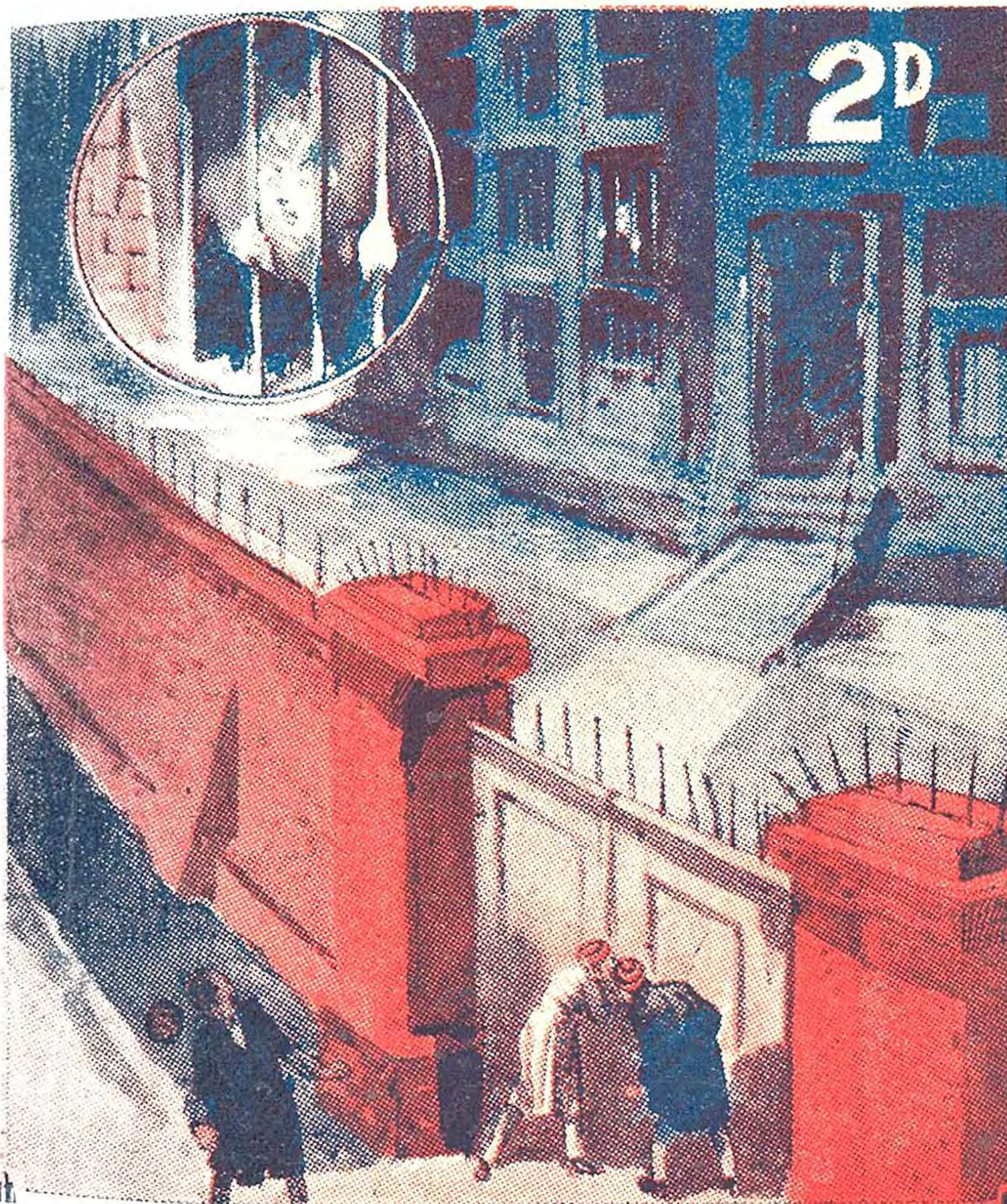


POWERFUL NEW SERIES JUST STARTED

The NELSON LEE

LIBRARY



THE RIVAL HOUSE CAPTAINS

*or The Foul
Crack.*

A Grand Long Story of the Boys of St. Frank's, introducing the reform of Fullwood, the Cad of Study A.

No. 538.

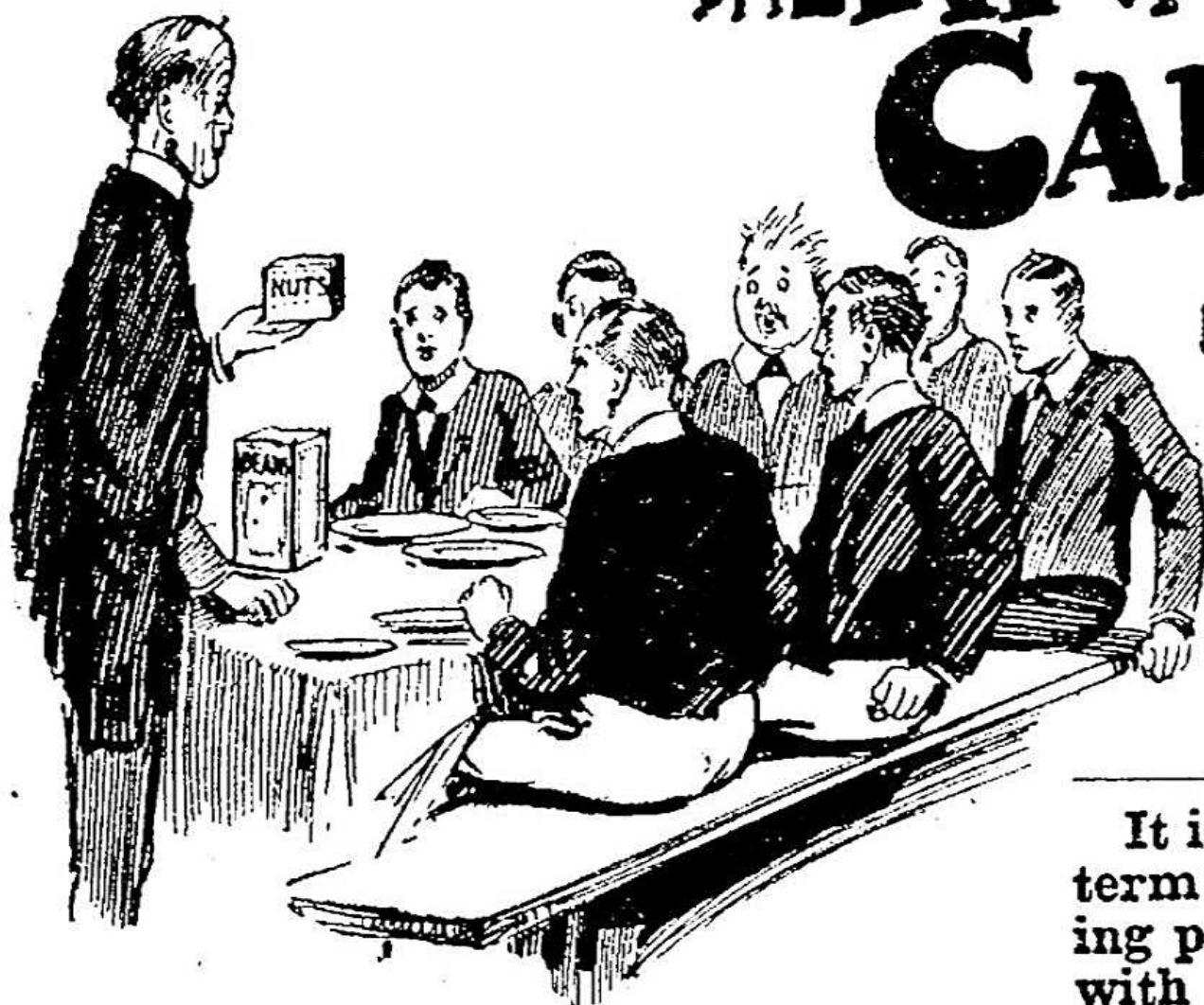
OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

September 26, 1925.



Without hesitation, Eustace rose to his feet, grabbed Clavering by the collar, and hauled him towards the steps.

THE RIVAL HOUSE CAPTAINS; OR, THE FOOD CRANK!



It is the second week of the new term at St. Frank's, and the opening part of this week's story deals with the new arrangement of

Houses, the names of the Housemasters and Captains and other interesting facts relating to the recent changes at the Old School. More about the amusing Mr. Barnaby Goole, the new Housemaster of East House, is followed by surprising revelations concerning a cousin of Fullwood, and how this rascally cousin haunts Fullwood and adds to the latter's difficulties in his uphill struggle to reform himself and break away from his old associates.

THE EDITOR.

By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

CHAPTER I.

RIISING EARLY IN THE MORNING.

EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH clung to the rock desperately. He was on the very brink of the waterfall, and the raging torrent was surging past him with appalling force. He felt his grip slipping, and he closed his eyes. When he opened them, he found that he was caught by the rising tide off Shingle Head.

The dream, in fact, was extremely vivid, and Handforth awoke in real earnest with a big start. He didn't open his eyes, but laid in bed, endeavouring to collect his wits. Curiously enough, he still had the sensation of water, but it was now running into his ears, and through his hair. He could even feel it trickling past his mouth.

"My only hat!" he gurgled, aghast.

He opened his eyes, and shut them again quickly. Then, with a yell, he clutched at his face, and removed a big sponge. It was filled with water, and Handforth uncon-

sciously squeezed about half-a-pint over his chest.

"Ugh!" he gasped. "What the—Great pip!"

He stared round dazedly. The comfortable little dormitory was empty, save for Church and McClure and himself. The slanting sunshine of the September morn was gleaming through the window, and birds were singing outside.

Edward Oswald was startled. One glance was sufficient to assure him that Church and McClure were sound asleep. He always knew when they were pretending, for they simulated the most unconvincing snores. At present they were looking peaceful and child-like in their slumbers. Church had his face buried in the pillow, and his bedclothes were in a confused tangle, and McClure was lying on his back with his mouth wide open.

Handforth looked at the sponge dazedly. His hair was soaked, and his face was still dripping with cold water. The mystery was beyond his powers—until he heard a chuckle

from the door. Then he noticed that it was slightly ajar.

"By George!" breathed Handforth grimly. He leapt out of bed, rushed to the door and flung it open. Three smiling faces met his gaze. Dick Hamilton, Sir Montie Tregellis-West and Tommy Watson were standing before him, all dressed in football togs.

"Begad!" grinned Sir Montie. "You were right, Dick, old boy—the trick worked like a dream."

"Of course it did," said Nipper cheerfully. "You'll find us on Little Side, Handy. Don't be longer than five minutes, and bring Church and McClure——"

"Wait a minute!" interrupted Handforth curtly. "What about this sponge?"

"You can leave that behind."

"You silly fathead!" roared Handforth. "What was the idea of trying to drown me?"

"Nipper wanted to be sure that you'd wake up," grinned Tommy Watson. "Footer practice is important, you know. This is only the second day of term, but we've got to get a move on."

"I'm not talking about football—I'm talking about this sponge!" snorted Handforth, glaring. "I'm drenched! I'm soaked to the skin! And if you think you can get me out of bed by a dotty wheeze of that sort, you're wrong!"

"My dear ass, you're out!" chuckled Nipper.

"Then I'm going back!" retorted Handforth grimly. "If anybody wakes me like a decent human being I'll get up—but I bar wet sponges! You can jolly well go and eat coke."

Handforth stalked back to his bed, and leapt in. He pulled the clothes over him defiantly, and turned his back upon the chums of Study C. Church and McClure in the meantime, had been aroused by the voices, and were now sitting up.

"Football practice?" asked Church, yawning.

"Yes," replied Nipper. "I shall have to go along and rouse De Valerie, too. We shall need a goal-keeper——"

"I'm goalie!" said Handforth, sitting up like a jack-in-the-box.

"But you're staying in bed, aren't you?"

"Yes, I am!"

"Then we shall have to get De Valerie——"

"You won't do anything of the sort!" yelled Handforth, sitting up again. "Do you think I'm going to be pushed out of my job by De Valerie? By George! So that's the game? On the second day of term you want to turn me down! I'll jolly well get up now—just to spite you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Nipper & Co., chuckling hugely, took their departure. And Edward Oswald couldn't see that the laugh was against him. He wondered why on earth Church and McClure were grinning so widely. They made no

attempt to explain, even when he pressed his questions to the accompaniment of listic gestures.

"Don't make a song out of it," growled Church, as he dashed over to the cupboard. "Where the dickens are my shorts? I say, Mac, you've got my shorts on! You silly ass——"

"Rats! They're mine!" retorted McClure.

They sorted things out at last, but a certain amount of confusion was unavoidable. This was the first time they had slept in a dormitory that only contained three beds. All the Remove fellows were sharing the same advantages. And the new order of things at St. Frank's was popular on all sides.

As Church dressed, he glanced out of the window across the West Square. Somebody at one of the upper windows in the West House waved a hand, and Church waved back.

"Reggie Pitt, I think," he said. "This new arrangement is rather ripping, you know. I like the idea of this inner square—it seems so jolly private. Some of those West House chaps are turning out for practice, I suppose?"

The Ancient House and the West House were twin buildings on one side of the Triangle, separated only by the West Tower. There was more space, and more cheeriness about the school than there had been in the old days. On the other side of the Triangle the twin buildings of the Modern House and the East House matched the other Tudor piles of St. Frank's.

At the moment, however, the juniors were not paying much attention to architecture. Term had just begun—there were four rival Houses now, and there was certain to be keen competition for football honours. In fact, all the fellows were determined that junior sports should boom more than they had ever boomed before.

Handforth & Co. were soon ready, and they sallied out into the morning sunshine. And, sure enough, as soon as they emerged into the Triangle they found Nipper & Co. chatting with a small bunch of West House juniors.

CHAPTER II.

FULLWOOD'S SECRET MISSION.

DOES my gaze deceive me?" asked Reginald Pitt, rubbing his eyes. "Even the Great Man himself has turned out an hour before rising bell! Greetings, O chief!" he added, bowing low before Handforth.

"Fathead!" said Edward Oswald rudely.

"And that is all I get for expressing my adoration of the mighty!" said Reggie, with

regret. "Never mind—life has probably got harder knocks in store."

"Who's goalie in your dud team?" asked Handforth.

"To tell the truth, the team isn't made up yet," replied Pitt. "It isn't even the ghost of a team. Now that we Ancient House fellows are divided up into two sections——"

"We Ancient House fellows be blowed!" interrupted Handforth. "You belong to the West House! Not so much of the 'we'!"

"Last term we were all Ancient House, so don't quibble!" said Pitt, frowning. "But this term the old Ancient Fourth is carved into two, and the Modern Fourth is carved into two. It'll mean complete rearrangements."

"All the better," said Nipper nodding. "We can do with four junior House teams—it'll make more fellows play football, and we shall have a wider selection for the actual junior school team."

Owing to the new Houses, the Fourth Form could no longer be divided into two sections. The fellows were distributed throughout the four boarding Houses. Accordingly, the old Ancient Fourth—Mr. Crowell's class—had once again become the Remove. And the Modern Fourth—Mr. Pycroft's class—had taken the designation of "Fourth Form" entirely to itself. Although Mr. Pycroft's boys didn't like to admit it, the Remove was just a shade higher than the Fourth.

Although the seniors had been allowed to select their own Houses, the Remove was confined to the Ancient House and the West House. In just the same way, all the Fourth Form boys lived in either the Modern House or the East House.

The juniors were pleased with this arrangement, for things were very much as they had always been—the old rival factions being separated by the Triangle.

"About your goalie?" demanded Handforth, as they all moved up towards the School House. "Naturally, I'm goalie for the Ancient House, and if you fatheads think you'll ever get the leather past me——"

"We won't go into arguments," interrupted Pitt soothingly. "I rather fancy Johnny Onions as our goalie. He was shaping well last season, if you remember, and he's a big, sturdy chap with plenty of muscle and brawn."

"Hold on!" said Handforth grimly.

He came to a halt as the juniors were about to move along the paved path between the Junior Wing of the School House and the Ancient House. Further along lay the twin gates which led across the private road into Little Side.

"Hold on!" repeated Handforth. "Johnny Onions, eh? It's like your giddy nerve! The chap's an acrobat!"

"What about it?" asked Pitt.

"He's made of rubber!" roared Handforth. "He's a trick cyclist, and a tight-

rope walker, and goodness knows what else!"

"Just the reason I've selected him as goalie," said Reggie blandly. "He ought to knock spots off every other goalie that ever stood between the sticks! He's got the finest qualifications!"

"But it isn't fair!" said Handforth warmly. "I'm no acrobat——"

"You're not?" asked Pitt, staring.

"Well, not exactly," amended Handforth. "Of course, I could easily be one if I liked! It's only a matter of practice. By George! I'll learn tight-rope walking and somersaulting and all the rest of it!"

"Good!" chuckled Nipper. "Then you'll be on even terms with Johnny. I admire your selection, Reggie, old man. Johnny is the very fellow I should have chosen. Are you playing him this afternoon?"

"Rather," replied Pitt.

An inter-House match had already been fixed up for that afternoon between the juniors of the Ancient House and the West House. With two such rival skippers as Nipper and Pitt, there was certain to be keen enthusiasm for sporting honours. And Buster Boots, of the Modern House, wouldn't be far behind. There were some doubts regarding Armstrong, the new junior captain of the East House. It was generally felt that he wouldn't go far.

"Things are pretty even, on the whole," said Jack Grey comfortably. "We've lost Handy—but you Ancient fellows have lost Reggie! And what are you going to do without your wonderful wing man?"

Nipper pulled a long face.

"Yes, by Jove, we shall miss you awfully, Reggie," he admitted. "But only in House matches, of course—we shall all play side by side for the school. Come on—let's get to work!"

They were on Little Side by now, and the springy turf beneath their feet was delightful to walk upon. They were eager to commence operations. For many weeks they had been thinking about football, and longing for it.

Nipper, in addition to being leader in his own House, was also Junior Sports Captain for the entire school—and Reggie Pitt was the first to approve. He had held the coveted position for a season, but he freely admitted that Nipper was the one man for the job. Reggie was quite content to be junior skipper of his own House.

Before the early rising enthusiasts had been on Little Side ten minutes, other stalwarts appeared—Cecil de Valerie, Somerton, the Onions brothers, Singleton, and some more. And even Ralph Leslie Fullwood turned out of his bed long before the rising bell was due to clang.

He made no attempt to awaken Gulliver and Bell, who shared the bedroom with him. It was an unheard-of thing for them to turn out before they were compelled to.

And it was a bit of a record in Fullwood's case.

But this morning was exceptional.

He had passed a sleepless night—the hours had dragged by restlessly, and he was only too glad to dress himself and prepare for a morning jaunt. There was something different about Fullwood this term. The old cad of Study A was more thoughtful—more serious. For the first time in his life he was actively using the brains with which he was endowed. And he was beginning to learn all sorts of things which had previously been concealed from him.

Gulliver and Bell grated upon him—indeed, he had practically thrown them overboard as useless. All his former associates had turned against him just when he was in need of their support. And the bitterness of the discovery had opened Fullwood's eyes very widely indeed.

His mission this morning was of a secret nature. He was bent upon visiting his rascally cousin, Eustace Carey—the Oxford undergraduate who was wanted by the police for assault and theft.

CHAPTER III.

NOTHING DOING!



FULLWOOD almost winced as he thought about his cousin.

He remembered his tortures of the previous day—the first day of term. The report in the newspapers—the displayed account of how Carey had attacked another Oxford man in his own rooms, and had flung him through the window. And Carey had fled, taking two hundred pounds in cash. Later, the victim had been found unconscious on the paved path, with a broken leg and a fractured skull. And the police were on the look-out for the fugitive Eustace.

The piece of news had been bad enough—but Fullwood had hoped to conceal it from the school that Carey was his cousin. Owing to the long ears and longer tongue of Teddy Long, however, the relationship between Fullwood and Carey had become known.

And it had been an appalling shock to Fullwood when Gulliver and Bell and Grayson and Merrell, and all his other cronies, had openly turned against him, sneering and contemptuous. Another shock had come—but a surprisingly pleasant one this time—when Nipper and Pitt and Handforth and the others had treated him even more friendly than before. Ralph Leslie was unable to appreciate their innate decency,

which urged them to ignore the voice of scandal.

The final blow of the previous day had come for Fullwood when Eustace Carey had 'phoned him up, and had begged to meet him outside the gates at midnight. Fullwood had kept the appointment, and Carey had spent the night hiding in Moat Hollow, the grim, deserted old place near the river.

And now Fullwood was bent upon making an early morning call. He loathed his cousin wholesomely, but he feared him, too. If he refused to help the young blackguard, his presence near the school might be discovered. And Ralph Leslie was willing to go to any length to avoid such a catastrophe.

He reckoned that most of the village shops would be open by the time he got there. He would buy a spirit stove, bread, groceries, and other necessities. And it would be a comparatively easy matter for him to slip into Moat Hollow unobserved, deliver the things to Carey, and get back to St. Frank's in time for breakfast.

"If the hound wants me to stay, I'm hanged if I will!" Fullwood decided, as he emerged into the Triangle. "He ought to be jolly thankful that I'm taking all this trouble over him!"

It was far better to go down to Carey straight away, and get it done with. There wouldn't be any necessity to go near Moat Hollow again until the next morning. Carey was only intent upon staying a week, anyhow—just until the hue and cry had died down—and after that he would make an attempt to get out of the country. Fullwood would be glad to see the end of the forthcoming week.

And even at the outset he was given an indication of the difficulties. He hadn't moved ten yards across the Triangle before Clive Russell appeared, with Adams, Burton, Dodd and Hart. The five Removites surrounded Fullwood in a crowd. They were all dressed for football.

