

GRAND NEW BARRING-OUT SERIES BEGINS TO-DAY!

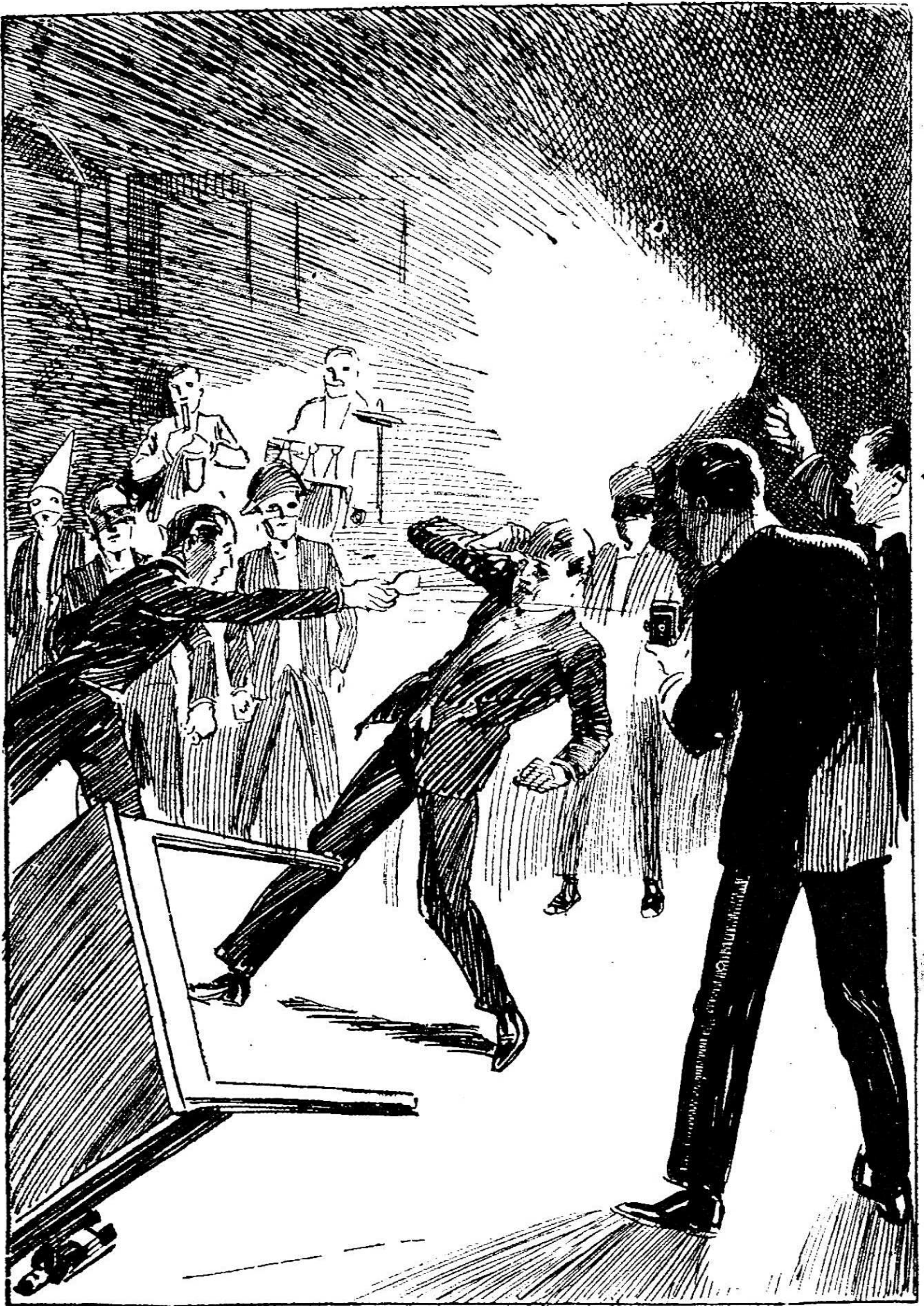
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The Schoolboy Dictator

The central figure of that rowdy trio, wearing a St. Frank's cap, was Guy Sinclair of the Sixth.



And at the same second there came a curious, puffing explosion from the other end of the room—accompanied by a blinding flash of light.

THE SCHOOLBOY DICTATOR!



By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

With the beginning of the new term at St. Frank's, we commence this week a grand new series in which Guy Sinclair, the bully of the Sixth, succeeds in getting himself appointed prefect of the West House in place of Arthur Morrow. Sinclair is as heartily detested as Morrow is liked, and it is only through a form of blackmail against Mr. Stokes that the new prefect has been able to obtain his position. How this comes about, and threatens to lead to serious trouble at St. Frank's, is related in this week's rousing story.

THE EDITOR.

CHAPTER I.

THE NEW YEAR REVELLERS.

"GOOD gad!" Archie Glenthorne uttered the words in a tone of absolute horror. He had suddenly come to a dead halt, and he was staring with a dazed, glassy look in his eyes. He had even turned slightly pale.

"What's the matter, Archie, old son?" asked Reggie Pitt.

