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"HIS COUSIN'S DISHONOUR"

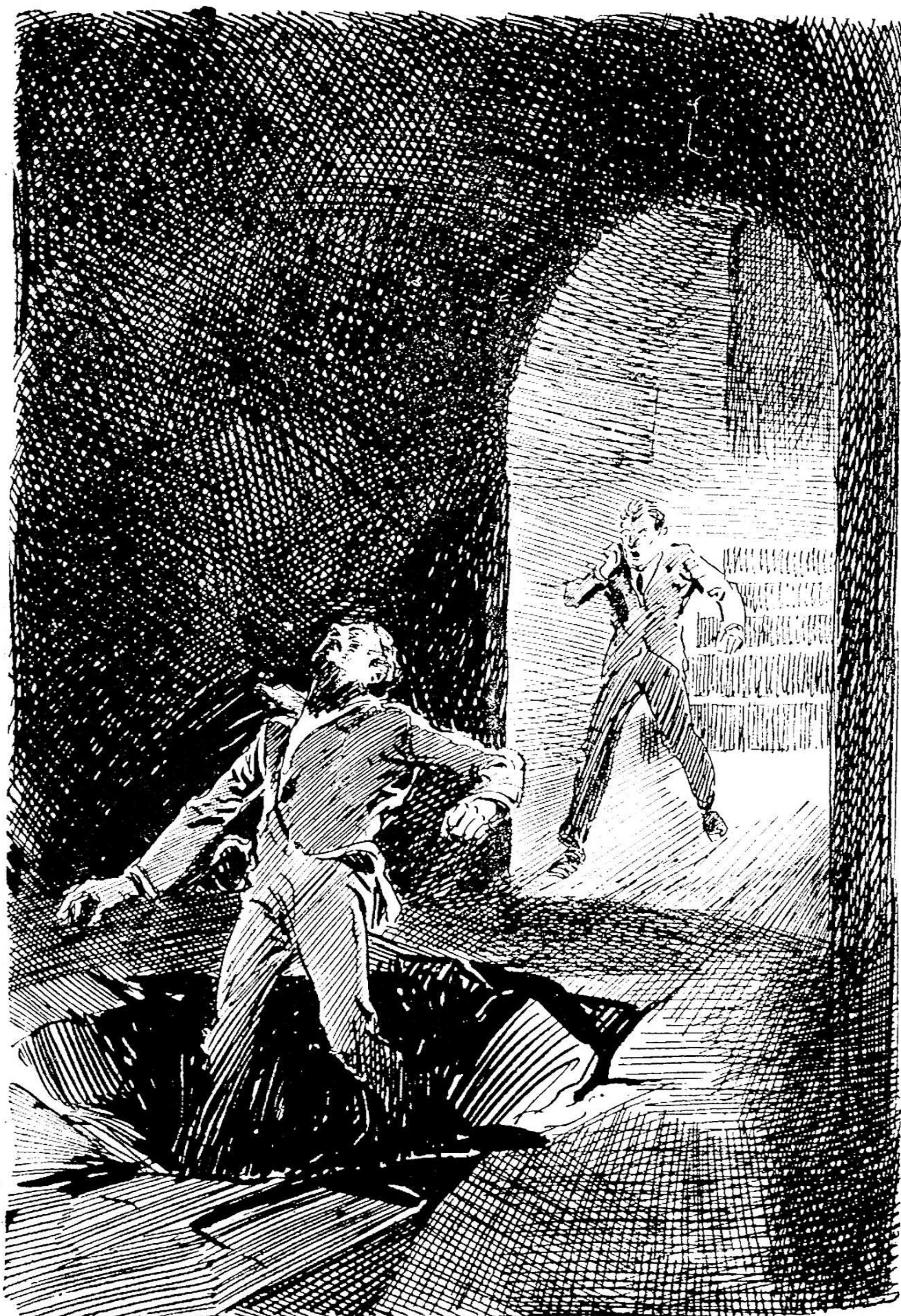
Fullwood lay in bed, sleeping peacefully. Willy climbed carefully over the window-sill, and dropped lightly into the room.

(From This Week's Grand Story of the Reform of the Cad of St. Frank's.)

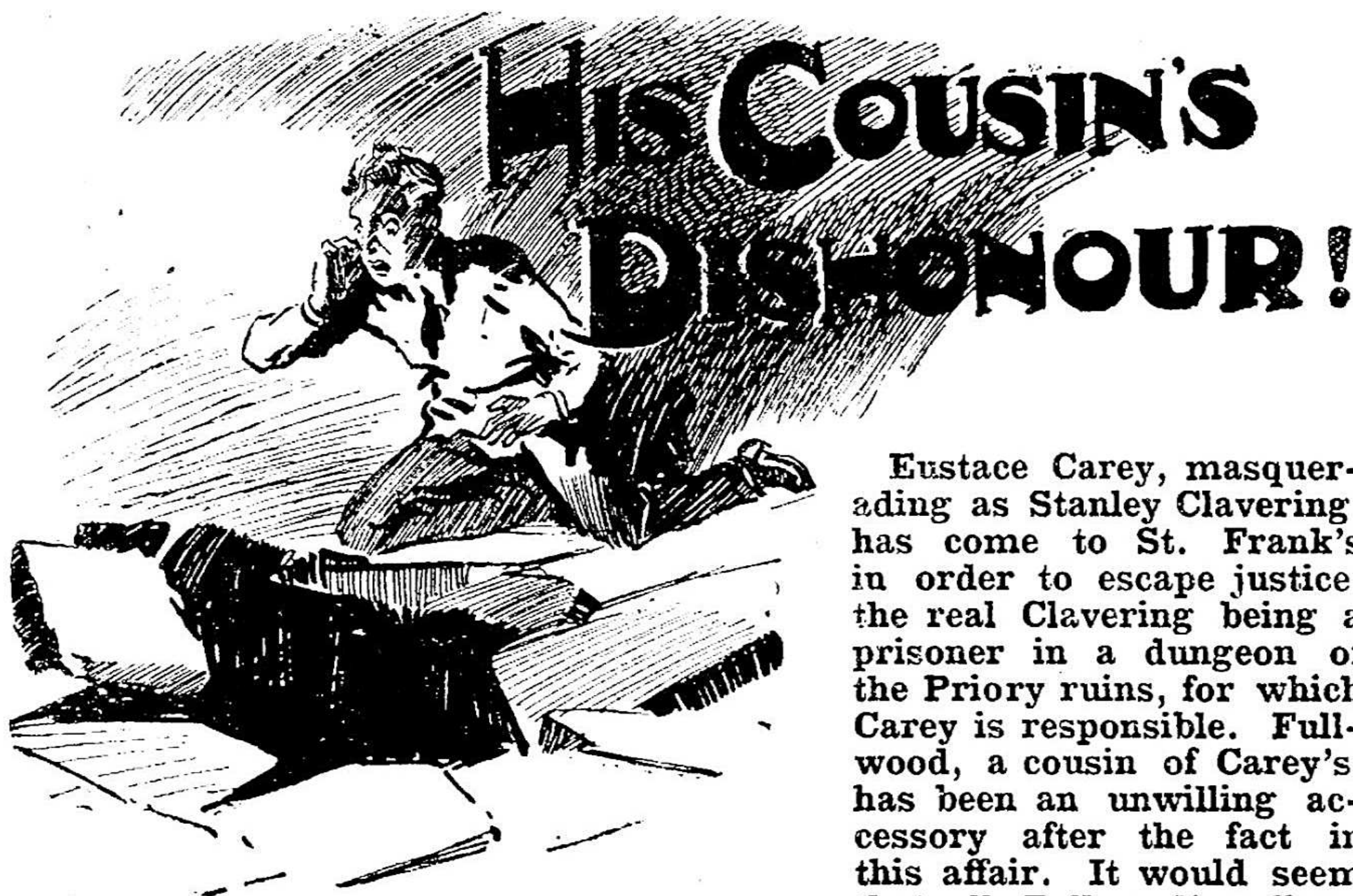
No. 541

OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

October 17, 1925.



Then came a sudden slithering sound, a noise of crumbling stones, and a sharp cry.



to reform himself will only end in his being dragged down with his infamous cousin. In this week's story, Carey's mean and contemptible scheme is at last discovered, but in what way Carey's exposure effects Fullwood's future at St. Frank's must be left for the story to tell.

THE EDITOR.

By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

CHAPTER I.

AN AWKWARD SITUATION.

RALPH LESLIE FULLWOOD tossed restlessly in bed.

The October sunlight was streaming in through the window, and outside he could hear, dim and far away, the voices of the juniors as they disported themselves on Little Side. St. Frank's was just starting the day, and the footballers of the Remove and Fourth were putting in some practice before lessons.

But there was no practice for Fullwood. He was in the school hospital, suffering from an acute chill. He was disgusted with his Housemaster, with the Head, and with Dr. Brett. Personally, he could see no reason why he should be confined to bed in this ridiculous way.

Except for a little soreness in his chest

and throat, he was feeling as fit as a fiddle. Of course, his muscles ached, and it was a bit of a strain to turn over in bed. His head throbbed atrociously, too, but all these symptoms were mere trifles.

"It's all rot!" he growled, for the hundredth time. "I've a dashed good mind to get up, an' risk the consequences! I'm not goin' to be kept here because of a bally cold!"

There was something on Fullwood's mind—something beyond the dramatic events of the previous day. He had played a great game for the St. Frank's Junior Eleven against the River House School. He had scored two goals, and had saved the match during the last minute of play.

But that effort had cost Fullwood dear, for he had been in a fever during the second half, and had collapsed. Carried to the sanny, the doctor had arrived in the nick of

time. And it was only by pure luck that Fullwood escaped pneumonia. He was in no danger, but Dr. Brett had firmly declared that he mustn't be allowed out for two days, at least.

So Fullwood remained in bed.

At the moment, he was quite alone—he wasn't a patient who needed watching constantly. And he had a little ward to himself, and was exceedingly glad of the privacy. He was anxious to be alone.

The school sanatorium was situated in a wing of the Head's private residence, beyond the Inner Court. Patients were therefore isolated from the noise and bustle of the school. The sounds of healthy voices floated in from the playing fields, but there were no other disturbances.

Left to their own devices, the Removites would have crowded to Fullwood's bedside with presents—fruit, chocolates, and a hundred and one indigestible food articles which the doctor had strictly forbidden. Even the Fourth-Formers would have done the same thing. But no visitors were allowed without a special permit, and so Fullwood was undisturbed.

In a single evening he had attained popularity.

That winning goal of his had aroused enormous enthusiasm in the Lower School. The game had seemed lost. Even a draw had been regarded as hopeless. And then Fullwood had inspired all the other forwards with his own brilliancy, and the game had been snatched out of the fire.

That alone had been sufficient to popularise him. But when it was learned that he had been handicapped by a feverish temperature, the wonder of his performance was even more pronounced.

Previous to the match there had been an outcry against him, owing to a rumour that he had joined in a wild party in the East House the previous night. But after the match Mr. Goole, the Housemaster of the East House, had issued a report to the effect that Fullwood was exonerated from blame—that he had taken no part in the affair.

So this morning, naturally, the fellows were anxious to do all they could to make things right. Fullwood's wonderful play, combined with the knowledge of his innocence, had an enormous effect. His popularity was something which he had never before enjoyed.

For Ralph Leslie Fullwood had always been every kind of waster. This term he had thrown over his old associates, and by dint of stern determination and pluck, he had kept to the straight path. Such fellows as Gulliver and Bell grated upon him now—they filled him with nothing but loathing. Yet those two had been his closest friends!

The change had been gradual—up to a point. At the beginning of the term Full-

wood had scarcely realised that he was different. And after one or two struggles with himself he had openly convinced himself that the old life was no good. He was fairly revelling in his present mode of existence.

He didn't like to admit it, but he believed that one of the Moor View girls had greatly influenced him. She was Winnie Pitt, the dark-eyed sister of the celebrated Reggie. Ever since the summer holidays, Fullwood had thought a great deal about Winnie, and it was her returned friendship which had a great effect upon his moral character.

Yes, the former cad of Study A had had his battle. He was running straight, and he was proud to be running straight. He had gained a place in the junior school team, and was determined to keep it.

Except for one secret worry, everything in connection with his new life at St. Frank's was enjoyable. Indeed, Fullwood had never known that St. Frank's was such a splendid place. In the old days he had expressed a sneaking kind of contempt for sports, for the school, and for all authority. But now he was for the school every time, and even Mr. Crowell, his Form-master, was finding him a much better pupil in the classroom.

It was that secret worry which kept gnawing at his conscience.

He had been instrumental in harbouring a wanted criminal at St. Frank's. Eustace Carey, his cousin, was a thief and a rege. And Eustace Carey was now a member of the Sixth Form, boarding in the East House under the name of Stanley Clavering. No wonder Fullwood tossed about in bed!

For there were some awkward circumstances in connection with the unwanted Eustace. Indeed, matters seemed to be approaching a crisis. More than ever before, it was necessary for Fullwood to be up and about. And here he was, ordered by the doctor to keep in bed!

Indeed, by tracing the cause of his illness to its source it was clear that his cousin was responsible for it. It had happened on Tuesday. To-day was Thursday. Fullwood lay in bed, musing, going over the ground.

Willy Handforth, of the Third, had seen Carey prowling round the old ruins of Bellton Priory. Willy had seen this through a telescope, and had mentioned the matter to Nipper & Co. A perfectly simple train of events.

And Nipper & Co. had gone to the Priory after tea to have a look round. Fullwood's severe chill was a direct result of that little expedition. For the real Stanley Clavering was imprisoned in the Priory! In desperation, Fullwood had driven his bicycle into the river, causing Nipper & Co. to abandon their original project and dash to his rescue.

And now the problem was more complex than ever.

CHAPTER II.

A SHOCK FOR EUSTACE CAREY.



"I CAN'T stick here—I can't!" muttered Fullwood fiercely. "What about Clavering? I promised him I'd go last night! I gave him my word! An' the chap's waitin'! What the deuce will he think?"

Fullwood was really tortured. And it didn't make things any better when he realised that Carey was doubly responsible for his indisposition. On the Tuesday night Fullwood's chill had revealed itself, and he had requested his cousin to visit the prisoner in the Priory. But the callous Eustace, intent upon that wild party in the East House, had refused.

So, in spite of an east wind, Fullwood had gone. In a way he was glad. For he had told Clavering the full truth. And Clavering had turned out to be a genuine sportsman. He had seen that Fullwood was not responsible, and he had made a generous proposition.

Fullwood was to get his cousin away, and visit the Priory again when the coast was clear. Then Clavering would go to St. Frank's and tell his story—that he had promised to keep Carey's identity a secret. In that way, the school would never know, and Fullwood would be saved from any scandal.

But Carey had refused to leave! Fullwood gritted his teeth as he thought of all these things. Carey had laughed, and had told Fullwood to clear out. Then the football match had come, then oblivion, then an awakening in the sunny.

Now it was the next morning! And Fullwood had definitely promised to go back to Clavering the previous evening! What would Clavering think? What construction would he put upon Fullwood's non-appearance?

Fullwood had left the door of Clavering's prison unbolted and unlocked, and Clavering had promised to stay there. Of course, Carey hadn't gone during the night—he was too much of a funk. But Carey would go there to-day! Carey always went after morning lessons. What was going to happen?

It seemed to Fullwood that his only course was to get up, and make a dash to the Priory. He wanted to know something! The suspense was getting on his nerves, and retarding his recovery. He couldn't confide in anybody else—although he had certainly thought of Nipper as a possible helper. Nipper wouldn't give anything away if he was told—Nipper was true blue. Ralph Leslie Fullwood was beginning to appreciate Nipper's sterling qualities at last.

But he still hesitated. He wanted to keep this thing to himself. Above all, he wanted Carey to go. It was amazing that the young rascal should have had such a long run. He was an Oxford undergraduate—over twenty-

one—and yet he was passing at St. Frank's as a fellow of under eighteen. And nobody suspected.

"I don't know what the dickens to do!" muttered Fullwood helplessly. "It's too late for Nipper now, anyway. Morning school's begun. I shall have to stick it until lessons are over."

Then Dr. Brett arrived, and announced the patient to be much improved. But on no account was he to think of getting up before Saturday, the earliest. Indeed, there was a possibility that the other fellows would be denied the sick-room, as the Head was particularly anxious to isolate colds.

So Fullwood had no relief from his worry except sleep. He was able to drop off for an hour or two after the doctor had gone.

In the meantime, Eustace Carey was making plans of his own.

He had told Fullwood that he wouldn't go. But the little common sense he possessed urged him to leave while he was still safe. He had been spending a lot of time on Stanley Clavering's passport, and had faked it up to his entire satisfaction. He was convinced that he would be able to get out of the country without any trouble—still using Clavering's name.

After all, there was nothing to remain for. An inquiry was pending about that disgraceful party in celebration of Grayson's birthday. Carey didn't want to be mixed up in anything of the sort. It would be better for him to clear out almost at once.

If Fullwood had only known this, his relief would have been immense. But it was like Eustace's mean nature to keep his cousin in ignorance of his plans. Eustace was preparing to leave not later than Saturday. Perhaps he would slip away on the morrow.

To-day, of course, he would have to visit the Priory and take Clavering his daily supply of food. During the unfortunate senior's captivity, he had been visited daily by Carey, and nightly by Fullwood. But Fullwood had been in the sanatorium the previous night, so Carey's visit was essential. The prisoner's supplies would be running very low.

As soon as the Sixth was released, Eustace started off. He had a regular plan of action. He always bought the foodstuffs in the early morning, leaving a well-filled suit-case in a secret cache in Bellton Wood. By doing this, he avoided comment.

So now he was able to stroll out without attracting any attention. If he had been carrying a suit-case, or another package, some of the fellows would have expressed curiosity. It was impossible to be too careful.

Reaching the little hollow in the wood, Carey fished out the suit-case, and went his way along the woodland path. There was little danger of meeting anybody now. At this time of the year the footpaths were hardly ever used—particularly this one to the Priory.

Nevertheless, Eustace kept a sharp eye open. He was an undersized, insignificant type of man. Indeed, it was impossible to realise that he had actually reached man's estate. His weak chin, and his shifty eyes denoted his spineless character. But for Fullwood, the unhappy prisoner would have spent an appalling time, for Eustace was callous to the core.

He left the wood, and came out into the open. Before him lay an undulating series of small hills, wooded and picturesque in their brown autumn clothing. On one hand the River Stowe could be glimpsed flowing placidly between willow-lined meadows. And straight ahead the ivy-clad ruins of Beilton Priory peeped out from the brown trees. The scene was enchanting in the October sunlight. But Eustace Carey had no eye for scenic beauty.

"I'll be glad when this infernal drag's finished with!" he muttered savagely. "That fellow ought to think himself lucky! Not everybody would take all this trouble!"

Having imprisoned his victim, and having kept him for weeks in solitary confinement, Eustace was now patting himself upon the back for keeping him alive! It was characteristic of the young blackguard.

He made his way up to the ruins, and entered. He was even more cautious than ever—taking care to go round to the rear before passing through one of the crumbling arches. That telescope might be active again! Fullwood had told Eustace of the danger, and Eustace had just sufficient sense to appreciate it.

Some crumbling steps led downwards towards the vaults. Carey had never explored these—he was too cowardly. He had only penetrated as far as a row of dungeons. And it was in one of these latter that Stanley Clavering was incarcerated.

Eustace switched on his electric torch, and pulled out his keys. Then, arriving opposite the door, his face blanched, and his jaw dropped. Both bolts were shot back, and the door was ajar!

CHAPTER III.

A LITTLE JAUNT.



DICK HAMILTON glanced at his watch, and compared it with the school clock.

"Heaps of time if we put our best foot forward," he said briskly. "Are you fellows game?"

"Anythin' you say, Nipper, old boy," beamed Tregellis-West.

"Go ahead!" said Tommy Watson. "But dinner won't wait, you know—"

"It'll only take ten minutes to get there, and ten minutes to get back," interrupted

Nipper. "That leaves us over twenty minutes on the spot. And we can have a good look round in twenty minutes."