"By jingo!" ejaculated Jerry Dodd. "Wonders will never cease! Here's Fullwood out and about before rising bell! You ass, why didn't you dress properly? You can't play footer in Etons!"

"Footer!" ejaculated Fullwood, with a start.

"Surest thing you know!" said Adams. "These guys are sure pepped up with their old game! Say, if you want real football, I'll show you how we do it over in the States!"

"Rats!" grinned Clive Russell. "We're in England now, old man, and we've got to play soccer. Fullwood's already promised to practice."

The Canadian boy grabbed Fullwood's arm, and pressed it. In some rather unaccountable way, Clive had taken a liking to Fullwood—and Fullwood was compelled

to admit that he was attracted by Clive. Yet Russell was true blue to the backbone, and opposed to all Fullwood's former habits.

"I'm sorry," said Ralph Leslie, hesitating. "The fact is, I was going for a walk——"

"Just one of your little hallucinations, I guess," interrupted Clive lightly. "You're coming indoors, and you'll put your football togs on. No, no sliding out of it, Fully! If you don't agree, we'll dip you in the fountain!"

Fullwood's eyes glittered. Just for a second an ugly look came into his face—that old supercilious glare which had been one of his characteristics. He was on the point of curtly telling the juniors to go to the deuce. But he checked himself, and forced a grin.

"Oh, right-ho!" he said. "It's no use gettin' out of it."

And ten minutes later he had changed, and was on Little Side. Nipper was not surprised to see him there—for Fullwood had already stated his intention of going in for the great game this term. And it was just like him to cast aside every other consideration, and throw himself whole-heartedly into practice.

"The man's a dark horse!" declared Nipper, as he and Tommy Watson paused for a moment and watched. Look at that! He's got speed——"

"He'll soon have bellows to mend if he smokes," said Tommy.

"If he plays football for my team he won't smoke!" interrupted Nipper grimly.

"In any case, I believe he's chucked up a lot of those silly habits now. That trip to the South Seas did him a world of good—knocked heaps of those cynical views out of him. He's a changed man."

And Fullwood was certainly entering into the spirit of the game with a heartiness that could not have been assumed. And when the breakfast bell rang—a welcome sound to the early risers—Ralph Leslie was hungry, and his mind was more settled. Football was like a dose of medicine.

"By gad!" he muttered. "An' this is the game I sneered at last season! I'm hanged if I knew how to live!"

CHAPTER IV.

TROUBLE OF SEVERAL KINDS.



GULLIVER and Bell were sunning themselves in the Triangle when the first breakfast bell rang. As a matter of fact, they had been discussing Fullwood, having observed him on Little Side.

"Amazin'—that's what it is," said Gulli-

ver. "The chap's degeneratin'! I'm dashed if he isn't becomin' as goody-goody as Nipper's bally set! He's as thick as thieves with them!"

"Thieves is right!" exclaimed Bell. "Considerin' his own cousin is a thief, an' wanted by the police! It's a wonder to me that the chap can play football at all! He ought to be barred! What's St. Frank's comin' to? It's a bit thick when we've got to mix with the relatives of murderers!"

"That Oxford man isn't dead yet——"

"Practically," said Bell. "Anyhow, Carey nearly murdered him, an' it amounts to the same thing. It's amazin' that Pitt an' those other chaps should mix with Fully. I wouldn't touch him with a barge pole!"

And these two had always been Fullwood's closest chums! Their mentality was such that they turned against him at the least sign of family scandal. Other fellows, with gentlemanly instincts, knew that Fullwood was not to blame for his cousin's blackguardism. Indeed, as Reggie Pitt shrewdly pointed out, Carey's misdeeds seemed likely to convert Fullwood into another being. For Fullwood was now learning the true nature of his former "friends."

When he appeared in the Triangle, Gulliver and Bell deliberately turned their backs, and ignored him. Fullwood walked straight into the Ancient House as though he had not observed the slight. But he was rather flushed. He had intended to give the "cut direct" to Gulliver and Bell, and it annoyed him to find that he was forestalled.

"That showed the outsider what we think, anyway," grinned Bell, after Fullwood had vanished. "I don't altogether fancy him bein' in our study, you know. There's bound to be trouble."

"Morning, you fellows," came a drawling voice from the rear.

Gulliver and Bell turned, and found themselves facing an aristocratic junior with a classic cast of countenance. He was Bernard Forrest, a new fellow in the Fourth. He belonged to the East House.

"Mornin'," said Gulliver, looking the new fellow up and down. "Haven't got time to talk now—breakfast bell's gone!"

"Isn't there a second bell?" asked Forrest.

"Yes, but——"

"Then we can have a few minutes' chat," said Forrest smoothly. "I rather admire the way you gave that cad the miss-in-baulk just now. Fullwood, wasn't it? The cad with a bit of garbage for a cousin?"

Gulliver and Bell grinned.

"You've just about hit it," agreed Bell. "Glad you agree with our point of view."

"Oh, rather," said Forrest. "I've heard a good deal of gossip already—especially from Grayson, of the Fifth. We're a bit thick, you know. I'm a pal of his—stayed at his pater's place during the vac."

"Oh!" said Gulliver, giving Bell a glance. "You're a pal of Grayson's, eh? Is he over in the East House now?"

"Yes, and he was telling me about Fullwood," continued Bernard Forrest. "The man was different last term, by what I can hear."

"We've finished with him," declared Gulliver. "He's turnin' goody-goody, for some reason. Used to be one of the hottest bloods in the school, too. It's a bit of a shock for Bell an' me. We're thinkin' about givin' him the order of the boot."

"You'll have to come and have a chat with me in my own study," said Forrest. "I've been shoved in with two fools named Kemp and Conroy minor, and I'd like your advice. They make me sick. Wouldn't even let me smoke in the study last night."

"You can come an' have a smoke in ours, if you like," invited Bell. "What about a game of cards, too?"

"Any stakes?"

"My dear man, who'd think of playin' cards for fun?" asked Gulliver tartly. "Perhaps we can have some splashes now an' again. Hallo! There goes the second bell. We'll see you later, Forrest!"

They parted, Gulliver and Bell highly impressed by the new fellow. By all appearances, he was one of their own sort, and they would probably get on well together. Forrest, for his part, had formed a pretty poor opinion of Gulliver and Bell, but if they were disposed to give him some sport, he wouldn't mind tolerating them.

When Forrest entered the East House dining hall he was aware of a subdued excitement. All round the breakfast tables there were expressions of indignation, flushed faces, and angry eyes.

Mr. Barnaby Goole, the Housemaster, sat at the head of the senior table with a complacency which was not revealed by any of his boys. Even the seniors were looking hot.

Forrest sat down at the junior table, and listened to the hissing comments which were passing to and fro near him. Mr. Goole was a new housemaster, and this was his first meal with his boys. And the East House fellows were already receiving a few shocks.

"Cocoa!" breathed Griffith, aghast. "Not tea—not even coffee! Cocoa for breakfast!"

"And no butter!" hissed Armstrong rebelliously. "Nothing but this—this muck! Monkey nuts, or something!"

"It's walnut butter!" said Page, in a suffocating voice. "I've just had a taste, and I'm nearly dead! They've got some almond butter on the other table, and I believe it's worse! Wholemeal bread—not even a white roll among the lot of us! And no trace of eggs, and not a sign of bacon!"

"Only that awful stuff in the dish in front of old Goole!" murmured Harron. "They'll bring it round here soon—and we've got to eat it for breakfast!"

"What is it?" asked Cobb fearfully.

"Goodness knows—some kind of nut meat, or something," said Page. "They say it's made from lentils and beans, and fried with tomatoes!"

"Doesn't sound so bad," remarked somebody else.

"You—you blithering idiot!" snorted Page. "Do you think we're going to live on that awful stuff? I want an egg! I want some tea——"

"Come on, Armstrong, what about it?" demanded Harron.

Timothy Armstrong started.

"What the dickens can I do?" he asked, glaring.

"Aren't you junior captain?"

"Yes, but——"

"Then it's your place to get on your hind legs and kick up the dust!" said Harron firmly. "What's the good of being junior skipper——"

"You hopeless ass, I'm only sports captain!" snorted Armstrong. "Boots is Form captain—and he boards in the Modern House."

"Silence, down there!" exclaimed Mr. Goole sternly. "In fact, silence, everybody! I have a few words to say."

CHAPTER V.

THE FOOD CRANK.



MR. BARNABY GOOLE was an exceedingly thin man. This physical aspect, in-

deed, was somewhat unfortunate, for it was no cheering advertisement for his vegetarian views. One look at him was sufficient to make the fellows go rather pale with alarm.

"Before we commence breakfast, I would like to make a few comments," said Mr. Goole, rising to his feet and viewing the room with a fighting look in his eye. "I am aware that there have been certain murmurings of discontent. Needless to say, I am grieved."

There was an ominous silence as Mr. Goole paused.

"This is my first meal with you, boys, but I hope we of the East House will set a shining example to the other Houses of St. Frank's. It is my intention to control your diet according to my own tested theories."

"Oh!"

"My goodness!"

"He's going to make us vegetarians!"

"At first, no doubt, you will be strange to the many new foods which I shall introduce," continued Mr. Goole benevolently.

"Meat will not figure in any of our menus. Meat, in all forms, is harmful to the human system—"

"No meat, sir?" interrupted Payne, of the Sixth.

"No meat at all, young man!"

"No meat!" echoed half the Fourth-Formers, in horror.

"But—but we'll starve, sir!" shouted Grayson truculently. "What about dinner? Aren't we going to have beef and mutton and—"

Mr. Goole shuddered.

"Do not mention those poisonous foods in my presence!" he said, with a deep

"We're not animals, sir!" said Armstrong warmly.

"No!" roared Mr. Goole. "The animals of the forest eat nuts and fruit—"

"Tigers eat men sometimes, sir," put in Page warmly. "And all sorts of animals live on other animals! Any naturalist will tell you that!"

Mr. Goole brushed the objection aside as though it hadn't been made. He had just got into his stride, and such trifles were as nothing to him.

"Nuts and fruit!" he thundered. "They are the true foods for the human frame! Nuts, vegetables, fruits, beans, roots!



But, with an agility which none credited him with, Handforth dived head-long, and just tipped the leather round the post. It was one of the most wonderful saves Little Side had ever seen.

frown. "Alas, your ignorance, I fear, is appalling. Let me assure you that meat is the curse of mankind! Every vile disease can be traced to the consumption of animal flesh! Do you all realise," demanded Mr. Goole, "that lentils have many times the food value of the richest kind of meat? And lentils are a natural food—whilst meat is unnatural!"

"But we shall die of starvation, sir!"

"Arrant nonsense!" retorted the House-master. "You will live in greater health than ever before. Before many days you will enjoy life in a new way. Meat eating is the product of our false civilisation! Do the animals of the forest eat meat?"

These are the foods with the true protein value! If you wish to obtain the full value of vitamins, vegetables should be eaten raw!"

"Raw carrots, for example, sir!" asked Grayson.

"Yes, certainly!" retorted Mr. Goole. "They are delicious!"

"Donkeys eat raw carrots, sir," said Grayson blandly.

"And donkeys eat lettuce and cucumber!" snapped Mr. Goole. "I am aware that you have attempted to insult me, but I merely put it down to your ignorance, young man. Even potatoes should be eaten in the un-



cooked state. Only in that way can the human frame obtain the full benefits."

"My hat!"

"It is the same with everything," continued the Housemaster. "The world has got into a vicious habit of eating meats, cooking vegetables, and extracting all their health-giving properties. I intend to bring about a complete change in the East House! There will be no cases of biliousness under my roof, no indigestion, no nights of log-like sleep, accompanied by appalling nightmares! I intend to show you the Road to Health!"

"There's all sorts of accidents happening on the roads nowadays, sir," said Conroy mildly. "Perhaps we shall have a smash-up before we get far. In fact, we shan't last out the term!"

"A mere fallacy—a foolish fear born of ignorance," replied Mr. Goole. "I do not intend to deal with this matter any further at present. We will now say grace, and get on with our meal."

And the fellows of the East House, being hungry youths, attacked the food with vigour. Many of them were dubious at first, but the stuff was certainly eatable. And it was better than nothing. Inwardly, however, the boys were seething with indignation. This breakfast was bad enough—what would dinner be like? They saw nothing but an endless vista of vegetarian meals, with uncooked greenstuffs as a background.

And the worst of it was, complaining to the headmaster would be futile. Mr. Goole was lord of his own household, and it would not be the Head's place to interfere with any domestic arrangements. Each Housemaster at St. Frank's had full control over the catering for his own boys. He was, of course, required to limit his expenditure to a certain fixed amount—so much for every head. If the Housemaster economised, so much the better. He was certain to be popular with the Governing Board, providing he performed his other duties satisfactorily.

Mr. Barnaby Goole had no fear that he would overstep the mark. He was convinced, indeed, that his vegetarian system would result in a big saving. And as long as his boys were provided with foodstuffs which more than equalled the sustaining values of meat, grumbling, in his opinion, was impossible.

But grumbling commenced the very instant the fellows were released. And their feelings were in no way improved when they discovered that the rest of the school was laughing at them.

The Triangle echoed with laughter as Handforth & Co., Buster Boots, and a good many more unmercifully chipped Armstrong and his men. Armstrong was waxing more furious every minute.

"It's a pity we transferred from the Ancient House!" said Griffith.

"Rats!" snorted Armstrong. "It was my chance—I'm junior skipper in the East House—but in the Ancient House I should

have been nothing. I'm going to show the chaps what I'm made of!"

"You'll be sprouting cauliflowers soon!" grinned Bob Christine.

"Oh, shall I?" roared Armstrong. "Just you wait! I'm leader in the East House, and I mean to squash this freak in no time! If necessary, we'll jolly well go on strike! We'll even organise a barring-out!"

And Armstrong stalked off, his eyes gleaming with determination. There was certainly a chance here for him to come out strong. But had he enough courage and initiative to take advantage of the opportunity?

CHAPTER VI.

THE REFUGEE OF MOAT HOLLOW.



RALPH LESLIE FULLWOOD hurried down the village high street, carrying a neat leather suit-case. He had just completed a number of purchases, and was on his way back.

These purchases had occasioned no comment, for St. Frank's juniors were always buying groceries and provisions in Bellton. It was certainly unusual for Fullwood to personally shop over the counter; but this was a detail.

He had just sufficient time to get into Moat Hollow, have a few words with Carey, and return to the school in time for calling-over. But it would be a rush. Fullwood had hurried to the village almost as soon as he had changed, missing breakfast altogether.

He was hungry, but he had no wish to be worried all the morning by thoughts of his cousin. It was better to see him and get the interview over. He might be able to snatch some food in the school shop during interval.

There was another reason why his plan was better, too. The school had only just about finished breakfast, and there was hardly any chance of him being spotted by fellows who were making hasty trips to the village on their bikes.

When he reached Moat Hollow there wasn't a soul in sight. Both Bellton Lane and the little by-road leading to Edgemore were deserted. And Fullwood lost no time in getting out of sight.

He had decided that it would be better for him to climb the wall at the rear. It was too risky to chance a climb in front. If any of the fellows spotted him getting over, there would be all kinds of questions, and his refusal to answer would only make a mystery.

So he selected the back, where the trees came right up to the wall. He had brought a rope with him, and he soon had it hooked round the spikes. Three minutes later he was cautiously crossing the decrepit old

drawbridge over the moat, and entering the deserted building.

"Oh, thank goodness!" ejaculated a voice, as Fullwood took a step down the stone passage. "You've come at last!"

"I like that!" said Fullwood gauffly. "I get here before lessons—an' miss my bally breakfast—an' you greet me in that way! You're jolly lucky! I might not have come until this evenin'!"

Fullwood pushed past his cousin, and entered the little living-room which Carey had selected as a haven of refuge. It was dusty and smelly, and half the window was boarded up. There were a few sticks of ancient furniture, and some blankets which Fullwood had annexed from the school the previous night.

Eustace Carey followed Fullwood into the room. He was small for his age—twenty-one—and looked scarcely older than seventeen. He had fair hair, and a weak, vicious face, with a watery look in his blue eyes. He was untidy, unwashed, and dishevelled. Altogether, he looked about the most miserable specimen of humanity Fullwood had ever set eyes upon.

"Frightfully decent of you to come, of course," said Carey hesitatingly. "I've been longing to see you, Ralph. This place is fearful, you know. Absolutely fearful. I've had an awful night!"

Fullwood regarded his cousin with cold contempt.

"You're not in a position to pick an' choose!" he retorted. "By gad, I wonder you've got the nerve to grumble! After the trouble I took last night in bringin' you here——"

"I don't mean that," interrupted Eustace plaintively. "That was priceless of you, Ralph—absolutely priceless! But—but isn't there some other place I could go to——"

He paused as Fullwood glared at him.

"I—I mean——" he went on.

"There's no other place; an' it's like your infernal impudence to want one!" said Fullwood angrily. "If this house isn't good enough for you for a week you'd better clear off to another neighbourhood! I shan't be sorry, I can tell you!"

"But, hang it, I daren't move——"

"Then stay where you are, an' don't growl!" snapped Fullwood, exasperated by his cousin's whinings. "There couldn't be a better house than this for your purpose. There's not one chance in a thousand of anybody buttin' in."

He proceeded to empty the suit-case.

"Here you are—bread, biscuits, cheese, salmon, canned-beef, sugar, tea, condensed milk—everythin'!" he said, reeling off the items as he produced them. "I've even bought a stove an' a supply of methylated spirit. Here's a pound of candles—but you'll have to be jolly careful at night not to show a glimmer of light, you know. There's a kettle here——"

"I say, this is awfully decent of you!" exclaimed Carey.

"I know it is," agreed Fullwood. "The police are still looking for you—there's a big column in this mornin's paper——"

"Have you brought it with you?" asked Carey eagerly.

"Yes."

"How's Roper?"

"Still unconscious," said Fullwood curtly. "The doctors are just as uncertain about his recovery. The police are instituting a big search for you—so you'd better not show your face in the open."

Carey turned pale, his breath becoming painful.

"Don't let them get me!" he muttered. "It'll mean a trial—very likely six months in the second division——"

"Or seven years' penal servitude," said Fullwood.

"It would kill the mater if anything like that happened!" gasped Eustace. "Things are bad enough as they are, but if I can only get out of the country there'll be no stigma of chokey on the family! But—but this house, you know! It's awful at night—full of all sorts of creepy sounds. Absolutely awful! I thought I heard foot-steps, and people whispering——"

"I'm not surprised!" interrupted Fullwood contemptuously. "A fellow with nerves like yours would hear anythin'! By gad! An' you're a full-grown man—an' my cousin! I've got a fat lot to be proud of!"

Carey winced.

"I—I believe the place is haunted!" he said, looking round nervously. "Dash it, I'm not jumpy as a rule. But I heard things during the night, I tell you. Isn't there some other place? Some deserted cottage or barn? I'd rather sleep in a bally pigsty than spend another night here!"

"You make me sick!" exclaimed Fullwood harshly. "You've got no more pluck than a Third-Form fag—not a tenth as much! Frightened of the dark, eh? Poor 'icle baby, then! Didums get frightened!"

Eustace Carey flushed deeply.

"Look here, confound you——" he began.

"Go an' eat coke!" retorted Fullwood. "You're my cousin, an' I suppose I've got to help you—but I'm not obliged to listen to your babblin'. I'm off! I might come again to-morrow mornin', but I won't promise."

CHAPTER VII.

THE BREAK IN STUDY A.



EUSTACE CAREY clutched at Fullwood's sleeve.

"Don't go yet!" he panted. "I want to speak to you——"

"You idiot, I've got to get back for callin' over!" said Fullwood. "I'm late already. Do you think I can spend

my time here? I've missed breakfast for you, but I'm hanged if I'll let myself in for an impot! I've brought you everythin' you want, an' you'll have to be satisfied."

Carey might have filled a less-hardened fellow with pity. But Ralph Leslie Fullwood was the very opposite of soft, and his cousin's attitude only filled him with supreme contempt. There was no room for pity in his composition.

The fugitive from justice was indeed in a sorry condition. A pampered youth, a product of foolish and doting parents, he had been utterly spoilt since childhood. And now that he had reached man's estate he was far more of a weakling than many boys of twelve. Until this catastrophe had enveloped him, he had gone through life by the easy path. He had had a large allowance, he had indulged in every form of vicious pleasure, and had never known the meaning of hardship.

And now, all in a sudden crash, he was obliged to skulk away in hiding. Moat Hollow oppressed him—terrified him. There was nothing surprising in this, for the old place, while providing an ideal haven of refuge—a safe sanctuary—was gloomy and eerie. At night, when the wind was in the high trees outside, there was a positively weird atmosphere in the place.

But Fullwood didn't look at these points at all.

Had he been in a similar position to Carey, he would have endured these trials without grumbling—since they couldn't be cured. And his common sense told him that there was no safer hiding-place. So what was the good of grumbling at a few fancies and imaginary sounds?

Fullwood found it impossible to sympathise with his backboneless cousin. He considered that Carey was confoundedly lucky to have a haven of any kind. So he took his departure with scarcely another word.

Carey remained in the dank passage, and Fullwood's last glimpse of him was of a drooping, pitiable figure, leaning against the wall. Many fellows would have hesitated to go—but Fullwood went.

"Hang the fellow!" he muttered savagely, as he crossed the tangle of wilderness which constituted the Moat Hollow grounds. "There's no pleasin' him. I've a good mind to give him a miss to-morrow!"

Here was the old Fullwood—the hard, cynical leader of Study A. But later, while he was pretending to concentrate on his lessons in the Remove Form-room, Fullwood melted a little.

He had much to brood over. He had been late for calling-over, and had received the imposition, after all. He was hungry, and there was almost an hour to wait before interval. Fortunately, Mr. Crowell was in a very good humour, and was treating the Remove with unusual leniency.

