURS



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

JOAN OF ARC (Bradford): Here, I say! Do I write love-letters???***!!! What next? I should jolly well think I don't! It takes me all my time to answer all these other letters. Besides, I don't believe in it!

WILLY (Belfast): I don't quite like your name, old man, because you remind me of my minor. But it's quite evident that you're one of the Right Sort. You MUST be. You like Trackett Grim and Splinter, and that's good enough!

S. THOMPSON (Bradford): Those sketches of yours are too awful for words. You fathead! You've drawn me without any body at all! Do you think I'm a hair-pin? And do you think that Fatty Little is a balloon?

TED (Bermondsey): Church's home is in Shropshire, and McClure's in Kent—their paters' country houses, I mean. If you come to St. Frank's, I'll meet you at the station and kiss you on both your rosy cheeks—I don't think!

W. E. M. C. (Maldon): Thanks for that ripping sketch of Irene. Of course, it isn't like her—no artist in all the world could do her justice! At the same time, I've got to admit that you're a jolly clever sort of chap.

JACK MONSELL (Oldham): Why are my replies so short? That's an easy one! Because so many of you fatheads write and ask potty questions! Can you blame me for giving potty replies? I've got to say something!

REDSKIN ERN (Hale): I think Clarence must have descended from that "chile" you refer to! Why not get your pater

Correspondence Answered by Edward Oswald Handforth

to read the long story every week? I'll bet he'd like it. Try him, and see! ARCHIE, MAY, ARTHUR, EDNA, and BOB (Ealing): You're not going to get five times as much space because you've lumped yourselves together. In fact, there's no more space left at all. I've used your bit already!

XJKKJBN IBNFT (Cleethorpes): I suppose you're a Greek, or a Checko Slovakian, or something. Either that, or you're one of those funny fatheads who think it's a great joke to give me potty problems to solve! Nothing doing!

E. B. FLETCHER (Markfield): If you think Willy could give better replies than me, you're a silly duffer! I shan't tell you to go and eat coke, but you can jolly well go and fry yourself if you like! What do I care?

A REGULAR READER (Reading): Yes, if you send that stamped envelope along, you'll get your reply. There's nothing else in your note to answer, and as I'm short of space, I can't give you any more of it.

K. A. BISSET (Edinburgh): It's taken me five minutes to read your letter, and it isn't worth it! But if I don't give you as much space as the others you'll probably get jealous, so I've got to say all this for nothing.

PEGGY Christchurch, (N.Z.): Jolly nice letter, of course, but there's one thing you've got wrong. Who told you that Irene was a flirt? I'm not sure it isn't a libel! However, I'll forgive you as you're so far away.

W. STOKES (Pretoria, S.A.): If my stories aren't good enough without you pulling them to pieces, you can jolly well read something else! I'm not offended, of course, but I pride myself that my yarns are as clear as crystal.

SAUL FEIGELMAN (Montreal): You're another chap who's trying to tear my Trackett Grim stuff to ribbons! And you're only an occasional reader, too. Traitor! Why can't you read it every week? You can't miss my serial, you know!

HYMAN GOLDENHAR (Montreal): All right, we're pals again, eh? You promised not to insult me any more. So your

hobbies are reading, stamps, and coin collecting? Teddy Long's hobby is coin collecting; too. But he gets stamps!

GLADYS M. BOWEN (Dudley): That serial of mine is already on the go, you'll notice. How do you like it? Even better than Trickett Grim, eh? I told Pitt that it's going on for a year, but the ass only grinned.

HILDA (South Norwood): How can I take you out when you live so far away? Besides, we've not even been introduced, and for all I know you may be trying to pull my leg. You've simply wasted a three-halfpenny stamp.

A REGAL READER (Reading): You want me to give your regards to "Helen"? Before I do this, it wouldn't be a bad idea for you to tell me who Helen is. Sorry to trouble you, but I'm not exactly a magician, and I can't read your thoughts.

R. BAKER (Brough): If you think I've got time to answer your dotty riddles, you've made a large-sized mistake. And after you've called me an "unintelligent kipper" it's like your nerve to ask me any riddles at all!