The group of St. Frank's juniors halted, and Archie Glenthorne was the centre of interest for the moment. It was New Year's Eve, close upon midnight, and the St. Frank's revellers had sallied out to see the New Year in. Piccadilly Circus was looking gay and animated with other jovial sportsmen.

"Odds slurs and insults!" gasped Archie. "I mean to say, a dashed disgrace to the good old Alma Mater. What? Something ought to be done, laddies! This foul blot must be wiped out!"

"What's the fathead gassing about?"

demanding Edward Oswald Handforth tartly. "What blot? Don't take any notice of him. We're going down the Haymarket, and then across Trafalgar Square——"

"Hold on!" interrupted Dick Hamilton, the popular captain of the Remove, better known as Nipper. "Hold on! I think I know what Archie's driving at. By Jove! This is serious, and no mistake!"

"What-ho!" gurgled Archie. "The old optics have observed the frightful scene of ghastly horror?"

"Yes," answered Nipper, nodding. "Look, Handy! Through that crowd on the other side of the road, Reggie. It's Sinclair of the Sixth."

The other juniors looked with growing interest. They were on one of the famous islands of Piccadilly Circus, and in a position to watch the passing throngs without hindering the pedestrian traffic. It was a clear, bright night, and there were any amount of people about. The West End was crowded with cheery parties who had decided to see the New Year in.

One party of three seemed extraordinarily cheery. It was this trio, indeed, which had attracted Archie Glenthorne's attention in the first place. Three young fellows were forcing their way along the road, regardless of taxicabs and buses, singing at the top of their voices, and generally behaving in a riotous manner. But people only smiled. Even the police were tolerant. New Year's Eve was a special occasion.

The three young sports were arm-in-arm, and only the centre one was recognisable. He was a dandified fellow of about seventeen, attired in an overcoat, a silken scarf, and one of the well-known St. Frank's caps was placed on his head, with the peak to the back.

His companions were entirely disguised, since they wore grotesque masks, and riotous looking coloured paper hats. These two did not interest the St. Frank's crowd at all. But the third one did. He was Guy Sinclair, of the Sixth Form at St. Frank's. He was indeed a prefect of the East House.

"The absolute rotter!" said Church indignantly.

"He's disgracing the school!" snorted McClure.

"What-ho! Precisely the same conclusion as Archibald arrived at!" exclaimed Glenthorne. "I mean to say, when I caught sight of the chappie I positively went jellified at the knees. This sort of thing is liable to make a cove weep. Disgracing the good old school, I mean—"

Handforth frowned dangerously.

"We're going to settle this matter!" he said. "By George! Parading the West End in a St. Frank's cap, and brawling! I'll bet the chap's half tipsy, too!"

"We don't want to start any trouble—" began Church.

"He's right, Handy," said Nipper quickly. "Better go easy."

Handforth stared.

"You're going to let this go on?" he asked furiously.

"No, certainly not," retorted Nipper. "We've got to get that cap, anyhow. But there's no need to do any punching or scrapping. Come along, you fellows, just one rush, and we'll grab the spoils."

"Hurrah!"

There were over a dozen Removites and Fourth-Formers in the party, so it was a certainty that the raid would be a success. Guy Sinclair and his companions were wandering off in the direction of Regent Street, and they appeared to be enjoying the attention they were attracting.

Unquestionably, they were behaving in a disgraceful manner. It is one thing to be light-hearted and gay on New Year's Eve, but another thing to go about brawling and behaving like young hooligans. Sinclair and

his friends had gone beyond all reasonable bounds.

Nipper, Pitt, Handforth and the others didn't care two straws about Guy Sinclair. In fact, this sort of thing was only to be expected from such a cad. The East House prefect was well-known at St. Frank's as an arrant outsider. Indeed, the only useful purpose he served in life was during the cricket season, for, curiously, enough, he was a really brainy bat.

No, the juniors didn't care a toss about Sinclair. But they weren't going to have him parading the streets in a St. Frank's cap, and bringing the old school into disrepute. There was hardly a fellow who didn't take immense pride in the old college, and to see the familiar colours exhibited in this brawling way aroused their ire to a high pitch.

Sinclair could do just as he liked, it was no concern of anybody's. But that cap was coming off.

It came.

Handforth was the first to reach the yelling trio. He didn't waste time on preliminaries. At the moment Sinclair was singing with unrestrained abandon. He seemed to be greatly concerned about the doings of a certain Red-headed Mamma. Indeed, he proclaimed far and wide, with various interpolations from his two companions, that she was a lady to be very wary of.

Handforth spoilt everything by pushing his right fist into Sinclair's mouth just when the Sixth-Former was emitting a particularly lusty bar. The song ceased abruptly, and Sinclair sat down on the pavement opposite Swan and Edgar's with a dull thud.

"You rotter!" bawled Handforth. "Gimme that cap!"

Sinclair was at a disadvantage. Sitting on the pavement, wondering how many teeth were loosened, he had no opportunity of replying in a fitting manner. He gave a wild roar, but it could scarcely be described as a lucid remark. And Handforth tore the cap off his head with a triumphant yell.

Sinclair yelled, too, and quite a little crowd collected. Considering that Handforth had pulled out about two locks of hair by the roots, the unfortunate Sinclair had a little justification for being upset.