And Fullwood, as he pretended to work, allowed his mind to stray back to Moat Hollow. He caught himself sympathising with Eustace Carey—for, after all, that old house was certainly a bit lonely and cheerless.

But Ralph Leslie pardoned himself, and tried to dismiss his cousin from his mind. He was immensely relieved when interval came, and his first move was to make a dash into the Triangle, and to cross over to the Ancient House. He hurried into Study A, and put the kettle on. It would only take him a few minutes to speed to the school shop while the kettle was boiling, and get some food. He preferred to eat in the privacy of his study.

Gulliver and Bell came in just before he left, and after a long stare at him, they affected to be unaware of his presence.

"The new class-rooms are pretty good," said Bell. "Better than the old, stuffy rooms, anyhow. Shall we have a cig.?"

"Might as well," said Gulliver. "A pity we can't have this room to ourselves, you know. It's a bit thick when we've got to share it with a cad whose cousins go about robbin' people——"

Fullwood twirled round, and his arm shot out.

Crash!

The blow caught Gulliver hard in the middle of the chest, and he reeled against the table, shot completely over it, and sprawled into a heap on the floor.

"By gad!" ejaculated Bell feebly.

He watched Fullwood in a fascinated kind of way. Ralph Leslie dusted his hands, pulled open the door, and strode out. He hadn't uttered a word. Gulliver picked himself up, dazed, and red with fury.

"Where is he?" he demanded thickly. "The cad—the beast!"

"He's gettin' dangerous!" said Bell nervously.

"He's goin' out of this study, too!" snarled Gulliver. "We'll ask Forrest to come here instead—he can easily transfer from the East House! We're not goin' to stand that cad any longer!"

Within three minutes Fullwood was back. He walked in with a few packages, and set them on the table. Gulliver and Bell watched him with glowering eyes.

"I've got somethin' to say," said Gulliver. "We've decided——"

"I've got somethin' to say, too," interrupted Fullwood curtly. "Last term we three were pals. This term you've turned against me without any reason—insulted me because of my cousin's blackguardism. All right—I'm clearin' out of this study for good!"

Gulliver and Bell exchanged glances.

"That'll suit us nicely," said Gulliver sourly.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE INTER-HOUSE MATCH.

 FULLWOOD nodded. "I thought it would," he replied. "If I liked I could kick the pair of you out, an' keep this study for myself. You know that as well as I do. I can lick the pair of you with one hand."

They were startled. "But I'm not pinin' for any publicity," went on Fullwood. "So I'll shift into Study I—it's empty, anyhow—an' you can do all the crowin'. I'd rather live with a couple of hogs than you worms."

"You insultin' cad——" began Gulliver. "But I'm not shiftin' until to-night!" went on Fullwood deliberately. "Until tea-time, the study is mine. Understand? Now get out?"

"Confound you——" "Get—out!" roared Fullwood. Gulliver and Bell retreated hastily to the door, and vanished. From past experience, they knew that Ralph Leslie Fullwood was a fighter, and his present attitude was dangerous in the extreme. Outside, they consoled themselves by glorying in a little cheap triumph.

"Well, he's clearin' out to-night, so we can't grumble," said Bell gloatingly. "In the meantime, we'll fix things up with Forrest, an' make him a member of the Co. He's only got to ask for a transfer."

They went off to find Forrest before lessons commenced. And Fullwood was now feeling relieved and satisfied. His break with Gulliver and Bell was the best thing that could have happened. It had been inevitable, anyhow, and it was all the better that it should have come quickly. Life in Study A would have been intolerable.

When morning school was over, Fullwood noticed a sheet of paper on the board in the Ancient House lobby. It was the list of players for the match that afternoon against the West House. Nipper and Reggie Pitt were wasting no time. They were getting down to serious business at the first opportunity. In a way, it was only a trial match, but plenty of interest was evinced in it. Everybody was anxious to shine—for, in accordance with the form shown, so would the St. Frank's Junior Eleven be chosen. There was no big school fixture until the following week.

John Busterfield Boots, the captain of the Modern House junior team, had fixed up a match with Nipper for later on in the week. In the meantime, the Modern House would play the East House on the morrow. But to-day it would be a struggle between the two sections of the Remove.

Nipper had found some difficulty in selecting his team—and so had Reggie Pitt. Formerly, they had been as one, and there had been plenty of talent to choose from.

But with the additional House at St. Frank's, these junior House matches would give a chance to juniors who had hitherto scarcely had a look in.

The Ancient House team consisted of: Handforth, goal; McClure, Burton, backs; Watson, De Valerie, Church, half-backs; Hart, Tregellis-West, Nipper, Somerton, Brent, forwards. Several of these were playing in new positions, but Nipper had decided upon this course after a review of the practice that morning.

The West House team was thus: Johnny Onions, goal; Doyle, Owen major, backs; Bertie Onions, Nicodemus Trotwood, Kahn, half-backs; Singleton, Grey, Goodwin, Canham, Pitt, forwards. Reggie had been much impressed by Dick Goodwin's speed and agility and his clever long passes to the wings convinced Pitt that the Lancashire boy would shape well as centre-forward.

In any case, both teams were experimental, and this was one reason for the great interest in the game.

The very fact that it was the first match of the season was enough to attract many round the ropes. Willy & Co. and most of the other fags turned up in force, ready to cheer their respective Houses. Fullwood went over to Little Side, too.

He had kept strictly to himself most of the day. He had avoided contact with the other fellows. More than once he had been ostentatiously cut, and he was feeling bitter. He had decided that it was far better for him to remain completely aloof.

He wasn't upset because he was not included in the Ancient House trial team. He hadn't expected to be. It would be a week or two, probably, before he obtained a place even in a House match. There were many players better than he, but he had made up his mind to practice grimly.

And when Fullwood made up his mind he was capable of big things. A rotter in the past, he had, nevertheless, displayed that good quality—determination. Unfortunately, his determination had led him in wrong directions. Now that the right path was stretched before him, he was capable of going far.

So he was keen upon watching this match—he was keen to learn.

Over on Big Side a Senior House match was already in progress. But the Removites and Fourth Formers paid little or no attention to it. When there was a junior match to be seen, the Lower School had no eyes for anything else.

"Glad to see you here, Fully," said Nipper cheerily as he paused on the way to the pavilion. "Going to see the match?"

"Yes," replied Fullwood.

"That's good," nodded Nipper. "We can never learn too much, you know. By the way, I hear you've had a bust-up with Gulliver and Bell?"

"Somethin' like that."

"You're changing your study, aren't you?"

"Yes."

Fullwood seemed disinclined to talk, and Nipper had no wish to force his questions. He was about to turn away when Clive Russell intervened. The Canadian boy was looking interested.

"Say, that's fine!" he exclaimed. "Changing your study, eh? Why not come into mine, Fully? There's plenty of room in Study II for another one. Adams will be tickled."

Fullwood flushed slightly, and shook his head.

"Thanks all the same, I'd rather be alone in Study I," he replied bitterly. "When a fellow's in disgrace he's better alone."

"But, hang it, you're not in disgrace——" began Clive.

"My cousin's wanted by the police, an' I'm related to a criminal!" said Fullwood deliberately. "I shouldn't like to cause trouble for anybody else. So I'd better have a study to myself. Thanks all the same."

He turned away, and Clive looked rather worried. He caught Nipper's eyes, however, and Nipper gave a slight motion of his head. They walked away without discussing the matter further.

"It's only his way," said Nipper, when they were out of earshot. "And there's something in his point view, too. It won't do him any harm to be left alone for a week or two."

CHAPTER IX.

THE WINNING GOAL.



"O H!"

A long gasp went up round Little Side.

It was a note of disappointment from the West House juniors, and a note of relief from the Ancient House crowd. Others were merely impartial.

Dick Goodwin had sent in a glorious first-timer—a low, wicked shot which sang towards the posts with deadly speed. Dick had received the pass from the right wing—one of Pitt's beauties—and had taken full advantage of the opportunity. A goal seemed certain.

But, with an agility which none credited him with, Handforth dived headlong, and just tipped the leather round the post. It was one of the most wonderful saves Little Side had ever seen.

"Oh, well saved!"

"Good old Handy!"

"Hard lines, Goodwin!"

"Corner—corner!"

Handforth picked himself up, wiped a few specks of dust from his knees, and looked round calmly. He gave the ball a light kick towards the corner flag.

"By jingo, that was a fine save, Handy!" panted McClure.

"What do you think I'm here for?" asked Handforth coldly.

"All the same, Dick had us all beaten except you!" admitted McClure. "I thought it was a cert goal."

"Rats!" said Edward Oswald. "Didn't I tell you at the start of the game that I wasn't going to let anything pass me? As a matter of fact, I'm jolly wild—I've conceded a corner!"

McClure grinned, and prepared for the minute of tense excitement to come. There was always a brief period of uncertainty while a corner kick was being taken. Handforth couldn't understand his chums' grin at all. But it was justified—for the West House had already scored two goals. And Handy had spoken as though the sheet was still clean.

But the Ancient House had scored twice, too. The rival teams were on equal terms, and there was only a quarter-of-an-hour left to play. The game had been hotly contested from the starting whistle.

Pitt took the corner, and with all his old judgment, he dropped the ball in the very goal mouth. Singleton leapt, Handforth made a wild plunge, and beat the leather back. But it fell against Jack Grey's toe, and he kicked hard and true.

"Goal!"

"Where?" gasped Handforth. "Great pip!"

The leather was in the corner of the net, and Edward Oswald had nothing to worry himself about. No goalie on earth could have saved that shot, for at the moment of Grey's kick Handy had been unsighted. Singleton had barred his vision in the melee.

"Hurrah! West House wins!"

"West House rats!" roared Church. "There's over ten minutes yet!"

At the same time, matters were looking dubious for the Ancient House. One goal to draw, and two to win. It was a stiff task. And the redoubtable Johnny Onions had to be beaten. Johnny had already proved himself to be an amazing goalkeeper. His acrobatic agility was startling.

The elevens lined up, and the game recommenced. From the first kick, the pace was furious. It looked like another certain goal for Pitt's men. On the left wing Grey got away with the ball, streaked up the touch-line, and centred. But before Goodwin could accept the pass, Tom Burton dashed in and cleared.

It was a long kick, and the ball fell at De Valerie's feet. The Ancient House centre-half had two men on him, but he deftly pushed the leather forward to Nipper—a cool, brainy pass. Nipper was on it in a flash, and he ran round Doyle with ease. The next second he was making a dash for goal.

"Shoot!"

Nipper judged his time beautifully. With the backs beaten, there was only the goalie to worry about. Nipper steadied himself, and took the shot. He had almost reached the penalty spot before shooting. And Johnny Onions made the mistake of rushing out.

Slam!

The ball left Nipper's foot at an acute angle. It shot past Johnny's outstretched hand, and just scraped in at the far upper corner.

"Goal!"

"Good shot, Nipper!"

The excitement was growing. One might have supposed that this was an important school match instead of a mere minor affair.

At the ropes, Fullwood was watching with intense eagerness. During the opening half he had forced his attention upon the game, and had more than once been bored. But, gradually, the fascination of it had gripped him. And now he was standing there with gleaming eyes and flushed cheeks.

"Only five minutes more to play!" exclaimed Tommy Watson, as they lined up again. "By jingo, it's going to be close!"

The speed was now intoxicating. Each side was grimly determined to get that winning goal. The play swung from end to end of the field with bewildering swiftness. Reggie Pitt succeeded in putting across two of his flawless centres. The first time Goodwin miskicked, and the second time McClure managed to scramble the ball away.

And now, in the last minute of the game, the play was in the other half. Tregellis-West had got the ball, and he was intent upon scoring. But Bertie Onions robbed him, and half cleared. Then Brent dashed in from the right wing, and swiftly centred.

As the ball bounced, Nipper kicked. It was a true shot, but Johnny was able to deal with it. He punched out, and the position seemed safe. But De Valerie raced in at full speed, and took a pot shot. The leather rose high, and seemed to be dropping over the bar.

But it just failed to clear, and bounced on the woodwork. Back it went into play, and Nipper's head met it. The next second the ball was in the net.

"Goal!"

And Ancient House had won. That header of Nipper's was the deciding factor in the game. Reggie Pitt and his valiants were beaten.

CHAPTER X.

GETTING THICK.

"HONOURS even, in my opinion," declared Nipper. "That last goal was a pure gift. Ancient House won, but those West House chaps put up a fine fight. There's no need for Reggie Pitt to be down-

It was night now, and the match was being discussed in the Ancient House Junior day-room—or common-room. As usual, a kind of inquest was being held over the match, and every phase of the game was investigated. More than one youthful player was the recipient of painfully candid criticism.

But, as Nipper had said, there was no need for the West House fellows to be downhearted. The match had been good in every respect. There was scarcely a pin to choose between each team.

"Well, let's talk about something else," said Handforth, at length. "I hear there's a new fellow coming to-morrow. Like his cheek! Why couldn't he get here on the first day of term?"

"Better ask him when he comes," chuckled Church. "Not that it affects us, in any case. In the first place, the chap's a senior, and in the second place he's booked for the East House. I heard it from Armstrong this afternoon."

Handforth snorted.

"What rot!" he explained. "Somebody told me a new chap was coming, and I naturally thought he was booked for the Ancient House. He's not a new chap at all, then—the other Houses don't count!"

"I expect the other Houses say the same things about us," grinned Nipper. "Anyhow, this fellow—Clavering, I think his name is—is a bit of a novelty, because it isn't usual for new boys to go straight into the Sixth. Some special arrangement, I expect."

The talk drifted on, and the new fellow was dismissed as being of no importance. In the junior studies, other discussions were taking place. Study A, for example, was full of low whispers, as though something secretive were being conspired. Study I was silent, for Fullwood sat there alone, busy with his thoughts.

He had much to occupy his mind, too. In a way, he felt that he had fallen between two stools. He was no longer on speaking terms with his former friends, and as yet he had made no new acquaintances. All the decent fellows suspected him. They regarded him askance. They were friendly and polite, but it was easy to see that they desired to give Fullwood no encouragement. And he, being acutely sensitive, made no advances on his own account.

It was a new experience for Fullwood to be sensitive. It was an emotion he had never felt before. But the recent happenings had made an extraordinary difference in his character. He didn't realise this difference himself as yet, and his one desire was to be alone—to brood. There was his cousin, too. The worry of Eustace Carey was still acute. Fullwood had a fear that the fellow would stick on at Moat Hollow for longer than the agreed-upon week. And there was the possibility of exposure, too.

What would happen if the truth came out? What would the Head say if he discovered



There's no need for Reggie Pitt to be downhearted."

that Fullwood had helped to conceal the fugitive from the police? Without question, expulsion was looming before Ralph Leslie. Small wonder that he was nervous and jumpy.

"Oh, hang!" he muttered, at last. "What's the good of gettin' into a panic? I'll tell Carey straight to-morrow—he'll have to clear! This infernal business is gettin' on my nerves! I wouldn't mind so much if he was an innocent victim, and decent. But he deserves chokey, if ever anybody did!"

It was this point, indeed, which occupied Fullwood's mind more than any other. The man was an outsider—an utter young black-guard. And Fullwood, willy-nilly, was compelled to help him! To betray him to the police was impossible. As Carey himself had said, blood was thicker than water.

In Study A, the low voices continued. Gulliver and Bell, to be exact, were intent upon celebrating the inclusion of Bernard Forrest in the "Co." Fullwood had been cast out, and a new leader brought in. At present, Gulliver and Bell didn't know that Forrest was to be their leader. But Forrest knew it. He had made up his mind on that point before transferring from the East House.

He had "wangled" the transfer with comparative ease. Being a new fellow, he had not settled down yet, and as he had a desire to board in the Ancient House, no particular objections had been made. He was now firmly established in Study A, and he had listened to the plans of his new friends with amused tolerance. He liked them both because they were his own sort—because they were sporty according to his own definition of the word.

If Gulliver and Bell were disappointed over the loss of Fullwood, they needn't have been. So far, Bernard Forrest was an unknown quantity. But it wouldn't be long before he revealed himself. Bernard Forrest possessed every one of Fullwood's worst qualities in a highly concentrated form—and absolutely none of Fullwood's better qualities. If Gulliver and Bell were anxious to act the fool more strenuously than ever, they couldn't have introduced a more cunning brain, a more fertile imagination for evil mischief, than Bernard Forrest.

"Then it's all settled?" asked Gulliver, at length. "We'll slip out at exactly eleven o'clock, an' go to Bannin'ton on our bikes?"

"That's the idea!" said Bell, with enthusiasm.

"You're doin' the plannin'," said Forrest drily.

"We're goin' to give you a bally good

time," said Gulliver generously. "Rely on us, Forrest, an' we'll show you the ropes."

"Thanks awfully."

"We'll take you to the Wheatsheaf in Bannin'ton, an' introduce you to the bookies," said Bell. "We can play billiards, too—an' a game of cards in the back-parlour, perhaps. They're always glad to see us."

CHAPTER XI.

THE FACE AT THE WINDOW.



ELEVEN o'clock chimed out solemnly from the old clock of Bell-ton Church.

The reverberating notes penetrated Moat Hollow on the still air of the September night, and Eustace Carey heard. He was not sleeping, although he had rolled himself in his blankets long since.

"Midnight!" he muttered fearfully.

He had confused his counting, and was convinced that the hour was twelve. And he fairly trembled in his blankets. It was the hour of all ghostly things—the hour he now dreaded more than all others.

If Fullwood could have seen his cousin now, he might have felt a spark of pity for him. For Carey was indeed an object of pity. Considering his weak nature, his cowardly spirit, his present condition was easily understandable.

During the day he had felt nothing but relief. Time after time he had explored Moat Hollow from end to end—just for something to do. With the sunlight streaming through the grimy windows, there had been nothing to alarm him. He had appreciated the security of this retreat.

Here he was safe. The police would never dream of looking in such an old house without a direct clue. And nobody else came near the deserted pile. The great high walls were an added protection. Carey's spirits had risen as the day had passed.

He would only have a few more days of it, and then the hue and cry would be over, and it would be safe for him to make his break for France. He had money, and once across the water, he could cable to his people, and they would help him. His father would probably go over, there would be an awful row—but the police would never get him. And he would plead with his pater to be sent to Australia. He could take passage from Marseilles quite easily. He was keen on getting to Australia, too. Oxford had never been any good to him—he had always been mixed up with the fast set.

In Australia he would be able to live in ease and luxury, for even if his father wanted to be hard, his mother would contrive to send him a comfortable allowance. Carey was the sort of fellow who could live with a free conscience on unearned money.

ANSWERS

Every Saturday. Price 2d.

Work horrified him. His doting mother would never allow him to be driven to that degrading depth.

So, on the whole, his thoughts for the future were sanguine. Perhaps that rotten affair at Oxford would turn out for the best, after all. He was out of the rut now, and after the upheaval was over he would be in clover.

The greatest difficulty of all would be in getting across to France. Carey had a vague idea that he would require a passport. Under ordinary circumstances, it was easy enough to get this, a mere matter of form. Not even a visa. But a British

terrifying by night—particularly to an individual of nervous temperament. It was a big, rambling old place, and there was something sinister about it. The stagnant moat, the prison-like walls, the great masses of high trees—all contributed to the eerie atmosphere.

And by eleven o'clock—midnight, according to Carey's assumption—he was almost in a state of collapse. For over an hour he had heard mysterious creaks, the soft rattling of the window, a thud or two in a distant part of the empty house. Even in his own room he heard sounds.

All of them were purely natural—the



"Ghosts!" said Bell, looking round nervously.

"Ay, sir—ghosts in Moat Hollow!" panted the man, his voice trembling.

"I heard 'em, an' I seen 'em!"

passport was essential—or there would be all sorts of trouble on the other side. It was the one problem which exercised his feeble wits.

But, like all weak intellects, he had brushed the matter aside, assuring himself that when the time came everything would be all right. And, foolishly, he had slept soundly after his midday meal, and had not awakened until dusk.

In consequence, he was now sleepless and alert. A more brainy man would have tired himself out in some way during the day, so that he would sleep when darkness came. Moat Hollow was gloomy by day, and

creaks and whisperings inseparable from ancient timbers. But to Carey's agitated mind, they seemed like the voices of ghosts. His imagination was responsible for most of his terror. And now it was the dreadful hour of midnight.

"I can't stand it—I can't stand it!" he muttered feverishly. "I'd rather let the police get me, than this!"

All his rosy plans were forgotten. He lay on the couch, hunched up in his blankets, his ears buried. A child of seven could not have displayed more arrant weakness than this. Carey remembered his victim, Roper. He pictured him lying on that paved path,

at Oxford. There had been an awful look on his face. He could see the fellow now. He was dead, too—dead, with staring eyes.

He gave a little scream, and sat up. A thump sounded overhead. Carey shivered in every limb. There was something up there! He sat, frozen. He heard footsteps coming down the creaking stairs—he heard ghostly whisperings outside his very door.

As a matter of fact, that thump had been caused by his own carelessness. He had opened one of the windows, and the sash-lines were broken; in closing it, the window had jambed slightly, but a sudden gust of wind freed it. The footsteps on the stairs, and the whisperings at his door were purely imaginacy. He had heard normal sounds, and his terror had magnified them into something tangible.

With another gulping cry of unreasoning terror, he leapt off the couch. The darkness was intense. Something clutched his ankle—a grisly hand. His scream was horrifying in its intensity.

That grisly hand had been a fold of his blanket, but it seemed to Carey that he actually felt the bony fingers. He made one dash for the window, intending to fling it open and escape.

He got to the window and wrenched at it madly. Outside, the moon was shining full upon the grimy glass. But Carey tugged in vain. The window was screwed up! And, in any case, there were iron bars outside. He saw them, and realised his helplessness.

He fell back, babbling incoherently, and collapsed in a heap.