T. C. JONES (Breen): Your poetry is wicked. Your sketches, particularly the one of Irene, are ghastly. And Archie says that that note to him is poisonous. As for deciphering your pen-name, I wouldn't even make an attempt.

ERNEST V. BLAKEMAN (Birmingham): Sorry, but I doubt if I could get all those autographs you want. Can I play an instrument of any kind? My dear, pitiful ass! You ought to hear me play the violin! I'd make you cry!

INKY (Islington): What do you mean—when are we going to publish a history page about the school? The whole giddy book, from cover to cover, is nothing else but history! Some of you chaps just try to be funny!

B. BARTLETT (St. Neots): You write me about four lines—in a kind of spidery scrawl—ask me two potty questions, and then you think you've written enough! As a matter of fact, you wrote four lines too much.

PERCY CABLE (Shepton Mallet): Hallo! Another of those pencil fiends! You wouldn't believe how hard it is to read these closely written letters in pencil. In fact, I'm not even going to try. No time! Sorry!

J. CABLE (Shepton Mallet): I expect you're the brother of the pencil maniac above and, what's more, you've evidently used his giddy pencil! Judging by the faintness, you must buy 'em at six-a-penny!

A CANDID FRIEND (S.E.5): What stroke does Tom Burton use when he swims? Why, he uses his arms and legs, of course. You suggest a Joke Editor for the "Mag." eh? If you saw Reggie

at work sometimes, you'd know we've got one!

AN OLD READER (Brentford): At the top of your letter you've called yourself "An Old Reader," and at the end of it you call yourself "Inquisitive." When will Willy's portrait appear, eh? Do you want us to ruin the Old Paper, or what?

IRENE MANNERS (Upper Norwood): You're not Irene Manners at all, so don't try to kid me, please! So you think I'm a very nice boy? Oh, do you? Well, I'm NOT. I'm just an ordinary sort of chap, so please don't insult me again!

VERA (Hanwell): Lots of the chaps DO like Doris Berkeley the best. What makes you think otherwise? Doris is jolly sporty, and she's a ripping girl. But, of course, when it comes to Irene—well—Hullo! No space left!

GRATIFIED READER (Basingstoke): You're not rude at all—oh, no! What night is my bath night? How many times have I kissed Irene? You wouldn't be a gratified reader after five minutes alone with me!

EDNA (Melton Mowbray): Why do so many of you sympathise with Church and McClure for "standing me"? You don't seem to realise that without me they wouldn't be able to keep alive! I guard them night and day.

GEORGE JOHNSON (Melbourne): The Who's Who you ask for was running long before I got your letter. I hope you like it. But don't take any notice of that portrait of me. It isn't like me a bit. I'm ashamed of it!

EDWIN F. EBBORN (Charters Towers, Queensland): My dear chap, you can't wear a St. Frank's badge unless you belong to St. Frank's—or I'd send you one off McClure's cap. You could lick me in two rounds, eh? That's impossible, because after the first round you'd be unconscious.

J. WATT (Woodview): Yes, it's a good idea of yours to put your name and address, short, because it would take up so much space if I added New South Wales, Australia, I'm a great believer in saving time and space whenever I can!

CAFE NOISETTE (Bowral, N.S.W.): You forgot to sign your postcard, and you're lucky to have an answer at all. The subjects we study during lessons are simply awful. Do you think I want to be reminded of 'em now?

C. THOMPSON (Adelaide): Your letter is very interesting, but there's nothing to reply to in it. So, much against my will, I'm compelled to leave you out. Hope you won't mind, old man. But space is very short.

B. L. TERRY (Melbourne): If the Old Paper came out every day, you'd soon get fed up with it. You can always have too much of a good thing, you

know—that's why I write so little for the "Mag." Everybody always asks for more!

R. V. EVANS (Geelong, Australia): Who told you that Jerry Dodd is the best cricketer? I won't mention names, but there's one chap in the Fourth who's simply a demon at the game. In fact, I ought to be cricket skipper!