"Handforth!" he gurgled, as he struggled to his feet. "You—you young cub! What the thunder—"

"Chuck it, Sinclair!" snorted Nipper, as he and the other juniors pressed round. "You ought to be jolly well boiled. Haven't you got more sense than to parade in this disgusting way, wearing the school colours?"

"He ought to be bumped in public!" shouted Pitt.

"Hear, hear!"

"You infernal young cads!" roared Sinclair thickly. "Give me that cap back. I'll skin you for this when term starts—"

"Look out, there's a bobby coming over!" interrupted Church uneasily. "We don't want to be mixed up in anything shady—"

"Yes, we'll go," said Nipper. "Got that cap, Handy?"

"Yes, but what about Sinclair?" demanded Handforth. "I think we ought to drop him down a manhole, or something. Aren't sewers especially provided for rubbish? Come on, let's pull up—"

"Don't be an ass!" interrupted Nipper. "We'll make ourselves as bad as Sinclair at that rate. We've got the cap, and that's good enough. Let's clear off. The rotter can do as he likes now."

"It's not our business, anyhow," added Buster Boots.

Before the crowd could increase its size the St. Frank's juniors pushed their way out. Sinclair's companions seemed to regard the whole incident as a good joke, and they were laughing uproariously. They had partially removed their masks, and were revealed as two brainless looking types of sportsmen of about nineteen or twenty.

Handforth kept possession of Sinclair's cap, and he informed the others that he would have some good sport with it on the first day of term. But the little incident was soon forgotten, for it was just upon midnight, and the old year was rapidly passing. Within a very few moments the bells would be ringing, and the whistles shrieking, and the hooters blaring.

Nearly all the juniors had only arrived in London that day, having come straight down from Derbyshire with Lord Dorrimore and a number of the Moor View girls. They had been spending a wonderful Christmas at Dorrimore Castle.

The genial peer had thought it rather a good idea to bring the fellows up to town in time to see the New Year in. The girls had gone off to their respective homes, and one or two of the boys had followed their example. The party was quite a big one, in spite of this.

They felt that they had done well. There wasn't a junior who didn't flush with indignation at the thought of Sinclair disgracing the school colours in such a way. The fact that he was a senior and a prefect made his offence doubly heinous.

As for Sinclair himself, his good humour vanished. His companions continued to broadcast warnings about the Red-headed Mamma, but Guy Sinclair took no part in these transmissions. He allowed himself to be dragged along between his companions, and his expression was sullen.

He wasn't altogether to be blamed. He was rather a weak sort of young fool, and he had allowed these questionable friends of his to drag him along with them. They weren't really friends, merely acquaintances whom he had met at the home of a mutual friend. And having "had a few," they had thought it rather a good scheme to sally forth into the throng.

Sinclair's enthusiasm was dampened. His teeth were paining him, and there was a nasty swelling on his underlip. In addition to this, he felt rather cold about the head, and was not altogether pleased when one of his companions pinned a newspaper into the shape of a fool's cap, and proffered it to him.

"Don't be an idiot!" snorted Sinclair. "I can't wear that!"

"Better than nothing!" suggested the other. "On with it, man!"

The paper cone was jammed on, and it didn't feel at all uncomfortable. Sinclair allowed it to remain, especially as his friends assured him that it was quite appropriate for the occasion.

They wended their way up Regent Street, singing and shouting. Sinclair's spirits revived somewhat. He even joined in a song, intimating that it wouldn't be a bad idea to visit a place known as Sunny Havana. In fact, he seemed quite keen on the idea.

"Sinclair!"

The Sixth-Former started so violently that his fool's cap jerked sideways in a most drunken fashion. There had been something peremptory and curt in that spoken word, and he recognised the voice, too.

Mr. Beverley Stokes was confronting him, and Mr. Beverley Stokes was the Housemaster of the West House at St. Frank's.

CHAPTER II.

BARRY STOKES' MISSION.



GUY SINCLAIR felt that he had a real grievance.

It was bad enough to have the West End swarming with St. Frank's juniors, but it was a bit too thick when a Housemaster bobbed up in that disconcerting fashion. The West End seemed to be littered with the very people he didn't want to meet.

"Sinclair!" exclaimed Mr. Stokes sternly. "What does this mean?"

Sinclair glared. Mr. Stokes wasn't his Housemaster, anyhow—he hadn't any authority over him at all—and this sort of thing was a bit rotten.

"Anything wrong?" he asked insolently.

"There seems to be something decidedly

wrong, Sinclair!" retorted Mr. Stokes, in a sharp voice. "I should like you to remember that you are a prefect of St. Frank's College, and that this hooliganly conduct is not in keeping with your—"

"It's New Year's Eve!" broke in Sinclair furiously.

"I'm aware that New Year's Eve is used as an excuse for all sorts of excesses," said Mr. Stokes curtly. "That is no reason why you should perambulate the streets of London with these undesirable friends of yours, acting like a young fool."

"You're not my Housemaster!" shouted Sinclair.

"You may count that fact as a very fortunate one," snapped Mr. Stokes. "I am not attempting to interfere, Sinclair. I merely wish to remind you of your duty to the school. Be sensible, and cease this ruffianly conduct. Compose yourself, sir—behave like a human being, and not like a jibbering monkey! Remember the St. Frank's code."