But his own terror was over—he had passed the climax. And outside, he had brought terror to another. One of the villagers, returning to his outlying cottage after a heated family difference with a drunken uncle, was passing Moat Hollow at that crucial moment.

And to this man's ears came Carey's wild cry. The unfortunate man halted in his tracks, and his teeth chattered. He had all the rustic's fear of the dark, and Moat Hollow was ill-famed in the neighbourhood.

In spite of himself, he turned to the great boarded-up gates, and peered through an opening where one of the boards had warped and bulged away. There was a distinct gap. The man looked through—and nearly dropped with fear.

For at one of the lower windows an apparition was visible—a pale, ghastly face, and two clutching hands!

CHAPTER XII.

THE GHOST OF MOAT HOLLOW.

"ALL clear now?"

A Bernard Forrest asked the question rather impatiently.

It was only a minute or two after eleven, and he was standing in Bellton Lane, just outside the gates of the private road which encircled the school buildings.

Gulliver and Bell were lifting their bicycles over the gate, having obtained them from the rear of the big sheds opposite the East Gate. These sheds were locked up in the evening, of course—but the nuts of Study A. had taken the precaution to conceal their machines in the rear, among the bushes.

"Give us a chance!" murmured Gulliver, as he wheeled his bicycle away from the gate. "All right, Bell—I'll give you a hand. Hold this, Forrest."

Bell's machine was brought over, and a minute later the three young rascals rode off. They didn't light their lamps, and wouldn't do so until they had reached the comparative security of the Edgemore Lane.

"It's better to go that way," declared Gulliver. "It avoids the village, and we strike the Bannin'ton road further along. It's really quicker, because it cuts off a corner—but the surface is a bit flinty, that's all."

There was little fear of being pulled up by the local policeman. And if any master was out and about, he would never be able to recognise the three swiftly moving figures.

"Good!" said Forrest, as they were coasting past Bellton Wood. "We've got away all right, and we shall soon be having some sport. I rely upon you fellows to show me the ropes," he added drily.

"Rather!" said Bell. "Trust us!"

Forrest smiled in the darkness. He rather fancied that he would startle his new friends once they got into the Bannington Wheat-sheaf. There was very little that Gulliver and Bell could teach him. It was far more likely to be the other way round.

They turned into Edgemore Lane, and the next moment there was a dramatic surprise for them. A figure came blundering out of the shadows, and collided violently with Gulliver's bicycle. He crashed over, and Bell and Forrest only just succeeded in steering clear.

"What the——" began Gulliver furiously.

"Sorry, young gent—sorry!" gasped an agitated voice. "I didn't see ye! There's ghosts—there's spooks!"

Forrest and Bell were off their machines by now, and they were not a little alarmed. This blundering idiot had not only caused a delay, but he would probably recognise the guilty three. But to race away was impossible, since Gulliver was entangled with his machine.

"Ghosts!" said Bell, looking round nervously.

"Ay, sir—ghosts in Moat Hollow!" panted the man, his voice trembling. "I heard 'em, an' I seen 'em!"

"Rubbish!" said Forrest.

A shaft of moonlight fell between the trees, and the rustic's face could be seen clearly. He was a middle-aged man, small and wiry. At the moment, his weather-beaten face was almost bloodless, and his eyes were staring.



"Tain't rubbish, young gent," he went on huskily. "I seen 'em! I was passing the place, when I heerd an awful kind of moan. Then I looked through that there gate, and saw the thing at the winder!"

"What thing?" asked Bell, with a shiver.

"What window?" demanded Forrest.

"One o' them winders of the old 'ouse," replied the man, jerking his head towards Moat Hollow. "The moon was fair on it, an' I didn't make no mistake. A face, young gents—a face without no flesh to it, seemed to me. And two 'ands—bony things that clawed out at me, like as if they wanted to pull me in!"

The man was obviously sincere in his wild statement. His imagination, of course, had got the better of him. He had seen Carey at the window, and he had seen Carey's hands raised to the sash, trying to open it. And, from outside, in the moonlight, the spectacle had been terrifying enough. Moat Hollow was supposed to be empty and deserted, and that figure at the dark window had seemed utterly supernatural.

"You'd better get home!" said Forrest sharply. "You've seen nothing, my man!"

"Lor', young gent, I tell ye——"

"You'd better get home!" repeated Forrest. "Here's five shillings. You haven't seen us, remember. You don't know anything about us, do you?"

The man dimly understood through his terror.

"'Tain't none o' my business, sir," he muttered, taking the money. "I ain't the one to talk, any'ow. But this ere ghost——"

"Nothing but your silly imagination," interrupted Forrest curtly.

The villager gave another sidelong glance at the high wall, and touched his cap. Then he hurried away along the lane. In his terror he had started back towards the village, but he corrected the error this time, and went home. Gulliver and Bell looked at Forrest, and Forrest grinned.

"These yokels are scared of their own shadows," he said contemptuously.

"I'm not so sure about that," muttered Gulliver, as he rubbed one of his knees.

"Moat Hollow's a queer place. There's all sorts of yarns told. Years ago, it used to be a lunatic asylum—then it was taken by Dr. Hogge and became the River House School. After that old Creepe got it, and now it's shut up. They say there's queer things to be seen——"

"You infernal idiot!" interrupted Forrest.

"You don't believe those old wives' tales, I suppose? The man must have been drinking."

He went to the gates, and looked through the gap in the warped woodwork. Gulliver and Bell accompanied him. They could clearly see the tangled vegetation, the weed-grown moat, the stagnant water, and

the grim old house. The windows stared at them rather weirdly in the moonlight.

"Nothing there!" said Forrest scornfully.

At that very second a figure appeared at one of the lower windows—a white face, and two white hands which seemed isolated from the body. Only for a second did the apparition remain in view, then it faded slowly away.

"The ghost!" gasped Gulliver feebly.

He fell back, his teeth chattering, and his face like chalk.

CHAPTER XIII.

AN ALARM FOR FULLWOOD.



THE explanation of this fresh vision was as simple as the previous one.

Eustace Carey having recovered from his brief spell of dazed fear, had pulled himself up by using the window-ledge. Thus he had appeared for a moment in the moonlight. Then he had retreated into the room.

Even Bernard Forrest was shaken. He wasn't a fellow who was nervous of the dark, and he scoffed at ghosts. But he had scoffed because he had never seen anything of an uncanny nature. He was thoroughly scared now. His eyes hadn't deceived him about that figure at the window.

"By gad!" he breathed. "There was something there all right—I saw it! That confounded rustic wasn't so far wrong, after all! Did you fellows see, too? A sort-of head——"

"It—it was a death's head!" breathed Bell, with a shiver. "A skull, you know—an' those hands were all bony——"

"Don't be an idiot!" interrupted Forrest. "We only saw it for a moment, and the moonlight isn't very strong. It may be a tramp, or something like that——"

"Impossible!" said Gulliver huskily. "Nobody would dare to go into Moat Hollow at night! It was a ghost!"

"Let's—let's get back to the school!" said Bell, seizing his bicycle. "Let's go while we're safe! I'm scared—I don't mind admittin' it!"

"That be hanged for a yarn!" snapped Forrest. "What about our trip to Bannington? We're going to the Wheatsheaf——"

But Gulliver and Bell had lost all their enthusiasm for the trip. The dark country roads were full of shadows and mysteries. In their present nervous condition they had no desire to be out. They had been thoroughly frightened by that unexpected apparition. It wasn't as though they had only themselves to judge by. The villager had seen the thing, too—and he had heard

an unearthly moan. There was no doubt about the ghost whatever.

"Yes, let's get back!" said Gulliver shakily.

They paid no attention to Bernard Forrest, who wanted to continue the trip, in spite of the dramatic interruption. Gulliver and Bell refused to go, and Forrest couldn't very well go alone, since he had never been introduced to the habitués of the Wheatsheaf.

In a thoroughly bad temper, he was obliged to return to the school, and the night jaunt was off. Even after they had got into bed—having safely reached their dormitory—Gulliver and Bell were still nervous. They talked for a full hour before dropping off to sleep.

They were worried because they would be obliged to keep mum. Although they had seen the ghost, they wouldn't be able to mention this fact to any of their school fellows. For by so doing they would admit their own guilt in breaking bounds.

Not that this made any difference.

The next morning the whole village was discussing the spectre of Moat Hollow with bated breath. The man who had seen the ghost had lost no time in relating his experience to others. They were early risers in Bellton, and long before the St. Frank's breakfast-time, the story was carried from mouth to mouth over the entire neighbourhood.

It was brought to St. Frank's with the milk, and having passed through the domestic quarters of each House, it made its way among the boys. And by the time it reached this point, the story had become somewhat warped.

The ghost, according to the reports which circulated the Junior School, was a terrifying thing with a death's head, and bony arms and hands. It had not only uttered hair-raising cries, but had crossed the waters of the moat and had floated through the air towards the gates.

Ralph Leslie Fullwood was one of the last juniors to hear the yarn. But this was due to the fact that he had held himself aloof from all the others. He took no interest in their sayings and doings. But at last his attention had been impelled by the excited discussions in the Triangle.

"Hallo, Fully!" said Clive Russell, as he came up. "Heard the yarn?"

Fullwood was at the rear door of the Ancient House, looking out across the West Square. He turned, and acknowledged the greeting.

"Mornin', Russell," he said. "What yarn?"

"About this ghost?"

"Ghost?"

"Great Scott! Have you been up all this time and haven't heard?" asked Russell, laughing. "All rubbish, of course. These

village people are full of superstitions, I guess. It's about Moat Hollow——"

Fullwood gave a violent start, but tried to control himself.

"Moat Hollow?" he repeated sharply.

"Why, yes," replied Clive. "What's wrong? You seem——"

"Oh, nothin'!" muttered Fullwood, striving to conceal his confusion. "Moat Hollow, eh? There's all sorts of nonsense—— But what ghost?" he went on pointedly. "Has anybody seen anythin'?"

"Yes, rather," said Russell. "One of the rustics was passing Moat Hollow last night, and saw a face at one of the windows——"

"The fool!" muttered Fullwood savagely.

"Eh?"

"Nothin'!" said Fullwood hastily. "Go on!"

Clive gave him another queer look.

"That's all, I guess," he replied. "This man saw a figure at the window, and ran for his life. He heard something, too. They say that the ghost came out, and floated across the moat, but I expect that's all——"

"I'm not interested in these village yarns," interrupted Fullwood, yawning. "Take my advice, Russell, an' forget it. It's all piffle."

He nodded, and walked away. Entering the Ancient House, he suffered tortures until he reached the privacy of his own study. As soon as he had closed the door, he stood just inside with clenched fists and gleaming eyes.

"The infernal idiot!" he breathed fiercely. "The fool—the confounded fool! All right—he can go to the deuce now, for all I care! No more sense than to show himself at one of the windows in the moonlight! Bah!"

His disgust was too deep for words.

For Ralph Leslie Fullwood was under no misapprehension about this "ghost." At the first mention of it he knew the truth. Eustace Carey was the culprit! And it was more than probable that that trivial incident would develop into an awkward situation.

CHAPTER XIV.

LEARNING THE TRUTH.



FULLWOOD glanced at his watch. He had made up his mind not to go down to Moat Hollow until mid-day, but this piece of news made all the difference. He was anxious—worried. He couldn't go in to morning school with a load of uncertainty on his mind. He would have to find out the full facts,

It was possible that this ridiculous story would be taken seriously. Perhaps the police might enter the place and search it! Carey would be found, and the whole school would buzz with the news.

Fullwood cared nothing about his cousin now. The fellow was an arrant blockhead, and deserved everything he got. Fancy having no more sense than to show himself at the window! Fullwood's concern was on his own account—and he couldn't be blamed for this.

Carey's discovery would lead to more trouble. It would be like a boomerang, recoiling upon Fullwood's own head. Everybody would guess that he had helped the unhappy Eustace, and he would be made the recipient of further scorn. The Head would know—the whole story would come out—and it would mean the sack.

Without doubt, Fullwood was passing through a trying time. He felt that he would have to see Carey at once—to know just what had happened. It was no good relying on the exaggerated stories which were being passed from mouth to mouth by the juniors.

So, although there was precious little time, Fullwood rushed out to the bicycle sheds, and was soon off on his machine. It took him only a few minutes to reach Moat Hollow, and even during this brief spell he had obtained a certain amount of comfort. For a new thought had come to him.

Perhaps that incident would do no harm at all, but would be a help. Moat Hollow had always been shunned, but now it would be doubly shunned. Nobody would go near the place after dark. And even during daylight the villagers would avoid it. This would make Carey safer than ever.

Fortunately, there was nobody within sight when Fullwood pushed his bicycle among the bushes near the side wall. He didn't much care if he was seen—for now it would be easily possible for him to explain that he was just having a look round, after having heard the ghost story. It was an explanation that everybody would accept.

He got over the wall without any incident, and rushed round the drawbridge. Then he found his way barred by the locked door. He hammered upon it, and heard footsteps. Bolts shot back, and Carey appeared.

"Thank goodness you've come!" he said hoarsely.

"By gad!" ejaculated Fullwood.

The exclamation was forced out of him. Carey was utterly changed. He was haggard, wild-eyed, and shrunken. He had allowed himself to get into a condition of grime and dishevelment. His face was pale, and there were bags under his eyes. He looked really bad.

All Fullwood's hot words dried on his lips. He had intended going for his cousin bald-headed, but somehow he couldn't do it. The man looked absolutely cowed and scared.

"What's happened?" he asked bluntly, as they paused in the passage.

"Nothing's happened," babbled Carey. "But—but I'm glad to see you, Ralph! This loneliness is killing me, you know! All yesterday—last night— Last night!" he added, with a shudder. "It was ghastly!"

"How do you mean?"

"I can't explain it," panted Eustace. "I heard all sorts of sounds—I didn't sleep a wink! Once, I tried to open the window and escape—but I fainted, or something."

Fullwood listened grimly. He was already learning the truth. Eustace Carey knew nothing of the ghost story which was going the rounds. In his fright, he had gone to the window, and sheer misfortune had led that rustic to be passing at the crucial moment. Fullwood determined to make sure.

"Did you yell out?" he asked.

"I don't know—I believe so," replied Carey. "Something caught me by the ankle, and I gave a scream!"

"That's enough!" growled Fullwood. "By gad, what a funk you are, Eustace! Haven't you got any backbone at all? What do you mean—somethin' caught you by the ankle?"

"I don't know—I believe it was a fold of the blanket," muttered the other. "Oh, don't look at me like that! You don't understand. It sounds silly now—I know it as well as you do. I was a fool, Ralph. But in the darkness, and with all those queer sounds—"

"Why didn't you have some candles burnin'?"

"I was afraid to," replied Carey. "I thought somebody might see, and I can't afford to take any risks. You've got to get me out of this, Ralph! I can't stay here. If I do, I shall go mad!"

"All right—go mad!" said Fullwood shortly.

"You—you callous young rotter!" panted Eustace. "I believe you'd be glad if I went mad! You've done these things for me, but you've shown me from the very first that you hate doing them! Do you deny it?"

"No!"

"A fine kind of cousin to have!" said Carey bitterly.

"That's a remark two can make!" retorted Fullwood. "Make no mistake, Eustace, I'm helpin' you for my sake—not for yours. I don't care a brass button about you. If ever a fellow deserved what's comin' to him, you deserve it! You always were a toad, an' that affair at Oxford stamps

you as a hooligan! What do you expect me to do—lick your boots, or somethin'!"

Carey winced.

"Anyhow, I can't stay here!" he said, changing the subject. "I've got to get to some other place before to-night—I don't care where it is—an old barn, or some other farm building."

"It's too risky," said Fullwood curtly. "You mustn't leave here, Eustace—unless you go clean away. There's no other place for you in this neighbourhood. Why the deuce can't you tire yourself out in the day-time an' make yourself sleepy?"

"I can never sleep in this place!"

"Rot!" snorted Fullwood. "If you're so jolly nervous, why don't you go into one of the cellars, bolt yourself in, an' have two or three lighted candles all night? You won't hear any ghostly noises down there!"

Carey shivered.

"I can't sleep here at all," he replied nervously.

"Oh, well, I've done the best I can for you, an' there's an end of it," said Fullwood. "I'm goin' now—No, it's no good—I can't stop. Lessons. I might come this evenin', but I won't promise."

"I've nearly run out of condensed milk, and the bread's stale——"

"All right—I'll come this evenin', an' bring another supply," said Fullwood promptly. "But don't keep me now—I've got into trouble over you already!"

A minute later he was on his way back to St. Frank's. And Eustace Carey gained what comfort he could from Fullwood's promise that he would return during the evening.

CHAPTER XV.

HANDFORTH MEANS BUSINESS.



"GHOSTS," said Handforth dreamily.

"Eh?"

"I don't believe in 'em, of course, but any kind of mystery is interesting," went on Edward Oswald. "Yes, by George, I'll go! An investigation! That's the idea—and the sooner the better!"

Church and McClure looked at their leader grimly, and then gave one another a somewhat hopeless glance. Already they could tell the workings of the great man's mind. Hadn't he been hinting at something of this sort all day?

It was teatime now, and Study D was cosy, and the air was filled with the mingled odour of hot tea and buttered toast. There was plenty of daylight, and even the sun was shining through the window.

"Chuck it, Handy!" said Church gruffly.

"Eh? Chuck what?" asked Handforth, looking round the table. "If you want

something passed, why not ask in the right way? I don't chuck grub about!"

Church and McClure differed on this point, but did not press it.

"I didn't ask you to pass anything," said Church. "I mean, give up this dotty idea of investigating Moat Hollow. It's only a village yarn. I don't believe a word of it."

"Neither do I," said McClure.

Handforth started.

"How the dickens did you fathoms know anything about my plans?" he demanded, in amazement. "This is uncanny! I've just decided to go down to Moat Hollow after tea, and you know all about it!"

"Marvellous!" said McClure.

"You must be thought readers!" ejaculated Handforth, startled. "Look here, Church, how the dickens did you know? I demand an answer! I'm not going to have you doing these mysterious things!"

Church chuckled.

"Nothing very mysterious about it when you guess your giddy thoughts aloud!" he replied. "You've been sickening for this disease all day!"

"Disease?" said Handforth. "What disease? You ass, I'm absolutley fit!"

"It doesn't matter," growled Church. "Let's have a cup of tea, and pass some of that toast. Blow Moat Hollow! If we go there we shall only be trespassing——"

"Rubbish!" interrupted Handforth. "Who does the place belong to, anyhow? Nobody! It's empty, and if there's a ghost there, it's our duty to lay it. I rather fancy myself at laying ghosts."

"Perhaps that's why you cackle so much," suggested McClure. "Chickens cackle when they lay eggs, and you cackle when you lay ghosts!"

"Har-har!" said Handforth, with mocking laughter. "No wonder the chaps turn pale when you make a joke, Arnold McClure. And it's no good you trying to be funny, either! We're going down to Moat Hollow immediately after tea. That's final!"

"Oh, all right," said Church and McClure resignedly.

Handforth rose to his feet.

"Ready?" he said briskly. "We'd better take some cricket stumps——"

"You said after tea!" roared Church. "We haven't started yet!"

"If you're going to argue, Walter Church, I'll chuck this plate of toast at your head!" said Handforth darkly. "Don't disobey orders!"

"I thought you never chucked grub about?" said Church bitterly.

"Besides," added McClure, "there's no sense in hunting for ghosts in the sunlight! Who ever saw a ghost at this time of day? We've got to wait until darkness!"

Handforth sniffed.

"You fathead!" he said tartly. "There's

no ghost at all! I never said there was. I don't believe in ghosts."

"And yet we're going to Moat Hollow to lay one?"

"No, we're not!"

"But you said——"

"I don't care what I said!" hooted Handforth. "There's a mystery at Moat Hollow, and we're going to elucidate it!"

"We're going to do what to it?"

"Elucidate it!" repeated Handforth, rolling the word off his tongue with relish. "I don't expect you chaps to know what that means—it's a word we detectives use. To elucidate is to solve—to illustrate."

"Then we're going to illustrate the mystery?" asked McClure. "We'd better take a pencil and a drawing block——"

"You—you ignorant lunatic!" roared Handforth, exasperated. "We're going at once—and we're not taking any pencils, either! I've had enough of this useless argument! Minutes may be precious! Are you coming now, or shall I use force?"

Church and McClure decided to go at once. They were now quite resigned, having successfully played for time, and demolished the toast without Handforth being in the least aware of the fact.

CHAPTER XVI.

ORDERS TO QUIT.



RALPH LESLIE FULLWOOD was just passing through the Ancient House lobby when Handforth & Co. came marching into the passage. Fullwood was on his way out to go to the village. He remembered those purchases he had to make, and he had decided to see Carey again.

During the day he had cooled down considerably, and was feeling a certain amount of sympathy for the lonely fugitive. Indeed, he had already evolved a scheme whereby his cousin might have more peace of mind.

He had decided to break bounds soon after lights out, and spend the crucial hours of the night with Carey. The fellow had looked so haggard and pale that Fullwood was worried about him. Perhaps he would indeed go mad if he went through many more nights of utter solitude. Fullwood had no hope that Carey would be less nervous if he changed his quarters.

It was not only his surroundings which tortured him—but his conscience. In all probability he had lived that affair at Oxford over and over again during his lonely hours. And Fullwood didn't want a lunatic on his hands. That would be worse than ever. For to-night, at least, he would spend five or six hours with his cousin.

It was curious, that, having come to this



And one of the headlines was staring Carey in the face: "Oxford undergraduate dies without recovering consciousness! Carey still eludes capture! Murder charge probable!"

decision, events were so destined to take place that the plan would never come off.

Handforth & Co. passed through the lobby, talking noisily. They didn't even notice Fullwood, and Handforth wouldn't have paused, in any case. He was as keen as mustard on this new idea of his.