"Those Priory ruins are pretty big," said Watson dubiously. "We can't do much exploring in that time. What about the dungeons and vaults—"

"Dungeons and vaults?" said Edward Oswald Handforth, striding out of the Ancient House. "What's that? Here, I'm in this! If you chaps are off to the Priory ruins, I'm going, too!"

Nipper sighed.

"Why did you do it, Tommy?" he asked painfully. "Why did you speak in that loud voice with this human bloodhound in the offing? We've got to take him now, or else we shan't go at all! You know how he argues!"

"Sorry!" said Tommy Watson penitently. Handforth glared, and Church and McClure—who had followed him out—grinned with keen appreciation.

"If you don't want me, say so!" said Handforth fiercely.

"We don't want you!" chorussed Nipper & Co., in one voice.

Handforth started.

"My only hat!" he ejaculated. "So that's it? I'm not wanted! You've just called me a human bloodhound—and yet you scorn my talents! How do you expect to find any clues at the Priory if I'm not there?"

"It'll be a terrible struggle, old man, but we'll face it with brave hearts," replied Nipper. "But there's no time to waste. We've got to be off at once if we're going at all."

"Good!" said Edward Oswald. "Let's start!"

"But we said we didn't want you."

"That's why I'm coming!" declared Handforth calmly. "I know all about this business—everything from A to Z! My minor told me. Clavering prowling about the Priory ruins, meeting masked men, and making secrets signs—"

"Did Willy tell you that?" asked Nipper.

"The bit about Clavering is right, but I wouldn't guarantee the other," put in Church, grinning. "Handy's imagination is a bit vivid, you know. He's already reached smugglers' and coiners' dens. He's got a theory that Clavering belongs to a gang of counterfeiters—"

"You leave my theories alone!" roared Handforth. "What's the good of a detective confiding in his assistants if they give all his theories away? Let's get to the Priory, and make investigations on the spot!"

"Hear, hear!"

And the six Removites lost no further time. They didn't go out by the main gates, but crossed the upper end of the Triangle, skirted the senior wing of the School House,

and went through the double gates on to Big Side. From the other end of the playing field, it was a short cut to the Priory. Carey would have used this route, only it was rather too public for him.

Nipper and his chums were not expecting to discover anything dramatic. But Nipper was rather keen on going, if only to satisfy his own curiosity. He didn't like Eustace Carey, and was quite ready to believe that the senior was up to something shady.

Of course, all the juniors only knew Carey under his assumed name of Stanley Clavering. They knew nothing of the real Clavering—or they would not have been mystified about the Priory.

Handforth's eagerness was more or less manufactured. The redoubtable leader of Study D was always ready to make a mystery out of anything. From the slightest cause—from most unpromising material—he would not only evolve a mystery, but a complete gang of crooks into the bargain. Handforth had big ideas regarding his astuteness as a detective.

Nipper's motive was quite different. He had every reason to suspect the Priory of containing some secret. Nipper couldn't forget Fullwood's extraordinary behaviour on the Tuesday evening.

That first visit to the Priory had been a mere evening jaunt. The chums of Study C had never really expected to make any discoveries. But Fullwood had deliberately flung himself into the river in order to create a diversion.

Nipper was under no misapprehension regarding that incident. Sir Montie Tregellis-West and Tommy Watson were not so sure about it—they were of the opinion that Fullwood's plunge had been an accident. But Nipper shrewdly guessed that Fullwood was somehow connected with "Clavering," the new Sixth Former.

So it was just as well to take a look round the Priory.

Under the circumstances, they couldn't have chosen a more significant hour for their visit of inquiry!

CHAPTER IV.

FACE TO FACE.



EUSTACE CAREY was utterly startled.

He stared blankly at the door of the dungeon. It stood ajar! What of the prisoner? What of Stanley Clavering? For a

moment, Eustace's limited brain capacity was unable to cope with the situation.

His mind took in the facts, and then refused to function. He could only stand there, with the electric torch in one hand, gaping at the door. Then, dimly, he seemed

to remember Fullwood's warning. His cousin had told him that Clavering knew the truth—that the situation was entirely changed.

But Eustace hadn't believed it—he hadn't bothered himself on the subject. He had taken it for granted that he was safe, and that the prisoner was in good keeping. What had happened? Where was Clavering now?

Fullwood's rascally relative was dumbfounded. Perhaps Clavering was talking to the police at this very minute—perhaps the police were on their way to St. Frank's to arrest their prisoner! Panic seized the frightened Eustace, and he was on the point of running blindly away, with the one idea of putting as many miles between himself and St. Frank's as possible.

But he checked the impulse. He had to return to St. Frank's—he HAD to! That passport was there—Clavering's passport, which he had altered for his own purposes. Without that he was helpless.

He pulled open the door of the dungeon, and flashed his light within. As he had expected, the place was empty. There were all the signs of recent occupation—blankets, spirit stove, odds and ends of foodstuffs—but the real Stanley Clavering had vanished.

Carey didn't wait. With his heart thumping wildly, he turned away, and made for the stairway. Perhaps there would be time for him to get to St. Frank's—to seize the few things necessary, and bolt. He was preparing to do the very thing which Fullwood had advised him to do on the Tuesday evening. But until he had come face to face with realities, he hadn't absorbed the significance of the situation. It was an indication of his mental capacity.

"Oh, hallo! Brought my daily supplies?" asked a voice abruptly. "Sorry I was out. Just been for a breath of air, you know."

Carey caught his breath in with a gulp. He had reached the top of the broken stairs, and was among the ruins. Stanley Clavering emerged from an ivy-grown buttress, and faced him. For a moment, Carey was too thunderstruck to speak.

Clavering was looking calm, although there was a rather grim expression in his eyes. He was about Eustace's own size, but slightly slimmer, and his recent imprisonment had had a big effect upon his stamina. He hadn't been strong previously, and now he was palpably in poor condition.

"You look startled," he said briefly.

"You—you—Where did you come from?" panted Eustace. "Confound you! How did you get out? If you've been to the police—"

"Steady on!" interrupted Clavering, backing away. "Keep your temper! Haven't you done me enough harm already? I've got to thank your cousin for what's happened. He's a young sportsman! I've



been wondering how you and he can possibly belong to the same family!"

Carey stood there, breathing hard. He had made an instinctive movement towards Clavering, as though about to attack. But now he pulled himself up, a great relief within him. At all events, Stanley Clavering was still on the spot. But he had his liberty! What had he been doing with it?

"I've heard something about this!" snarled Eustace harshly. "But I never guessed you were free! If you come near St. Frank's——"

"Don't waste your breath by threatening what you'll do," interrupted Clavering contemptuously. "There's no reason why you shouldn't know the truth. I made an arrangement with young Fullwood, and I expected him here yesterday. He didn't turn up, and I was worrying——"

"Did you expect that young cad to keep his word?" sneered Eustace.

"I did."

"Then you'd better go on expecting!" said Eustace. "He's fooled you——"

"I don't believe it—actions speak louder than words," interrupted Stanley Clavering quietly. "He had such faith in me that he left my prison open, so that I could pass in and out as I pleased. Besides, he was always decent, even before he revealed himself to me."

Eustace waved his hand.

"All this is a waste of time," he said impatiently. "My cousin didn't keep his word because he never meant to. You'd better tell me where you've been to, and what you've been doing."

"I've been doing nothing," replied Clavering. "I told young Fullwood I'd give you a chance to get away from St. Frank's before I showed myself. I wanted to avoid any scandal—not for your sake, but for his. Why haven't you gone?"

"Because I don't choose to go—because I've no intention of going!" replied Eustace deliberately. "What's more, you're going back into that dungeon! And this time I'll make certain that you stay there! It's lucky you didn't do any damage while you were out."

For the first time Clavering looked alarmed.

"Wait a minute!" he said sharply. "You'd better not touch me——"

"Confound you!" roared Eustace. "I'm fed up with this talking!"

He leapt forward just as Clavering made a break for liberty. Under severe stress, Eustace was capable of a certain amount of thinking. Until a crisis arrived he didn't trouble to use his petty brain. There was a crisis now, and he was cunning enough to appreciate that his only chance of safety lay in putting Clavering back in that dungeon.

All this was Fullwood's fault! The young fool had released the prisoner, and Clavering hadn't had sense enough to take advantage of it. Eustace Carey couldn't appreciate decency in others.

He flung himself at Clavering with a ferocity which carried all before it. Clavering had no chance to get away. He tried to escape, but he was too late. He had never expected his enemy to attack in this fashion, or he would not have revealed himself. Truth to tell, Clavering was anxious to learn something about Ralph Leslie Fullwood. For the latter had faithfully promised to visit him the previous evening, and he had failed. Even now, Clavering believed that there was some good reason for Fullwood's non-appearance. And the prisoner of the Priory had faithfully kept his own compact.

Eustace's unexpected appearance had startled him at first—for he had assumed that Eustace was clear away by this time. Too late, Clavering realised that he should have kept in the background.

At the first onslaught he was taken at a disadvantage.

He knew that he was no match for Carey. He was a quiet, studious fellow, with no aptitude for fighting, and there had been nothing cowardly in his break for liberty. It was a true instance of discretion being the better part of valour.

But Carey was too quick for him. He hooked his foot round Clavering's ankle, and delivered a violent punch at the back of Clavering's head at the same time. It was a cowardly method of fighting.

Clavering went down in a heap, and Eustace fell upon him, delivering smashing blows, and kicking viciously.

Within two minutes the unfortunate Clavering was well-nigh beaten into senselessness. He was dazed and numbed. And at last Eustace got over his frenzy, and paused. He was half-scared by what he had done. But even now his ordeal was not over.

For on the air he distinctly heard the sound of youthful voices!

CHAPTER V.

THE MYSTERY OF THE PRIORY.



"HERE we are!" said Handforth briskly. "Now, leave everything to me. You chaps stand back and watch my methods! Just for once, I'll give you the benefit of my experience."

His five companions grinned with appreciation.

"Good old sleuth!" said Nipper. "But where do I come in? Can't I share the glory of unearthing this gang of coiners?"

Handforth waved his hand.

"You'd better let me do all the preliminary work," he said firmly. "We don't want the investigation messed up at the start—"

"In that case you'd better take a back seat, old man," suggested Church.

Edward Oswald turned red.

"Are you suggesting that I'm incapable— Hi! Look out!" he roared. "Mind where you're treading, Walter Church! You'll confuse all the footprints if you go marching about like that! Stand aside, you fathead!"

Church made a leap to the left.

"What footprints?" he gasped. "I didn't see any!"

"All the same, I'll bet there are plenty of footprints there!" said Handforth gruffly. "You can't see 'em, of course—it takes a trained eye to spot footprints on hard ground like this."

Nipper turned to the others.

"We've got fifteen minutes exactly," he said crisply. "Are we going to spend those fifteen minutes exploring, or are we going to stand here listening to this animated megaphone?"

"We'll spend them exploring!" said four voices, as one.

"And shall we chuck the aforesaid animated megaphone outside?"

"We shall!" agreed the four promptly.

Handforth backed away, startled and outraged.

"Hi! Hold on!" he gasped. "You babbling idiots—"

"We'll give you one chance!" said Nipper sternly. "Either you behave yourself, or you get the order of the boot! 'You've got three seconds to decide!'"

"Look here—"

"One!" counted Nipper impressively.

"I tell you—"

"Two!"

"All right!" hooted Handforth furiously. "It's five to one, so I've got to knuckle under! It's always the same. I'm never appreciated!" he added bitterly. "I'm willing to show you chaps just how to conduct an investigation, and all you can do is to squash me! I'm not a bit surprised!"

He relapsed into one of his sulky moods, and Nipper grinned. Handforth was now silenced for at least ten minutes. He wouldn't recover from that mood until it was time to go, so all was well.

Nipper took the lead, and approached the crumbling stairway which led down into the dungeons and vaults. He pulled out a powerful electric torch, and switched it on. All the others followed—with the exception of Handforth. Edward Oswald turned his back, and decided to punish his companions by depriving them of his majestic personality.

"Handy's all right, but he's got to be squashed now and again," chuckled Tommy Watson. "Why don't you fellows treat him



Clavering went down in a heap, and Eustace fell upon him, delivering smashing blows and kicking viciously.

like that?" he added, turning to Church and McClure.

"We've tried it!" said Church sadly.

"It's a bit too painful!" added McClure, shaking his head.

They reached the dank passage at the foot of the stairway, and plunged on into the darkness. Nipper wasn't expecting to make any startling discoveries, but he made one, all the same.

They looked into several of the dungeons, and found nothing to arouse their suspicions. Then they came to the door of Clavering's late prison. Nipper paused as he was about to enter. He sniffed the air sharply, and a keen look came into his eyes.

"Hallo!" he said quickly. "That's rummy!"

"Dear old boy, what's rummy?" asked Sir Montie.

"There's a smell of coffee—and paraffin oil— Hallo!" repeated Nipper, with a whistle. "Just look here! By jingo! We've hit upon a regular nest! Somebody's been living here!"

They crowded into the dungeon, looking about them in astonishment. Since their arrival at the Priory they had seen no living thing. They had no notion that any human beings were within a mile of them.

But here, at all events, were traces of recent occupation.

"You chaps lost yourselves?"

Handforth looked in at the door, and his voice was gruff. Then he strode into the dungeon, and his eyes widened. The aggrieved expression left his face, and it became animated with excitement.

"What's all this?" he went on tensely. "By George! What did I tell you? Smugglers! Coiners, anyhow! Look at the furnace over there! I'll bet that's where they've been making all their counterfeit stuff—"

"My dear ass, you're looking at an oil stove!" said Nipper patiently. "And the crucible for melting the base metal is only a frying-pan! Don't get so excited, you chump!"

"But somebody's been living here!" said Handforth.

"Marvellous!" remarked McClure. "You come here, and tell us things we've known for minutes past! But who's been living here, Handy? Tell us that, and we'll believe that you're a real detective."

Handforth strode round grimly.

"Blankets—candles—biscuits!" he muttered. "And what's this? Tea—condensed milk! Well, I'm jiggered! There's something jolly rummy about this!"

"You're right, but we can't do anything more at the moment," said Nipper practically. "We've only just got time to get back to the school. Let's leave everything as it is, and come back later on. And keep mum."

Handforth would dearly have loved to remain, but Nipper was firm. And the six explorers took their departure—for they had already spent more time than they could afford, and would have to run most of the way back.

But Nipper had seen something which the others had missed—and he was not only curious, but startled. These blankets belonged to St. Frank's! How had they got into that dungeon?

Clavering was undoubtedly responsible—and Nipper, of course, was thinking of Eustace Carey, the false Clavering. This investigation wasn't over yet, by any means!

CHAPTER VI.

THE DISASTER.



BUT what had become of Eustace and his victim?

They had been among the ruins while the six juniors were approaching. And yet the Removites had seen nothing of them. They had gone away, without the slightest suspicion that two other human beings were near by.

Desperation had seized Eustace upon hearing the voices, and he had taken swift action. Having previously been warned by Full-

wood, he instantly guessed that some of the St. Frank's fellow were about to explore the ruins.

And discovery at this point would mean utter disaster.

He couldn't explain Clavering's battered condition. The juniors would seize him, and Clavering would tell his own story. That, indeed, would be the end of all things for Eustace! At last, he was beginning to realise the perilous nature of his position. His folly was coming home to him.

For such a feeble-minded individual, he acted wisely.

Without hesitating a second, he grasped Clavering, dragged him to the stairs, and pulled him forcibly down. And he had only just been in the nick of time, for the juniors had entered the ruins a second later. That brief argument with Handforth had helped Carey enormously, for he had been provided with an opportunity to find concealment.

He found it unexpectedly.

Panic-stricken, he dragged Clavering to the very end of the dark passage. He had never explored this section of the ruins, but he had a vague idea that there were some vaults in that direction. He didn't even trouble to switch his torch on, for his only thought was to get away into some corner and keep Clavering quiet until the danger was over.

Then Eustace felt himself stumbling headlong down some unexpected steps. He tripped over his victim, and they both rolled to the bottom. Clavering was too dazed to know much, and Carey himself was badly battered. He had finished up by crashing his head against the wall, and he was almost knocked senseless.

It was fully five minutes before he aroused himself to any movement—and this only because Clavering had commenced struggling. Far away, and dim, sounded the muffled echo of human voices.

"Help!" shouted Clavering desperately.

He had meant that to be a loud cry, but his voice seemed to break, and the result was feeble. And before he could utter another sound, Eustace was upon him.

"Keep quiet, hang you!" snarled Carey.

The cry for help had revived him as nothing else could. The darkness here was pitch black, and Carey lashed out blindly. He caught the other on the shoulder, and the next moment found Clavering's face, and forced a hand over his mouth. He knelt upon him, quivering with rage.

"Quiet!" he panted. "By gad, I'll make you obey!"

Stanley Clavering was certainly in the wars! Against his more powerful opponent he could do nothing. And in this confined space, in total darkness, he was at a grave disadvantage. He could do nothing but relax his efforts, and stop struggling. It was the only way in which to relieve the pressure.

Feeling the other grow limp, Eustace

ceased his violent methods. But he still kept his hand over Clavering's mouth. From somewhere above the sounds continued—the voices of those schoolboy explorers.

Although the time was brief, it seemed an interminable wait before the voices grew fainter, and then died away. Carey didn't know how lucky he was. With more time at his disposal, Nipper would have explored every inch of these ruins, and discovery would have been inevitable for Eustace.

As it was, he still escaped detection. And at last he breathed freely. Those interfering juniors had gone. The coast was clear again! He could drag Clavering back into the dungeon— But could he? Obviously, those juniors had been exploring the dungeon! It would be necessary to take Clavering away from the ruins altogether.

Thinking thus, Eustace released his victim, and fumbled for his electric torch. He wanted to see what manner of spot this was. A sudden idea occurred to him. One of the vaults, perhaps—

At this moment Clavering acted. Unknown to Eustace, he had been gathering his strength. He had been pretending to be half-insensible. But now he made a desperate effort to master his persecutor.

Crash!

Something hit Carey on the side of the head, and he uttered a howl of agony. The unexpectedness of the blow startled him. And a second afterwards Clavering was wrenching himself away, and retreating. His one idea was to get away from Eustace—and he backed blindly into the darkness.

"You infernal——" began Eustace savagely.

Then came a sudden slithering sound, a noise of crumbling stones, and a sharp cry.

Following immediately upon the heels of these dramatic occurrences, there was a gurgle, and then complete silence.

Eustace Carey crouched there, frightened.

"Clavering!" he panted sharply. "Are you there?"

There was no sound in response.

"Hang you, why don't you answer?"

snarled Carey, shivering from head to foot.

"Can't you hear me? Why don't you answer, you fool?"

With quivering, shaking fingers, he found his electric torch, and pulled it out. He didn't know how he switched it on, and when the light appeared, it was jerky and unsteady.

But it revealed something which caused Carey to lose the last atom of his colour. He was at the foot of those treacherous steps, and before him yawned a black passage, with slimy walls, and an arched roof. The floor was broken and decayed with age. Not a yard from him was a gap—a wide, jagged chasm.

And Stanley Clavering had vanished!

CHAPTER VII.

PANIC.



JUST for a moment, Eustace nearly fainted. Clavering had vanished! What had happened was obvious. In the total darkness, the unfortunate senior had backed

away from his enemy, thinking only of escape. He had stepped into that yawning hole, had clutched vainly at the air, and fallen.

"Good heavens!" muttered Eustace. "He's gone—he's gone!"

In spite of his fear, he took a step nearer, and cast the light of his torch down into the abyss. He shuddered. It went down—down! And there was no remaining sign of Clavering except for a jagged piece of cloth on the rough edge of the stonework.

And then panic seized upon the unhappy wretch. He turned, and ran madly up the slimy steps—stumbling, slithering, and gasping for breath. He reached the passage, tore along it, and got out into the open air. If there had been a dozen policemen waiting to receive them, he would have gone just the same. His panic was stupendous.

Clavering was dead—had gone to his death down there in the darkness. In one way, Eustace's condition was pitiful. He ran round and round in circles, his eyes wild, his breath becoming shorter. If anybody had seen him at the moment, he would have been set down as a maniac.