Mr. Stokes turned on his heel and walked away—feeling rather sorry that he had interfered. He had an idea that he had blundered. It was no good talking to Sinclair. The young fool would probably be all the worse now.

These fears were well founded.

For Guy Sinclair felt that he would have to do something to show his contempt for the Housemaster's advice. His two friends were cackling inanely, and jibing at him.

"Shut up, you idiots!" snarled Sinclair. "Do you think I take any notice of that interfering beast? Come on! Let's go fairly on the razzle! I don't care where we end up! We'll make a night of it!"

"Good man!" said one of the others. "Let's grab something to eat, and then carry on with the good work."

They went on arm-in-arm again, and Barry Stokes, in the meantime, felt decidedly uneasy. He was quite convinced now that he had blundered. If he had had any sense, he would have ignored Sinclair altogether.

Of course, the fellow was an outsider. Even at St. Frank's he had the reputation of being a "goer." Away from all the school influences he was naturally far worse. And on a night when the streets were crowded with revellers, Sinclair was just the type of fellow to go the whole hog.

"Oh, well, I'm not going to bother my head over the young ass!" muttered Mr. Stokes. "He'll probably finish up at the police-station—but that's his own concern."

The Housemaster turned his footsteps towards home—or, to be exact, his father's home, for Barry Stokes and his wife regarded the West House of St. Frank's as their own abode. During the holidays they always stayed in London at the home of Sir Oliver Stokes, K.C.

The Housemaster's father was not only famous, but his income was fabulous, and if Barry had chosen he could have led an idle

life. But he much preferred to earn his own living at St. Frank's.

He had only ventured out for a stroll to "see the New Year in," and when he reached home he found that his wife was still out with some friends, and the library was empty, save for his father.

"Oh, there you are, Barry!" said Sir Oliver, looking up. "Lambert was here a few minutes ago, asking for you. He seemed very uneasy about something. Do you know what's wrong?"

"Haven't the faintest idea," replied Barry Stokes. "Lambert, eh? I don't know the man particularly well—I've only met him here, in your house, pater. What on earth can he want me for?"

Sir Oliver shook his head.

"He's a fussy little fellow, is Lambert," he replied. "Quite a good man in his own way, but not exactly the type I care for. I'm not sure, but I believe he's waiting in the billiard-room. Young Bentley is there, too. They're probably having a hundred up."

"I'll go along and see," said Barry, nodding.

He was rather astonished. This Mr. Lambert was a stockbroker, and more than once he had tenaciously attached himself to the young schoolmaster. Somehow, Barry seemed to attract him. But the feeling was not reciprocated. Mr. Stokes was not particularly fond of Mr. Lambert.

Arriving at the billiard-room, he entered, and found the two men just finishing their game. Mr. Rodney Lambert was a small, wizened man, with a very spruce appearance and a nervous manner. His companion was a languid young fellow of a commonplace type.

"Ah, Barry!" exclaimed Mr. Lambert eagerly. "Just the man I wanted! Splendid! Your father told you, eh? Thank you—the fact is, I'm wondering if you will do me a little favour—"

"Something private, eh?" put in young Bentley. "Right-ho! Good-night, Mr. Lambert—cheerio, Barry!"

He wandered out of the billiard-room with a nod, and Mr. Lambert looked relieved. He went across, closed the door, and turned to Barry Stokes with an anxious light in his eyes. The housemaster was puzzled. He could not imagine what all this mystery meant.

"I think you know my son, don't you?" asked Mr. Lambert quietly.

"I have met him," said Barry, in a guarded manner.

"A foolish boy—a headstrong, reckless young fool, indeed!" continued Mr. Lambert sadly. "I have done everything within my power to control him, but I might as well have attempted to stem the tide itself. The boy is absolutely impossible when he gets into one of his reckless moods."

Mr. Beverley Stokes was still puzzled. He remembered young Lambert—he had been a member of the party on Boxing Day. A

quiet fellow, seemingly decent enough, but rather prone to get out of hand after he had partaken of a little whisky.

"I thought your son was quite a model young man, Mr. Lambert," smiled Barry. "Isn't he in the fortunate position of private secretary to a monarch of industry who spends most of his winters abroad? Isn't the lucky young beggar going to Monte Carlo for the season?"

"They leave to-morrow, or the day after," replied Mr. Lambert. "That's just it, Barry—that's just the point. Much against my wishes, Rodney insisted upon going out with some friends of his to-night."

"Nothing particularly dreadful in that, is there?"

"No, no, of course not!" went on the other. "Please let me finish. It is New Year's Eve—strictly speaking, the first day of January by now—and it is a night of unusual revelry. I have no doubt that the majority of questionable resorts are overcrowded. Quite by chance, I learned about an hour ago that Rodney's companions had taken him to the Smugglers' Lair."

At last Barry Stokes understood, and he looked grave.

"The Smuggler's Lair, eh?" he repeated, with a whistle.

"You know the place?"

"Only by reputation," replied Mr. Stokes. "I rather pride myself on the fact that I have never entered its doors. The Smuggler's Lair has about the worst record of any night club in London."