The chums of Study D were on their way to Moat Hollow to investigate! This in itself was a dramatic event. Fullwood's presence in the lobby at that moment was a fortunate coincidence, although there was nothing remarkable about it.

"We'll go on our bikes," Handforth was saying. "We shall be there in no time, and we'll climb over the wall——"

"What about ropes?" asked Church. "Those Moat Hollow walls are twelve feet high, or more. There's the moat, too——"

"Leave it all to me," interrupted Handforth briskly.

They passed out, and Fullwood stood stock still. It seemed that there would be no end to these shocks. It had been bad enough in the morning, when he had heard about the alleged ghost. But this was a thousand times worse. Handforth & Co.—of all people—were going to investigate! They would find Eustace Carey within the first five minutes!

Fullwood ran out into the Triangle, and was just in time to see Handforth & Co. disappearing through the West Arch, en route for the cycle-sheds. Having got through, they paused, chatting with Solomon Levi and Dick Goodwin. They all crossed the West Square together.

"A ghost hunt, eh?" Dick Goodwin was saying. "By gum, that's champion! We'll go, if you like——"

"I don't like!" interrupted Handforth firmly. "We don't want any outsiders, my lad! No offence, but ghost hunting is a ticklish business. It's got to be done with delicacy."

"By my life!" ejaculated Levi. "You'd better not go, then!"

While they all paused, and Handforth slowly rolled up his sleeves, Fullwood hurried past, and went out through the West Gate. In a few seconds he had obtained his bicycle, and was off. He inwardly blessed Goodwin and the Jewish boy. They were causing a delay.

As Fullwood sped down the lane, his mind was active. He felt that he could count upon having ten minutes in Moat Hollow, at the least. Handforth & Co. were certain to have further arguments on the way. And there was much to be done. By the time Fullwood reached his destination he had his plan all ready.

He entered as before, and Carey was eager to see him. He had washed, brushed himself down, and was now looking spruce and respectable. The change in Fullwood's cousin was astonishing.

"I'm heaps better now," he said, as he grabbed Fullwood's arm. "Thanks awfully for coming, Ralph——"

"I've brought nothin'!" interrupted Fullwood. "They're comin' here!"

Eustace's face blanched.

"They're coming?" he panted. "The police——"

"No, not the police!" rapped out Fullwood. "Some of our fellows explorin'! You were seen last night when you tried to open that window, and there's a ghost story goin' the rounds. You've got to clear out!"

Carey's brain refused to work at such speed.

"Clear out?" he repeated dully. "But——but——"

"There's not a second to lose!" insisted Fullwood. "Only for a few hours, confound you—until these idiots have gone!"

"But—but where?" demanded Eustace. "I—I——"

"The wood, of course," interrupted Fullwood. "It's just behind here—across the rear wall. Bunk now—an' leave me here. Go into the wood, an' stay there until it's nearly dark. An' for goodness' sake, don't let anybody spot you!"

"But what shall I do then—when it's dark?"

"Come back here—it'll be safe by that time."

"But—but——"

"It's all right—I'll be here, waitin' for you," said Fullwood. "We'll have a jaw together. I've got an idea about to-night, Eustace—we'll fix everything up comfortably."

"You mean it?" asked Carey eagerly. "By gad, you're a young brick, you know! I've been worrying about to-night. It's been on my mind all day—I can't be in this place alone any more——"

"Don't be so infernally weak—there'll be no leavin' Moat Hollow, in any case," interrupted Fullwood. "But don't stop now—get into the wood, an' find one of the most secluded places you could spot. An' keep there until it's nearly dark. Then come back here. I'll have the grub by then."

Eustace went off, hardly knowing whether to be relieved or otherwise. It was some comfort, at least, to know that Fullwood would be on the spot when he returned. But it was obvious to Carey that his cousin was making no plans for shifting him into different quarters.

He would have to remain at Moat Hollow! That one statement alone sent Carey into the wood in a highly strung condition. It would have been better, perhaps, if Fullwood had mentioned that he was planning to spend most of the night in the old house.

As soon as Carey had gone, Fullwood worked like a demon.

In five minutes he had accomplished an enormous lot. And at the end of ten minutes he had left the place, and was cycling lazily towards the village. As he crossed the bridge, he glanced back, and he saw Handforth & Co. turning the bend.

"Gad!" breathed Ralph Leslie. "Only just in time!"

CHAPTER XVII.

THE GHOST HUNTERS.



THE chums of Study D paused outside Moat Hollow, and regarded the high walls. Church and McClure had no particular enthusiasm for the adventure, but Hand-

forth was as keen as mustard.

Fullwood, in the meantime, was making his purchases at the village shops. After that, he intended hanging about until Handforth & Co. took their departure—which they would certainly do before darkness gathered.

Fullwood's plan was simple.

While being annoyed with Handforth for coming on this errand, he was in no way surprised. It was just the sort of thing that Handforth would do. Fullwood had very little fear that any other fellows would embark upon such an enterprise. The school was already coming to the conclusion that there was no ghost at all, and that the villager had imagined things. And if

Handforth & Co. failed utterly in their search—as they would—the matter would drop.

It was only necessary to wait until the three youthful explorers went, and Fullwood could enter the place again, and wait for his cousin. Carey would certainly come back. He wouldn't remain in the wood after dark.

Handforth stood back from the high wall, and surveyed it critically.

"It's simple," he declared. "The place is empty, and there's nobody to drop on us if we're spotted. We'll go over openly."

"What about the ghost?" asked McClure. "It may see us coming in, and hide somewhere."

Handforth gave him a suspicious look.

"Ghosts don't hide!" he retorted. "You know as well as I do that there aren't such things as ghosts. We've come here to prove that that village duffer saw double! Or it's quite possible that there's a tramp in here. In fact, that's the most likely explanation."

"He might be desperate," suggested McClure.

"If we three can't tackle a giddy tramp, it's a pity," said Handforth. "Besides, we shan't need to tackle him. A dozen tramps can use the place, for all I care. We're only here to expose that ghost story as a fake."

"Good old Ted!" said a voice from the rear. "Go it, old son! Shall we form a bodyguard, and lend a hand?"

Edward Oswald turned round, and frowned. Willy Handforth and Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon were interested spectators. They had strolled up, unnoticed, and Handforth received a shock.

"Go away!" he roared. "Who told you to come here?"

"Who told us to come here?" asked Willy, appealing to his chums.

"Blessed if I know!" said Chubby.

"Clear off before you're hurt!" shouted Handforth. "By George! Have I got to stand here, and put up with your tommyrot? I'll give you just ten seconds to make yourselves scarce!"

"Poor old Ted!" said Willy sorrowfully. "He's got an idea that he owns the public roads now! He's ordering us off the highway as if he mistook it for Study D! Sorry, Ted—we've got urgent business here."

"Urgent business?"

"Watching you," explained Willy. "Don't mind us—go ahead!"

Handforth breathed hard, and turned his back.

"Come on, you chaps—we can't waste our time messing about with these kids," he said loftily. "I'm going over first, and you can follow. If those fags get over, throw 'em back!"

Handforth had come to the conclusion that it was a wise course to ignore his minor, but he needn't have worried. Willy & Co. were not interested in Moat Hollow, and having seen the chums of Study D vanish

over the high wall, the Third Form trio made a bee-line for the village tuck shop.

"We've got something better to do than waste our time on imaginary ghosts," said Willy, calmly. "Hallo, Fullwood! Buying up the giddy shop? Leave something for us, won't you?"

"That's all right," replied Fullwood.

He went out rather hurriedly. He wasn't alarmed that Willy & Co. should have surprised him making purchases, but he didn't want any questions asked. He knew that Willy was shrewd. And of late he had grown into the habit of avoiding his school-fellows as much as possible.

In one way, it was rather a pity that Willy & Co. had abandoned Moat Hollow. For Willy's keen eyes would have seen things which his major had missed. Church and McClure, of course, were not worth mentioning—they had entered upon this adventure by compulsion, and had no enthusiasm for it. They didn't even trouble to use their eyes. Willy might have detected many clues had he been there.

But the great Edward Oswald saw nothing. At least, he observed nothing. In spite of his boasted powers, he drew a complete blank. Moat Hollow was searched from roof to cellar, but no ghost was seen, and no tramp was located. The old place was grimy, dusty, and deserted.

Fullwood, in fact, had done his work well.

During that brief spell of intensive labour, he had done his utmost to remove all traces of his cousin's recent sojourn. He had taken the blankets, the remains of food, the empty tins and other tell-tale articles away. He had left nothing that the casual eye could see.

A minute examination of the place would have revealed footprints on the dusty floors—crumbs and condensed milk traces on the little table which Eustace had used. Willy might have detected a few of these clues, and if Nipper had come down there would certainly have been some discoveries.

But Handforth missed everything.

He confined his attentions to a general survey of the place. For, truth to tell, Handforth had no actual suspicions that Moat Hollow was inhabited. He found what he had expected to find—nothing. So he didn't trouble to delve further. And although he was inwardly disappointed, he affected an air of triumph.

"There you are!" he declared, with a sniff. "What did I tell you? I've proved that ghost story to be a fake, and there's nothing more to do! There's nothing here—not even a bird's nest! I knew it all along."

"Are we going now?" asked Church hopefully.

"Yes—the case is satisfactorily concluded," replied Handforth carelessly. "If any of the villagers tell us that ghost story again, we shall know what to say. We've been here, and they can't spoof us!"

And Handforth & Co. left.

And Fullwood, watching from a safe distance, little realised that this apparently trivial affair—this whim of Edward Oswald's—was to bring about a development which would be utterly startling in its possibilities.

CHAPTER XVIII.

IN BELLTON WOOD.



EUSTACE CAREY had much to think about as he made his way through Bellton Wood. Now that he was out, he felt that he might as well get some exercise. And it was rather pleasant wandering in the twilight of the dense trees. There was little or no fear of being seen.

He wasn't nervous of the solitude here. For one thing, it was daylight, and after the sinister atmosphere of Moat Hollow, the wood seemed cheerful. Carey wandered on aimlessly.

He was more than ever worried about the night.

He couldn't rely upon Fullwood to get fresh quarters for him, and it never occurred to him that his cousin might have decided to keep him company. He assumed that he must spend the night alone again.

And the prospect was appalling—unthinkable. Carey had had such a nerve-wracking experience on the previous night that the very thought of another one horrified him. His nerves had been in a shattered condition before his arrival in the district at all. And two nights in Moat Hollow had converted him into a mass of jumps and fears. He was almost startled by a crackling twig. A falling leaf made him start back with staring eyes.

And he was in the wood now—in open daylight. The night was near at hand—another night of unspeakable torture. He was in a condition of anxiety, too, concerning Roper, the undergraduate he had so murderously assaulted. Was Roper dead? The thought frightened him intensely.

In any case the police were hot on his trail—searching everywhere. Even these rural constables had been told about him—had received his description. He daren't show himself anywhere. Until the hue and cry was over, he would have to sulk in hiding. And the greatest problem of all—getting across to France—remained as obscure as ever.

These fresh thoughts of the police steeled him to a certain extent. He would even face Moat Hollow again, rather than risk arrest. But yet he couldn't. Another night in that place would drive him mad—

"Oh, I say, does this path lead to St. Frank's?"

Eustace Carey pulled himself up with a violent start. So deep had been his

thoughts that he hadn't noticed that he had walked right into a beaten woodland path. And he was face to face with a stranger—a young fellow of between seventeen and eighteen. The shock of it was stupendous.

"I—I—" Eustace paused, incoherent.

For one instant he thought about flying back into the wood—dashing off anywhere, so long as he got away from this stranger. Then he had a flash of real astuteness—about the first in his life. His very plight had sharpened his wits. If he took to his heels, this fellow would wonder at it. He would be surprised—he would talk. He would probably describe the wild-looking stranger who had run into the wood.

Then the police would know—and a search would be instituted. The hue and cry would be narrowed down to this very neighbourhood! At all costs, something must be done to divert suspicion from this youth's mind.

"St. Frank's?" said Eustace, forcing himself to speak calmly. "Yes, I think so—straight along. You can't go wrong if you keep to this path."

He pointed as he spoke, and he pointed at random. Anything to get rid of the fellow in a natural way. Unfortunately, Eustace pointed in the very direction that newcomer had come from.

"It can't be," he said. "I've just come along there, and it's a path to the Bannington Road."

"Sorry!" said Eustace. "Ridiculous of me—it's the other way, of course. As a matter of fact, I'm a bit confused. This wood is so confoundedly thick. I came along here for a walk, you know."

The other was regarding him with open curiosity.

"Oh!" he said in a queer voice.

Carey felt his alarm rising again.

"I've had a bit of a shock this evening," he hastened to explain. "Bad news about a relative, and I'm a bit bowled over."

The explanation seemed plausible enough.

"I'm frightfully sorry," said the youth quickly. "I thought you looked a bit worried. Why not sit down for a minute or two? There's a log here. Why, hang it, you're as shaky as the deuce! Sit down, for goodness' sake!"

Eustace inwardly cursed, but he could do nothing else but comply. In his efforts to get rid of the other, he had only aroused his sympathy! And now they would have to sit down together.

To make an excuse—and dash off now would look suspicious, and Carey's chief anxiety was to fool this boy into thinking nothing of the meeting. He must go on his way free from any doubts. More than ever Carey cursed himself, for he had ignored Fullwood's express warning. Deep in his thoughts, he had blundered on to this path, and had met the stranger. And it could have been avoided so easily, too!

"That's better!" said the other, as they sat down on the log. "I'm not sorry for a bit of a rest myself. I'd no idea it was so far to St. Frank's."

"Visiting somebody, then?" asked Carey.

"Oh, no—I'm a new fellow," said the youth. "Clavering's my name—Stanley Clavering. I'm going into the Sixth—East House, I think."

"New fellow, eh?" said Carey, staring. "My name's White, you know. Nothing to do with the school. I live over towards Caistowe."

"I don't know any more than I did before," smiled Clavering. "I'm new to this district—new to the whole of the South of England, in fact. It's a bit rough, coming to a new school like this at my age, but it can't be helped."

"I thought it seemed queer," said Carey. "Why did you leave your old school? You must have been in your last year, almost. It's rotten luck to have a change on the last lap—"

"As a matter of fact, I haven't been to a Public school before," confessed Clavering. "Sounds rummy, doesn't it? But it's true. I've always had a private tutor, and—"

He broke off abruptly, for an extraordinary look had come into Eustace Carey's eyes—a look of horror and abject fear. A copy of the evening paper was held carelessly in Clavering's hand, and it rested across his knees. And one of the principal headlines was staring Carey in the face:

"Oxford undergraduate dies without recovering consciousness. Carey still eludes capture. Murder charge probable."

CHAPTER XIX.

TORTURE.



EUSTACE CAREY was on the point of utter collapse.

It seemed like a stroke of fate that had brought this complete stranger across his path.

Clavering, of course, had bought the evening paper on his journey, and had still kept it. There was something uncanny in the chance that unconsciously led him to hold the paper so that Carey could read those fateful lines.

Roper was dead!

The worst, then, had happened! Carey's awful fears were justified—although he had never believed it possible that his unfortunate victim would die. He had always assured himself that the papers had made too much fuss over the affair.

And now, like a thunderbolt, the truth

was known to him. Roper was dead—the police were redoubling their efforts to capture the fugitive—the net was being spread more closely! And a murder charge was probable!

Small wonder that Eustace Carey suffered acute torture for those dramatic seconds! Strangely enough, his mind worked with brilliant lucidity. The shock hadn't affected him as one might have supposed. His brain wasn't dulled. It became razor-edged—unnatural in one so constitutionally dull-witted.

And he knew that his position was a thousand times more precarious than before. While Roper had lived, the police had made only a formal pretence of searching for the culprit. But when it came to a charge of murder, the whole organisation of Scotland Yard and the provincial police would be set to work. The country would be combed from end to end. The best brains would be utilised in this search. Roper's death made all the difference!

"Is anything the matter?"

Carey heard the voice as though from afar. For some moments he didn't realise that his companion was speaking to him. But Stanley Clavering was not only speaking, he was looking really alarmed. Carey had turned deathly pale, and was awful to look upon.

"I say—steady!" said Clavering sharply. "What's the matter? You'd better let me take you to a doctor—"

"No!" panted Carey, forcing himself grimly to control his emotions. "No, it's all right. I—I can't help it, you know. I go like that now and again. I shall be O.K. in a minute."

He shook himself, stood up, and walked up and down once or twice. It was more than ever necessary for him to allay any suspicions that Clavering might be harbouring. There was the paper in his grip—and perhaps he had read the police description of the fugitive! Carey's fears were justified.

"That's better!" he said, sitting down again. "By Jove! I'm glad you're here, Clavering—it always does me good to hear somebody talking. What were you saying about St. Frank's?"

Clavering felt relieved. He wasn't a particularly brilliant fellow, to judge by his features, and he had no suspicions regarding his strange companion. He thought Carey rather unusual, but nothing more. And he was talkative—he loved the sound of his own voice.

"Yes, this is my first taste of a big Public school," he said dubiously. "I'm not so sure about it. As I was saying, I've always had a tutor. But my people were keen about St. Frank's—especially this term. They seemed to think that it would be like a home for me."

"And won't it?" asked Carey.

He was only listening dully, and spoke for the mere sake of saying something.

"I don't know," replied Clavering. "It might. Anyhow, I'm booked to St. Frank's for a year at least. My people will be in India all that time. The pater's a big pot in the Government, you know," he explained. "Had to go out—and the mater went with him. I'm left behind, on my own."

"Hard lines."

"I should think it is hard lines!" growled Clavering. "I was going, too—I've got my passport and everything—"

"Your passport?" said Eustace, with a start.

"What on earth for?" asked Carey, staring.

"Well, there's nowhere for me to go," said the other. "I've got a couple of uncles, but one's in Canada, and the other's in Italy. And my people have hardly lived in England at all. Until a year ago I was in the South of France—that's why I had a private tutor. I don't know anybody in England, and yet I'm doomed to stick here for a year—until I go up to Oxford. I hope to goodness I find some decent friends at St. Frank's."

"I wish you luck," said Carey indifferently.

STORIES OF SPORT, SCHOOL AND ADVENTURE

THE Boys' Friend Library

(New Series.)

No. 13. THE FOOTBALL DESERTER.

A gripping and powerful story of the footer field. By ROBERT MURRAY.

No. 14. THE CHAMPION WHO WOULDN'T FIGHT.

A trenchant yarn of the modern boxing ring. By WALTER EDWARDS.

No. 15. THE TRIERS.

A fine sporting story of boxing and soccer. By JACK CRICHTON.

No. 16. THE ROTTER OF THE FOURTH.

A new and original tale of the Four Macs and the juniors of Haygarth School. By JACK NORTH.

THE Sexton Blake Library

(New Series.)

No. 13. THE MYSTERY OF THE SWANLEY VIADUCT.

A magnificent tale of clever detective adventure, introducing Zenith the Albino.

No. 14. THE CASE OF THE BOGUS BRIDE.

A fascinating story of baffling mystery and detective work, introducing Gilbert and Eileen Hale.

No. 15. THE CRUMBLEROCK CRIME.

A strong story of Cornish mystery and thrilling adventure. By the author of "The Case of the Deported Aliens," etc., etc.

No. 16. THE CLUE OF THE FOUR WIGS.

A London detective drama. By the author of the popular "Dr. Huxton Rymer" series.

THE SCHOOL-BOYS' OWN LIBRARY

No. 11. THE DUFFER OF GREYFRIARS.

A rollicking school story, introducing Alonzo Todd. By FRANK RICHARDS.

No. 12. EXPELLED!

A dramatic yarn of Jimmy Silver and Co. at Rookwood. By OWEN CONQUEST.

NOW ON SALE!

PRICE FOURPENCE EACH!

"Yes, rather—it's in my bag now."

"Then why didn't you go?"

"Oh, the doctor said that my constitution wouldn't stand India," replied Clavering, disgusted. "I should catch fever, or some rot of that sort. I could have slaughtered the old idiot! Of course, the mater drank it all in, and at the last minute I was pitchforked off to St. Frank's."

"That was pretty tough."

"Tough isn't the word," grunted Clavering. "It wouldn't be so bad if I knew anybody here—but I don't. I shall be like a lost sheep until I've made some friends. And I shall have to spend the holidays at the school, too."

He had heard the story, but it was only subconscious. He was suffering tortures of his own—greatly intensified by his obligation to appear unconcerned. His own peril throbbed through his mind.

He wished Clavering to the other end of the earth, and half-decided that it would now be safe to get up and stroll off. He was actually on the point of doing so, when a glitter entered his eyes.

An idea had come to him—an idea which, at first, was so stupendous in its possibilities that his brain refused to take it all in. But the idea was there, and with every second that passed, Carey's wits cleared. He looked at Stanley Clavering in a new way—with intense, burning gaze.

CHAPTER XX.

A CHANCE IN A THOUSAND!



EUSTACE CAREY'S heart throbbed with a tumultuous excitement.

During these dramatic twenty minutes he had learned that the police were after him for murder. His position was now desperate in the extreme. To escape to France was impossible—the net would be too fine to penetrate.

There remained Moat Hollow. With Fullwood's help, he might stay there for weeks without any suspicions being aroused. But Moat Hollow was a place of sinister mystery—a place of horror. And with Roper's death on his conscience, Carey knew that he could never face another night in that gloomy old house. The very thought of it sent a shudder through his frame.

And there was Stanley Clavering, too.

The fellow had no suspicions at the moment—Carey was convinced of this. But there were plenty of fellows at St. Frank's who had keener wits. It was impossible to imagine that Clavering would make no reference to this meeting. He would get acquainted with somebody during his first hour in the school. He would probably go into some other fellow's study.