At last, sheer exhaustion bade him call a halt. He sank down in the grass, and leaned against the ivy-covered wall. And he babbled incoherently

"I didn't do it—— Clavering, come back!" muttered Eustace huskily. "I didn't do it! It was an accident, I tell you! He—he fell through! I didn't touch him—— I tell you I didn't touch him! He hit me first, and fell back——"

His mumbling became inaudible, and he fell into a kind of stupor. The shock of this last tragedy had left him a mere wreck.

It seemed ages since that affair at Oxford. And he hadn't been responsible, even then. He and the other fellow had struggled madly—they had fought in a drunken brawl. And the other man had crashed backwards through the window, to fall headlong to the ground.

Hundreds of times, Eustace had told himself that he couldn't be blamed for that. He wasn't blamed, anyhow. At the inquest it had been proved that the victim had had a weak heart, and might have died from the effects of any slight shock. Eustace Carey was only wanted for theft. The police weren't looking for him now, in any case.

But what of this fresh affair?

Who would believe his account of the accident—after the Oxford business? Sup-

posing Clavering was found, and the whole story came out? In Eustace's stupor, he found himself thinking of these wild things. They were like dreams—nightmares.

Supposing Clavering was found?

The sordid tale of the impersonation would come out—Clavering's imprisonment in the ruins—Fullwood's bitter antagonism to the scheme. Eustace had enough wits left to realise that the case was as black as ink against him. It would be taken for granted that he had deliberately flung Clavering into that abyss with the object of putting him out of the way! Everything pointed to it. He had known that there was cause for alarm—he had gone to the Priory deliberately. There wouldn't be any escape—there wouldn't be any hope of establishing his innocence.

Carey was guilty of many things—brutality, theft, callous cruelty—but he wasn't a murderer. His first victim had succumbed as a result of a drunken brawl. And Clavering's end had been a pure accident, in which Eustace had taken no part whatever.

But who would believe it? Nobody—not a soul on earth!

At last, Eustace recovered some of his breath, and with it he staggered to his feet, and left the ruins. His brain was still numbed, but he knew that there was only one chance for him now. He would have to go. He would have to get out of this neighbourhood as quickly as he could.

He didn't remember walking back to St. Frank's. He got there in the middle of afternoon lessons—when he should have been in the Sixth Form class-room. He didn't remember such details as these.

Somehow, he got into his Study in the East House, and he unlocked the cupboard. From this he produced a whisky bottle, three-parts full. He didn't even trouble to get a glass, but gulped the neat spirit down greedily. Then he sank back into a chair.

The spirit had an effect within five minutes.

It gave him a false strength—a false confidence. Before long, he found himself calmer and he reviewed the situation without panic. He couldn't go yet, he decided. He would have to wait until the evening. There was a train to London in the evening—an express.

Eustace became cunning. If he left now, there would be inquiries, and they might get on his track quickly. By waiting until the evening, he would stand a much better chance. He wouldn't be missed until bedtime—he might even make some excuse that he was compelled to make a journey to some imaginary friend or other. Anything to put them off the scent. Yes, it would be far better to remain behind, and go off quietly and unobtrusively.

A tap sounded on his door, and he started violently.

With a jerk, he swept the whisky bottle off the table, and dropped it behind his chair. He was aware that he was dishevelled and dirty. For the first time, he saw that his clothing was stained and soiled.

"Who— Who's there?" he demanded huskily.

"Only me, Mr. Clavering," came the voice of Tubbs, the Ancient House page-boy. "The 'Ead told me to find you—"

"Go away, confound you!" snapped Carey.

"Beggin' your pardon, sir, but the 'Ead was most urgent," said Tubbs, putting his head into the doorway. "It's young master Fullwood, sir. 'E wants to speak to you, over in the sannitorian," explained Tubbs. "I've been in the School 'Ouse, an' everywhere. Mr. Langton's in a rare way—"

"Get out of here!" snarled Eustace harshly.

"My! 'Ave you 'ad an accident, sir?" asked the page-boy, staring.

"Get out of here!" roared Eustace.

Tubbs got out. He felt that it was far better to do so, for this remarkable Sixth Former had become violent. A heavy book crashed against the door, but Tubbs was safely on the other side of it.

CHAPTER VIII.

VISITING FULLWOOD.



EUSTACE breathed a sigh of relief as he heard the page-boy passing down the corridor. He was still furious. That infernal young idiot would talk now—would tell others about Carey's appearance. Carey cursed himself for not changing. His first act ought to have been a complete change.

He repaired the omission forthwith.

Going upstairs, he stripped, washed, and donned another suit—another of Clavering's suits. And he felt much better. The whisky was still having effect, and his clean condition added to his sense of comfort and safety.

"There's bound to be a row with Langton," muttered Eustace. "Who cares? I'll explain that I went for a walk, and met a bull, or something! Or I slipped down a gully in the wood— Anything! One yarn's as good as another! I've got to say something, anyhow!"

He didn't worry himself about the master of the Sixth. He was thinking about Fullwood now. And it occurred to him that he had better visit the sanatorium and silence his cousin. If he didn't, Fullwood would only keep pestering—and that might cause comment. Ever since Carey's arrival, he and Fullwood had kept away from one another. They had met in secret mostly.

To the school, they were comparative strangers. Considering that one was a junior, and the other a senior, and that they boarded in different Houses, there was nothing to be wondered at in this.

"Hang the young idiot—I'd better go!" decided Eustace. "Of course, he's worrying about Clavering. He promised to meet him last night——"

He broke off, shivering again. The sudden recollection of Clavering shook him up. But it was no good being weak. His only chance of complete escape was to pretend for a few more hours, and then silently vanish. After all, he had achieved his object. The passport was in his possession, and within twenty-four hours he would be out of the country.

He passed out of the East House, and found the Triangle deserted. Tubbs came out of the West Arch and paused, staring. Then he approached, with a cheerful grin on his ruddy countenance.

"Feelin' better now, Mr. Clavering?" he asked warily.

Eustace thought it better to make friends.

"Yes, thanks," he said gruffly. "Here you are, boy—take this," he added, producing half-a-crown. "Don't get talking about the way I kicked you out of my study. And you needn't mention that I wasn't looking quite well. You understand?"

"You bet I do, sir!" said Tubbs, with a heavy wink.

He accepted the half-crown, touched his forelock, and went his way. Half-crown tips weren't any too common, and Tubbs suddenly came to the conclusion that "Clavering" wasn't such an outsider, after all.

Eustace continued his way through the Big Arch, crossed the Inner Court, and presented himself at the school hospital—which was situated in one of the wings of the Head's private residence. Carey had no difficulty in reaching Fullwood's bedside.

A nurse escorted him there, and left him.

"Why didn't you come before?" asked Fullwood angrily. "I've been waitin' all day——"

"I've come now, haven't I?" interrupted Carey. "What's the idea, you young idiot? Don't you realise that this will cause comment?"

"I don't care about that," said Fullwood. "I had to speak to you. I couldn't stick it any longer. What about Clavering——"

"Shut-up!" hissed Eustace fiercely. "Not so loud! I'm Clavering here, don't forget! That nurse——"

"It's all right—we're alone," muttered Fullwood.

The little ward was certainly empty, save for themselves. Fullwood was sitting up in bed, and he was feeling thoroughly exas-

perated and annoyed. He was so much better in himself that this confinement in bed irritated him. He saw no reason why he shouldn't be out and about. It was just like that fussy Dr. Brett to keep him in bed! Half-a-dozen times he had asked for his clothes—he had begged for them—but all to no purpose.

"Yes, we're alone," admitted Carey, "but these partitions are as thin as paper. What do you want me for? Say it quickly, so that I can get out. I shall have to make some excuse, too——"

"Have you been to—to that place to-day?"

"Yes, I have."

"What about Clay—— What about that chap?" asked Fullwood. "I promised to see him last night——"

"Don't worry yourself about him," interrupted Eustace. "He's gone."

"Gone!"

"That's what I said—gone."

Ralph Leslie looked at his cousin keenly. He was just seeing that Eustace was different. He was flushed, his eyes were more shifty than usual, and there was a general air of restlessness about him. His former careless indifference had completely vanished. Fullwood immediately guessed that something had happened.

"I don't understand you," he said quickly. "How can Clavering have gone? Where to? How the dickens——"

"Don't ask me riddles!" snapped Eustace curtly. "I'm not likely to know where he's gone to, am I? You left that dungeon unlocked, and you've only got yourself to thank for what's happened. You were mad to trust the fellow to go out on parole."

"He hasn't gone—I don't believe it!" said Fullwood. "He was just out for a walk, or something. Anyhow, you'd better take this last chance, Eustace, and clear out. I tell you, it's dangerous to stay here——"

"Don't get excited," interrupted Carey; "I'm going!"

Fullwood looked at him sharply.

"You're going?" he repeated. "When?"

"To-night!"

"Look here, Eustace, is that straight from the shoulder?" asked Fullwood, grabbing his cousin's arm. "Are you really going to-night?"

"Yes, I am, confound you!" snapped Eustace. "Let go of my arm! I'm sick of this hole-and-corner business, and I'm glad to be rid of you and the whole infernal school!"

There was something in Eustace Carey's eyes—something in his tone—which told Fullwood that the man was speaking the truth. He was going at last! For the first time for days, Fullwood enjoyed genuine contentment.

CHAPTER IX.

WILLY & CO. ON THE WARPATH.



MR. SUNCILFFE rapped his desk impatiently.

"You are talking again, Handforth minor," he said, peering severely over the tops of his glasses at Willy Handforth. "Stand up, sir!"

Willy stood up.

"This is the third time I have warned you, young man," went on the master of the Third. "It may interest you to know that we are concentrating upon geography. What did you say to Heath?"

"Nothing much, sir——"

"I require no evasions, Handforth minor," snapped Mr. Suncliffe. "What did you say to Heath? I demand the exact words."

"Honest injun, sir?"

"Yes, honest injun—— Yes, certainly!" snorted Mr. Suncliffe. "Come, Handforth minor, at once. Good gracious! Am I to stand here asking you this question until the time for dismissal arrives?"

Willy sighed.

"All right, sir," he said resignedly. "I said to Chubby——"

"To whom?"

"To Heath, sir," amended Willy. "I turned to Chubby, and said that it was about time you had a hair-cut, sir."

Mr. Suncliffe gave a kind of gulp, and the Form tittered with huge enjoyment. It was an exceedingly sore point with Mr. Suncliffe that he was nearly bald, although he did valiant deeds with the scanty locks which remained at the back of his head.

"You—you impertinent young rascal!" shouted the Form-master. "How dare you? This is a deliberate affront. Handforth minor, you will remain in this room after the rest of the Form has dismissed, and will be detained for one hour——"

"Hold on, sir!" interrupted Willy. "You can't detain me for telling the truth."

"Upon my soul!" gasped Mr. Suncliffe. "Your impertinence is positively staggering, young man! Do you dare to stand there and tell me that my hair needs cutting? Of all the impudent——"

"I say, steady, sir!" protested Willy, in an injured voice. "You surely don't think I could be as cheeky as that? And to you, sir—my own Form-master? I didn't mean any impudence at all."

"You are making things much worse——"

"You asked me to tell you what I said to Chubby Heath, and I told you, sir," went on Willy. "I might have made up a lie on the spur of the moment—I might have said all sorts of complimentary things about you—but you asked for the truth, and I gave it. And now you're going to punish me!"

Mr. Suncliffe swallowed hard, and pulled himself together. He could not fail to see the force of Willy's argument. These tussles were frequent occurrences in the Third

Form-room, and it was one of life's tragedies for Mr. Suncliffe that Willy always won.

"Very well—sit down!" he said gruffly. "Perhaps you are right, Handforth, minor—I certainly have no wish to be unjust. You will write me fifty lines for talking in class."

"Yes, sir," said Willy. "Thanks awfully, sir."

He sat down, jabbed Chubby Heath in the ribs, and got on with his work. It was only by a manful effort that Chubby refrained from uttering a wild cry. Willy's jabs were sometimes painful.

Fortunately, lessons came to an end without any further incident, and Mr. Suncliffe was just as relieved as his class. He always felt light-hearted during the last five minutes, and regarded the end of the day with happiness. And, curiously enough, the Form felt just the same.

Willy marched out into the Triangle, arm in arm with Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon, his two special cronies of the Third.

"What about some sardines to-night?" asked Juicy. "We've got those kippers from yesterday, but they smelt a bit squiffy at dinner-time. It was Chubby's fault for putting them next to the boot-polish——"

"Never mind kippers and sardines," interrupted Willy. "In fact, never mind tea at all. There's work to be done."

"Work?" said his chums, aghast.

"We're going to the Priory," explained Willy. "It's no good grumbling—we're going I decided it first thing this morning——"

"But what about us?" asked Chubby. "Don't be like your major, for goodness' sake. He decides all sorts of things for Church and McClure——"

"All sorts of silly things," interrupted Willy. "I'm different. This Priory idea is absolutely necessary. There's something fishy going on there, and we've got to find out what it is. A lot fishier than those kippers!"

His chums groaned inwardly. In one respect, Willy resembled his major to an uncanny degree. Once he had made up his mind upon a certain line of action, nothing would shift him. Fortunately, Willy's lines of action were generally based upon some concrete foundation. Handforth major was ever ready to dash off on the purest wild-goose chases.

"Can't we have tea first?" asked Juicy hungrily.

"Impossible—I want to get one in on Ted," said Willy. "We've got to hustle like the dickens. I believe our Form-room clock was fast—we're out before the Remove, and that's all to our advantage."

Mystified, his chums followed him across Big Side, as they took the short cut towards Bellton Priory. Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon regarded it as a bit thick that they should be forced into this move on empty stomachs.

"But what's the idea?" asked Chubby resignedly.

"I haven't got much to go on, but it's enough," replied Willy. "Just before lessons, my major came in puffed and breathless. He said that Nipper had discovered something rummy up at the Priory, and that he was going to dash back after lessons. Isn't that good enough?"

CHAPTER X.

MORE INVESTIGATIONS.



CHUBBY HEATH scratched his unruly hair.

"Good enough?" he repeated in amazement. "My only hat, do you mean to say you're taking any notice of your major's dotty vapourings? You know what an ass he is for woolly ideas! I'm surprised at you!"

"Making us miss tea, too!" said Juicy rebelliously.

Willy regarded his chums painfully.

"My poor, brainless fatheads!" he said. "Didn't I tell you that Nipper was in the affair? Do you think I'd accept Ted's word alone? I grabbed hold of Nipper and asked him about the Priory and Nipper said nothing."

"Nothing?"

"Not a giddy word!"

"And still you're going to the Priory?" asked Juicy Lemon.

"Exactly!" agreed Willy. "I'm going because Nipper said nothing. Of course, I don't expect your weak intellects to understand, but it was jolly significant. If Ted's yarn had been spoof, Nipper would have laughed and told me not to be a young ass. But he didn't laugh. He frowned, and advised me to get in to lessons."

There was strong force in Willy's argument. He was quite convinced that Nipper and the other Removites had made an important discovery at the Priory. His major, of course, had given the thing away as usual—without having the least idea that he had given it away.

And it was really a shrewd move on Willy's part to steal a march on the Removite fellows. Willy, be it remembered, had been the first one to spot Eustace Carey among the ruins, and the later developments only added to his conviction that here was something worth looking into.

Tea was a matter of minor importance under the circumstances. Willy was just as hungry as his chums, but he was content to wait. It was one of his greatest delights to forestall his major in anything important.

The ruins were reached in record time, for the three fags covered the distance at the double. Willy was eager to get to the ruins in good time, and his chums were eager to get back to tea. So they all had an incentive to put their best foot foremost.

They entered the Priory rather breathless, and looked round keenly. There was nothing particularly suspicious in the appearance of the place. Thick grass underfoot, weeds round the walls, and piles of dead leaves. And on all sides rose the ivy-covered piles, with arches and broken window spaces on all sides.

"Nothing here!" said Chubby, after one swift glance round. "I knew it all along. Let's get back to tea!"

"Good!" said Juicy eagerly. "Come on!" He made a move for the exit again, but Willy grinned.

"You young fathead!" he said severely. "Is this what you call exploring? You take one squint round, and then want to bunk! We're going down into the vaults, my lads. Follow me!"

"The vaults?" repeated Chubby. "I say, you'd better go easy, Willy! It's as dark as pitch down there, and some of the steps are missing. Before we explore those vaults, we've got to be prepared with lights."

Willy said nothing, but he proceeded to disgorge from his pockets a couple of candles, some matches, and a big screw-driver. The fact that two squashed caramels were adhering to one of the candles was a mere detail. The other candle was bent into a kind of arc, and had considerably melted. Fortunately, the inside of Willy's pockets were hidden from view.

"Did you think I'd come unprepared?" he asked tartly. "Take this one, Chubby, and light it—No, don't twist it about like that, you fathead!"

"I'm bending it straight!" retorted Chubby.

"You can't bend a thing straight," retorted Willy. "You can bend it bent, and you can straighten it. But I don't suppose it's any good pointing out these technicalities of the English language!"

"What's the screwdriver for?"

"I don't know—I brought it in case," replied Willy. "A screwdriver's a handy thing. You can prise things open when you're exploring. As a matter of fact, I borrowed it from old Browne, of the Fifth, only he doesn't know it."

They penetrated the stairway, and arrived in the dank-smelling passage. And Willy proceeded to explore the dungeons in systematic fashion. He was rather disappointed after the first five minutes. But then, like the Removites, he was soon rewarded.

They came upon the dungeon which had been Clavering's prison.

"What-ho!" said Willy softly. "The hermit's cave! Look at this, my sons! No wonder those chaps were eager to get back! Didn't I tell you there was something fishy about the Priory?"

Chubby Heath sniffed the air.

"Smells like stale bacon to me," he said critically. "I wouldn't say it's fishy—"

"You can't help it, so I'll forgive you," interrupted Willy kindly. "Now, where does

this place fit in? Who's been living here? Not Clavering of the Sixth, because he's been at St. Frank's all the time. But Clavering knows all about it. If not, why was he prowling about here on Tuesday?"

"My only hat! What was that?" said Juicy suddenly.

"Eh? What was what?"

Juicy was in the rear—only just in the doorway, in fact. And now he was staring out into the dark and gloomy passage, a scared, startled expression in his eyes. He had gone a shade paler. Willy looked at him keenly. He knew that Juicy was quite a fearless junior, and his present attitude was significant.

"Anything wrong there?" he asked sharply.

"I don't know," replied Juicy. "I thought I heard something."

"Those fatheaded Removites coming," began Chubby.

"No, it wasn't that," said Lemon, with a catch in his voice. "It—it sounded like a gurgle, and it came from down there," he added, pointing into the mysterious depths of the vault. "I'm not kidding, you asses! I tell you I heard—"

"Hist!" warned Billy, holding up a finger.

They stood there, tense and silent. And, distinctly, a sound came to their ears from the vault—a kind of moan, low and fearsome.

CHAPTER XI.

THE THIRD-FORM RESCUERS.



"O H, corks!" whispered Chubby Heath. "I—I heard something that time! Let's—let's get out of here! Goodness knows, I'm not in a funk!"

"Then don't talk like one," interrupted Willy tartly. "We're not getting out of here until we discover the cause of that rummy sound. Didn't I tell you there was something fishy about the place? Come on—follow me!"

"I say, wait a minute!" muttered Juicy. "Hadh't we better hang on until your major comes? There may be something dangerous here. I don't believe in ghosts, or anything of that sort, but that sound—Well, I mean—"

"Rats!" interrupted Willy crisply. "If you chaps are afraid, you can stay behind. A fine series of farm-yard crows we should hear if those Remove chaps came along and found us hesitating! Not likely!"

Willy marched out of the dungeon resolutely. And Chubby Heath and Juicy

Lemon, in order to avoid being labelled funks, followed close behind. They were as plucky as the best under any ordinary circumstances, but these dark and dismal places rather awed them.

But it seemed to have no effect upon Willy. He had made up his mind that there was nothing to be scared of, so he explored with perfect coolness. His heart was beating a little more rapidly than usual, but this was due to the natural excitement of the occasion.