JIM REID (Geelong): We'd like to come to Australia, but it's a bit too far off, old son. Lawrence is a better boxer than Buster Boots. And when it comes to real fighting— Oh, well, why blow my own trumpet? Thanks for enclosure.

B. W. (Richmond): I didn't show Fatty Little that portrait of him because it's no more like him than chalk's like cheese. In fact, it's nearly as bad as that rotten picture of me at the top of this page. I'm sick of complaining!

ADA and LOUIS (Glasgow): Sorry, but I can't excuse writing in pencil—especially when it's so faint. But I'll forgive you this time. I haven't given Willy that hug for you, but I told him he was "a wee darling."

KENNETH JAMES (Birmingham): After reading the first line of your letter, in which you call me a pitiful ass, I decided to have nothing to do with you. You run Trackett Grim down, and you call the other articles piffle!

THE TRIPLE ALLIANCE (Bowes Park): That secret society of yours must be blood-curdling. By George! Fancy doing one another's "dags"! Give my kind regards to the lady member, and tell her she's a sport. Yes, make the others write.

W. C. MARCHMENT (Battersea): So you want more Professor Zingrave stuff, do you? Well, I happen to know something! Just keep your eyes open, and before you know where you are you'll have your wish granted. You wait!

NEIL GARRATT (Leicester): Lots of you chaps ask me to punch the noses of Fullwood and Co., and generally biff people about. What do you think I am? Please remember that I am a peace-loving chap.

SOMEONE (Clapham Junction): Judging by your letter, I think you must be one of the newest of new readers. How old were you last birthday? I've answered as quickly as possible as you're so impatient.

WILLY II. (Hereford): I asked Willy about his rabbits, but he said he won't sell 'em at any price. The young ass cares more for his animals than he does for me! He only looks upon me as a kind of walking bank!

FRANK SNELL (Sudbury): I haven't spelt your name backwards, as you put it, because it would be a bad example. There are plenty of fatheads doing it,

without any encouragement. They must be dotty—what do you say?

NAUGHTY NELL (Southport): I don't know about you being naughty—you're certainly very personal. What do you mean by calling me a Teddy bear? And let me tell you Irene isn't a funny girl at all.

H. O. (Lewisham): What makes you "think" that I can fight? You might lick me with your tongue, but if you tried to lick me with one hand you'd get such a shock that you'd never smile again.

C. E. BALLS (Lymington): Other chaps write rot to me and think it sense. You ask if you can waste my time with a few lines of nonsense—and give me the most sensible letter of all! Queer, isn't it? Many thanks for your nice wishes.

OLWEN HUGHES (Streatham Hill): Thanks muchly for your letter. Tell your aunt and uncle from me that they've got heaps of good judgment. Long live the "trio"! When you've got time, don't forget to write again.

JOHN FULCHER (Worcester): Naturally, we Handforths are a brainy family. But you're not quite right in saying that we're "burdened" with brains. People with too much brain are hovering near the verge of lunacy.

HENRY CURTIS (Eastbourne): My hat! Here's another one wants to know how to get rid of warts! I believe you chaps think I'm a doctor! As for punching Teddy Long's nose, I can't do it. But I'll give him a good slapping, if you like.

RONALD MARSHALL (St. Leonard's): Naughty boy! Writing your letter to me in school hours! But I'm not a sneak—I won't breathe a word. I don't wonder that the master kept glaring at you! You ought to see how Mr. Crowell glares at me when I write my serial instalment during lessons!

HARBAR (Manchester): Although you are a comparatively new reader, you're evidently the kind we want. I don't think you're alone in liking the series better than the complete stories. Anyhow, you've got your wish now.

DAVID P. (Brentford): Sorry I can't publish the Fourth's footer fixtures and table in the Mag. Reggie Pitt is the Editor, and he's in full charge of all that sort of thing. Besides, it's too late in the season now.

CHEERFUL X (Shoreditch): Awfully pleased to hear that you're alive. Did you expect me to think that you were half dead? I'm awfully bucked.

BOB (Liverpool): Sorry I overlooked your questions in my last reply. I'll answer them straight away—sorry! I can't remember what they were.

TED.

AMONGST THE REDSKINS

By EUGENE ELLMORE

Author of "Facts Let Loose," etc.