They would certainly talk. Clavering would refer to his journey down—would explain how he had got lost in the wood. Carey could see the exact sequence of the probable conversation. The new fellow would remark upon the stranger he had met on the woodland path. He would remember his queer behaviour. One thing would lead to another, and sooner or later some keen brain would associate the stranger of Bell-ton Wood with the Oxford fugitive.

There would be a lot of talk. Fullwood's relationship with Carey was already known. Suspicions would be aroused on the instant, and the police would be hot on the clue. No doubt a Scotland Yard man would be sent down post-haste, and Fullwood would be cross-examined. Even if he denied all knowledge of his cousin, the detective would trace his recent activities, and Moat Hollow would be searched. Then—arrest, trial, conviction—

Carey shivered as he foresaw the events that would happen. His neck was in danger now—the noose was already hovering near him. And one fact stood out before his eyes like a blazing electric sign. Stanley Clavering must never be allowed to reach St. Frank's!

It was a startling thought, but the more Carey considered it, the more convinced he became. Nobody knew Clavering at St. Frank's—they were only aware of his name. If he arrived, it would be the end of Eustace Carey. No power on earth could save this wretched undergraduate if Clavering told his story.



"Are you going to strip, or not?" he snarled. "You'll either do as I tell you, or I'll batter you into pulp, and then strip you myself! It's up to you, you young fool!"

To make a break for liberty was out of the question. Carey knew that he would be recognised and arrested before he had covered—twenty miles. His only safety lay here—in the St. Frank's district. But Clavering must never get to the school!

Cunningly Carey's brain evolved the plot. Clavering was talking, but Eustace scarcely heard. He automatically nodded now and again, and pretended to be interested. But he was thinking. He had heard all that he wanted to hear. But he missed one remark, at least, that might have altered everything had he heard.

Stanley Clavering was practically a stranger in England! That was the one thought which throbbed through Eustace's brain. He had no friends here—no relatives, even. His people had gone to India, and wouldn't be back for a year. He was going to St. Frank's, here all were unknown to him. He wouldn't have any visitors.

Why shouldn't Carey go to St. Frank's in Clavering's place?

That was the idea which had staggered him with its own immensity. At first it seemed fantastic, impossible, wild. But the more Carey thought of it, the more plausible it became. The headmaster was merely ex-

pecting a boy named Stanley Clavering. How would any suspicions be aroused if Carey boldly arrived, and claimed to be the new boy?

He was youthful-looking—he knew it. In Clavering's clothes, he would pass for seventeen anywhere. And he would take his place in the East House, as one of the seniors. And how on earth could the police ever trace him?

His appearance would be totally altered by his masquerade. Scotland Yard would never dream of searching in a great Public school for their elusive fugitive. With another name, and in another personality, Carey could snap his fingers at every policeman he met. And he wouldn't meet many! Once at St. Frank's, he would keep to the school, and never leave the grounds. He would live in peace and luxury.

And there was another point. Clavering had a passport in his possession. It would certainly be available for France. That would become Carey's, and during his leisure he would remove Clavering's photograph, paste in one of his own, and fake up the stamp. With a passport, his way would be clear. After a week or two he could quietly clear out, and get to France. Then, still maintaining Clavering's identity, he could obtain complete and lasting freedom.

Clavering himself had put this idea into Carey's head. For Clavering's talkative tongue had related everything that was necessary. The plan was not only feasible, but childishly simple to carry out. There would be absolutely nothing in it. Remove Clavering, and go to St. Frank's in his name! The rest was easy.

For a moment Eustace Carey considered the other alternative. If he failed to take advantage of this opportunity now—and it would never come again—he would be compelled to go back to Moat Hollow. And what then? Nights of agony and torture—days of utter loneliness—the constant fear of arrest on his mind. There would be madness in that direction, for Carey knew that his brain would never stand the strain.

But this other way—He could have laughed at the comparison. Comfort, cheerful surroundings, and a new identity which nobody would suspect. At St. Frank's he would be swallowed up and lost, and could laugh at the futile efforts of the police to trace him.

There would be no inquiries concerning Clavering or his disappearance, because, to the world, Clavering wouldn't have disappeared at all. He would be at St. Frank's, where he was expected to be. Only Carey would be missing, and he could snap his fingers at Scotland Yard's cleverest men.

There wasn't any other course to be taken. Stanley Clavering must go, and Eustace Carey must take his place!

CHAPTER XXI. THE VICTIM.



"Of course, it was all the fault of that fool of a porter," said Clavering. "He told me it would be better to walk from Bannington, an' I took his advice. There wasn't a local train for nearly two hours."

"Yes," said Carey, nodding.

He hadn't heard a word, but he pretended to be listening.

"It would have been a lot better if I'd waited," said Clavering. "But I hate hanging about stations, so I walked. I thought it would be a good chance to see the district. Then I got lost in this confounded wood. Well, I shall have to be going now. Feeling better?"

"Of course you couldn't," said Carey.

"Eh? I don't quite—"

"Sorry!" broke in Carey, flushing. "I was thinking. 'What did you say?'"

"I said I was going."

"Oh, yes, naturally!" exclaimed Carey. "It's getting dark, isn't it? Thanks awfully for your little chat. It's done me a lot of good. I tell you what—I'll take you to the school, if you like."

Stanley Clavering looked very pleased.

"I say, that's jolly decent of you!" he exclaimed eagerly. "Thanks, White. I don't want to lose myself again. It's nearly dark by now, too—I hadn't noticed how the dusk was creeping on."

"That's all right—come with me," said Carey cheerfully.

He was playing his game cleverly—forcing himself to appear friendly. Yet he harboured evil intentions towards this perfectly harmless stranger. Not that Carey was thinking of drastic violence. He had killed Roper in a drunken brawl, but he was incapable of cold-blooded murder. He wasn't so atrocious as that—moreover, he didn't possess the nerve.

His brain had to work quickly, too. At first he thought of taking Clavering to Moat Hollow. It was natural that he should think in this way to begin with. He was taking Clavering's place, so why shouldn't Clavering take his?

But there were difficulties—insuperable when he considered the position at close quarters. Moat Hollow would never do as a prison. It was too near the village, and there would always be the chance of Clavering making his escape. And that wasn't to be thought of.

Besides, Fullwood was at Moat Hollow—waiting there even now. And Carey could imagine his cousin's attitude when he made his intentions known. In all probability Fullwood would ruin everything. Later on, when the impersonation was put into effect, Fullwood would be unable to speak. For his own sake, he would keep quiet, once the thing was accomplished.

No, Moat Hollow was ruled out. Where else? What place was there in this neighbourhood where Stanley Clavering could be effectually hidden away and kept in captivity? Once removed from human ken, Clavering's future would present no problem. Carey would force his cousin to help in looking after the prisoner.

And what better fortress than Bellton Priory?

Eustace Carey remembered this old ruin well. When he had at first come to St. Frank's to meet Fullwood he had wandered about the neighbourhood for hours, and he had closely inspected Bellton Priory—thinking that it might serve as a haven of refuge for him. But the grim old ruin had chilled his blood, and he had eagerly agreed to Fullwood's suggestion of Moat Hollow—little dreaming that Moat Hollow itself was a place of haunting fear.

But for Clavering, Bellton Priory was the very place.

The ivy-grown ruin stood on a wooded hill less than a mile away. It was absolutely isolated, with Bellton Wood on one side, and Bannington Moor stretching away for miles in the other direction. And there were no houses or cottages within a mile. Even the approach to it was sheltered, so that one could pass to and fro without being observed.

And Carey was convinced that there would be dungeons—underground places where Clavering could be incarcerated. A week or two of solitary confinement wouldn't do him any harm. Carey dismissed this side of the question callously. He was thinking of himself entirely now.

Yes, Bellton Priory was the place. But it would be rather a ticklish business getting Clavering there, and a stratagem of some sort would have to be evolved. Carey was already getting a glimmering.

"We might as well strike through the wood," he said lightly. "It's better than keeping to this path—it only goes a long way round."

"You know best," said Clavering, placing his trust in his companion. "You're familiar with the ground, and I'm not. It's awfully decent of you to take all this trouble."

"Don't mention it," said Carey. "Only too glad."

They went off into the wood, and now Carey's anxieties were acute. He wasn't even sure that he knew the way himself, but he would have to pretend that he did. The slightest suspicion on Clavering's part might upset everything at the critical moment.

Eustace was thankful when he broke free of the wood, and saw the dim outline of some neighbouring hills. The evening had set in murkily, with low clouds drifting across the sky, and with a few raindrops in the air. The wind was rising, too.

In a moment Carey recognised the view. The priory ruins peeped out beyond the

tree-tops on the nearest hill, and the way led through patches of gorse, and up through the trees.

"I say, this isn't the way, is it?" asked Clavering doubtfully. "There's no road here—not even a path. St. Frank's isn't buried in the middle of a wilderness, is it?"

Carey laughed lightly.

"As a matter of fact, old man, I've just thought of something," he explained, with a careless air. "St. Frank's is over to the left—just beyond these trees. But now we're on this ground, I wanted to go up to the ruins, and fetch some things I left behind there. You don't mind, do you?"

"Well, no—"

"It'll only take us two or three minutes—just a small detour," said Carey. "I came out sketching, you know, and I left all my kelter there. It'll be ruined if this rain comes on heavily. The Priory made a fine subject."

The story seemed perfectly plausible, and Clavering accepted it without question. It seemed so natural, too. Why should he suspect evil? Anybody might be sketching an old ruin.

"All right—if it won't take us too long," he said readily.

Eustace Carey glowed with the anticipation of triumph. He had worked it! Clavering was a fool to believe the yarn, but he would soon suffer for his childlike innocence!

CHAPTER XXII. IN THE DUNGEONS.



BELLTON PRIORY loomed up, grim and gaunt against the threatening evening sky. The two figures approached it up the steep hillside. Carey was talking

brightly now—going into an imaginary account of his recent sketching activities. He was intent upon keeping his companion's mind occupied.

Nobody had seen these two—they had been unobserved from first to last. This was all to the good, since an encounter with local residents might spoil the whole game. The priory was at hand, and there had been no hitch.

At last, Clavering was feeling a bit uncertain. It seemed strange that "White" should bring him all this way to fetch his paraphernalia. St. Frank's seemed to be further off than ever. Once or twice Clavering had started to ask questions, but he had been unable to interrupt his companion's flow.

"Here we are!" said Carey, at length. "I left the things just over in that corner. Got a match, old man?"

"No, I don't think so—"

"It's all right—I shan't need one," said Carey briskly.

He took one swift glance round. They had entered the ruins through one of the broken walls, and were within a great square, roofless chamber. The rain was beginning to increase, and the wind buffeted round the ivy-grown ruins with considerable force. Over in the far corner of the square space a dark patch made itself apparent. Carey moved in that direction.

Clavering remained where he was, as Eustace had expected. Bending down, Carey pretended to grope for his imaginary things. This intense gloom was fortunate. Suddenly, Carey stumbled and fell, uttering a sharp cry.

"Hang it!" he groaned. "These infernal stones— Ooooh! My ankle, you know— Of all the infernal—"

"Hurt!" asked Clavering, hurrying across. The ruse had succeeded.

"Not much—but a bit of a twist," said Carey painfully, as the other bent over him. "I shall be all right—"

While he spoke he acted. It was a cowardly, dastardly piece of work. Only a man with a blackguard's mind could have performed that foul act of treachery. All Carey's anxiety of mind was no excuse for him.

Crash!

His right hand swept up, and in it he gripped a heavy piece of stone, which he had groped for a moment earlier. Clavering's head was quite close, and the blow caught him in the centre of the forehead.

The unfortunate fellow uttered a gurgling cry, and his knees sagged. He sank to the damp ground, and half rolled over—not unconscious, but dazed by that coward's blow. And he was completely at Carey's mercy.

"By gad!" breathed Carey feverishly.

His ankle wasn't hurt at all, of course, and he threw himself upon the unfortunate Clavering, and knelt upon his chest. Then, whipping out his handkerchief, he prepared to bind his victim's wrists.

But he changed his mind. Clavering was practically knocked out, and there was no fight in him. Fortunately, the rock had not cut the skin, but an ugly lump would soon rise.

Carey's altered plan was the result of something he had just seen. Quite near by were some crumbling stone steps, leading downwards. The dungeons! Without hesitation, Eustace rose to his feet, grabbed Clavering by the collar, and hauled him towards the steps. A moment later the unfortunate was being dragged down.

Carey had remembered something else, too—something which was extremely lucky. During the night hours at Moat Hollow he had slept in his clothing—never once had he undressed. And he had always kept a box of matches and a candle in his pocket, so that he could be sure of a light without any groping.

A candle now was worth its weight in gold. With shaking hands, he brought it out, and struck a match. There was very little wind down here, at the bottom of the steps. The light revealed a passage leading into the dim obscurity.

Carey gave his victim a glance, and saw that he was safe for another few minutes. Clavering was groaning slightly, but was still too dazed to realise what had happened or where he was.

Hurrying down the passage, Carey came upon two or three great oaken doors, metal studded and formidable. In spite of their great age, they were still sound. And they led into dungeons.

Two of them were choked with the collected rubbish of years—stones, masses of dead leaves which had drifted down with the autumn winds. But one dungeon was closed, and when Carey opened the door, he found that it was clear. And the door was provided with enormous bolts. Inside, there was no window, and only indifferent ventilation. But it was a prison which would hold a dozen men with safety. Within that grim place Clavering would be secure.

Setting his candle on the floor, Carey hurried back—a distance of forty or fifty feet, for the dungeon he had chosen was almost at the end. Clavering was just sitting up.

"Something fell on you!" exclaimed Carey tensely. "Come along, old man—we'll soon have you right!"

He helped the other to his feet, and they staggered along the tunnel. A moment later they were within the dungeon, and Carey closed the door.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE PRIORY CAPTIVE.



CLAVERING held a hand to his head, and backed away.

"You cur!" he muttered. "You deliberately hit me out there—"

"You're mad!" interrupted Carey. "Something fell on you, and I tried to pull you aside—"

"You infernal liar!" shouted Clavering, recovering some of his strength. "You lured me here on purpose! I believe you're mad—there's something wrong somewhere, anyhow! That look in your eyes—"

"All right—you might as well know the truth!" snarled Carey, throwing all pretence to the winds. "I did lure you here—but I'm not mad! Oh, no! I'm as sane as you are, and a lot cleverer! You're going to stay here now—stay here until I choose to set you free!"

Clavering breathed hard.

"What do you mean?" he panted. "Don't talk like a maniac! Why do you want to

leave me here, in this dungeon? I was a fool to come with you—I suspected something before we got here, but——”

“But I was too many for you, eh?” asked Carey calmly. “I’m not going to explain anything, because you wouldn’t understand. But I’ve brought you here, and here you stay!”

Eustace Carey was cool now—his terror had left him. He could see a clear vista of safety ahead, and the effect upon his nerves was extraordinary. He was another man. It was as though he had taken a magical tonic.

The dungeon had no effect upon him. For one thing, he wasn’t alone, but, most important of all, his ambitious scheme had taken possession of him, and it occupied his thoughts to the exclusion of all else. He had succeeded! The rest of the business would be simplicity itself.

“I tell you you’re mad!” gasped Clavering. “Let me out of this place! Open that door, you fool! I’ll have the police on you for this! They’re expecting me at St. Frank’s, and when I don’t turn up they’ll search!”

Carey laughed mockingly.

“There’ll be no search,” he said. “And nobody at St. Frank’s will worry about you.”

He felt safe in making this assertion because the St. Frank’s authorities would receive the expected new boy, and would consequently institute no inquiries for him. The real Clavering would languish in this dungeon until it pleased Carey to release him.

Clavering was bewildered and scared. He wasn’t exactly a coward, but he was a peaceful fellow, and he had never done any fighting. Had he spent his earlier years in the junior form of a great public school he might have become hardened. But he had always had a tutor, and was mild and harmless.

And that blow he had received had weakened him to a great extent. He was in no fit condition to fight for his liberty. He believed that his companion was mad. He had encountered an escaped lunatic in the wood, and this was the result! Now that it was too late, Clavering was amazed that he could have been so blind. But he had only made a mistake that is common to all humanity. It is so easy to see one’s mistakes after they are made!

“Look here, don’t be ridiculous,” he said, forcing himself to keep calm. “What good will it do you to keep me here? We’re strangers—it won’t help you at all if you go on like this!”

“No?” interrupted Carey. “That’s just where you make a mistake. Strip!”

“What?”

“Strip!”

“Strip?” repeated Clavering blankly. “I don’t understand——”

“Don’t you know what the word ‘strip’ means?” demanded Carey. “Undress—take all your things off until you’re naked!”

Stanley Clavering’s final doubt vanished. The man was undoubtedly as mad as a March hare. He began to feel trapped now. Perhaps this maniac had a revolver somewhere. Perhaps he would bring out a knife.

“You think I’m mad, don’t you?” laughed Carey. “I’m not, so you needn’t get the wind up. Perhaps I’d better explain, after all. I’m going to St. Frank’s in your clothes, and with your baggage. When I get there my name will be Stanley Clavering. Do you understand?”

The other stared in amazement.

“You’re—you’re going to take my place?” he asked hoarsely.

“Exactly.”

“But you can’t—they’ll know you——”

“How?” asked Carey sharply. “Have you ever been seen by anybody there?”

“No, but——”

“Gad, you gave me a shock for a moment!” panted Carey with relief. “If you’re not known at St. Frank’s, how will they spot me? I shall take your name, and there’ll be no search for you—because you’ll apparently be there. But you’ll really be in this desirable furnished apartment.”

“But why?” demanded Clavering furiously. “What’s the idea of this idiotic scheme? Why do you want to go there?”

“Can’t go into details now,” interrupted Carey. “Time’s precious, so you’d better strip. Oh, don’t worry! I won’t leave you here to starve. Later on this evening I’ll come back with bedding and blankets, and plenty of food. I’ll even bring some magazines for you. You’ll have every comfort. Now obey my orders, and strip.”

“I’m hanged if I will!” shouted Clavering defiantly.

He made a rush for the door, hoping to take Carey by surprise, and escape. But Eustace had been expecting something of the sort, and he was ready.

Slam!

His fist came out, and caught the other in the stomach—another cowardly blow. Clavering doubled up with a gasp, and fell. And Eustace Carey stood over him panting heavily.

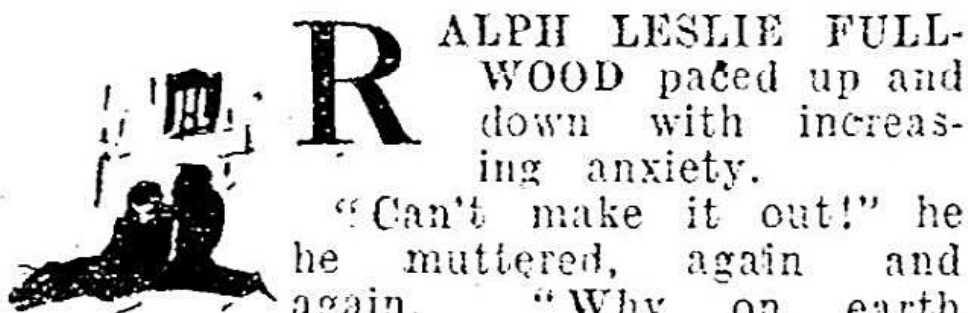
“Are you going to strip or not?” he snarled. “You’ll either do as I tell you, or I’ll batter you into pulp, and then strip you myself! It’s up to you, you young fool!”

But Stanley Clavering was something like a hothouse plant. He was incapable of standing rough treatment. Cared for since childhood by a fond mother, and pampered by a high-salaried tutor, he had known

nothing of life's hard knocks—such as come the way of any average public schoolboy. He was down and out.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE TRANSFORMATION.



RALPH LESLIE FULLWOOD paced up and down with increasing anxiety. "Can't make it out!" he he muttered, again and again. "Why on earth doesn't he come? What's the fool done now? I told him clearly enough when to come back, an' there's no sign of him!"

It was almost dark, and the gathering wind was hooting and moaning round the gloomy pile of Moat Hollow. From Bellton Wood came a subdued roar as the gale swept through the massed trees.

And Fullwood was pacing up and down near the moat—just against the drawbridge. Handforth & Co. had forsaken the place long since, and Fullwood had come back according to his promise. He had brought all sorts of food, and had placed it indoors.

Carey hadn't returned, however. He should have been here nearly an hour ago, but there was still no sound of him. He had vanished on the approach of danger, and his cousin hadn't seen him since.

"Yes, I might as well go," muttered Fullwood. "When I come back later on, after lights out, I bet I shall find him here."

But still he didn't depart. He went into the house again, thinking perhaps that Carey had entered by some other means. But Moat Hollow was empty. Fullwood sat down and brooded. He was getting tired of all this hole-and-corner business. But he couldn't think of any means to rid himself of his unwelcome cousin.

In the meantime, Eustace Carey was concluding his preparations to plant himself upon Fullwood more firmly than ever!

In that dungeon of Bellton Priory a transformation had taken place.

Eustace Carey, twenty-one, Oxford undergraduate, had disappeared. A new being had appeared in his place. Stanley Clavering the Second stood in the dungeon, securing the last button or two of his clothing.

He was a smart, well-dressed young fellow of between seventeen and eighteen—fair-haired, boyish, and wearing a plain college cap. That cap made all the difference. It stamped him at once as a schoolboy.

Without a trace of actual make-up, Carey had transformed himself. The clothes fitted him to perfection, for he was just about Clavering's size, and the alteration was not only subtle, but startling. The smartest detective, armed with a description of Eustace Carey, would have passed

this senior schoolboy without a second glance.

And on the other side of the dungeon stood the prisoner. He had donned his captor's clothing, and had sunk into a kind of dull hopelessness. Clavering had shown no cowardice—he had taken the only course. Resistance would have been dangerous, for Carey had clearly proved that he was in an evil mood. And in his desperation, he was ready to fight by fair means and foul. Clavering had instinctively realised this fact, and he had been wise in obeying orders.