Reaching the end of the passage, Willy paused. The flickering light from his candle revealed a flight of steep steps. They led straight downwards, and were slimy and wet, and many of them were broken and jagged. He descended with extreme caution, testing each step before trusting his weight to it. His chums still came on behind.

After negotiating the first few steps, Willy paused. He could see marks on the steps, but something else had caught his eye. A fountain-pen—smashed into three pieces, and lying in a little puddle of ink.

"See that?" he asked, pointing. "It's the first time I knew ghosts used fountain-pens! Somebody's been here to-day, by the look of it. Hi!" he added, raising his voice. "Anybody at home?"

They all waited, and held their breath.

"Help!"

It was a distinctly human cry—weak and feeble, and apparently coming from the very bowels of the earth.

"By jingo!" breathed Willy. "Hear that? There's somebody down there—somebody in trouble, too! It's a jolly good thing we came! Come on, you chaps—nothing to be afraid of!"

The others were as keen as mustard now. Their last apprehension had gone. That single word had braced their nerves. There was certainly nothing uncanny about a cry for help—but there was just as certainly something urgent.

Left to themselves, Chubby and Juicy would have tumbled down the remaining steps two at a time. But Handforth minor didn't increase his speed by a single degree. He continued the descent deliberately, testing each step. He knew how treacherous these old ruins could be, and he had no desire to lead his chums into a death-trap.

The bottom was reached at last, and Willy stepped gingerly forward. It was a tunnel now, narrow, and with an arched roof. The air was stagnant and foul. There was obviously no current down here. And in front of Willy yawned a grim-looking abyss in the stone flooring.

"Steady!" he said warningly. "Don't push, you cuckoos!"

"Jump across it!" advised Chubby excitedly.

"Hi!" roared Willy. "Where are you? Yell again!"

"Help!" came a voice from their feet. "Down—down here!"

ANSWERS

Every Saturday. Price 2d.

"My only maiden aunt!" breathed Willy. He stared blankly. The voice had come from far below—right down in that chasm. He dropped on his hands and knees, and bent over. At first he could see nothing. But, holding the candle slantingly, he could then distinguish broken stones and earth. The abyss was a kind of subsidence in the Priory foundations—an age-old gap which could probably tell many a story. Indeed, it was possible that it had been constructed by human hands centuries earlier.

But Willy couldn't see to the bottom, for the deep crevice slanted away to the left. Something had to be done. That voice had been very feeble, and had told its own story.

"We want some rope!" panted Juicy, in alarm. "Why the dickens didn't we bring some rope? Supposing I dash back——"

"Supposing you do nothing of the sort?" interrupted Willy, uncoiling a long length of rope from beneath his waistcoat. "Didn't I tell you to come prepared? You never know what you'll need when you're exploring! I borrowed this from old Cuttle's tool-shed before lessons!"

"My hat!" said Chubby, staring. "You think of everything!"

"It's a good thing somebody thinks!" retorted Willy.

The rope was of good length, although not very stout. But it was quite strong enough for the purpose. Willy hitched the end of it round some projecting stonework, and told his chums to watch it.

"I'm going down," he added. "You keep one candle, and I'll take the other."

"His chums didn't like it, but they had to agree. And they watched with vague apprehension as Willy vanished into the depths. They held the rope with all their strength, in case the stone failed in its task. And Willy edged his way lower and lower into the mysterious depths of the chasm.

The candle still burned clearly, but it didn't seem to be giving as much light. The air wasn't bad, but it was far from good. He could feel the difference in his lungs—particularly as he descended lower.

And then, at length, he saw something below him—a human face, strained and pale, with two feverish eyes. At first Willy was startled, but as he dropped alongside he was filled with concern. At the first glance he could see that the stranger was a youth of about seventeen—not over strong, to judge by his physique, and obviously in great pain.

"It's all right—we'll soon have you up," said Willy briskly. "Don't try to talk now—just grab my hand, if you can——"

"It's my leg!" muttered the other faintly. "It's jammed down there. I'm wedged in, and I'm dizzy. This air—I can't see properly——"

"The air's rotten," agreed Willy. "Another few hours of this, and you'd have pegged out. Hi, up there! Can you hear me?"



And then, at length, Willy saw something below—a human face, strained and pale, with two feverish eyes.

"Yes!" came Chubby's voice. "Found anything?"

"Don't ask questions," retorted Willy. "Hold the rope, and be ready to pull up when I give the word!"

He placed the candle upon a flat stone near him, and could now see that he was at the very bottom of the cleft. The stranger was in an awkward position, one leg being doubled under him, and jammed. He had evidently dropped the whole way down, but the slanting nature of the chasm had saved him from grave injury. But even now Willy feared that his leg was broken.

"If I give you a hoist up, do you think you can get free?" he asked. "This rope isn't very thick, but we'll do our best. And we shall have to go easy, too—the sides might cave in unless we're careful."

"I'll try—thank's awfully!" muttered Clavering. "It's my leg, you know. It's a good thing I fell feet downwards——"

With his face screwed up in agony, he used every ounce of his strength to free himself—Willy exerting himself to the utmost meanwhile. And with a sudden jerk, Clavering pulled himself out.

CHAPTER XII.

CLAVERING'S SILENCE.



"NOT broken?" asked Willy anxiously. Five minutes had elapsed—five worrying minutes. During the first two or three of these Clavering had been so agonised by the returning circulation that he had almost fainted. For nearly three hours he had been jammed in that one position, unable to move himself. Indeed, without aid, he would never have got free—and but for the activities of these St. Frank's juniors he would have perished miserably. Eustace Carey would never have come back to make certain.

Clavering couldn't remember much. He had struck his head at the first fall, and had been completely stunned. His temple was gashed, and blood had been flowing. The unfortunate senior had met with nothing but misfortune since his arrival in the district. But surely he had reached the end of his trials now!

Consciousness had returned in this black and foul pit, and he had found himself helplessly fixed. And then, just when all hope was dead, he had heard the faint echo of human voices—and had raised his own.

"Broken?" he repeated, as Willy spoke. "No, I don't think so. It's better now, thanks. By jingo! It was pretty tough while it lasted, though! I think I can move it if you help me."

The task of getting Clavering to the top was a stiff one. But Willy, aided by his faithful chums, surmounted the difficulties

and brought the stranger into the daylight. And by that time Clavering himself had partially recovered. The activity, and the fresh air did wonders. But even now he was practically done. His weeks of privation had told upon him. And this culminating adventure had reduced him to a pitiable condition.

"I suppose you belong to St. Frank's?" he asked, after—he had embarrassed the fags by repeatedly thanking them.

"Yes—Third Form," repeated Willy. "But don't bother about us. We want to know something about you. How did you get down into that crevice? Did you fall, or were you pushed?"

Clavering ignored the question.

"Do you know a fellow named Fullwood?" he asked tensely.

"Why, yes. He's in the Sanny."

"In the what?"

"Our school hospital," explained Willy. "He had a fearful chill on Tuesday, and played football on Wednesday, like an ass—and then collapsed. Now he's recovering in the Sanny."

A light of understanding came into Clavering's eyes.

"So Fullwood collapsed!" he muttered. "And he's been confined to the school hospital ever since! That's rough luck, if you like! How long do you suppose he'll be there?"

"Till Saturday, I expect—although you can bet he's keen upon getting out before then," replied Willy. "But once you're in the sanny, it's a pretty hopeless business. You're liable to be chained!"

Clavering hardly heard. He was feeling relieved in body and in mind. As he had suspected, Eustace's account of Fullwood's non-appearance was false. Ralph Leslie had been unable to keep his promise because of illness. He had been kept in the sanatorium during those hours when he should have come to the Priory. Things were getting clear.

As for the rest, Clavering hardened his heart.

For Fullwood's sake, he had been willing to allow Eustace Carey to get away unpunished for his misdeeds. He had arranged things so that Eustace should have a clear day's start, and although it would be necessary to explain the facts, Carey's real identity would never be known by the school.

But that was different now. Clavering was only human, and he was grimly determined to see that Eustace was punished. He would be a weak fool if he allowed the rascal to get away scatheless. After what had happened this afternoon, there was no excuse for Fullwood's cousin.

Clavering knew that he had only himself to blame for that fall down the abyss. Carey hadn't had any hand in that affair—which might have been a tragedy. But Carey had made a brutal attack later, and it had been his doing that Clavering was in the position of danger.



And on the top of all this, Eustace had gone off with utter callousness.

He had made no attempt whatever to ascertain if Clavering was still alive. There was no excuse for such conduct. Eustace's final act utterly condemned him. He had gone off, not caring whether his victim was dead or gravely injured. Such indifference was startling. And Stanley Clavering hardened his heart, and determined to play his own game.

"Finished thinking yet?" asked Willy, at length.

Clavering started.

"Sorry!" he muttered. "Well, I'll be going, if you don't mind——"

"But we do mind," interrupted Willy. "My hat! You don't suppose you're buzzing off without explaining things, do you? I've got about two dozen questions to ask. I'm not inquisitive, but it's necessary that you should supply us with a few details. Don't we deserve 'em?"

"Yes, by Jove, you do!" admitted Clavering gratefully. "But for you youngsters I should be still in that cleft, and there was nothing but death there. You've got a right to know the facts."

"Good!"

"But I can't let you have them," went on Clavering. "I'm sorry, but I shall have to disappoint you. If you'll do me a favour, you'll go back to St. Frank's and say nothing about this affair at all."

CHAPTER XIII.

LATE FOR THE PAIR.



WILLY HANDFORTH looked rather rebellious.

"I say, that's all very well!" he protested. "If anybody's got a right to know the facts, we have."

"We don't want to pry into your business, or anything like that, but you know Fullwood, and we're all interested. And there's that new chap, Clavering, too——"

"Oh, Clavering?" said the other drily.

"He's a beast, by all I can hear," said Willy. "I'll bet you're not a pal of his—I'm not boasting, but I pride myself on being a judge of character. Now, Fullwood's different——"

"He's not a beast, then?"

"He used to be," put in Juicy Lemon.

"Last term he was one of the worst cads in the school. But he's true blue this term—keen on football, a good sportsman, and everything else. He's been doing wonders this term."

"But he seems to have a secret worry," said Willy thoughtfully. "I've noticed it more than once—and I'm beginning to get a few suspicions. Of course, there's some

rummy business going on in connection with you and Clavering and Fullwood. You see, we know that already. Why don't you tell us the rest? It's only fair to us, isn't it?"

"You're right—absolutely right," admitted Clavering. "And I'll admit that Fullwood's secret worry is connected with Clavering and me. But I'll take it as a personal favour if you'll ask no more questions. You'll know the truth later on."

Willy shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, well, it's your business, after all," he said. "Perhaps you'll tell us your name and who you are?"

"I can't even do that," replied Clavering quietly. "But you'll know by to-morrow—and perhaps before to-day's out. It all depends. I'd rather you went away now——"

"But, look here—I don't like it!" interrupted Willy indignantly. "Look at you! You're in a terrible state! Torn and battered and like a scarecrow! You've got a gash on your head, and your hand's bruised——"

"I know—I know," interrupted Clavering. "But they're only trifles, after all. Isn't there a quiet inn somewhere about here? I'd like to find one—a place where I can wash, have some food, and rest for a bit. Not too public, and not too far away——"

"What about the Plough, in Edgemore?" asked Willy.

"Where's that?"

"Well, by the footpath it's only about half a mile away—down in the hollow," replied Willy, pointing. "You can't go wrong. It's quiet enough there—Edgemore's only a tiny hamlet. Better than Bellton if you want quietness, and nearer, too. But the rustics will talk——"

"That'll be all right," said Clavering. "I've got nothing to be afraid of—I'm not an escaped convict. Straight down the footpath, and I'll come to it? Thanks awfully, young 'uns. I can't bind you to secrecy, of course, but I ask you as a favour to keep mum until you see me again."

"All right—you can rely on us," replied Willy gruffly. "I don't like it, but you're evidently firm. By the way, if you need any cash——"

"Good gracious, no!" interrupted Clavering. "I've got heaps, thanks all the same. By the way, I wonder if you youngsters would take it as an insult if I treated you to a feed to-night? I don't want to hurt your feelings——"

He paused, and produced a wallet. From this he took two pound notes, and Willy & Co. watched with interest. Willy was somewhat dubious, but Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon were frankly agog with eagerness.

"Would it hurt our feelings?" asked Chubby.

"Shall we feel insulted?" said Juicy.

"Never!" they declared in one voice.

"Wait a minute—I'm in this!" said Willy grimly. "I'm not so sure about it. Thanks

all the same, Whoever-You-Are," he went on, turning to Clavering. "But we don't want paying for what we did—or for keeping quiet. I should hope we're not that kind!"

"Of course you're not," said Clavering. "I was afraid you'd misunderstand me. I want you to take the money as something independent—just a little treat from me. You're just as much at liberty to tell the whole school of this affair if you want to. I've asked you to keep quiet, and I believe you will."

"Then I don't think we'll be insulted," replied Willy cheerfully. "As it happens, cash couldn't come at a more favourable moment. With the prospect of squiffy kippers for tea, a pound note is a glorious sight. But look here, we shall see you again, shan't we?"

"On my word."

"Either to-night or to-morrow?"

"Positively," replied Clavering. "And then you'll know the truth. There's a very particular reason why the whole school shouldn't be talking about this affair. But before I can explain, I've got to learn a few other things."

Clavering was feeling so much better that his cheeks had recovered some of their colour. He went off without any further discussion—but Willy & Co. were the richer by three pounds. Clavering had given them one each. Chubby and Juicy were examining them closely to see if they were real, but Willy had stuffed his own into his pocket with a frown.

"I don't like it!" he growled. "We ought to know the truth. It's too thick, keeping us in the dark. . . By jingo! My major!" he added suddenly. "That chap only just got off in the nick of time! Once Ted started on him, there'd be nothing but ructions."

Not only Handforth, but the other Remove investigators also appeared at the other side of the ruins. Nipper and Tregellis-West and Watson were to the fore, and Nipper was looking rather exasperated. He had reason to be, for Handforth had caused an awful amount of delay at St. Frank's.

"You're too late, my sons," said Willy, going forward to meet them. "All the excitement has happened."

"What excitement?" demanded Handforth.

"That would be telling, wouldn't it?" said Willy cheerfully. "But you can take my word for it there's been some. If you'd only come five minutes ago. . . But why go into details?"

Willy & Co. strolled off, and the Removites looked after them, frowning.

"Fancy my minor getting here first!" ejaculated Handforth indignantly. "Of course, he was spoofing—there's been no excitement—"

"I'm not so sure," growled Nipper. "I believe Willy was telling the truth. We've missed everything—we're late for the fair! This is what comes of your dilly-dallying, handy."

"Look here, you ass—"

"Not that it's any good blaming you—you can't help it," went on Nipper generously. "All we can do is to explore again, and trust to luck. But, somehow, I think we shall draw a blank. After your minor's been on the scene there's not much hope for anybody else."

CHAPTER XIV.

A DECISION.



HAROLD GRAYSON, of the Fifth, strode along the senior passage in the East House, and came to a halt in front of "Stanley Clavering's" study. He tried the handle, but the door refused to budge.

"Hallo! Anybody at home?" said Grayson loudly.

"Sorry—busy!" came Eustace Carey's voice from within.

"But look here, I want to fix up something—"

"Don't bother now—I don't want to be disturbed," came the voice again. "I've got the deuce of a headache, too! I'll see you later, if it's all the same, Grayson."

The Fifth-Former grunted.

"Go to the dickens!" he said unpleasantly, and strode off.

Within the study, Carey was making his final preparations. It wasn't quite dark yet, but the October evening was drawing in. In any case, the coast was clear. When Eustace went out during the next half-hour he would be in time to catch the evening train, and he wouldn't be missed for hours.

He had packed a small bag, and was practically ready. Clavering's passport was the most important thing, however, and at the moment of Grayson's visit Carey had been examining it. The passport was of the usual type, but it had been very cleverly faked.

Eustace had removed Clavering's photograph, and had substituted one of his own. The only difficulty was in connection with the official stamp, which was on the photograph itself—on the original photograph. Carey had succeeded in duplicating it very ingeniously. But would it pass the sharp inspection of the officials? That was the one problem which concerned Eustace more than anything else.

He knew that the inspection was not particularly severe, but those fellows had keen eyes—they were always on the look-out for tricks. If he got through, all would be well. But what if that faked stamp was

spotted? He would be detained—placed under arrest—and then the police would get him for the other affair. Investigations would follow, Clavering's disappearance would come to light, and the body would be found.

A cold perspiration broke out on Eustace's sloping forehead as he sat at the table, gazing at the passport. It was a terrible risk. It was a frightful risk. But what else could he do? He wasn't safe in England—unless he stayed at St. Frank's. And that was impossible.

The sudden recollection of Clavering's fate unnerved him. Now that his flight was on the point of starting, he hesitated. It had seemed so easy yesterday—so childishly simple. But now he was distracted by a hundred-and-one fears. His nervousness was evidenced by his trembling hands.

He stuffed the passport into his pocket and went to the cupboard. Again he resorted to the whisky bottle. As a St. Frank's senior, whisky was absolutely forbidden in the study; but Eustace Carey was over twenty-one, and he felt that he had every right to please himself. And nobody knew about that secret supply, so what did it matter?

Half an hour earlier he had decided that he wouldn't touch another drop. It was risky. He needed a clear head to-night. But his accumulation of fears drove him to the bottle again.

Having no natural courage, Eustace resorted to false. The amount of whisky he swallowed was startling. He gulped it down from the bottle recklessly, without realising the quantity. He must have taken nearly half a pint, and even Eustace was not accustomed to neat spirit in such doses.

He set the bottle down, and flung himself in the big chair. For a moment or two he gasped, and then the colour rose into his cheeks. He brooded over his worries, and reviewed the situation. There was still plenty of time before he need start. Nobody suspected, so why should he be a fool? He was only making things worse by all this worrying!

He had no thought for Clavering. The idea of going back to the Priory in order to make certain of Clavering's death didn't occur to him. He took it for granted that the unfortunate senior had gone to destruction. He was far down in the earth—buried for ever.

And Fullwood wouldn't cause any fuss, either. Fullwood had swallowed the yarn that Clavering had gone off of his own accord. In any case, why should he concern himself about his infernal cousin?

The whisky increased its effect, and Eustace Carey found all his fears vanishing. What a fool he had been to excite himself about the passport. There wouldn't be any trouble at all—he'd pass the officials easily.

In this mood, he took another gulp or two of whisky, and put the bottle back in the

cupboard. But when he turned aside, the study rocked somehow, and Eustace was obliged to clutch at the table. He started, realising what had happened. He laughed inanely.

"Steady, old boy—steady!" he murmured. "This won't do, you know!"

He managed to get to the easy chair, and again he lounged, his legs sprawling, his whole attitude relaxed.

He was feeling boisterous and happy. Supreme freedom from worry had come close upon the heels of black depression. The whisky was performing its usual function in such cases. Eustace's despair was a thing of the past. He now looked upon life with careless indifference.

"Who cares?" he muttered recklessly. "I shan't worry a toss if I miss the train. There's no reason why I should go at all. By gad! Why not stay? I'm safe now—safer here than anywhere else!"

The idea gripped him. Without that whisky he would have dismissed it on the instant. But he was different now. Why shouldn't he stay on at St. Frank's? Where was the danger? There was no worry about Clavering now; the fellow had vanished for good.

It would be easy enough to fool Fullwood. There wouldn't be any inquiries—there wouldn't be any risks. That passport was all very well, and in France he could be comparatively safe. But St. Frank's wasn't a bad hole, and there were some sporty fellows in the East House—Yes, by gad, why shouldn't he stay?

Eustace gave another laugh.

"I should be mad to leave," he decided slapping his thigh. "I'll stay here; I'll stick here until the end of the bally term. And I'm dashed if I don't have another drink on the strength of it!"

He rose unsteadily, and lurched across to the cupboard.

CHAPTER XV.

ANOTHER DECISION.



WILLIAM NAPOLEON BROWNE, of the Fifth, paused in the lobby of the Ancient House and fixed his gaze upon the three juniors who were just entering.