THE Redskin to-day belongs to a race that is dying out. The number of Red Indians who survive and still live their roving life on the prairie decreases day by day. They are becoming civilised. But not so very long ago things were very different.

The great prairies bounded by the Rocky Mountains and the Missouri and Yellowstone rivers were the home of ever so many tribes. The best known are probably the Sioux, the Crows, the Blackfoot, the Pawnees, the Ojibbeways, and the Crees.

Of these, the Crees, the Blackfoot, and the Crows are the finest specimens. But of course the three tribes mentioned have always been deadly foes.

In most cases a chief wears a kind of robe made of a couple of skins of some animals. The skins are stitched together and hang downwards. The legs are fastened together over the shoulders, and hanging down the arms, form sleeves.

This garment is always handsomely embroidered. It is trimmed with porcupine quills, and very often with hair. The latter has been captured from the head of an enemy, and is known as a scalp-lock. Leggings, trimmed in a similar way, are also worn, so that a chief always carries about with him emblems of his successes in war.

On his feet the chief wears heavily-embroidered mocassins made of buckskin. There is also his head-dress. These vary with the chief and with his tribe. But the one that, generally speaking, shows that its owner is an exceptionally valorous man, consists of ermine skins, surmounted by a pair of buffalo horns. These stand upright upon the top of his head and give him a most ferocious appearance.

Besides their dress, the Redskins are never seen without their arms. They are naturally always well armed, for their usual occupations are fighting and hunting.

For these purposes they carry a shield and a bow and very often a lance. These weapons are all well adapted for use upon horseback. In fact, it may be said that a Redskin is always on a horse. The mustangs or wild horses of the prairie are innumerable, and an Indian can always secure as many as he likes. Both in war and in his hunting he is on his horse.

The bow with which he is armed is usually quite short. Its average length is between two or three feet. It is made of ash or other pliable wood, and lined on the outside with buffalo skin and deerskin, which

gives it great elasticity. The arrows have bone or flint heads, and are sometimes poisoned.

Besides bows and arrows, the braves often carry a shield and lance.

Vast herds of buffalo swarm over the prairie, and it is to these animals that the Redskin looks for food. The chief braves organise hunts on a large scale and set forth to capture the game.

To look at, the buffalo, or more correctly, bison, is a bit bigger than a British bullock.

The method of capturing these wild beasts of the prairie is to hunt them on horseback. The Redskin gets within a few hundred yards of them with great stealth. He then gives chase, and rides into the herd. His arrows, which he can discharge at the rate of anything up to fifteen a minute, do the rest. And he has buffalo meat to last him for several weeks to come.

Amongst some of the smaller tribes who do not number very many braves and are not so skilled in hunting, the capture of buffalo is a more difficult job. They do not care to roam far away into the prairie, and sometimes they find their provisions running low.

It is then that they hold what they call a "buffalo dance." Such a dance is held by the Mandans, one of the smaller tribes. It is thought that when this dance takes place the buffalo will be attracted to their village.

The signal for the dance to commence is given by the chief and headmen after a meeting in the chief's wigwam. The rest of the tribe then gather in the large open space which is usually kept in the middle of an Indian village. Drums are beaten and rattles are shaken till the air is full of a hideous din. Songs and weird yells are shouted on all sides. In the centre a kind of ring is made, and here about a dozen braves start the dancing.

They wear a head-dress specially kept for such an occasion. It consists of a buffalo's skin with its head or mask still on. This is placed over the dancer's head, and he carries his bow or spear.

The rest of the braves gather round the dancers, and as each man gets tired, another takes his place. A ceremony attaches to this, as the man who has danced enough has to fall to the ground as though he were a killed buffalo. Another brave then drags him off by the feet and takes his place.

By this means of relaying the dancers, it is said that the dance has never failed to achieve its object. In time, of course, buffalo are sighted. Then, after giving a shout of thanks to the Great Spirit who has answered their invocations, they leap upon their horses and the hunt takes place.

The dance has been known to last nearly a month. In fact, it would continue until the buffalo appeared—that is why it never fails.

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