"Well, we're all fixed up now—thanks to you," said Carey at length. "I shall have to leave you, Clavering, and I'm afraid the candle won't last long. But don't worry—I'll be back in a few hours with heaps of supplies."

The prisoner made no reply.

"Dumb?" asked Eustace, with a sneer.

"All right—I don't mind a bit. I daresay you're feeling a bit pipped. Sorry I had to take such drastic measures, but there was nothing else for it."

He gripped Clavering's bag, and turned to the door. But he kept a wary eye open, in case of a last minute attack. None came, however, and he reached the darkness of the passage. With a slam, he closed the dungeon door, and held it.

Then, striking a match, he shot both the great bolts home into their sockets. From within, no human power could force that great door. It would have required a charge of dynamite to break it down.

Groping his way along the passage, Carey reached the steps, and stumbled up. The rain was holding off a bit, although a few drops were in the wind. And the whole air was filled with the rising voice of the elements.

For a moment the new Stanley Clavering paused. There was no danger. The prisoner could shout until he was hoarse, but he could never be heard. Even here, right in the ruins, the voice wouldn't penetrate through that heavy door. And who would visit Bellton Priory now, with autumn already present?

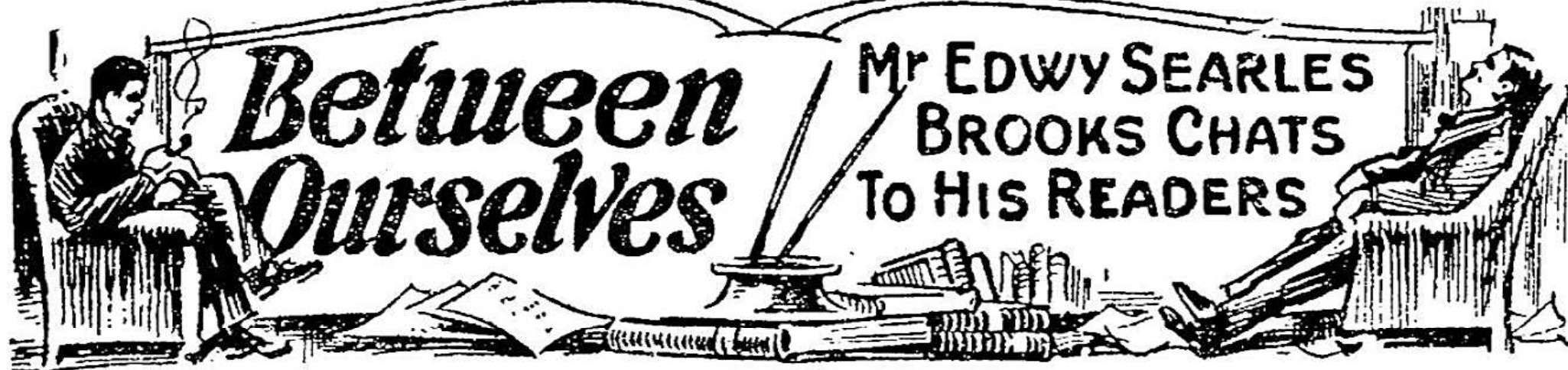
"He's safe enough!" decided the schemer. "And so am I, by gad!"

And thus, while Ralph Leslie Fullwood waited in vain at Moat Hollow for Eustace Carey, a new fellow for the Sixth was making his way through the gathering storm towards St. Frank's.

Eustace Carey had vanished, and Stanley Clavering was on the point of making his bold entry into the East House.

Another episode was over, but the trials of Ralph Leslie Fullwood, it seemed, were just beginning! The former cad of Study A, changed already, was only at the foot of the uphill climb which lay before him.

THE END.



Mr EDWY SEARLES BROOKS CHATS TO HIS READERS

NOTE.—If any reader writes to me, I shall be pleased to comment upon such remarks as are likely to interest the majority. If you have any suggestions, send them along. If you have any grumbles, make them to me. All letters should be addressed to EDWY SEARLES BROOKS, c/o the Editor, THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Every letter acknowledged below has been personally read by me, and I thank each writer most heartily. But, although ALL letters afford me an equal amount of pleasure, I am reluctantly compelled to confine my individual replies to those of general interest.—E.S.B.

When I showed the Editor some of your recent letters his poor old brow went into furrows, and he nearly wept. Don't you believe it? Well, perhaps I have exaggerated slightly, but you can take it from me that your long-suffering Editor isn't one of those hard, stern merchants who rule their offices like a feudal baron of old. No, your Editor possesses a heart, and he worries like the dickens when things aren't running on oiled wheels. At the slightest sound of a creak in the machinery he goes all funny. And those letters I showed him were exactly like a bunch of his own, and they absolutely knocked him sideways.

It's all your fault, of course.

Oh, is it? Yes, it is! Look here—All right—all right! We won't argue. If you fellows are going to get nasty about it I'll soon settle your little hash. I'll just show you HOW it's your fault. Those letters I showed the Editor were grumbles—grumbles, mark you, because the Magazine hadn't made its reappearance. Lots of you have been writing to me about it, and lots of you have been writing to him, too. So we've put our heads together—utterly regardless of splinters—and these masterly lines are the result. You may know it, but I'm ticking you off.

What are we going to do? That's what I want to know. What ARE we going to do. When the Mag. was in full blast, and Messrs. E. Sopp, Clarence Fellowe, E. O. H. & Co., Ltd., were contributing their weekly—or, rather, weakly—doses of drivel, you arose in your might and put the half-

nelson on their efforts. What you wanted was no magazine and a much longer St. Frank's yarn. And you got it! Does the Editor ever deny your slightest wish? Do I ever refuse to do your bidding? Didn't I increase the length of my yarns as you desired? Of course I did. And now you're grumbling because the Mag. is left out. Dash it all, you can't have butter on both sides. Some of you, I believe, would like longer stories AND the Mag., and the price of Our Paper raised to threepence; but I'm afraid that's impossible. The Editor has got to consider the tens of thousands of readers who can only afford the homely "tuppence." So I'm afraid the Mag. has gone for good—unless the Editor puts it in instead of the serial. How would you like that? A League Magazine, eh? Exchange and Mart—League Topics—Local Club News Correspondence Exchange—Back Number Column. All that sort of stuff, I mean. How about it? Let's have some opinions.

Wait a minute, though. You quite understand, don't you, that no sort of League Mag. can make its appearance until the League membership reaches ten thousand? At least, I think that's the figure the Editor has decided upon. But I'd better drop this subject, or I'll be treading on the Editor's corns. Not that he's actually got any, but you know what I mean. So, in order to change the subject, I'll fix up the next few lines in acknowledging some letters.

William L. Hope (Falkirk), G. Kyrwin (Streatham), Kenneth Smith (Crawley), Another New Reader (Melbourne, Australia), O. Tucker (Deal), A Woman Reader (Geraldton, West Australia), Grace D. Warren (Bristol), John A. Adams (Sydney, Australia), Charles Browne (Edmonton), N. J. Counihan (Melbourne, Australia), Doris L. T. (S.E.1), J. Ashdown (Perth, West Australia), J. Wilson (Wandsworth), A. H. Pick (Freemantle, West Australia), A. Redgate (Nottingham), Colin E. Green (Perth, West Australia), E. A. Mittleholzer (Berbice, British Guiana), Reg Rose (Melbourne, Australia).

"Another New Reader," of Melbourne, has written me a very nice letter, saying that she and her two sisters all read Our Paper every week. She's promised to get some more new readers, too. But by this

time she probably knows that she's only got to join the League, and she will be rewarded by medals and things.

* * *

I quite see your point, Grace D. Warren. When the Portrait Gallery appears again you want it so that it can be torn out without mutilating the yarn. Lots of other readers are just as keen as you are on this matter, and I'm sure the Editor will do everything he can to please you.

* * *

It shall be done, John A. Adams. In fact, it's being done now. You may have noticed that I am occasionally bringing some of the older characters into the lime-light again. I'll keep up the good work, and introduce two or three of them every week. But, mind you, I'll only do so when they are necessary to the unfolding of the yarn. If I started dragging the characters in just for the sake of bringing them to the front, you'd soon get fed up.

* * *

You don't deserve an answer at all, Doris L. T. In your own words, this feature of mine is a beastly fraud, is it? And in order to prove it's a fraud, you've written to me, expecting to get your answer in the very next issue of Our Paper. Or, to be more exact, you didn't expect an answer at all. Well, you certainly didn't get one, because your letter was posted more than a month ago. Perhaps you won't see this at all, but it doesn't matter. Regular readers will, and I'd just like to point out that a reply to any letter is impossible in the current issue. You've got to wait four or five weeks, at least. Anybody might think we were a newspaper, and blossomed out daily, by the way some of you expect your replies!

* * *

You're a cute chap, A. Redgate. You guessed quite right about Fullwood and the fellow he chums up with. Of course, I'm writing the next series now, and there must have been some sort of mind reading going on between the two of us. About the Bronze Medal. I'm not sure whether the Editor wears one, but I do. But as I'm not likely to visit Nottingham, I'm afraid you won't buttonhole me in the street.

* * *

Thanks for those newspaper cuttings you sent me, Colin E. Green. Of course, we heard all about the doings of our footballers in Australia months ago, in our own newspapers. Some people regard our Soccer victories as a sort of revenge for the way you Australians whacked our cricketers during the Test Matches. But that's hardly fair, is it? Cricket is a hale and hearty grown-up in both countries, and the English Test Team stood as much chance as the Australian. But the Soccer Team we sent "down under" was composed of picked footballers,

and the teams they met were in quite a different class. I believe that Soccer is quite an infant in Australia, and it seems to me that the meetings were more or less one-sided. Let's hope you beat our men when they visit you next time—it's better for the game to have a loss now and then. By the same token, I hope you Australians are whacked at cricket when you come over next year for the Test Matches! It's about time we had a look in.

* * *

You surprise me, Reg Rose. In fact, you not only surprise me, but you pain me deeply. I knew the Americans had a few warped ideas concerning our London weather. But it's a bit thick when you tell me that the Australians hold the same views. So Melbourne thinks that London is always foggy, eh? Listen to me, all you Australians! You're wrong—the English weather is as good as any in the world—and then some! You can't spoof me that there's nothing else but sunshine in Australia. You can't kid me you never have days of dullness and rain. London weather may vary somewhat, but that's where the charm comes in. We haven't had a fog in London for over five months—not even a thick mist! I'll guarantee that even Los Angeles can't say as much. They often have early morning mists there. They certainly have the sunshine—weeks and months of it. But give me London weather every time. It may rain just when you've got a picnic planned, but there's something attractive in the very uncertainty of the weather.

* * *

How on earth can anybody believe that London is always foggy when we've got the world's largest air port at Croydon—which is practically a suburb? Fog is the one element which absolutely prohibits flying. And yet our great passenger-carrying machines leave London daily, month in and month out, for Paris, Brussels, Amsterdam, and many other Continental cities. Not one machine daily, mark you, but dozens of them. And these services hold the world's record for safety and reliability. In the whole course of a year, I don't think they have been held up more than once or twice on account of fog. So it is beastly unfair to London for people to believe these false things. The fact is, London is too modest. It never boosts itself up. The Americans, for example, get the biggest surprise of their lives when they visit the world's largest city for the first time. Perhaps it's just as well. London is quite content. After all, it's better to say nothing and let visitors have a pleasant surprise, than to boost the town out of all proportion, so that the newcomer gets a shock—of the wrong sort. I had many shocks of that sort when I was in America!

E.S.B.

SECOND INSTALMENT OF A GRAND NEW SERIAL APPEARS BELOW!



THE CITY OF MASKS;

*or, The Case of the
Boy King!*

**A Gripping New Tale of Detective
Adventure, introducing SEXTON
BLAKE and TINKER.**

FOR NEW READERS.

Tinker visits his former school chums at Calcroft, and on his return is attacked and captured by three men in a motor-car. Evidently, he is mistaken for somebody else, for soon after, his captors set him free. Next morning, Tinker receives a visitor, who is announced as the king of some foreign power, and late of Calcroft, which school he has only that morning left for some urgent reason.

(Now begin reading this rattling new yarn.)

GOT fired out?"

"Don't be humorous, child?" said the visitor. "I was the model boy of the school, and all the masters loved me—I don't think. This is a business call. Having heard a good deal about you, you seem to be the very chap I want. I'm not particular about the personal appearance of the fellows I take into my service, as you'll gather by taking a dekho at Blimp. But I'm quite serious, honest injun, and no swank, as they say at Calcroft. Tinker, I've come to offer you a job."

Tinker still suspected a jape. He thought that those lively juniors, Jane, Pye, Manners, and Bindley, learning that the sandy-haired youth was coming to London, had plotted something in the leg-pulling line, and that the boy had been sent to carry out the plot.

"It will have to be a decent job to tempt me, old top, for the job I've got is quite a nice one," he said. "What's the screw?"

"Oh, I think fifty pounds a week," answered the boy from Calcroft. "That would be clear boodle, for I'll pay your keep and travelling expenses, and all that, and chuck in a motor-car and horses to ride.

A month's screw in advance, if you'd like it."

"Sounds quite enticing," said Tinker; "but I'm a wily bird. Where's the catch, old bean?"

"There is a catch—the risk of getting shot. It's more than a risk, it's pretty well a certainty, but I'd give you a jolly good old time before we get biffed. Popping off people they don't like is quite a hobby with them. They popped off my pater, but as I was an infant in arms at the time, it didn't worry me much. I believe it was a bomb that did it for my grandfather—something quick and nasty and noisy like that. Now my uncle's gone through it, but whether they poisoned his lobster-salad or used an automatic pistol, I'm not sure. Like the job?"

"I'd just love it, and rush for it," answered Tinker drily. "The sergeant's introduction was a bit too vague; so who are you?"

"I'm King Peter the Fifth of Carlovioa."

"Great snakes!" exclaimed Tinker, staring. "Well, you don't look it."

Barely an hour before, when looking at the newspapers, he had seen a brief announcement of Prince Paul Lyanoff, who was governing Carlovioa as regent during the young king's absence in England, where he was being educated.

"Perhaps I don't look it, but it's a painful fact," said the visitor. "There's an escort of my faithful subjects coming over to take me home in regal state, but I'm dodging that crush. Of course, it's a bit beastly to get shot, but I want a pal, and I can promise you a rousing old time before they pip you. And, of course, Tinker, I could double your screw. Supposing I made you Master of the Royal Buckhounds or

Keeper of the King's Ferrets. There ain't any Royal Buckhounds or Royal Ferrets that I am aware of. But that's no reason why I shouldn't create the post and let you draw the salary."

"But how long do you expect the merry old game to last before they heave a bomb at you or start the shooting, King Peter?"

"Not till the novelty wears off. Let's explain a bit, old top, for, by the look of your dial, I believe you think I'm leg-pulling. Nothing of the sort. I'm Peter Lyanoff, King of Carlovina, right enough. My proper name is Peter Somerville Bruce-Lyon, so I'm as British as you are on the male side of the family. My great-great-grandfather took on the king job donkey's years ago."

"It's not the sort of kingdom to write home about much, for it's not much bigger than Yorkshire, and as full of mountains as a new-laid egg is full of meat. We've still got real brigands and jolly old-fashioned things like that, and some of the merchants want a republic and some want a monarchy, and instead of arguing about politics in a sensible way like they do over here, and slinging a few dead cats or rotten tomatoes when they get a bit excited, the beggars shoot. Now I hear there are a lot of Bolshevik johnnies in Kamfak, which is the capital; so things are even livelier than usual."

"Go easy, your Majesty," said Tinker, who was getting interested. "Let's have a bottle of ginger-beer. What about a biscuit or some cake?"

"Uncork the festive ginger-beer, but as I had a jolly good breakfast before I left, cut out the cake and biscuits. You can also cut out the Majesty business, for I shall get fed up with that later on."

Tinker poured out the ginger-beer, and, sitting on the edge of the table, he nodded to his Royal visitor to proceed.

"Perhaps you wonder why I'm going back?" asked the king.

"Everybody to his taste," said Tinker. "If you like getting shot, why not? Personally, getting shot is something I don't care about."

"Here's good health, anyhow," went on his Majesty of Carlovina. "Decent pop this, better than the frothy, luke-warm water they call ginger-beer at our tuck-shop. If I don't go back they'll stop my cash, and as they've been allowing me bags of it, that would be beastly. Mine isn't a very rich country, but they haven't kept me short. Then there's my sister, Princess Celia, about a year older than I am. I don't think they'd shoot her, but if I don't come along, they'll imprison her in a fortress or something nasty. Old Blimp doesn't mind being shot a rap, do you Blimp?"

"I love it, king, not 'alf," replied the gruff-voiced ex-sergeant. "Lead me to 'em and I'll eat 'em."

"Kamfak, that capital of yours, must be a charming place," said Tinker. "In the

Balkans, isn't it? Is it marked on the map?"

"I never looked, but with a population of two hundred thousand odd it ought to be. There's nothing wrong with Kamfak, old bean. We've got a cathedral, opera-house, theatre, cinemas, electric light, and trams and taxis. The royal barracks is no barn, either, I give you my word. Will you come as my equerry and companion? The lingo they talk is a jaw-breaker; a sort of mixture of low-German and Russian, but all the better class talk English, and most of the lower class can patter a bit of it. You'd be jolly useful you know."

"As a target," said Tinker, with a grin. "Look here, Peter, I know you Calcroftians, and I've listened nearly as meekly as a lamb. Now just show me something to prove that this isn't an attempt at leg-pulling. Let's have your credentials, my lad."

"My hat! What a suspicious bounder you are, Tinker. How about that? That's a little appointment I'm supposed to keep."

He handed Tinker a type-written letter. Like the communication Sexton Blake had received, the letter was from the Foreign Office, and bore the signature of Sir Randolph Brayling. It asked in respectful terms if it would be convenient for Mr. Peter Somerville Bruce-Lyon to pay a call at three p.m., and stated further that if he would wire the time his train arrived at the terminus, he would find a motor-car awaiting him."

"No mention of the king business here," said Tinker.

"Of course not. At Calcroft I'm just Bruce-Lyon, of Collier's House, better known as 'Slacker.' It's only in the class I'm that, for I just hate fagging and grinding at lessons. As I'm in the first cricket eleven, and also in the first footer team, I'm no dud at games. And you can bet I haven't been swanking at Calcroft that I'm a king born in the royal purple."

"You were wise, Peter," said Tinker, with a chuckle, "for you've saved yourself many thick ears and much booting. Calcroft kids won't stand much swank of that sort. I'm beginning to think it's all correct. Do you really want me to go with you?"

"Absolutely."

"And get shot?"

With great skill King Peter balanced the brim of the straw hat on his nose.

"That certainly is a bit of a drawback," he said, "but, of course, they might miss you. Some of 'em are rotten bad shots, I believe, but I promise solemnly to hang the merchant who does pot at you—whether he hits or misses."

"Kind of you, but if the blighter hits, it won't give me much interest in the hanging stunt," said Tinker. "Got anything else on till three o'clock?"

"Nothing except to feed Blimp. It's an expensive business, for he's got an enormous appetite, but I like Blimp. It's surprising you should make such a fuss about getting

shot. I explained the risks to Blimp before I offered to take him into my service, and he jumped at it. He liked it better than running errands and picking up bits of orange-peel in the quadrangle, and when I promised him a first-class military funeral he was delighted."

Tinker grinned.

"Go easy a minute, Peter," he said. "I'm thinking a few. Would it benefit anybody to keep you from getting back to Carlovina?"

"Only those who have rotten taste enough to want a republic, I suppose. It might suit them."

job, I'd have to get permission from the boss. It would be quite nice to be your equerry, or whatever you call it, and Ruler of the Royal Ferrets, but I'm not quite my own master. It would be a lot nicer if you could cut out the shooting and bombing. Care to wait?"

"You bet," said his Majesty. "I'm not going to miss the chance of seeing Mr. Sexton Blake. We'll chuck out Blimp to graze for himself. Hi, Blimp!"

The sergeant's heels clicked together as he jumped to attention and saluted.

"Here's a pound note for you," said Peter



"Hello, Guv'nor," grinned Tinker, as he caught sight of Sexton Blake. "Permit me to acquaint you with his Majesty King Peter the Fifth of Carlovina."

"Did the headmaster send for you this morning?"

"No, but I went across to see him, and showed him the letter I got from the Foreign Office. Why should he want to send for me?"

"Oh, I just had an idea, that's all," said Tinker. "I can feed Blimp for you, and find you something in the grub-line as well if you'll wait. I'm chained down here till my guv'nor comes back. P'r'aps you'd like to meet my guv'nor, and I'm sure he'd like to meet you. You see, my dear Peter, if I wanted to take on this peaceful and safe

the Fifth. "Clear out and be here sharp at two."

Tinker was convinced that his adventure at Calcroft concerned his visitor, and that the three masked men had mistaken him for the young ruler of Carlovina. Evidently his letter to the headmaster had been delayed in the post, and Mr. Pycroft, as Sexton Blake had foretold, had completely forgotten his talk with Tinker on the telephone.

"Now, old bean," said Tinker, emerging from the kitchen, after an interview with Mrs. Bardell, the housekeeper, "I've ordered lunch for half-past one, and it's a bit of a

novelty to have a king with his legs under our dining table, so we'll have a few extra potatoes and a larger size in bloaters. Tell me a bit more about your country," he added, as Peter chuckled, "how it's governed and such. Seriously I mean, for I'm taking you seriously enough now. Tell me about Kamfak for a start, and save me looking it up in the encyclopedia."

"Over there they never call it Kamfak, Tinker," said his Majesty. "Nowadays everybody calls it the City of Masks, and I'll tell you why."

SECRET SERVICE.