Handforth & Co. were not looking exactly cheerful.

"Alas and alack!" said the Fifth Form skipper. "What is this I see, brothers? Correct me if I am wrong, but it appears that a sad accident has occurred."

"Go and eat coke!" said Handforth gruffly.

"I fear your good manners have deserted you, Brother Handforth," said Browne sadly. "It is known throughout the length

and breadth of the school that I am the least inquisitive of all the St. Frank's inhabitants. Yet on this occasion I must confess I am slightly curious. May I be permitted to share the tragic news?"

He continued to beam upon the three juniors. It was nearly dark outside, and the electric-lights were glowing in the lobby. The chums of Study D were in no fit condition to encounter a master, and they were anxious to hurry upstairs. Browne's curiosity was annoying.

Handforth looked as though he had been rolling in a ditch. His clothing was muddy, his collar was crumpled, and he was thoroughly disreputable. Church and McClure were, if anything, in a worse condition.

And they were all ill-tempered. It was a direct result of failure at the Priory. Nipper & Co. had abandoned the investigation after the first half-hour, but Handforth had insisted upon a thorough exploration of the ruins. Even Church and McClure had jibbed after a while, and a fight to the finish had happened in one of the dungeons. This, combined with endless crawling through holes and crevices, had had dire effect. And in the end the trio had had no reward. They were thoroughly fed-up.

"Don't bother, Browne, for goodness' sake!" said Church. "Let's get upstairs before anybody spots us!"

"A wise decision, Brother Church," declared Browne approvingly. "But am I to take it that I count as nothing? Let me assure you that I shall have great difficulty in sleeping to-night. Visions of human wreckage will rise before me—"

"Cheese it, you ass!" snorted Handforth. "It's no good you asking questions; we shan't tell you a thing. It's likely we're going to let on that we've been to the Priory. It's a dead secret!"

"Let that be your watchword, Brother Handforth," agreed Browne firmly. "I am the first to agree with your secret policy. Why should it interest me that you have been to the Priory? Why should I inquire your purpose there?"

"You can inquire all you like!" retorted Handforth. "As a matter of fact, we've been on the track of a gang— By George! How did you know we've been to the Priory?" he added warmly. "You must have spotted us!"

Browne smiled benevolently.

"Who knows?" he asked. "My wonderful powers are famed far and wide, but it is not for me to remind you of that fact. But when it comes to a matter of keen intelligence— Alas, such discourtesy! It saddens my poor old heart. I must seek Brother Horace, and obtain consolation."

Handforth & Co. had left Browne in the middle of his speech, and the Fifth Form skipper went off to his study to confide

his troubles to Horace Stevens, his bosom chum.

In the meantime Willy Handforth passed through the lobby just in time to see his major vanishing upstairs. But for once Willy refrained from comment. He wasn't in the mood for banter. Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon had been unable to fathom their leader during the past hour.

Willy had even forgotten his pets, an extraordinary state of affairs. He hadn't fed Marmaduke, the monkey; he hadn't had his evening chat with Priscilla, the parrot, and his other pets were just as neglected.

Willy had sat on the windowsill of his study, his hands thrust deep into his trousers pockets, a pencil between his teeth. By the time he had finished his ruminations the pencil had ceased to bear any resemblance to its normal state. Willy, to tell the truth, was intensely worried.

"Yes, by jingo, I'll do it!" he said firmly.

At last he had come to a decision. He would get a permit to visit Ralph Leslie Fullwood in the sanny, and would tell Fullwood everything. It was only right that Fullwood should know. In fact, it was essential.

Willy hadn't come to this decision without full thought.

Fortunately, Clavering hadn't mentioned anything about Fullwood, and Willy hadn't promised that he would keep quiet to Ralph Leslie. In some hidden way Fullwood was bound up in this mystery, and he was confined in the school hospital. Perhaps the poor chap was worrying himself ill.

That stranger in the ruins had expressed deep concern over Fullwood, and had seemed obviously relieved when he heard that Fullwood was in the sanny. There was something queer about that. And there was Clavering, too—Willy, of course, thinking of Eustace Carey.

He had discovered that the new East House Sixth-Former had gone to Fullwood during the afternoon. More mystery. And Fullwood was decent now, a thorough sportsman. It was only fair to let him know what had been happening.

So Willy, having decided, marched to the Housemaster's study.

CHAPTER XVI.

WILLY, THE RESOURCEFUL.



NELSON LEE looked up from his desk and smiled good-naturedly. He was always pleased to welcome the one and only Willy. But just now Willy was looking uncommonly serious.

"Good-evening, Handforth minor," said Nelson Lee. "Come in, my boy—sit down by the fire. Make yourself at home——"

"Awfully nice of you, sir; but I'd like to ask a favour," said Willy. "Can I have a permit to see Fullwood in the sanny?"

"I'm afraid not."

"Oh, not so jolly quick, sir!" protested Willy. "You're out with it before you've had time to think. I particularly want to see Fullwood, and if I've got a permit from you it'll be smooth going."

Nelson Lee considered the matter more carefully.

"Unless your reason is a very urgent one, Handforth minor, I am afraid I cannot comply," he said. "You know as well as I do that no visitors are allowed in the sanatorium after five o'clock. That is a strict rule."

"Rules were made to be broken, sir."

"I am well aware, Willy, that that is your general practice," admitted Nelson Lee drily. "But in this instance I must be firm. To-morrow morning, certainly—if Dr. Brett's report is satisfactory. But to-night any visit to Fullwood is out of the question."

"Oh, just for once, sir!" said Willy in his softest tones. "I won't be there more than three minutes. Just as a favour, sir—between ourselves. If there's anything you want doing later on——"

"You can't bribe me like that, young man," interrupted Nelson Lee sternly. "And it's quite useless for you to adopt that wheedling tone. But one moment," he added. "If you can give me a good reason I might relent even now. Why do you wish to see Fullwood to-night?"

"Oh, I just want to have a chat, sir!"

"Good gracious! A chat?"

"Anyhow, I can't explain any more, sir," said Willy gruffly. "As a matter of fact, it's a private matter, and I ask you to believe me when I tell you it's urgent. Thanks awfully, sir."

He handed Nelson Lee a pen, and waited.

"This time, Handforth minor, it won't work," said the Housemaster-detective, shaking his head. "I am aware that you frequently get the better of me in these little encounters; but for once I must be firm."

"You won't give me the permit, sir?"

"I am afraid not."

"And that's final, sir?"

"Quite final."

"Good-night, sir," said Willy coldly.

"I shall remember this!"

He went out of the room stiffly, and Nelson Lee sat back in his chair and chuckled. He half regretted his firmness now. There was something about Willy which made it very difficult to refuse him anything.



There was a splintering of glass and crashing of wood as Carey flung himself through the window in his mad-dened charge.

Outside in the passage Willy's jaw was grim. He wasn't finished by any means. In fact, it was final. If Willy entered the sanatorium now he would find himself in trouble when Nelson Lee heard about it.

But trouble had never worried Willy; he thrived on it. He passed straight out of the Ancient House, crossed the Inner Court, and presented himself at the door of the school hospital. He rang the bell, and the door was opened by Dr. Brett in person. It was just Willy's luck that the doctor should be on the spot at such an inopportune moment.

"Just the man I wanted to see, sir," said Willy briskly, making the best of a bad job. "I've got your permission to pop up to see Fullwood, haven't I? I shan't be five minutes. Thanks awfully, sir."

"Steady on!" said Dr. Brett, as Willy was worming past. "I haven't given you permission at all. You can't see Fullwood to-night; he's asleep."

"I'll wake him up in two ticks, doetor," said Willy brightly.

"I dare say you would, but you're not not going to," declared Dr. Brett. "Fullwood is much better, and I may allow him

out to-morrow. But he has had a very restless day and at last he's asleep. I won't have him awakened by any of you youngsters. Where's your permit, anyway?"

"Oh, look here—be a sport!" said Willy earnestly. "Has Fully been worried to-day? Something on his mind?"

"Undoubtedly there is something on his mind," agreed the doctor. "If you know something you'd better tell me—"

"Sorry, but I've got to see Fullwood in private, sir."

"In that case, you'll wait until the morning," replied the practitioner. "I'm just going now, but I leave strict instructions that you are not to be admitted. So you might just as well go away and have patience until the morning."

Willy heaved a sigh.

"It wouldn't take me a tick," he said gruffly. "Fullwood's on the ground—two or three doors down the passage—"

"Fullwood is upstairs, in the ward at the end of the building!" interrupted the doctor promptly. "By Jove! If you're thinking of slipping in— But you can't do it, Willy; there's always a nurse on the landing."

"Oh, well, I'd better give it up!" growled Willy. "Good-night, sir."

He saluted, and the door closed. Willy's eyes gleamed. He had obtained the necessary information with his usual adroitness. It had been so simple, too.

As for giving up the project, the very idea was ridiculous. A dozen Housemasters, and a similar number of doctors, wouldn't have swerved the redoubtable Willy from his purpose.

After all, perhaps it would be better that he should see Fullwood in secret.

Willy waited for a few minutes among the bushes, and then he quietly strolled round the wing of the building, and looked up at the end window. It was partly open, and there was a light within. No ivy clung to the wall, but there were plenty of niches and crevices in the Tudor architecture. To a junior of Willy's agility, the wall was almost as good as a ladder.

As silently as a cat he rose higher and higher—until he reached the picturesque window-sill. He pulled himself up and gazed cautiously within.

CHAPTER XVII.

RALPH LESLIE FULLWOOD ACTS.



"ALL serene!" murmured Willy. "Coast's as clear as anything. It's a good thing Fully's asleep, because nobody's likely to come for a bit. At the same time, I shall have to go easy."

A small light was burning within the ward, and Fullwood lay in bed, sleeping peacefully. At last, after a very restless day, he had managed to drop off. He had had scarcely any sleep the previous night, and nature would not be denied in the long run.

Willy climbed carefully over the window-sill, and dropped lightly into the room. Then he advanced to the door. For a moment he stood listening. Everything was quiet out in the corridor. He went to the bed and hesitated. It seemed such a pity to awaken the sleeping junior. Then Willy steeled himself. It was no good being silly. He gently shook Fullwood's shoulder, bending low.

"Steady!" he whispered. "Don't talk loudly—"

"Hallo! That you, doctor?" mumbled Fullwood, yawning, and opening his eyes. "I didn't expect— Why, what the— Gad, it's young Willy! What on earth are you doin' here?"

"Not so loud—not so loud!" hissed Willy, in agony. "I'm not here at all—at least, not officially. I've been refused permission."

Fullwood sat up, fully awake.

"How did you get in, then?" he asked.

"By the window," replied Willy softly. "Don't look startled, you ass—it was as easy as winking. But I can't stop long. I've come here because I thought you might like to hear the news."

"The news?" repeated Fullwood, with a start. "What news?"

"About the Priory—"

"Good heavens!" breathed Fullwood, staring. "I—I don't understand— What's been happening, Willy? Tell me—quick!"

Willy looked at the patient and shook his head.

"If you're going to get excited, I'd better go," he said. "I don't pretend to know anything about this mystery, Fullwood. I'm puzzled. But I'm pretty sure that you're mixed up with that cad, Clavering."

"What do you know about Clavering?" asked Fullwood hoarsely.

"He's a senior in the East House, isn't he?"

"Oh, you mean—you mean— Yes, of course—Clavering!" said Fullwood hastily. "Clavering of the East House! Yes!"

"There aren't two Claverings, are there?" asked Willy shrewdly. "According to the way you're speaking there seems to be another one—"

"I'm only half awake!" muttered Fullwood. "Look here, Handforth minor, what have you come here for? It's not your business—"

"My dear chap, you're in the sanny, and you don't know anything," exclaimed Willy. "Things have been going on all day. Nipper & Co. have been to the Priory ruins—my major's been there—I've been there. And we all know that you've got

a secret with that East House rotter. And I'd like to help you, if I can. Don't think I'm nosing in—"

"How can you help me?" asked Fullwood.

"I don't know—that's what I want you to tell me," said Willy. "Something queer happened to-day. It was just after lessons. Chubby and Juicy and I went to the Priory, and found a dungeon there. It had been occupied by somebody, although it was empty."

"By gad!" breathed Fullwood tensely.

"I can see you know all about it," went on the leader of the Third. "But now for the real yarn. We heard some rummy moans and things, and went down some steps—"

And Willy, with swift lucidity, went into the details. He described how they had found the stranger at the bottom of the abyss—how they had pulled him up in the nick of time—how he had inquired after Fullwood—and how he had urged them to secrecy, after declaring that he would go to the Plough Inn, in Edgemore.

Fullwood listened to all this with mixed feelings. His changing expressions were significant to Willy. That Fullwood was glad to hear the news was very obvious. The Removite was fairly quivering with inward excitement. And there was a very good reason for this.

Eustace Carey had told him that Clavering had disappeared—had gone off of his own accord. But Willy's story threw a completely different light on the affair. And, strangely enough, the very thought that thudded into Fullwood's mind was voiced by his young visitor.

"It's my private opinion that Clavering knows something about this affair," declared Willy grimly—referring, of course, to Eustace. "I believe he pushed the poor chap down that chasm, and left him there to die! It's a pretty awful thing to think, but why should the fellow refuse to speak if it had been an ordinary accident? Jolly fishy to me!"

Fullwood nodded absent-mindedly.

"You're right—you're right!" he muttered. "Of course he pushed the fellow down there—I believe it! The cur—the brutal, murderous hound! An' he told me—" Fullwood pulled himself together. "Thanks, Willy," he went on gratefully. "By Jove, I'm glad you came here with this yarn! Thanks awfully, old man! I don't know why you're all so deuced good to me!"

Willy felt very uncomfortable.

"Rats!" he said gruffly. "You're helpless here, so I thought I'd bring you the latest news. If there's anything I can do—"

"Thanks all the same, but there isn't," interrupted Fullwood. "Don't worry, Willy—this won't be a secret much longer—the whole school's got to know about it— But why shouldn't I tell you?" he went on fiercely. "The fellow you saved from that cleft was Stanley Clavering."

"He wasn't," said Willy. "He was a total stranger—"

"He was Stanley Clavering!" said Fullwood grimly. "The senior you know as Clavering is my cousin—Eustace Carey! That's how I'm connected with the brute! Do you understand now?"

Willy gave a soft whistle.

"By jingo!" he breathed. "Daylight—chunks of it!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE FINISHING TOUCH.



RALPH LESLIE FULLWOOD looked at his young visitor queerly.

"Well?" he asked, at length. "Perhaps you're sorry now? You can see what I'm made of, can't you? I've been harbourin' that infernal cousin of mine for weeks—ever since the beginning of term! And he made the real Clavering a prisoner in the Priory, and kept him there."

Willy smiled.

"Why should I be sorry?" he asked. "I'm not brainless, Fullwood. I can easily understand that you were forced against your will. And if there's anything I can do to help, just say the word. Your cousin's wanted by the police, isn't he?"

"Yes—that's why he's been skulkin' here," replied Ralph Leslie. "That scandal is almost forgotten now—and Clavering's a genuine brick. He wanted to keep it all secret, so that I shouldn't suffer. But I'm coming out with the full truth now—and I don't care who knows. I'm sick of this horrible pretence! Yes, you can help me," he added eagerly.

"How?"

"Go to the Ancient House an' fetch me some clothes—"

"But you're not going to get up!" protested Willy. "You can't do that, Fully! You'll be dropped on in no time! Besides, what about your condition? You'll only get another chill—"

"Confound the chill—confound my condition—confound your objections!" rapped out Fullwood. "If you meant what you said, Willy, get me those clothes. I've got to see Eustace—an' I've got to see Clavering!"

Willy Handforth quickly decided. One glance was sufficient to tell him that Fullwood was practically well. And if he didn't get those clothes, he would probably leave the sanatorium in his pyjamas! In his present state of mind, he was ready for anything.

"All right!" said Willy briskly. "I'll get 'em!"

He was a youngster of action, and without another word he padded to the window, and had reached the ground in no time. Within five minutes he was in Fullwood's

dormitory in the Ancient House, and he soon seized underclothes, socks, shoes, and a complete suit—even linen and collar and tie. Then he rolled everything into a bundle and sped back.

Luck was with him, for he met nobody. He had prepared for the climb by leaving the trouser-legs out of the bundle. With these tied together, he swung the bundle round his neck, so that he mounted the face of the building with free hands and feet.

Fullwood was waiting—out of bed already.

"By gad, Willy, I'll never be able to thank you for this," he said breathlessly. "Good man! Everythin'! Take my advice and scoot! I can handle the affair now—you wouldn't want to be in, anyhow. But the whole school will know before to-night's out—"

"I'm not budging until you're ready," interrupted Willy. "You may need a hand down the wall."

After ten minutes had elapsed, Fullwood was fully dressed. But Willy needn't have worried. The former cad of Study A descended the wall nimbly, and but for a sudden alarm half-way across the Inner Court—when a master unexpectedly appeared—there were no incidents. The pair reached the Triangle without being challenged.

"Right you are," said Willy cheerfully. "I'll leave you now, old son. But if you want a hand again, call on me. Cheerio!"

He strolled off into the Ancient House, and Fullwood looked after him with grateful eyes. How often had he regarded Willy with contempt in the past! He was only just beginning to realise the full worth of the juniors he had previously scorned.

Then, dismissing such ideas, he strode into the East House, and made straight for Eustace's study. He didn't care how many juniors he met—he was indifferent as to who saw him now. And because he was indifferent, he met nobody! Had secrecy been essential, the passages would have been swarming!

Without any preliminary knock, he burst into Eustace's study, and closed the door. Then he stood just inside, staring. His cousin was there—but Fullwood had not expected to find him in this fashion.

Eustace Carey was sitting in the easy-chair, with a bowl of sugar in his lap. He was taking out the lumps and throwing them into the fire, laughing inanely at every bullseye. For one moment, Fullwood thought his cousin had taken leave of his senses. Then Eustace turned and looked at him. He frowned, and his flushed face told its own story.

The fellow's eyes were bleary, and his jaw was dropping. Quite apart from this, an empty whisky-bottle on the table was eloquent enough. Fullwood was sickened by this spectacle—but he wasn't surprised.

"Hallo! What the deuce d'you want?" demanded Eustace thickly. "Go 'way! Hate sight of you! Clear out of my study! Go and hang yourself!"

"You contemptible blackguard!" said Fullwood harshly. "Well, this will get you kicked out of St. Frank's—if nothing else will shift you! When the Head hears about your filthy condition—"

"Who cares about the Head?" said Eustace jeeringly. "I don't care if I'm kicked out—I don't care a jot! S'matter of fact, I'm staying on—comfy here, by gad! Why should I leave? Why should I run away, and use a dud passport? I'm staying on—understand?"

Fullwood strode forward and faced his cousin.

"What did you do with Clavering?" he asked deliberately.

He expected Eustace to start back, and blanch; but Eustace did nothing of the sort. He gave vent to a wild, triumphant cackle.

"Clavering, eh?" he gloated. "Clavering's finished—gone for good! No more visits to the Priory, ole man! That's done with! We're safe now! Clavering's settled!"

"Did you kill him?" asked Fullwood, in horror.

"Don't be a young fool!" snapped Eustace. "He went for me, and we fell down. He slipped, and went over backwards—"

"The same yarn as before!" said Fullwood hotly. "Don't lie to me, Eustace! You killed Clavering—"

"He's dead, anyhow!" interrupted Eustace, with drunken indifference. "All the better! Coast's clear now—he can't be found, because he's fallen into the middle of the earth! And I'm safe here. As for you, you can go to the dickens!"

Fullwood regarded his cousin dangerously. He felt like grasping the wretch by the scruff of his neck and kicking him out. Fullwood knew that Stanley Clavering was alive and safe—but Carey believed that he was dead. And he was gloating over the fact! He was even planning to remain at St. Frank's!

And then the door opened, and Stanley Clavering walked in.

CHAPTER XIX.

SOMETHING LIKE A COMMOTION.



FOR a few tense seconds there was complete silence. Clavering was a changed person. With brushed clothes, a clean collar, and spruced up, he looked himself again. But there was a grim, cold light in his eye. He nodded swiftly to Fullwood, but said nothing.