"You agree, then, that it is a vicious centre?" asked Mr. Lambert anxiously.

"My dear sir, it is notorious," replied Mr. Stokes. "I am sorry to hear that your son has allowed himself to be drawn—"

"This will mean his ruin," moaned Mr. Lambert. "If Lord Swaffield—his employer—gets to hear of this escapade, it will mean instant dismissal, and the utter ruin of my son's career. You may remember that Lord Swaffield instigated a clean sweep of night clubs some months ago. He is opposed to all such resorts."

"And his own private secretary visits the worst of the lot on New Year's Eve!" said Barry slowly. "H'm! It is certainly an awkward situation, Mr. Lambert. If Lord Swaffield hears of this, your son will soon be out of a job."

Mr. Lambert clutched at Barry's sleeve.

"That is why I want you to help me!" he said tensely. "Will you do me a favour, Barry? Will you go to this infamous place, find Rodney, and bring him away? It may mean the difference between—"

"But, my dear sir," protested Mr. Stokes, "if your son voluntarily visits these places, he must suffer the consequences. He deserves all he gets. No decent fellow would go to the Smugglers' Lair. I'm sorry, but—"

"You don't mean that, Barry—you can't mean it!" pleaded Mr. Lambert. "I tell you the boy was led away—he didn't realise

what he was doing. Only once since he left the 'Varsity has he allowed himself to get out of hand. For fifty-one weeks of the year he is everything that a son should be. A clean, decent boy. But he's weak. He's easily led. These infernal young scamps got hold of him before I could protest."

Mr. Stokes was silent. He knew that the other was genuinely distressed. And he believed, also, that young Lambert was thoroughly decent in the main. It didn't take him long to come to a decision.

"Oh, all right, Mr. Lambert," he said, nodding. "If it's going to relieve your mind to such an extent, I'll go along and fetch him."

"Splendid fellow!" exclaimed Mr. Lambert gratefully. "Thank you a thousand times, Barry! I knew you would help me."

CHAPTER III

WITHIN THE SMUGGLERS' LAIR.



GUY SINCLAIR looked rather scared for a moment.

"I say, that's a rather tough place, isn't it?" he asked dubiously. "I'm not particularly saintly, but there's a limit, you know! We'd better choose a place with a better reputation. Hang it, we might get caught in a raid! The police are bound to be hot to-night."

Sinclair's two companions laughed uproariously.

It was getting on for one o'clock now, and they had just emerged from a Soho restaurant—a quiet little place where they had obtained an excellent supper. And they were now in the mood for fresh mischief.

They were both older than Sinclair—and both feather-brained. What they didn't know about the West End's night life was not worth learning. The St. Frank's Sixth-Former could scarcely have chosen two less desirable companions. While dressed like gentlemen—while appearing to be gentlemen—they were actually a pair of brainless young caddish idlers.

"My dear old Guy, you're squeamish!" jeered one of them.

"Rot!" snorted Sinclair. "I'm game for anything! If you accuse me of being squeamish, Charteris—"

"If you're not squeamish, what's the idea of jibbing?" demanded Charteris. "There are night clubs an' night clubs. You don't know you're alive until you've visited the Smugglers' Lair! It's toppin'! They've got a jazz band there that fairly makes the tables jog."

"It'll be something to talk about next term, Guy, old man," said the other sportsman. "We've tried the other night clubs—they're washouts. The Smugglers' Lair is in the fashion just now—it's the only place in town."

"Oh, all right," growled Sinclair; "I'm game!"

"Besides, we've got a rag on," continued Charteris, as he signalled to a passing taxi. "It's the richest thing— Here you are— hop in! Smugglers' Lair, cabby Let her go!"

They piled in, and Charteris grinned.

"What was I sayin'?" he asked. "Oh, about that rag. Bertie's got a camera an' a flashlight apparatus— By gad, you didn't leave that truck in the restaurant, did you, Bertie?"

"I've got it here," said Bertie, with a chuckle.

"But what the deuce—" began Sinclair.

"A wheeze, my little lad," grinned Charteris. "Some of our pals have gone to the Smugglers' Lair to-night, but they wouldn't like their people to know it for worlds. We're goin' to take a snap of 'em with our flashlight! See the wheeze? We'll have the laugh over them to-morrow, when we show them the prints."

Sinclair grinned.

"Not a bad dodge," he said. "By the way, I've just thought of something. Haven't you got one of those masks for me? Everybody's wearing 'em to-night, and I shan't care a toss—"

"Have mine," said Charteris cheerfully. "I don't care a hang who sees me in the Lair. I'm known there. It's a bit of a job to get into the place, as a matter of fact. You'll be safe enough with me to pilot you in."

Sinclair felt so much better that he began to thoroughly enjoy himself. His only fear was evaporated. Wearing a mask, he could enter the night club with perfect serenity. There would be no fear of anybody recognising him. And his love of hectic excitement prompted him to enter upon this adventure. By Jove, it would certainly be something to tell the other fellows when the new term started at St. Frank's. There wouldn't be many seniors who could boast of visiting the most notorious night club in London! To Sinclair's peculiar mind, a disgraceful exploit of this kind seemed glamorous.