"**D**ELIGHTED to see you, Mr. Sexton Blake, and I hope you're not too busy at the moment, for we're rather in need of you."

Sir Randolph Brayling, bald-headed, but very erect and soldierly, rose from his desk and shook hands with the private detective.

"It just depends what you need me for, Sir Randolph," said Blake. "I'm not anxious for a trip to China or Japan."

"Oh, dear, no; it's much nearer than China or Japan. I don't want you to go to the Far East. It's here. Mr. Blake."

A large map of Europe hung on the wall, and Sir Randolph placed his finger on it.

"Carlovia, eh?" said the private detective. "Rather unhealthy, isn't it?"

"I envy you your excellent eyesight if you can see what I am touching from that distance," said Sir Randolph Brayling. "Yes, it's Carlovia. Sit down, please, and try a cigar. Yes, it's that beastly little country which always reminds me of a barrel of gunpowder with the top knocked in, ready to explode at the first spark. You know, of course, that Lyanoff, who acted as regent, is dead?"

"I didn't know, and confess my ignorance."

"He died last week, and a natural death from heart-failure—and a natural death is unusual for a ruler over there."

"The king is a mere lad, if I remember rightly."

"Yes, a schoolboy of Calcroft."

Sexton Blake nodded as the memory of Tinker's queer adventure flashed through his mind.

"He will be here to-day," went on Sir Randolph, "but I can do nothing except give him a little friendly advice."

"Has the poor kid to go back to that nest of conspiracy and assassination?"

"That is the case, unfortunately," said Sir Randolph, snipping the end off a cigar. "Needless to state, we have nothing on earth to do with Carlovia, which is a free and independent kingdom, nominally, that is to say. Prince Paul, in a miraculous way, managed to keep out of the war, though he sympathised with the Allies. Now he is dead, it is difficult to think what will happen. The neighbouring states are quiet at

present—and all their rulers have been appointed by the Allies, but the rumours from Carlovia are quite alarming."

"Are they plotting for a republic, Sir Randolph?"

"Worse than that—far worse—rabid Bolshevism, Mr. Blake. Our aim—and France and Italy agree—is to preserve the monarchy. We do not object to throat-cutting in Carlovia, if they'd confine it to cutting each other's throats; but a republic there on Soviet lines would be too terrible to contemplate. It would spread like wildfire from state to state, and might cause another European war. The truth is, we can get no exact information, only alarming rumours. The royalist party is fairly numerous, but they lost a very strong man in Prince Paul, and, with a mere lad on the throne, it will be a difficult business. We are very worried about Carlovia, Mr. Blake. It is only a little place, but it is a loaded gun, and a single touch may send it off, and the very sound of the report may cause more than echoes in the neighbouring states—it may cause revolution."

"I quite see the danger," said Blake; "but what am I expected to do if I go over there?"

Sir Randolph Brayling took a few thoughtful pulls at his cigar.

"In leaving that to you chiefly, I know I'm leaving it in the best of hands," he said, after a pause. "We want to know exactly what is happening, and that will require skill, energy, pluck, and caution. Once we know, we may be able to act. I suggested you to the French ambassador yesterday, and he agreed that you were the very man. As for funds, your credit will be unlimited, and you will be perfectly free to go about the matter in your own way. It will be a dangerous business, I tell you quite plainly, but you are accustomed to perils. What do you say?"

"I feel greatly honoured, Sir Randolph," answered the private detective, smiling; "but I don't care to accept offhand without a little private consideration. Don't take it that I'm refusing, however. Will you be here about three?"

"Yes; for at three o'clock I have an appointment with his youthful Majesty, King Peter the Fifth."

"Then at three I'll let you have my answer. Good-day, Sir Randolph!"

"Good-day, Mr. Blake, and make your answer a favourable one, for that wretched little firebrand of a country is getting on our nerves."

Sexton Blake drove down to the City on some private business, and then back to Baker Street in a thoughtful mood. Strange things were happening in his usually quiet and sedate consulting-room. The table had been pushed aside, and Peter and Tinker were far too busy to notice Sexton Blake when he opened the door.

Their coats were off, and they were hammering at each other with boxing-gloves.

Suddenly Tinker got one home, and his Majesty staggered back and sat down on the carpet with a heavy bump, and there he remained, red in the face and gasping, and tenderly fondled his right ear.

"Hallo, guv'nor!" grinned Tinker, as he caught sight of Sexton Blake. "Permit me to acquaint you with his Majesty King Peter the Fifth of Carlovina."

His Majesty arose a trifle groggily about the knees, but with a bright and cheerful smile.

"Pleased to meet you, sir!" he said. "Did you see that one? I didn't, but I can still feel it. That was one out of the basket, Tinker."

"Lunch will be ready in ten minutes, if you please," announced Mrs. Bardell.

"And another little wash won't do us any harm, so help me off with my mittens, guv'nor," said Tinker. "Want any help, Peter?"

"No; I've unfastened the left one with my teeth," answered Peter. "and I'll soon get the other off. Where do I wash and brush up?"

"In my bed-room, right in front of you. It's King Peter, right enough," he added to Blake, as the king vanished. "He's got to see Brayling this afternoon at the Foreign Office. He's going back, and he wants me to go with him as equerry or something. Not a bad sort of kid, either. He's the guy they wanted to kidnap yesterday, I'm jolly certain. I don't think the headmaster got my letter, for he said nothing about it to King Peter."

"Curious!" said Sexton Blake. "What made him come here, young 'un?"

"Oh, he'd heard about us, and the boys had been talking about us, I suppose. He's a bit of a scream, and I'll tell you later, or perhaps he'll tell you at lunch. Fifty a week and all found till we get shot. And he's quite serious about it, too. Salary in advance if I'll take the job."

"Curious," repeated Sexton Blake. "It's to Carlovina Sir Randolph wants me to go."

Tinker gave an astonished whistle.

"Did he tell you you'd get shot, guv'nor?"

"He suggested that it would be a bit risky."

"Peter goes the whole hog, guv'nor. He says we're sure to get shot if we go; but the fun will be quite worth it."

"Will it? A short life and a merry one, eh? Go and smarten up, young 'un, for you look as ruffled as if you'd been crawling through barbed wire. I don't want to be unkind, but I'd like to give you a reminder that this is not a boxing-booth but a consulting-room."

"Sorry, guv'nor; but I don't think we've smashed anything," said Tinker. "If you go to this crazy shooting-match, I go too, eh?"

"We'll see about that," said Sexton Blake.

"Push that table back into its place first, for there's somebody at the door."

"I expect it's only Blimp, guv'nor,"

grinned Tinker. "Ex-sergeant Coggs, of the Fighting Barshires, now in the royal service of his Majesty King Peter the Fifth. I'll leave you to let him in. If you don't want him inside, leave him outside to guard the doormat."

(To be continued.)

NEXT WEEK!

Another fine long story of the Boys of St. Frank's, dealing with the reform of Fullwood, entitled:—

"THE PRISONER OF THE PRIORY!"

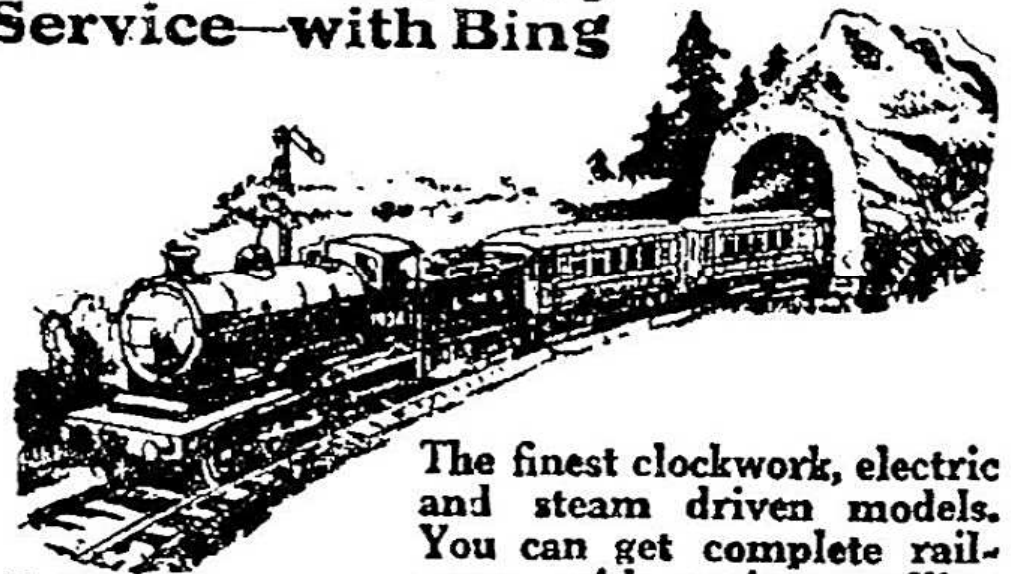
SPECIAL FULL-PAGE
MAP OF ST. FRANK'S.

COMING SHORTLY.

SERIES OF ARTICLES ON
STAMP COLLECTING

By F. J. MELVILLE
(The well-known philatelist.)

Your own Railway Service—with Bing



FREE.

Ask at any toy shop for free Bing Booklets. No. 1.—Steam, clockwork and electric trains. No. 2.—Stationery engines, magic lanterns and cinemas. No. 3.—Miniature table railway sets.

The finest clockwork, electric and steam driven models. You can get complete railways, with engines, rolling stock, tracks, stations, signals etc. Also the Bing Miniature Table Railway, rolling stock and separate parts. Also stationary steam engines, magic lanterns and cinemas. Ask for them at any toy shop and see how surprisingly low priced they are.



Look for this
Brand Mark
on all Metal
Toys.

BING

Model Toys

"Keep Boys Busy."

Bing Toys are distinctively boxed
in yellow boxes with black edges. ☉

THE ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE

(Please quote your membership number in all communications to the League, which should be addressed to the Chief Officer, The St. Frank's League, c/o THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY, The Fleetway House, London, E.C.4.

My Dear Leaguemates,—

Last week O. O., F. M. 141 raised a problem which must have occurred to many other O.O.'s and members. He wanted to know what would happen in the event of several O.O.'s being created in one district, and whether it would make any difference to an O.O. who had offered his services before the League had started. I said I would deal with the matter more fully this week.

If the St. Frank's League is to become a world-wide organisation, it must have leaders and organisers everywhere. But how were we to find our leaders and organisers? That was the main difficulty we had to face. After thinking out various schemes of selection and examination tests, I decided to let the problem solve itself in its own way. The conditions for appointment of O.O.'s would be simple and enough to satisfy me that my volunteers were in earnest. That would ensure everyone getting a chance. The ultimate test would be the ability of the O.O. to gain a number of followers who would come under the banner of his leadership. In the event of several O.O.'s occurring in one district, a meeting should be arranged between them to elect one of their number to be O.O. for that district. There is no reason why two or more clubs should not be formed in one district, but whenever possible, it is best to amalgamate and make one big club in a district. Loyalty to your club and the determination to make it better than any other should come before any other consideration.

As to the original band of O.O.'s who

offered their services before the League started, they will have a big advantage already over the newer O.O.'s in the length of time they have had in digging themselves in, as it were, and getting together a number of supporters. Beyond that and the distinction belonging to the pioneer band of O.O.'s, their future success, as with every other O.O., will depend on themselves.

I want it to be clearly understood that all appointments of O.O.'s are at present only provisional until the ten thousand members have been enrolled. Then, as soon as we can begin forming the various sports and social clubs, every O.O. will be required to present a list of at least twenty members to retain his position, and every new applicant for the post of O.O. must likewise have twenty supporters, besides being a bronze medallist, before he can be appointed. In localities where no other St. Frank's League clubs exist an exception to the above conditions may be allowed, according to the discretion of the Chief Officer.

There is one little matter to which I must draw your attention before I conclude this chat. Several old members, who really ought to know better, have dropped into the habit of omitting to give their membership numbers on their coupons when qualifying for the bronze medal. This imposes a great deal of extra work in looking up names, and I trust that in future every member will not forget to state his number on his coupons and on all communications to me.

Your sincere friend,

THE CHIEF OFFICER.

SOME ADVANTAGES OF JOINING THE LEAGUE.

- (1) Getting to know your fellow-readers from near at home to the most distant outposts of the Empire.
- (2) Joining local sports and social clubs affiliated to the League.
- (3) Entering for competitions run for the benefit of members.
- (4) Qualifying for various awards by promoting the growth of the League.
- (5) Opportunities for contributing short articles, stories, and sketches to the League Magazine.
- (6) Space for short notices and free adverts. for members in the above magazine.
- (7) Advice on choosing a trade or calling in life, on emigration to the colonies, dependencies, or abroad.
- (8) An employment bureau for members of the League.
- (9) Tours to interesting places in England and on the Continent, camping-out holidays, and sea-trips, specially arranged for members of the League.

AS SIMPLE AS A B C.

INSTRUCTIONS.—Reader Applying for Membership: Cut out TWO complete Application Forms from TWO copies of this week's issue of THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY. On one of the forms fill in Section A, crossing out Sections B and C by running the pen diagonally across both Sections. Then write clearly your full name and address at bottom of form. The second form is for your new reader, who fills in Section C, crosses out Sections A and B, and writes his name and address at bottom of form. Both forms are then pinned together and sent to the Chief Officer, The St. Frank's League, c/o THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY, Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C.4.

Member Applying for Bronze Medal: It will be necessary for you to obtain six new readers for this award. For each new reader TWO complete forms are needed, and these must be taken from copies of the latest issue of THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY at the time when the forms are sent in. On one of the forms fill in Section B, crossing out Sections A and C, and write your name and address at bottom of form. The other form is for your new reader, who fills in Section C, crosses out

Sections A and B, and writes his name and address at the bottom of the form. Now pin both forms together and send them to the Chief Officer, as above. One new reader will then be registered against your name, and when six new readers have been registered, you will be sent the St. Frank's League bronze medal. There is nothing to prevent you from sending in forms for two or more new readers at once, provided the forms are taken from the latest issue of THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY at the time when the forms are sent in.

Bronze medallists wishing to qualify for the silver or gold medal can apply in the same way as for the bronze medal, filling in Section B, which has been revised for this purpose. Every introduction they make will be credited to them, so that when the League reaches the required number of members, they can exchange their bronze medal for a silver or gold one, according to the number of introductions with which they are credited.

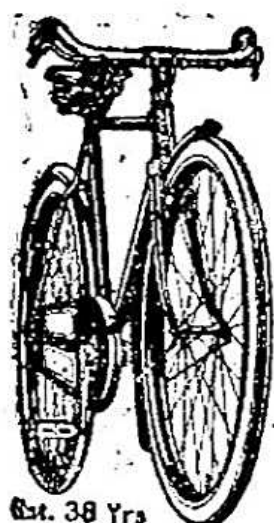
These Application Forms can be posted for 3d., provided the envelope is not sealed and no letter is enclosed.

IMPORTANT.—Complete and post off this form before the next issue of THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY is on sale. Otherwise the form becomes out of date and useless.

ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE APPLICATION FORM No. 14. Sept. 26, 1925

SECTION A	READER'S APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP. Being a regular reader of "THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY," I desire to become enrolled as a Member of THE ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE, and to qualify for all such benefits and privileges as are offered to Members of the League. I hereby declare myself to be a staunch supporter of "THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY" and THE ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE, and that I have introduced Our Paper to one new reader, whose signature to certify this appears on second form attached hereto. Will you, therefore, kindly forward me Certificate of Enrolment with Membership Number assigned to me.
SECTION B	MEMBER'S APPLICATION FOR MEDAL AWARDS. I, Member No.....(give Membership No.) hereby declare that I have introduced one more new reader, whose signature to certify this appears on second form attached hereto. This makes me.....(state number of introductions up to date) introductions to my credit.
SECTION C	NEW READER'S DECLARATION. I hereby declare that I have been introduced by (give name of introducer) to this issue of "THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY," which I will read with a view to becoming a regular reader of this paper.
(FULL NAME)..... (ADDRESS)..... 	

DON'T MISS THIS WEEK'S "BOYS' REALM"—2^D.



Est. 38 Yrs

15 DAYS' TRIAL

Sent Packed FREE & Carriage PAID.
£4 19s. 6d. Cash or 2/6 Weekly.
 Immediate delivery. Big Bargains in
 Second-hand Cycles. Accessories at
 popular prices. Write for a **Free**
List & Special Offer of Sample Cycle.
Mead CYCLE CO. Inc.
 Dept. B601
SPARKBROOK BIRMINGHAM.

£2,000 worth cheap Photo Material. Sam-
 ples catalogue free; 12 by 10 En-
 largement, any photo, 8d.—**Hackett's Works,**
 July Road, Liverpool.



HEIGHT COUNTS

in winning success. Let the Girvan
 System increase your height. Send
 P.C. for particulars and our £100
 guarantee to Enquiry Dept. A.M.P.,
 17, Stroud Green Rd., London, N.4.

SPLENDID CHANCES for BOYS

AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND,
 CANADA.—Free Farm Training.
 Generous financial assistance to-
 wards passage and outfit, repayable
 by easy instalments when in work
 overseas. (Ages 14 to 19.)—Apply
 The Salvation Army Emigration
 Dept., 3, Upper Thames St., London,
 E.C.4. 203, Hope St., Glasgow.

CAN YOU SKETCH?

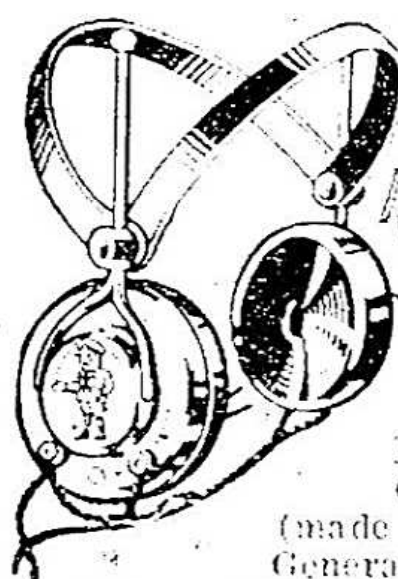
If so, why not learn how to draw
 cartoons, comic sketches, posters,
 etc., which sell at high fees? I
 can teach you in your own home.
 Send 3d. (postage) for my illus-
 trated prospectus which describes
 my methods. **FOR BEGINNERS**
 I have a special inexpensive
 course. Write me to-night!—
J. GERRARD, A.B.W.S.,
 The Northern School of Press Draw-
 ing, 15, Bradshaw, Bolton.



ENTERPRISING BOYS AND GIRLS

wanted to show our Splendid Sample Book of
 Private Christmas Cards and thus earn money in
 spare time. **YOU** can take advantage of this
 offer. No risk. No outlay. Apply at once.—
G. Denton & Co. (Dept. D.29), Accrington.
A firm with a reputation.

**BE SURE TO MENTION "THE NELSON LEE
 LIBRARY" WHEN COMMUNICATING
 WITH ADVERTISERS.**



The FAMOUS GENERAL RADIOPHONES

YOURS for



6^D
 DEPOSIT

Latest Standard Model
 General Radiophones
 (made by the well-known
 General Radio Company,
 Ltd), super-sensitive and highly
 efficient. Receivers matched in tone.
 Magnets of highly expensive Cobalt Steel.
 Diaphragms triple tested. Accurately designed
 sound chamber gives natural tone. Beautifully
 comfortable, highly finished, weight 7 ounces.
 Fully guaranteed. Sent on receipt of 6d. de-
 posit. If satisfied, you send 2/6 more on receipt,
 balance 3/- monthly until only 21/- is paid.
 Price full cash with order or within 7 days, £1.
SIMPSON'S (Brighton), Ltd., (1552), 94,
Queen's Road, Brighton.

60 DIFF. NEW ISSUES FREE!

100 Album headings. Send
 postcard only, requesting approvals.—**Lis-**
burn & Townsend, London Rd., Liverpool.

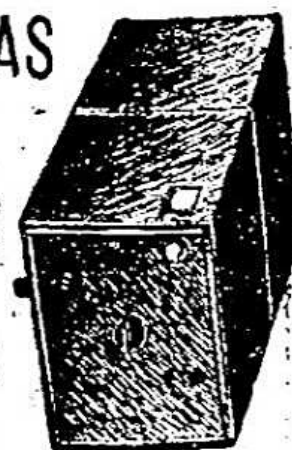


DON'T BE BULLIED.

Special offer. Two Illus. Sample Les-
 sons from my Complete Course on
JUJITSU for 4 penny stamps or a Large
 Illus. Portion of Course for P.O. 3/6.
 Jujitsu is the best & sim-
 plest science of self-defence
 and attack ever invented.
 Learn to take care of your-
 self under all circumstances. **SEND NOW: "YAWARA"**
(Dept. A.P.19), 10, Queensway, Hanworth, Middlesex.

"MONARCH" (REGD.) CAMERAS

British Made. Take Perfect Photos.
 (Size 2 1/2" x 1 3/4"). With Complete
 best quality Plate De- Outfit
 veloping and Printing Sale Price
OUTFIT. P.O. 1/6 - 1/3 Post
 will bring a "Mon- 3d.
 arch" to your door! **LARGE**
 size "MONARCH" 1/9, post
 3d. (with complete Outfit). Takes
 Beautiful Photos 3 1/2" x 2 1/4".
 Catalogue 1,000—Big Bargains
 post free!—**THE LEEDS BAR-**
GAIN Co. (U.J.), 31, Kendal Lane, Leeds.



Height Increased 5/- Complete In 30 Days. Course.

No Appliances. No Drugs. No Dieting.
 The Melvin Strong System **NEVER**
FAILS. Send stamp for particulars
 and testimonials.—**Melvin Strong, Ltd.**
(Dept. S), 10, Ludgate Hill, London, Eng.