Eustace Carey was too bemused for the first second or two to understand. He gazed at the new arrival with a fixed, horrified

stare. Then his face went to the colour of chalk, and the sugar-basin dropped from his knees, and crashed to the floor. He sprang up with a wild shout.

"Take him away!" he screamed. "Take him away!"

"Steady!" shouted Fullwood. "There's nothing—"

"He's come back—come back to torture me!" shrieked Eustace, in the very grip of panic. "He's dead, I tell you—he's dead! Take him away from here!"

He covered his face with one hand, and blundered to the window. He dared not venture near the door—where Stanley Clavering was still standing. It was clear to the others that he mistook Clavering for a ghost—a spirit of the departed! His intoxicated condition was partially responsible for the hallucination.

Nevertheless, Carey was sobered— instantly, dramatically. His brain cleared, and his one thought was to escape. At the window he didn't pause. He flung himself straight at it. The two casements crashed open by the very force of his maddened charge.

There was a splintering of glass, and crashing of wood.

Eustace Carey blundered clean out, fell headlong into the Triangle, and picked himself up. He ran madly—blindly. And by chance, a crowd of juniors were pouring out of the Ancient House at that moment.

There had been a meeting in the Lecture Hall—an important football gathering, at which West House and Modern House juniors had joined in with the Ancient House crowd. They were all swarming out into the Triangle together, en route for their respective Houses. There were even one or two East House juniors in the throng.

Eustace Carey didn't even see them. In his panic, he ran without knowing where he went. He had a wild idea that Stanley Clavering was just behind him, ready to pounce. But Stanley Clavering was at the study window, with Fullwood by his side, watching.

Eustace pulled up abruptly, staggered and bewildered. He found himself among the juniors—who had all paused, startled by the crashing of glass and the sight of the dim, lurching figure.

"Hold on!" shouted Reggie Pitt, making a grab. "What's wrong here? Hold him, you fellows—he's crazy, or something!"

"I've got him!" shouted John Busterfield Boots, of the Modern House.

"Let me go, curse you!" snarled Eustace thickly. "Let me go!"

He struggled madly—and for a moment or two he was on the point of getting free. But other juniors came pressing in on him, Handforth & Co. included. He was forced to the ground by sheer numbers, and held there.

"Who is it?"

"What's the matter with him?"

"My hat—whisky!" yelled somebody. "He whiffs of it!"

All sorts of shouts and inquiries went up, and the excitement increased; windows were opened in the various Houses, and seniors and juniors came pouring out from the main lobbies. The excitement gathered speed with extraordinary rapidity.

"It's Clavering of the Sixth," said Pitt, as he struck a match. "There's something the matter with him—he's shivering all over—"

"Don't let him get me!" panted Carey.

"Don't let him get me!"

"You needn't be afraid!" snorted Handforth. "Pull yourself together— He's drunk!" added Handforth disgustedly.

"Absolutely!" ejaculated Archie Glen-thorne. "I mean to say, somewhat near the edge, as it were! Good gad! Kindly allow me to flow away to a region where the atmosphere is less polluted!"

"Duck him in the fountain!"

"Hear, hear!"

"He'll get the sack for this—and serve him right!"

Eustace Carey was pulled to his feet by the indignant juniors. They all took it for granted that he had crashed through the window of his study in a drunken stupor. Eustace was sobered now, and he was madly alarmed. This new peril was driving the other fear away. He knew what it was like to be in the grip of a hundred excited schoolboys!

"You're wrong—you're wrong!" he shouted. "I'm ill! Lemme go, confound you! Lemme gerraway from here—"

"You're drunk!" roared a score of angry voices.

Eustace's very words were indistinct and fuddled. His brain was sobered, but his tongue refused to function properly. And nothing could conceal his blotchy appearance—no words could destroy that reek of whisky. The fellow was absolutely soaked!

"Come on—before the masters get on the scene!" said Handforth urgently. "Let's duck him in the fountain—it'll clean him a bit!"

"Hear, hear!"

"All together, now! Up with him!"

Eustace Carey was seized by many excited hands, and swung aloft.

CHAPTER XX.

THE TRUTH AT LAST.



IN Carey's study, Stanley Clavering and Ralph Leslie Fullwood stood at the window. They were both startled by the dramatic turn of events. They had never expected Eustace to dash out like that. Fullwood, indeed, had had no idea that Clavering was at the school. He had intended going on to the Plough, in Edgemore, after his interview with his cousin.

But that was all changed now.

"Sorry for this," said Clavering regretfully. "I'd no idea he'd kick up all this fuss. Better let him go——"

"No!" shouted Fullwood. "The school's got to know the truth to-night—and I mean to see it through! Eustace thought that you were dead, and he was absolutely callous about you! Prison's the only thing that'll cure him!"

"But the scandal——"

"Who cares about the scandal?" said Fullwood fiercely. "I've got nothin' to be afraid of—I've done nothin' wrong! At least, what I did do I couldn't help. I'll stand the racket——"

"But it'll be better to let him go!" in-

"Hallo, what are you doing here?" demanded Clive Russell, grasping Fullwood's sleeve. "I thought you were in the sanny——"

"I'm not!" interrupted Fullwood. "I've got to get through this crowd. There's somethin' I want to tell everybody!"

"Yes, but——"

Fullwood didn't wait. He forced his way on, and at last, hatless and breathless, he arrived in the centre of the throng. Carey was just being hoisted aloft by the crowd.

"Wait a minute!" shouted Fullwood. "Don't duck him yet—I've got somethin' to tell you. That fellow isn't Stanley Clavering at all!"

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sisted Clavering. "There's no need to tell the school——"

"I want to tell the school!" interrupted Fullwood.

He wasted no further time, but vaulted out of the window, and ran across the Triangle. By this time the crowds were thick round Eustace, and the scene was a startling one.

Lights were gleaming in every window, fellows were leaning out, others were rushing out of doorways. And the congestion round Eustace grew. Prefects were sallying out, but masters were, so far, absent.

"Let me get through!" panted Fullwood hoarsely.

"We're going to chuck him in the fountain!" roared Handforth. "Clear out of the way, Fully——"

"That fellow is Eustace Carey—my cousin!"

Fullwood uttered the words loudly, but scarcely anybody heard. By this time Clavering himself had pushed his way through, for he felt that Fullwood would need him. Obviously, all hope of secrecy had gone. The full truth was coming out now—with a vengeance.

Fullwood placed himself in front of the ringleaders, and refused to budge.

"Let me speak!" he shouted. "I've just come out of the sanny, and I've got some—"

thin' to tell you all—somethin' important! Can't I have a hearin'?"

Nipper heard the words, and so did Handforth.

"Silence, you chaps!" yelled Nipper.

"Let's hear Fullwood!" bellowed Handforth.

There was a semi-silence, and Ralph Leslie took immediate advantage of it.

"Wait until I've finished!" he shouted loudly. "That fellow you've got isn't Stanley Clavering. He's an impostor—a fraud! Stanley Clavering's here!" he added, pointing. "He's come to take his right place in the school."

There was an immediate sensation.

"Fullwood's mad!"

"How can there be two Stanley Claverings?"

"There aren't two!" retorted Fullwood. "I'm ready to risk everythin' to-night—an' I'm comin' out with the truth! That scamp you've got hold of is my cousin, Eustace Carey—wanted by the police for robbery!"

"Your cousin!"

"Great Scott!"

"I knew it all along!" roared Handforth triumphantly. "I said there was something squiffy about the cad! Hold on, you chaps—don't duck him yet! Perhaps we shall have to make him run the gauntlet first! Fullwood's cousin! By George, this is the biggest surprise of the term!"

McClure chuckled.

"You've given yourself away!" he said. "A minute ago you said you knew it all along!"

But Handforth wasn't taking any notice. He and the others lowered the trembling Eustace, and held him tightly. The whole Triangle was a seething mass of commotion. Those fellows on the outskirts, who hadn't heard Fullwood's announcement, were now hearing it from the lips of others.

"So Fullwood's cousin is here, is he?" jeered Gulliver. "By gad! An' Fullwood's been shelterin' him all these weeks! He ought to get the sack!"

"He will get the sack!" said Bernard Forrest viciously.

"A good riddance!" sneered Bell.

But Fullwood was taking no notice of these taunts. He didn't particularly care what happened. The relief he obtained by telling the truth was stupendous. All that secret conspiracy was over now—over for good! If he was compelled to leave the school he would take his medicine without grumbling. But he was at last convinced that straightforwardness was the best policy.

"It's a lie—a lie!" babbled Eustace. "Let me go!"

"Are you Stanley Clavering?" asked Nipper, turning to the rightful owner of the name. "We want to get this thing straight."

"Yes, I'm Clavering," replied the other. "Fullwood has told the truth—that black-guard is his cousin. I didn't want you fellows to know, but it's too late now. There's no hope of avoiding the scandal."

"Hang the scandal!" shouted Fullwood. "That car left you for dead in the Priory ruins, and he deserves the horsewhip! I want somebody to go indoors, an' telephone for the police! I want to give him up with my own hand!"

There was something about Fullwood's tone which silenced the crowd. They hadn't heard him in this mood before. He was inexorable in his determination. There was nothing spiteful in his tone—nothing vindictive. He spoke with the conviction of one who knows he is doing the right thing.

"The police!" panted Eustace. "No, no, no! I'll go—I'll clear out! Don't send for the police! I'll go away, and never come back! Ralph, you young beast, if you do this——"

"Who'll go for the police?" asked Fullwood steadily.

CHAPTER XXI.

SENSATION UPON SENSATION.



EDGAR FENTON, the Captain of St. Frank's, pushed his way to the centre of the crowd. He had heard something of what had been going on, and he was grim.

"Hold on!" he said briskly. "Hasn't there been enough of this scene? We shall have the masters here presently——"

"Please don't interfere, Fenton," said Fullwood, grasping his arm. "There's been enough darkness already—I want to throw some daylight on this affair! I haven't had a chance this term—and my cousin has been responsible. I've got nothin' to boast about, goodness knows—I helped him in his rotten work. I want to tell these chaps the truth."

"And let them judge, eh?" asked Fenton dubiously.

"Yes."

"They're a bit excited at present," said the school captain. "I shouldn't advise you to ask any favours——"

"I'll tell the truth, and my mind will be free," interrupted Fullwood. "Just give me five minutes, Fenton—that's all I want. And do you mind telling somebody to 'phone for the police?"

The crowd was hushed, and waited for Fenton's words.

"Before we send for the police, let's hear the details," said the skipper steadily. "You say that this fellow is your cousin, Eustace Carey? I thought he was Clavering. Perhaps it'll be a good idea if you explain this mix-up. We've got a good audience, anyhow."

"Come on—on our shoulders!" suggested Nipper.

Without allowing Fullwood to object, Nipper and Handforth hoisted him up, so that he rose above the crowd. Nipper felt that it was far better for the truth to be told. Any other course would be a mistake—after the school had heard so much.

"You all know about that affair at Oxford, don't you?" asked Fullwood. "You know how Eustace Carey, my cousin, knocked another undergraduate through an upper window, and then robbed his rooms?"

"The chap died—but the manslaughter charge was squashed," said somebody.

"All the same, my cousin is wanted by the police for robbery," went on Fullwood. "After that rotten affair—the day following, in fact—he came to St. Frank's, and begged me to help him. Don't you remember all that scandal? There's been a bit of a lull lately—"

"Yes, but what about your cousin?"

"He spent two or three nights at Mont Hollow at first," said Fullwood grimly. "But he was too great a coward to remain there—and he met Stanley Clavering by chance. So he lured Clavering to the old Priory, and locked him in a dungeon—"

"Great Scott!"

"That dungeon we found!" roared Handforth.

"I was a fool to have anything to do with the scheme," went on Fullwood bitterly. "I'm not making any excuses myself, and I don't expect any sympathy. I'll take my gruel."

"But you didn't put Clavering in the dungeon," shouted Russell.

"I didn't know anything about it until he was there," replied Fullwood. "My cousin promised me that it would only be for a day or two—and like an idiot, I gave in. I helped Eustace Carey to keep the poor chap there—"

"Wait a minute!" shouted Clavering. "There's something I'd like to say. Carey treated me worse than a dog—but Fullwood hated the job all the time. He did everything in his power to make me comfortable. I don't blame Fullwood in the least—and I'm the chap who counts, after all."

"Hear, hear!"

"Go ahead, Fully!"

"There's no need to tell you all the details," said Fullwood, as the crowd urged him to carry on his story. "My cousin refused to go, and I was helpless. I didn't like to give him up to the police—it seemed rather too cadish. I was in a pretty difficult position. But I was an idiot to think of the family and the scandal. Prison's about the only thing that'll teach him anything."

"What about to-day, Fully?" yelled Willy Handforth.

"On Tuesday, I allowed Clavering to leave the dungeon," continued Fullwood. "We were friends, and fixed things up between us. The idea was to let my cousin go—but he refused. And Carey went to the Priory

to-day, and there was a bit of a quarrel. I don't exactly know what happened—"

"Your cousin attacked me in a cowardly way, and knocked me senseless," explained Clavering. "He dragged me down into the vaults, and when I tried to break away, I fell down that chasm."

"And Carey made no attempt to help you!" shouted Fullwood furiously. "Think of it, you chaps! He's my cousin, but he's the biggest blackguard I've ever seen! He knew that Clavering had fallen down a deep cleft, and he left him there for dead! Then he came back here, and got drunk!"

A roar of fury arose from the listening throng.

"We don't want to hear any more!" yelled Handforth. "Let's make the cad run the gauntlet, and then we'll shove him in the fountain! Line up, you fellows—get ready for it!"

"That's the idea!"

"We'll shove him through the mill!"

"They'll kill me—they'll kill me!" sobbed Eustace Carey, terror-stricken. "Send for the police—I'd rather let the police take me than go through this! Fullwood's been telling lies—they're all lies—"

"Shut up, you rotter!"

"Gag him, somebody!"

Eustace Carey was again seized, and for the second time he was on the point of being handled by the enraged juniors. But he was saved again at the last moment.

There was a commotion at the edge of the crowd, and a hush fell over the Triangle. The headmaster himself had appeared on the scene.

CHAPTER XXII.

A SURPRISING DEVELOPMENT.



DR. MALCOLM STAFFORD was not alone. Beside him came a tall, broad-shouldered man of powerful build. He was bronzed and sturdy, but refined, nevertheless. Fullwood gave one look at him, and started back.

"Uncle John!" he ejaculated.

"The pater!" bleated Eustace Carey, aghast.

The gentleman with the Head was none other than Mr. John Carey, Fullwood's uncle. He was the last man Eustace had expected to appear upon the scene at this dramatic moment. His pater! The one man in the world he wanted to avoid—for Eustace knew what to expect!

Ever since that night at Oxford, Eustace had skulked in hiding. He had feared his powerful father even more than he had feared arrest. Eustace was the third son, and had always been a waster. Mr. John

Carey, in spite of his sixty years, was still in his prime.

"One moment, boys—one moment," said the Headmaster quietly.

His voice was heard over every inch of the Triangle, for a complete silence had fallen upon his appearance. Eyes and ears were strained towards the centre of the crush.

"There is very little that I can do in this matter," continued the Head. "Indeed, Mr. Carey is anxious that I should allow him a free hand—and I have agreed to do so. Under the exceptional circumstances I will overlook this somewhat riotous scene, and I expect all boys to

much of this sordid story to doubt the truth now."

"Don't let the police get me, pater!" sobbed the wretched Eustace.

"Boy, haven't you the faintest spark of manhood?" thundered his father. "The time has come for you to face the music, and the least you can do is to put your back straight, and act like a man!"

But Eustace was only a man in years.

"First of all, I want everybody here to know that young Fullwood is not to be blamed," shouted Mr. Carey. "I haven't always approved of Ralph, but the headmaster has given me a very good report. Furthermore, I know my own son—to my



Slash! Slash! Slash!
The cane descended across the seat of Eustace's trousers. And Eustace was electrified into life.

return quietly to their Houses when Mr. Carey has finished."

While the Head was speaking, Eustace Carey had crumpled completely up. The juniors had instinctively released him, but he made no attempt to escape. He was too weak at the knees. He clutched at his father desperately.

"Don't believe them, pater!" he babbled. "It's all a fake—I haven't done anything wrong—"

"The least you can say, Eustace, the better," snapped Mr. Carey, his voice low and dangerous. "You have always been a liar—Heaven forgive you!—and I know too

cost—and I am aware that he led Ralph into this tangle of disgraceful intrigue. As for young Clavering, I don't know what I can do to compensate—"

"Nothing, sir," interrupted Clavering quickly. "It's all over now, anyhow, and I'm safely at St. Frank's. I'm not the kind of fellow to bear malice—although I'll admit I'd like to see your son get his punishment. I've got nothing against Fullwood."

"I'm glad to hear you say that, my boy," nodded Mr. Carey. "As for the rest of you, in case there is any misapprehension, I would like to tell you that there is no warrant out for the arrest of my son."

"No warrant?" gasped Eustace blankly.

"That is good hearing, eh?" said his father grimly. "But I haven't finished yet, Eustace—you needn't think you'll escape your punishment. I partially blame myself for all this trouble—you have had too much rope for years past."

"But we thought the police wanted your son, sir?" asked somebody.

"They did, but after the inquest on that unfortunate Oxford undergraduate, the police dropped the charge," said Mr. Carey. "It was proved that the youth might have dropped dead at any minute. And his bereaved parents are unwilling to proceed with any prosecution on the charge of theft. My son was mistaken in believing that the police were searching for him."

Eustace's feelings were too deep for words. He had been skulking all this time for nothing! His own cowardice had led to his own undoing. But for his fear of the police, he would never have come to St. Frank's at all.

"Under these circumstances, my only wish is to take my son away," continued Mr. Carey. "He deserves a flogging, and even imprisonment might be useful. I shall take the law into my own hands, and dismiss him at the earliest possible moment abroad."

"All wasters go to the Colonies!" shouted one of the juniors. "It's an insult to the Colonies, sir!"

Mr. Carey compressed his lips.

"My son will not go to the Colonies!" he retorted. "I, too, have no desire to insult a far-off section of the British Empire. I have an isolated ranch in Mexico, and Eustace will be sent there——"

"Mexico!" shouted Eustace desperately. "I won't go there—I won't! That ranch is fifty miles from anywhere—there isn't a railway—there isn't anything! It's nothing but burning heat——"

"And hard work!" interjected his father harshly. "That's what you need, Eustace—and, by Heaven, you'll have your fill of it during the next two years! I hope and trust that the experience will make a man of you."

"I shall die there!" bleated Eustace miserably.

"You are far more likely to get some strength into your flabby muscles!" said Mr. Carey scathingly. "You'll have no chance of running away, young man! I shall send you over in charge of my ranch manager, who happens to be in England at the moment, and he'll see that you remain on the spot. You'll work, too—you'll work from sunrise to dusk."

Eustace stood there, his face pale, his eyes glittering. Everybody else heard the sentence with complete satisfaction. Mr. Carey's decision was a good one. Out on that isolated ranch, the backboneless Eustace might become something more akin to a man.

And no sentence could have hit Eustace harder. He was a pleasure-loving waster, and hard work horrified him. Work in a London office would have caused him to shudder—but on that Mexican ranch—Everything seemed to go black in front of him, and he went into a frenzy.

"I won't go!" he shouted madly. "You can't send me out there—I won't go!"

His father turned upon him with blazing eyes.

"You'll go where I send you!" he thundered. "By Heaven! Many sons in your position would leap at the chance—and think themselves lucky! Is there no spark of decency in you, Eustace?"

Eustace was too enraged to make any lucid reply. He suddenly lunged forward, and struck out with all his strength. The blow caught Mr. Carey on the neck, and he staggered. And Eustace fell back, appalled.

CHAPTER XXIII.

JUST WHAT HE NEEDED.



EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH gave a loud bellow.

"Did you see that?" he roared. "The cad went for his own pater!"

"He sloshed him, too!"

gasped Church.

"Grab him!"

"Chuck him in the fountain!"