"Here we are!" said Bertie, as the taxi stopped. "You can pay the fare, Charteris—"

"Not likely!" said Charteris. "Guy, it's your turn!"

Sinclair felt prompted to remind his companions that he had been paying out practically all the evening. But he didn't like the idea of an argument opposite the entrance of the night club. He paid up grudgingly.

He wasn't at all impressed by the entrance to the Smugglers' Lair.

There was a dark alley, and a few yards down this a lamp hung over a kind of dingy area. Steps led downwards to a kind of basement. And there was a doorkeeper

on guard, grotesquely attired as a smuggler. There were scarcely any lights.

"This way," said Charteris, with the confidence of an old hand. "Hallo, Bates, old son! Doin' good business to-night?"

"Yes, sir, thank you, sir," said the smuggler, touching his cap. "Thought you'd be along to-night, sir."

"Oh, rather," said Charteris. "Couldn't miss an opportunity like this, Bates."

They passed down the area steps, and soon found themselves within the Smugglers' Lair proper. Sinclair was thrilled. The lights, the tobacco fumes, the jazz band—the dancers—all combined to intoxicate him. He felt that this was a taste of real life.

As a matter of fact, the night club was very similar to many of its fellows—a dingy, drab, tawdry place, with a dance band and a number of entertainers who would not be tolerated for a moment in any theatre. Just because the place was a night club, this half-baked talent was allowed to pass muster.

Such resorts as these are more or less repulsive to any healthy mind. It is only when one gets saturated with a constant round of pleasures that one seeks entertainment in the small hours. And as the night clubs are the only resorts which cater for such jaded appetites, there is no choice. And as most of the habitués were under the influence of drink, they thoroughly enjoyed themselves. The Smugglers' Lair was celebrated for its contempt of the law. People went there for the express purpose of figuring in a raid. To some minds, such a disgraceful episode would be counted an adventure.

"So here we are!" said Charteris, as he sat down at a table. "By gad! Nearly full up to-night! Where the deuce are those chappies we're lookin' for? Can you spot 'em, Bertie?"

Bertie looked round at the mixed throng, and Sinclair found himself doing the same. Quite suddenly, he started violently, and uttered an ejaculation. He even started up in his seat. He was staring wildly at a man who had just entered.

"Great Scott!" he breathed huskily.

He made a clutch at his mask, and adjusted it. His companions stared at him with astonishment.

"Anything wrong, old man?" asked Charteris curiously.

"Stokes!" breathed Guy Sinclair.

"Stokes—in this place!"

"Who's Stokes?"

"That Housemaster who stopped us in the street, just before midnight!" panted Sinclair. "Old Stokes—here! What on earth— For goodness sake crowd round, so that he can't see me! If anybody finds out that I've been here I shall get the sack!"

"No need to get the wind up, old man—"



"I shall be ruined!" gasped the prefect. "I shan't be able to go up to Oxford, or——"

"You prize idiot!" interrupted Charteris. "You're masked."

"He might recognise my figure," said Sinclair huskily. "By gad! He's passed now—gone into that alcove. Phew! We'd better get out of here as soon as we can."

"Rot!" yawned Bertie. "We've only just got in. This fellow can't do you any harm, Sinclair. A nice kind of Housemaster, I must say!" he added, with a grin. "Is this what he does in his spare time?"

Sinclair's eyes gleamed with a sudden fire.

"By gad!" he murmured. "That's a scheme! I could easily— Hang it, though, Stokes isn't my Housemaster!"

"You can transfer, can't you?" asked Bertie. "If you're not up to all the tricks, you ought to be! Look here, I'll give you a word of advice."

Guy Sinclair sat there and listened to the "advice." Left entirely to himself, he might have neglected this obvious opportunity. But his companions put rascally notions into his head—and they took root.



"You rotter!" bawled Handforth. "Gimme that cap!" And Handforth tore the cap off the Sixth Former's head with a triumphant yell.

Guy Sinclair drew a deep breath.

"Yes, I'm safe!" he muttered. "He'll never spot me through this mask. By Jove, what a rotten hypocrite! What a miserable humbug! The two-faced bounder! Pretends to be a proper sportsman at St. Frank's, and lets all the kids look up to him as a model of decency—and he comes to these places for a spree!"

Charteris grinned.

"Lots of masters are like that," he said coolly. "Only they don't get found out. This incident may be a bit useful to you in the new term, my laddie! It's always an advantage when you can remind your Housemaster of his indiscretions!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE WHEELS OF CHANCE.



EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH gave Church a severe look.

"None of that, my lad!" he said tartly.

"Eh?" said Church.

"None of what?"

"Don't you know it's rude to yawn at the supper table?" asked the leader of Study D. "Haven't you got better manners? It takes me all my time to look after you asses! Where were you dragged up?"

"No need to include me!" growled McClure indignantly.

"You'll be yawning in a minute unless I give you the tip," retorted Handforth grimly. "I do nothing else but keep you fellows in order from morning till night! I'm getting tired!"

He yawned widely, with a considerable noise.

"You sound tired!" said Church sarcastically.

"Eh?" gasped Handforth. "By George! Did—did I yawn just now?"

"I thought there'd been a 'bus accident outside!" remarked McClure.

"It's your fault, you rotter!" said Handforth, glaring at Church.

"My fault?" hooted Church.

"You started the yawning—and everybody knows it's catching," said Handforth, feeling that he had to make some sort of excuse. "I'm blessed if Archie isn't doing it now! And Pitt, too!"

"Good gad!" said Archie Glenthorne. "Frightfully sorry, old articles! The fact is, the good old eyelids are growing somewhat leaden. It seems to me that a dose of the priceless old dreamless is indicated. Forty of the best and brightest, what?"

"Yes, it's about time," said Dick Hamilton. "Half-past one, by jingo! We're fairly on the tiles to-night!"

The St. Frank's juniors were sitting round the table in the dining-room of Lord Dorrimore's town house. They were still Dorrie's guests, for he had insisted upon them remaining until a certain happy event took place—the wedding of Henry Bruce and Muriel Halliday. The St. Frank's fellows and Moor View girls had played a big part in bringing the pair together during the Christmas holiday, and they were naturally interested. The ceremony was due to take place within a day or two.

Meanwhile, most members of the Christmas party remained under Dorrie's roof. But instead of being at Dorrimore Castle, they were in London. And the New Year's Eve celebrations had resulted in very late hours.

"Time you young fellows were in bed!" said Dorrie, as he looked into the dining-room. "Hallo! Still at it, Fatty? That's the style! Go ahead, old man—don't leave anythin' on the board, for goodness sake! I suppose you'll start on the ham next?"

Fatty Little grinned.

"Rather, sir!" he said promptly.

"Gad!" gasped Dorrie. "I only said it in fun—but go ahead, if you want to—don't mind me. It's nearly two o'clock, but that's a detail. You'll probably be writhin' about in mortal agony all night."

But Fatty Little was not allowed to gorge himself further. His fellow Removites considered that he had eaten not only wisely, but too well. He was firmly seized,

and hustled upstairs. Lord Dorrimore chuckled as he bade good-night to the last of the fellows, and turned towards the library, intent upon a final cigar.

But just then a footman admitted a late caller. He was a burly gentleman in a dark overcoat and a bowler. His face was clean-shaven and pleasant—a man with twinkling eyes and a jovial manner.

"Sorry to butt in at this time of the night, Lord Dorrimore," he said, with the ease of long acquaintanceship. "Mr. Lee's here, isn't he?"

"My old college chum, Inspector Lennard!" said Dorrie heartily. "Come into the library, old man. What about a whisky and soda and a cigar? Lee? Sorry, he's not here just now. Went off this morning on a visit somewhere. You know what a chap he is for dodgin' off."

Chief Detective-inspector Lennard, of Scotland Yard, shook his head.

"Yes, worse luck," he said sadly. "I think I miss Mr. Lee more than anybody. Many's the time I used to drop in and have a chat—and many's the time he'd give me just the right line I needed. I haven't seen him for ages. Even now I'm unlucky."

The inspector entered the library, and accepted a drink—but he did not remove his overcoat.

"Can't stop, Lord Dorrimore," he went on. "Here's your good health, sir! Happy New Year! Fact is, I'm on the look out for a dangerous crook, and I thought Mr. Lee might care to join in the hunt."

"Hunt?" said Dorrie enviously. "That makes me jealous, old man! Any likelihood of a thrill?"

"Afraid not," replied the Yard man. "I'm going to drop into one or two of the night clubs. You see, Lee happens to know this crook—he's got a marvellous memory for faces. I might as well confess it—I wanted him to give me a hand. Can't stop, sir—thanks all the same."

"Hold on," said Dorrie. "I'm a pretty ghastly substitute for Lee, but how about it? I'll join in this hunt, if you like. I need somethin' to liven me up a bit."

"With pleasure," said Lennard heartily. "Come along, Lord Dorrimore—you're welcome. All the same, it'll be a dull business, and my advice is for you to go to bed. These night clubs aren't all they're cracked up to be."

Lord Dorrimore, however, elected to go. And thus Chance took a hand in the game. After visiting a couple of night clubs, and remaining for a few minutes, the pair found themselves within the Smugglers' Lair. As a matter of fact, they arrived a few minutes prior to Sinclair and his companions, and settled themselves in a far corner, where some palms effectively screened them. From this point of vantage they could watch the whole throng without being very noticeable themselves.

The proprietor was probably aware of the chief inspector's identity, and the proceedings in the night club were orderly and restrained.

"Pretty dull sort of hole!" remarked Dorrie, after a while.

"Yet it's got the worst possible reputation," said the inspector. "We've had our eye on this place for months, you know. We shall probably raid it one day. Huh! No sign of my man!" he added, after scrutinising everybody within range. "He's the fellow badly wanted for drug-smuggling, and he's certain to be in one of these clubs."

"I suppose you know these chaps?"

"Pretty well," nodded Lennard. "The trouble is, we can't always catch them with the goods. We know what they're up to, but they're a shrewd lot. To-night we've had information that this fellow is bulging with the stuff. If I can only lay my fingers on him—"

"By the Lord Harry!" murmured Dorrie, in a startled voice.

"Eh? Anything wrong?"