The fountain seemed to be very popular for Eustace in the minds of the crowd. There was a wild clamour for Eustace to be ducked. Indeed, the throng swayed like a field of corn after a breeze had struck it, and Eustace Carey was whirled off.

He had struck his own father in a frenzy, and was now nearly on the point of fainting. He didn't possess the pluck of a mouse, and he didn't know how he had performed the action. As for Mr. Carey, he stood there, pale to the lips. He scarcely felt the blow, but the humiliation was appalling.

These St. Frank's fellows had had a poor enough opinion of Eustace before that blow—but now they were hot with rage and indignation. But again Eustace was saved from the fountain.

"Wait!" shouted Mr. Carey.

"We're going to duck him, sir!"

"You will do nothing of the sort!" thundered Mr. Carey. "He is my son, and I will deal with him."

His tone was so grim that Eustace was again released. And, after all, Mr. Carey had all the rights of the case. He took three strides forward, grasped his wretched son, and pushed him across the Triangle towards the Ancient House steps.

Arriving there, Mr. Carey paused.

"Will somebody fetch me a cane?" he asked, his voice tense and drawn.

About twenty juniors ran in all directions to fetch a cane. The crowd was electrified. This was even better than a ducking! Eustace squirmed feebly, but he had shot his bolt.

Handforth was the first out with the cane—for he had dived straight into Mr. Crowell's study by the window, and had come out the same way. Edward Oswald knew it was a good cane, because he had tasted it that afternoon.

"Here you are, sir!" he panted.

"Here you are, sir!" chorussed about a dozen other voices.

Canes were at a discount, for Mr. John Carey had already taken possession of the one that Handforth had brought. With one movement, he pulled Eustace across his knees, and sat down on the step. Eustace struggled, but in the grip of his powerful father he was like a child.

Slash!

The cane descended across the seat of Eustace's trousers with a terrific swish. And Eustace was electrified into life. He howled wildly.

Slash! Slash! Slash!

Again and again the cane descended—and Mr. Carey used every atom of his strength. He felt that this was the only fit punishment he could adopt in the presence of St. Frank's. Eustace was a man of twenty-one—but he was being whipped like a child of eight—only proportionately harder.

Mr. Carey meant to hurt him—and he did.

Whack! Whack! Whack!

"I think that'll do!" panted Mr. Carey, throwing the cane aside. "And now, boys, I'll bid you good-night. And good-night to you, Dr. Stafford. I regret this scene, but I thank you for your broadmindedness. You will not be troubled with this wretched youth again."

He seized Eustace by the scruff of the neck, jerked him to his feet, and strode towards the main gates. And St. Frank's watched in silence as the pair passed out into the lane. Mr. Carey's stride was firm, but Eustace was half-dragged, and half-carried. A more ignominious departure could not have been imagined. And none could say that Eustace hadn't got what he deserved.

Many of the fellows would have hooted and hissed—but they kept silent out of respect for the unhappy father. But not one of those watching fellows realised the pain and humiliation in Mr. Carey's heart.

From a window of the East House, Mr. Barnaby Goole watched Eustace Carey's departure with infinite relief. The Housemaster of the East House had every cause to be relieved, too.

He had known of Eustace's presence all along—but had been afraid to speak, because Eustace had blackmailed him. Years before Mr. Goole had been mixed up in a scandal—a financial affair—at Eustace's old

school. And Mr. Goole had feared the loss of his appointment.

But he was light-hearted now—for he had told the Head the full truth not two hours since. And Dr. Stafford had thought it unnecessary to send Mr. Goole away. For the Housemaster had had no inkling of the real truth—he had believed that Carey's presence at St. Frank's had been brought about by a mutual agreement with Clavering. Upon hearing that Clavering had been victimised, Mr. Goole had revealed the whole truth.

And Mr. Carey's own presence was easily explained. He had come down post-haste in response to a telephone-call from Stanley Clavering. The ill-used senior had put a trunk call through to Eustace's father, thinking it would be the best way out of the difficulty. But Clavering had never guessed that such a scene would be the result.

"Well, he's gone, thank goodness!" said Handforth, with a deep breath. "But it's a pity we didn't duck him in the fountain!"

"That thrashing was ten times better, you ass!" said Church.

"All the same——"

"It's no good, Handy—it's over now," interrupted Nipper. "What about Fullwood? I vote we all forget what we've heard, and let everything go on the same as usual."

"Hear, hear."

"Fully wasn't to blame—he was in a rotten fix."

"Absolutely," said Archie Glenthorne, nodding. "I mean to say, the dear chappie absolutely performed wonders! In spite of that dashed blot he positively went into the football like anything!"

"I don't know how he did it," declared Nipper frankly. "With a cousin like that on his mind, he could be excused for neglecting footer altogether. I don't know about you other chaps, but I'm going indoors. And I've forgotten everything about Eustace Carey."

"Hear, hear!"

The majority of the juniors agreed with Nipper's view, and a general move was made for the respective Houses. The excitement was over, and at last Ralph Leslie Fullwood was freed from anxiety.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE NEW FULLWOOD.



"BUSY?" asked Clive Russell genially.

"Not at all—come in," said Fullwood genially, with a welcome nod. "Just in time for tea, Clive. I was longing for a guest."

It was Saturday evening, and everybody was feeling contented. The St. Frank's Junior Eleven had just arrived back from

Helmford, where they had trounced the Helmfordians by two goals to one. Considering it was an away match, the result was joyous.

Fullwood, of course, had not been playing. He had only been pronounced fit by Dr. Brett that morning, and he was rather out of practice. But he was determined to make up for lost time now.

Most of the fellows had kept their word.

Since that evening—only two nights since—hardly anybody had mentioned Eustace Carey, and Stanley Clavering had taken his rightful place in the East House—where he was already voted to be a good sort. His attitude throughout the Eustace affair had impressed everybody.

The headmaster had taken no action regarding Fullwood. Eustace Carey had been the culprit—Fullwood a mere tool. And Ralph Leslie's general behaviour since the beginning of the term spoke volumes for his good intentions. Dr. Stafford decided to let the boy continue in his straight path.

The clouds had all gone, and Fullwood was happier than he had ever been in all his life. And he wasn't surprised to see Clive Russell in his study. Somehow, these two were rather drawn towards one another.

"You must be a bit lonely in here," said the Canadian boy, as he looked round the study. "Why don't you get somebody to share it? Or I guess it would be a good idea if you moved——"

"I like this study," interrupted Fullwood. "It's a good long way from Study A—the further the better. I don't want any memories of that room. Why don't you come in, Clive?"

"Would you like me to move here?" asked Russell eagerly.

"Nothing I'd like better!"

"Then I guess we'll shake on it," said Clive. "This is first-class, Ralph. I was going to suggest it myself, only I didn't like to butt in. Say, we'll be fine here. Wonder why we didn't think of it before?"

"I thought of it long ago," replied Fullwood quietly. "But I didn't like to suggest it, old man. You see, with that boulder of a Eustace knocking about, I was half-afraid——"

"With whom knocking about?"

"Eustace."

"Who's Eustace?" asked Clive, staring. "Never heard of him."

Fullwood grinned.

"Thanks," he said. "All right, I won't mention him again. I've only had one or two gibes from Forrest and Gulliver and that crowd. But I can afford to ignore them, thank goodness. Most of the fellows are sportsmen."

Fullwood poured out the tea, shaking his head.

"And to think that I was pally with those outsiders!" he went on, in amazement. "Gad, I can't understand it, Clive. What

an utter cad I must have been! It's a wonder you speak to me!"

Clive Russell pushed back his cuffs.

"Are you going to drop that?" he asked grimly. "We're looking ahead now, Ralph—not backwards! The past can go phut! Pour out that tea, and don't jaw so much. I guess you're too noisy!"

"What about Adams?" asked Fullwood, smiling. "You're sharing Study H with him, aren't you? We shall have to ask his permission before you can move on——"

"That American guy gets on my nerves," confessed Russell confidentially. "I'm a Canadian, and I don't like his boasting talk. According to him, Canada is worth about two cents! He's a good sort in his way, but I'd rather be in this study any old time. It'll suit him to be alone."

Tea was a very pleasant meal, and after it was over, Clive went off to explain things to Ulysses Spencer Adams, and to fetch his personal belongings away. And Fullwood sat back dreamily in the easy-chair.

Until now he hadn't know that life could be quite so good. He was firmly resolved to keep to the road he was now treading. Until he had actually started upon it, he hadn't realised the advantages of a straight road as compared to a crooked.

And as he sat there, thinking, a certain face came into his mind—the face of Reggie Pitt's sister. He had seen Winnie that afternoon, and she had been particularly friendly. In his heart, Fullwood knew that this girl was more responsible than anybody else for his reformation.

He hadn't seen her more than once or twice in a week—and then only at a brief meeting. But she was responsible, nevertheless. It was her good opinion that he desired—that he had striven to gain.

And, having won hers, he rose to his feet, stretched himself, and looked outside into the gathering dusk.

"This is my first term at St. Frank's!" he told himself softly. "There was another fellow here before that—but he's dead now—and good riddance to bad rubbish!"

THE END.

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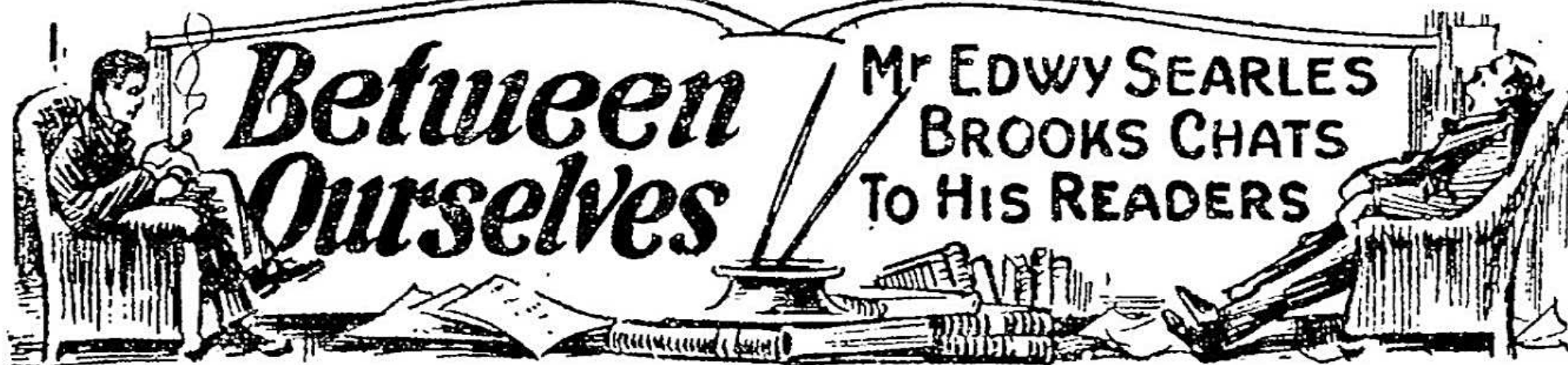
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NOTE.—If any reader writes to me, I shall be pleased to comment upon such remarks as are likely to interest the majority. All letters should be addressed to EDWY SEARLES BROOKS, c/o The Editor, THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY, The Fleetway House, Farringdon 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.

Just a little confidential word this week. Not merely to a few of you, but to the whole army of readers throughout England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, and every Colony and overseas possession and Dominion! In other words, EVERYBODY. Please pay very special attention, as I am asking a favour.

Well, not exactly a favour, but something a bit like it. I want you to make a special point this week of telling at least one non-reader friend of next week's coming number. You can tell a dozen friends if you like—the more the merrier. But please make up your mind NOW—as a special compliment to me—to tell the news to at least one friend. I feel sure that I can count on you all to be regular sports, and help things along.

Because next week's number is a very special one, and a word in advance to a non-reader will be a topping way of roping in a new member of the circle. It's a very big circle already, but we want to make it bigger and bigger. That's where you come in. I can easily address my remarks to YOU, the regular reader, but I can't get at the non-reader. But you can, and I am sure you won't think it a trouble to lend a hand, will you? How about it? Let's have a Special Old Paper Week, eh?

You see, next week's number will be absolutely distinctive. The first story of my New Series starts in it, and I am doing my best to make it the best one I've ever written. In addition, the Editor is giving away some rather wonderful packets of foreign stamps. He's told you all about it himself, of course, so there's no need for me to go into details. But if you'll only

spread the news among your friends, it'll be a first-class opportunity for them to become regular readers—they couldn't start taking in the Old Paper at a better time. Some of you cynics will probably say that this is just an advertisement stunt. Well, I can't help it if you do. I'm perfectly willing to admit that it's meant to be one! Isn't it natural that I should be intensely interested in a few solid slabs of new readers? That's what we want. Not a few scattered ones here and there, but chunks of them.

I haven't got much room for acknowledgments this week, but here are a few: Bob Tarrant (Lewisham, S.E.13), Albert S. Hughes (Tenbury), W. Rogers (W.1), Robert Jobling (Blaydon), W. E. Kieser (Penrith), J. Cook (Poplar), Fred Ingham (Bradford), A. W. Y. (Auburn, Australia), Intending Members (Cambridge), Albert John Grocott (West Hartlepool), Arthur Salt (Meliden, N. Wales), L. Lange (Bournemouth), W. F. Bridges (Derby).

Phew! That's a long letter of yours, Bob Tarrant! Yes, I can truthfully assure you that I have read every single word of it—not once, but twice. It's awfully difficult to give you the reply you deserve, and I don't think I can do it. But let me convince you that I never skip ANY pages of ANY letter, or even a single line. I think you'll be pleased with the New Series, which starts next week, for they will be purely school yarns—but with an element of school mystery and adventure. That's what most readers want, isn't it?

That little essay on scenery is excellent, Albert S. Hughes. If you'll elaborate it, and make it a bit longer, I should like to see it. Then I'll hand it over to the Editor for his consideration. When the League's properly going, you might even see it in print.

You shouldn't write to me, Intending Members. Please don't forget that all League questions should be addressed to the Chief Officer. If he doesn't give you an answer, you can bet your boots that you've made a bloomer in your questions, or something of that sort. If readers write to me, I want them to confine their subject to my stories.

E. S. B.



HOW TO PREPARE AND MOUNT STAMPS

LAST week we made a start on getting our hand in at this great indoor game of stamp-collecting, with as our first possessions:

- About 500 different stamps;
- A packet of stamp mounts;
- A pair of tweezers.

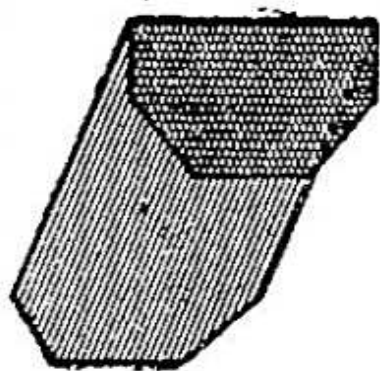
Before we attempt to arrange the stamps in a book, it will be well to make a few experiments in the method of mounting stamps. The stamps should be cleaned off the envelope or other paper to which they have been fixed. Most of the stamps in the packet will probably be already cleaned, but any stamps you have obtained from other sources should have the

backing paper removed. To do this without risk of injury to the stamps, take a saucer or shallow basin and lay the stamps face upwards on the surface of warm water. Don't attempt to do a lot at a time: try a few first in a saucer. The stamps float, and the purpose in floating them is to loosen the gum from behind the paper at the back without letting the water get on the face of the stamp and spoiling its colour.

Leave the stamps ten minutes or so, and then pick them out one at a time with the tweezers and you will find the back paper is easily and lightly pulled off. You have no more use for the back paper, but be careful where you put the stamp, for it is moist and probably sticky at the back. When floating stamps it is always well to have a sheet of clean blotting paper handy on which to lay the moist stamps *face downwards* until they are quite dry.

Now let us open the packet of mounts or hinges. Stamp mounts are neat little strips of thin semi-transparent paper gummed on one side. If you fold the mount in two with the gummed surface outside you form a hinge. This is simple enough, but it can be well done or clumsily done.

In the accompanying diagram you will see the best way to form the hinge for our purpose. The long arm of the hinge, two-thirds of its length, is meant for fixing in the album or book, while the short arm is all that is needed to hold the stamp.



Having folded the hinge, drawing the flat of your tweezers along the fold to make it quite flat and smooth, then moisten the small arm of the hinge ever so lightly, and fix it lightly to the back of a stamp at the top as in the third sketch. The hinge should come evenly at the top of the stamp. The stamp is now ready to be mounted in position on a sheet or page of an album or book, the long arm of the hinge being moistened—very lightly—and gently pressed into the required position in the album.

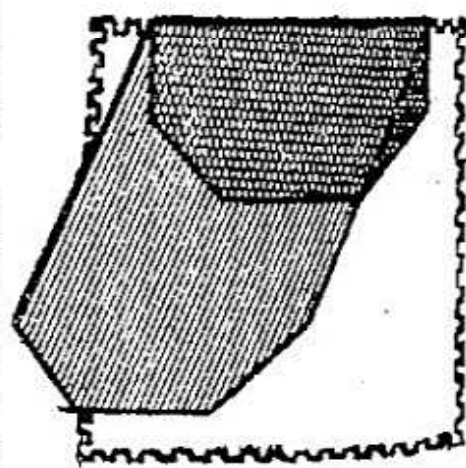
A stamp being a very slight thing does not need to be held in position with a bull-dog grip. The more lightly you mount, the neater will be the effect of the page when arranged, and the better for examining the stamp or removing it to some other position if you require to do so. So the merest touch of moisture will hold the stamp on the short arm of the hinge, and similarly the slightest moistening of the gum on the long arm will hold it in its place in the book.

Of course, nobody sticks stamps down fast in a stamp album nowadays. And we know better than to use stamp-edging and other substitutes for the proper kind of mounts.

The properly mounted stamp can be examined in every detail without removal. If it is properly hinged you can turn it over on its back without creasing the stamp or the perforations at the top.

Most collectors follow the uniform practice of mounting stamps at the top, but there is good reason, where large stamps are concerned, to vary the procedure so that large or long stamps get no chance to buckle.

For example, many of the French Colonial pictorial stamps are about $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. long by less than 1 in. wide or deep. In some designs the greater length is horizontal, in others vertical. My practice with such stamps is to fold my hinge the long way, in the same proportion—one-third and two-thirds—and if the length of the stamp is horizontal the mount is fixed to the top; if the length is vertical it goes at the side. When the hinge is placed at the side it should be the right side of the back of the stamp, so that when turned over in position in the album the hinges fold in the same direction as the cover of the album or book.





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 Caleroft, 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 turns out to be King Peter of Carlovía, and late of Caleroft. He is returning urgently to his unruly kingdom, and Sexton Blake, as Mr. James Brown, tutor, and Tinker, as Peter's school chum, agree to accompany the king on a dangerous mission. They arrive in due course in the mountainous and wild state of Carlovía. On the way to Shavola, the party are fired upon by a brigand, who is afterwards captured and sentenced to be shot. The execution is just about to be carried out when this instalment begins. (Now begin reading this rattling new yarn.)

"STOP, stop!"

Blimp and the lieutenant saluted, as Celia came running towards them.

"Who is in command here?" she asked breathlessly. "Is it you, lieutenant?"

"No, your Highness," answered the lieutenant. "The prisoner is Rivastoff, the brigand, and for having captured him it has pleased the King to make this gentleman captain of the Royal guard, so I am no longer in command. It is the King's will to shoot this bandit."

"Captain Coggs," said Celia quickly, "you cannot have forgotten the command the King gave you at the inn, that I am your mistress, and that you are to take orders from me?"

"I haven't forgotten, princess, and to take orders from you will be a pleasure and a joy," said Blimp gallantly.

"Then don't kill that wretched man until I have spoken to the king," said Celia.

She darted away in the moonlight and ran into the dining-hall, for the sentry who had taken the lieutenant's place on guard, saluted and stepped aside. At the sight of her Sexton Blake, Tinker, and Darro stood up; but the King who was smoking a cigarette, which he did not seem to be enjoying very much, kept to his seat in his carved and gilded chair.

"Peter," said Celia, "you must not do this thing—I implore you not to do it! On my knees, Peter, I beg you not to do it!"

"Outside!" snapped Peter; and the startled sentry almost jumped through the doorway. "And for the sake of Mike, get up, Celia, and don't grovel. This chap has got to go through it. He's a murderer and a thief, and he nearly bagged Blimp. He might have bagged me if he'd had a second shot. If you've got a word to say in the brute's favour say it, my child, and I'll listen."

"I haven't a word to say in his favour, Peter. I am speaking to you now not as the King but as your sister. Oh, Peter, don't let your first act of power be to send even a murderer to death! Don't begin your reign that way. Imprison this man for life if you will, but do not have him shot. That was our uncle's way. He was feared, I know, but he was hated. I don't want you hated, Peter."

"Well, this looks like being a jolly sort of life," grumbled the King. "If you're going to jump on my collar every time a man has to be hanged or shot you'll be kept busy. Don't let us have too much of it, Celia. As a special favour to you, once and only once, the beggar can have penal servitude for life, which is an expensive business, and I don't think he'll thank you for it. Inform Captain Coggs, cousin Darro, that the prisoner is reprieved, and

lock him up fast till he can be sent to Kamfak, for he's a slippery rogue."

"I think your Majesty is acting very wisely," began Prince Darro. "Very wisely——"

Peter withered him with a glare.

"When I need your opinion I'll ask for it," he said. "I fancy I gave you a command!"

"Thank you, Peter," said Celia, as Prince Darro made hastily for the door. "Thank you very much. Good-night!"

His Majesty whistled dismally, and then grinned at Tinker.

"That's a load off my chest, old son," he said; "but I mustn't do too much of it. Of course, I didn't want to shoot the guy, but if I start letting 'em off they'll take me for any old sort of a sap-head. Don't go yet, Celia. Play us some jazz music to cheer us up."

An hour later Tinker tapped at the door of Sexton Blake's bed-room. The private detective was sitting at the open window, smoking his pipe, and looking out over the peaks and valleys of Carlovía.

"How do you think my pal Peter is going to shape, guv'nor?" asked Tinker.

"That would take a bit of answering, young 'un," said Sexton Blake. "He might do well, and he might do the reverse. He's good-natured, but he's lazy. He'll get lazier as the novelty wears off. That's the big danger. Sarjo and the other ministers will get more out of him through his laziness than by trying to influence him, for the boy has a will of his own, if he wasn't too idle to exert it. That's where he may fail, in letting things slide."

"You've about hit it, guv'nor, for Peter does like to take life easily. I wish he'd got his sister's grit. Celia knows where he's weak, too, and she gave me a bit of jolly important news. You know she distrusts and dislikes old Sarjo? Sarjo has got a notion of marrying her to that ass with the sleek hair, Prince Darro, and Celia just hates the guy. And this being such a jolly country, Peter might go West after the wedding jolly quickly, for they'd butter the stairs, dope his soup, or shy a Mill's bomb at him."

"And Celia would come to the throne with Darro as Prince Consort?" said Blake, lowering his voice. "Don't talk loudly, young 'un, for these panelled walls might have been put in specially for listeners. Even if the wedding took place, and Peter met with one of the little accidents you suggest, I don't think Sarjo would have it all his own way, whatever kind of an idiot Prince Darro may be, for Celia is no fool."

"Anything but a fool, guv'nor. She's afraid they'll badger Peter into giving his consent. We're on her side all the time, and I told her so."

"True; but as the princess royal she must marry somebody, Tinker, and she can't choose for herself. That's one of the penalties of her position in an old-fashioned country like this. Another unfortunate point is, that our Foreign Office doesn't object to Prince Darro. What they don't want is a republic, so I'll get along and see what's happening in Kamfak, for I can't afford to waste a week here."

"How do you go, when you do go, and what about me, guv'nor?"

"I'm going on the lieutenant's bicycle as soon as I've smoked another pipe. Rather a nervy ride, but there's a bright moon. You can keep Peter and Celia company, and your eyes and ears wide open at the same time. I fancy they'll send up the Royal Guard, for Sarjo doesn't disobey, though he may not like it. As an old drill-instructor, Blimp knows his business, so let him rattle them up."

"What about the colonel, guv'nor? He'll be savage when he finds Peter has introduced a new captain."

"Oh, if he kicks, Peter had better retire him!" said Sexton Blake. "Peter thinks a lot of Blimp, and so do I. He'll stick up for Blimp against forty colonels, and you do the same. If I don't come back to Shalvola, I shall see you at Kamfak, and if I'm any prophet, young 'un, we shall have some exciting times before we make our report to Sir Randolph."

Sexton Blake knocked the ashes out of his pipe, and stretched himself.

"Now I'll make a move," he said, picking up a small attache-case. "Take care of yourself, young 'un."

Tinker went with him to the gate, where Blimp was waiting for him with the bicycle at the end of the lowered drawbridge.

"I don't suppose the rank and file of your new regiment will know much English, captain," said Sexton Blake. "So how will you manage?"

"Gawsh! Don't let that worry you, sir," said Blimp with a grin. "Only lead me to 'em and I'll eat 'em. I'm not trying to learn their lingo, but they'll jolly soon learn mine. Gimme an awkward squad to 'andle and I'm in my glory. I'll break 'em and make 'em or I'll bust 'em. I've turned stuff awful enough to break your 'eart to look at into a respectable regiment, and judging by the few of 'em up 'ere, though their uniforms are a 'orror, the Royal Guards aren't such a bad bunch. Gawsh! Leave it to me, sir, and I'll surprise you. And don't you forget, sir."

Sexton Blake laughed, and set off on his perilous ride. As Tinker went to his room he saw a sentry with a rifle and fixed bayonet on guard outside the door of King Peter's bed-chamber.

"Well, if I had to have a guy with a gun with a spike on it fooling on my door—"

mat all night I'd rather not be a king," thought Tinker. "There are some jobs I don't seem to want, and Peter's is one of 'em, and I hope he won't miff it. And as sure as eggs he will miff it, unless he's watched!"

KAMFAK.

COLONEL ZUSS, of the Royal Guard, was a tall, lean man, very dark and very stiff, for it was renowned that he wore corsets to give him a military figure. He had a huge, glossy

prime minister. "These are early days, my dear Paul, so let the boy have his way."

"But that cursed hole, Shalvola, that bleak mountain top. It may mean a fortnight there, for you cannot be ready earlier. And why should he want the Royal Guard? What can have put the notion into the brat's head?"

"Oh, all boys are fond of soldiers, I suppose! It is a great thing to have a royal guard; and perhaps he wants to show off, and impress his English schoolboy friend. The new uniforms we must have had, in any case, so get them in hand.



"Stop, stop!" Blimp and the lieutenant saluted as Celia came running towards them.

moustache with waves in it. Like all Carlovians, he was fond of cigarettes, and in order to prevent his moustache from being singed, he smoked them through a gold-mounted amber cigarette-holder nearly a foot in length. His position was a coveted one, highly paid, and little to do, and as he had obtained it through the prime minister, he was devoted to Oscar Sarjo, and the two were very confidential and friendly.

"Ten million blazes!" exclaimed the colonel, who had King Peter's letter in his hand. "Must I do this, then?"

"I am afraid it must be done," said the

Set every tailor in Kamfak at work. It goes against the grain a little to be ordered about by this lad, but as I said before, my dear Paul, these are early days. He is putty, just putty; I can mould him with my two hands into any shape I like. My advice to you, Paul, is to smarten up your men, hurry them to Shalvola, and be very deferential to his Majesty."

"But who is this English tutor he has brought with him? Is he to be trusted?"

"I cannot tell you yet. He seems a mild-mannered, inoffensive person. Prince Darro is there, and he will learn something. Wait, and be patient, my dear

fellow. King Peter is not Prince Paul Lyanoff. We have a child to deal with, not a hard-hearted tyrant like the late unlamented Prince Regent, so if we watch points we shall prosper."

The thin colonel saluted, highly flattered and pleased with his reception, and went out.

"A brainless, greedy ass, but a useful tool!" thought the prime minister, and sat down at his desk.

So it was that the Royal Guard went up towards Shalvola as far the railway would carry them and then on foot, and the Kamfak tailors were inundated with orders for military uniforms. And into the shop of Hermann Shoad, Kamfak's most exclusive and expensive tailor, walked a spectacled man with a stoop, who except that he wore an ordinary collar and tie, would have reminded the prosperous tailor of an English tourist, if he had ever seen an English tourist.

"I wish to see the proprietor himself," said the visitor.

After some delay Shoad came, raised his hands, and shook his head.

"A uniform, sir, a military uniform? Impossible!" he said. "We are working night and day on uniforms. It is a royal order."

"So is this," said the Englishman, who was Sexton Blake. "It is the uniform of a captain of the Royal Guard. This paper contains the measurements. You will please get it in hand at once, and deliver it at the castle of Shalvola without delay."

"But, sir—"

"Here is another paper. Good-morning."

Sexton Blake went out, leaving the astonished tailor gazing at a slip of paper bearing the royal seal and the words, "To be carried out immediately.—Peter R." It was the order for Blimp's new uniform, and a very large-sized uniform at that, signed by the King.

Blake strolled down the main boulevard of Kamfak. The pavements were broad and lined with trees and crowded with people. There were many shops and restaurants, and noisy electric trams ran up and down. Some children were dancing merrily to the strains of a barrel organ, and street hawkers were selling fruit and flowers. Kamfak seemed quite an ordinary sort of place to a travelled person like Sexton Blake, and yet he saw in Kamfak what he had never seen in any town or city in the world except at carnival time.

Every now and then he encountered a man wearing a flesh-coloured mask. He saw them on foot, in motor-cars, on the top of the trams, and seated drinking wine out of tall, slim glasses at the marble-topped tables of the open-air restaurants. They were people of the better class, by their dress. This wearing of masks might have puzzled

a stranger; but Sexton Blake had a very good idea of the political situation. Both parties, the royalists and the republicans, employed gunmen to pick off their opponents, and, without a mask, Kamfak was not a healthy place for an individual who had made himself unpopular to either faction.

Blake sat down in a cafe opposite the cathedral and ordered a bottle of wine.

"Tell me," he said to the waiter who served him, "is it some holiday or feast? Why are there so many masks?"

"Surely you are a stranger?" said the waiter. "And English, I see. Kamfak is the city of masks. It is not wise to talk about these things. Many are for the boy king—many are against him. I am nothing except to serve the guests. It has been quiet of late, but one never knows. At any moment—A thousand fiends! Hide yourself—quick! They are at it!"

The waiter bolted into the back of the restaurant, and, leaping from their seats, the wine-drinkers bolted after him. Trams quickened their pace, and pedestrians and hawkers dived into the nearest shops, and the crazy Englishman alone kept his place and calmly sipped his wine. There was a rattle of revolver-shots. Two masked men came racing across the square, firing back as they ran at three other men. The window of a chemist's shop next to the restaurant where Sexton Blake sat was shattered by a bullet, and a torrent of green liquid from a huge glass bottle, also smashed by the bullet, gushed over the pavement.

One of the masked men spun round and fell prone on his face, and the others dashed down an alley into safety. Then came a Kamfak policeman in a grey uniform, clutching a service revolver, and blowing a whistle furiously. Five minutes later the fallen man was carried away on an ambulance, the guests came back to finish their wine, the chemist sent for workmen to board up his window, and life went on again in the busy boulevard as if nothing had happened.

"These English," muttered the waiter, as he watched Sexton Blake refill his glass and light a cigarette, "have no nerves. They are built of wood. Even such a one as that with the stoop and the spectacles and clothes as if he would attend a funeral. No nerves—just wood!"

Sexton Blake walked away, and he was quite conscious of the fact that he was being followed. He turned, as a hand was laid on his arm, and confronted a smiling man who had politely removed his hat.

"Mr. James Brown, I believe?" said the stranger, in English. "Will you do me the honour of drinking a glass of wine with me? I have received your name from the Hotel Carlovica, and I am Johann Veilburg of the police. Over a glass of wine, Mr. Brown, you could no doubt explain to my satisfaction what you are doing in Kamfak."

"Thanks; but I have just taken wine," said Sexton Blake. "What I am doing in Kamfak, Mr. Veilburg, does not concern the police. I am the king's tutor."

The detective bowed. "That is a very high position," he said, bowing. "If such is the case, I have nothing more to say to your Excellency, except a proof."

Sexton Blake took a paper from his pocket and, after glancing at it, Veilburg bowed again and put on his hat.

"Though as yet I am not familiar with his Majesty's signature, I am satisfied," he said. "Accept my humble apologies, Excellency. We are suspicious of strangers in Kamfak just now. Permit me to endorse this paper with my name. It will be of service to your Excellency should your movements attract the attention of any of my colleagues. I wish your Excellency a pleasant sojourn."

"Thank you!" said Blake. "I hope I shall, but I doubt it; this is such an extraordinary town. I have already seen a man shot down in broad daylight. You will—er—pardon me, Mr. Veilburg, but, as an Englishman, these lawless proceedings amaze me. And the masks. I am—er—fully aware that in all lawless communities the police are very unpopular. As you can scarcely be an exception, it is quite surprising to me that you should walk the streets unmasked."

"It is quite simple, Excellency. I have a bodyguard. Three of my men accompany me everywhere, and with a revolver they are experts. The man who shot me would have no chance at all, and they know it. I do not think your Excellency runs any risks in Kamfak, but it is very unwise, though it may be English, not to take cover when bullets are flying. Should your Excellency feel unsafe, I shall be only too happy to provide you with an efficient guard."

Sexton Blake declined this offer with thanks, for a police-guard was the very last thing he wanted. The detective bowed himself away and crossed the street, closely followed by three other men, and Blake strolled on past the gates of the palace, where two sentries stood on guard before the tall iron gates.

Presently the Prime Minister's secretary, a bald-headed man, with a thin, white face and a nose like the beak of a bird of prey, approached his master.

"It is Mr. James Brown, Excellency," he said, "the King's tutor."

"Ah, yes!" said Oscar Sarjo with a grin. "Harmless, I think, Brentschi, but a nuisance. That interfering British Foreign Office insisted that he should have a tutor. He is of the boy's own choosing, and that is hopeful. No boy would select a tutor who was not an easy-going fool. Send him in, then, and let us see what he wants."

"One moment, Excellency. There is news from Shalvola. The King's English servant

captured Rivastoff, the bandit. The King condemned him to be shot, but reprieved him when Princess Celia pleaded for his life."

"A fool of a girl!" said the Prime Minister. "I must deal with her. This is surely a trifling matter to be the subject of a report, Brentschi."

"There is more, Excellency. The English servant, it seems, was a non-commissioned officer in the British Army. For the capture of Rivastoff the King has promoted him to be captain in the Royal Guard."

"The young fool! He will make enemies faster than he can count them. Colonel Zuss will be his bitter foe for ever, though Zuss is nothing but a fool himself. Send in this tutor, for he may have some influence over the boy, and complain that we kept him waiting."

Sarjo assumed his blandest smile and most amiable manner to greet the King's tutor. He spoke openly and freely, and his attitude would have disarmed anyone who did not know him to be a wily old rogue, greedy for power and wealth.

"I cannot hide from you, Mr. Brown," he said, "that the political position is difficult and dangerous. The republican party is strong, and there is a powerful Bolshevik influence. We Royalists, however, hold the power. There is a demand for a parliament in some quarters, but Carlovica has never had a parliament, and I am against any such drastic change."

"As the King's tutor, I am outside politics," said Blake. "I—er—was given to understand there would be some danger. I am not really a nervous man, but these shootings in the streets are, to say the least of it, deplorable. Do you think they will attack the King?"

"I trust not. The Carlovians are fond of novelty, and I am sure they will give the young King a royal and loyal reception. Later they may change their tune and howl for his head, for they are very fierce. Now, Mr. Brown, as I have told you so many things, I should like you to be confidential with me. A boy changes enormously in a few years. What is your opinion of the King from your personal knowledge?"

"He is inclined to be lazy," said Sexton Blake slowly. "Mentally, I mean. Physically, he is energetic."

"All the better. If he is mentally lazy he will not be such a nuisance. As a man of the world, Mr. Brown," the Prime Minister added flatteringly, "it would be madness to allow a mere schoolboy to exert too much power."

"It would of course be fatal," agreed the King's tutor.

(Another grand instalment of this thrilling yarn will appear next week.)

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 Leagueites and Readers,

I must first remind you that NEXT WEEK we are presenting a GIFT PACKET OF FOREIGN ASSORTED STAMPS with each copy of THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY, and that these packets of stamps will be given away with the Old Paper for four consecutive weeks. The unique features of these gifts are: no TWO PACKETS in any TWO copies of THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY will be exactly alike, and, to add to the attraction, some of the packets will contain stamps worth at least 1/- each. Special opportunities, later on, will be given to Members of the League to exchange their stamps with one another. This is a very great advantage to collectors, and I hope that every reader who is not yet a member will see the force of it, and join the League without waiting any longer.

Collecting foreign stamps is one of the oldest and most fascinating of hobbies, and the more you learn about it, the more enthusiastic you become. It is a hobby you can begin during your schooldays and continue throughout your life, for stamps, unlike cigarette pictures, have a real monetary value, varying with each specimen, which often increases as time goes on. There are some stamps, for instance, like the Blue Mauritius, that are worth some thousands of pounds. Stamps that are priced at only a shilling or two to-day may be worth a few pounds in a few years. But I must leave it to the expert knowledge of Mr. Melville to introduce you to the absorbing hobby of stamp collecting. His articles, which have been specially written for THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY, should arouse the keenest interest among Leagueites and Readers, and I trust will be the means, together with the gift stamps we are offering,

of adding considerably to the ranks of collectors of foreign stamps.

Member 1970 has sent me a delightful little poem which he calls "On Schooldays." Unfortunately, the League is not yet big enough for me to devote space for the League Mag., or I would be tempted to publish M1970's very promising effort. I am therefore returning the poem to its author for him to keep until you, my readers, bring the League up to the required ten thousand membership, when we can forge ahead with the Mag. and other items of our future programme outlined below.

My compliments to O. O. F. M. 519, who has had printed on his notepaper the heading "ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE" in handsome gold lettering. He has also had special envelopes printed bearing the League inscription. Being an ambitious O.O., he wants to know if he must obtain twelve more introductions or six new members to win the gold medal. That is quite correct; when the League has reached the ten thousand membership, and provided he is the holder of the silver medal, which, as I have already stated, is returned in exchange for the gold one.

O. O. F. M. 549 says he is feeling terrifically enthusiastic about the League, and that he will get every single boy in Southport to join the League. That's the spirit I like. Surely, this is Buster Boots in real life. With this sort of push, F. M. 549 ought to make his mark in the world. I wish him the best of luck, and hope he will succeed in letting Southport know there is a St. Frank's League, and that F. M. 549 is a real live wire representative.

THE CHIEF OFFICER.

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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 £d., 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. 17. Oct. 17, 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.
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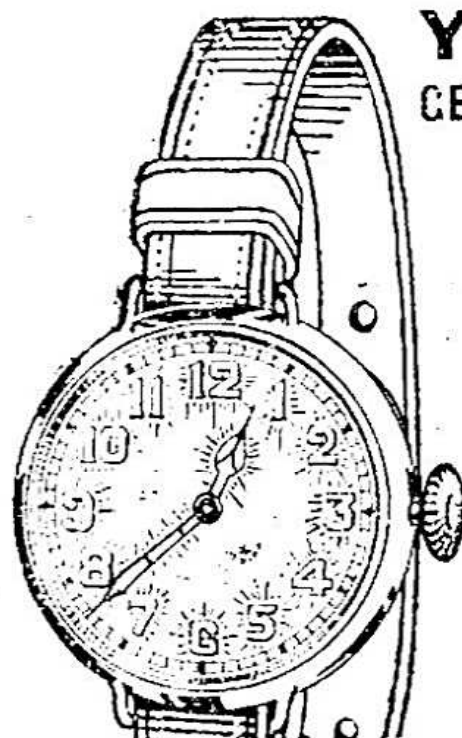
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