The chief inspector was looking at his companion curiously. For Lord Dorrimore had suddenly changed his languid manner. He was looking alert, astonished, and even concerned.

"What's that?" he said. "Oh, nothin'! I say, inspector, do you see that clean-lookin' young chap who's just come in?"

"I know him?" frowned the inspector. "Why, yes, of course! I've seen him at St. Frank's. One of the masters, isn't he?"

"Young Barry Stokes—one of the best sportsmen I've ever met!" said Dorrie. "A clean-livin' young fellow with an extraordinary record, a brilliant scholar, and the best all-round man of his year at Oxford. Son of the big K.C., you know. What on earth is he doin' in this rotten hole?"

The inspector shook his head.

"Some of these young men have queer ideas of pleasure," he said. "I'm rather surprised—"

"Rubbish!" interrupted his lordship. "Sorry for bein' so blunt, inspector—but rubbish! Barry isn't the sort of fellow to come here for pleasure. Good gad, no! I've a mind to have a word with him—"

"Better not!" interrupted Lennard quickly.

"Why not?"

"If he's here for an innocent reason, he wouldn't like you to confront him," replied the Yard man shrewdly. "And if he's here for a guilty reason—well, it would only be kindness to keep back. Besides, attention might be attracted to me, and that's the last thing I want."

"Just as you like," said Dorrie, frowning. "Confound it! I wish I hadn't come, Lennard! This sort of thing worries me. Barry Stokes—in this den of foolery! I'm infernally uncomfortable!"

CHAPTER V.

AN UNEXPECTED DEVELOPMENT.



MR. BEVERLEY STOKES was infernally uncomfortable, too.

He had consented to penetrate the Smugglers' Lair in a moment of good-natured impulse. Mr. Lambert senior's distress had been so acute that Barry's heart had been touched. He was a generous man, a thoroughly fine fellow in every way.

And, like all healthy-minded men, he regarded night clubs with contempt and repugnance. He avoided them naturally, as a clean man instinctively avoids a gutter. And now that he was fairly within the Smugglers' Lair, he felt rather angry with himself for having undertaken the mission.

The place revolted him. The whole atmosphere was unhealthy and unnatural. The people who patronised the club were undesirables of the worst type, and there was scarcely a face which did not betray signs of degeneracy. These people were no representatives of decent society. Many, indeed, were minor crooks and similar fry.

Here and there, however, could be detected a different type—groups of young fellows who had come out for a spree. Most of them were half-intoxicated, and were under the impression that they were having a good time. Barry Stokes felt sorry for them. He couldn't understand how they could regard this sort of thing as pleasure. His own mind refused to fathom the problem.

He walked along between the tables, keeping his eyes keenly open, and, needless to say, he had no suspicion that a St. Frank's prefect was within a few yards of him. Guy Sinclair's mask effectively disguised him.

Mr. Stokes had no difficulty, however, in locating young Rodney Lambert. He was sitting in an alcove further along, and with him were three foolish young fellows in evening dress. At the moment they were all engaged in the pastime of swinging toy rattles in one hand, and clinking table knives against their glasses with the other. They were chanting a popular air, too.

"This is going to be difficult," muttered Barry Stokes, frowning.

He could see at a glance that young Lambert was the worse for drink. There was nothing harmful in his visit to this place. He had just come with his friends to get a little unusual excitement, and it was not at all surprising to find that he had looked upon the wine when it was red.

Mr. Stokes went to the table, and was glad to find a vacant seat. He took it, and nodded to young Lambert. The latter

ceased his song, and returned Barry's salute in a fuddled kind of way.

"Seen you before somewhere," he said thickly. "Good man! Order some more drink, somebody! Let's have a good time!"

"It's all right. Don't trouble," said Mr. Stokes quickly. "Haven't you had enough of this, Lambert? Why not come out into the air? I've got a taxi outside, if you'll join me."

"What's time?" asked Lambert.

"After two——"

"Early yet," interrupted Lambert carelessly. "No need to get out before three or four. Be a sportsman, and join us. Friends of mine," he added, indicating his companions with a sweep of his hands.

Mr. Stokes gave them a curt nod.

"The fact is, Lambert, your father is rather anxious about you," he said, getting to the point directly. "I am here to take you away with me, if you'll come. Haven't you had enough of this for to-night? Be a sensible fellow, and chuck it up."

Young Lambert looked half-intelligent for a moment.

"The pater?" he asked, frowning. "Is he getting fussy? That's nothing new; he always is fussy. Good old boy, though—decent old stick, in his own way. Aw' right—I'll come. Anythin' for a quiet life!"

Mr. Stokes was highly relieved. He had feared that he was adopting a wrong policy in stating the literal facts, but Lambert's attitude justified it. He was already on his feet, preparing to leave. He was in just that amiable condition when he would do almost anything for the asking.

Lord Dorrimore was relieved, too—so intensely relieved that he was grinning with pleasure. He and the chief inspector were sitting only a short distance away, sheltered by the palms, and, although they could not actually see young Lambert's group, they could hear what was being said.

"It's all right. Barry Stokes is only here to drag that young fool away," murmured Dorrie. "Gad, I'm pleased! I thought he wouldn't come to a place like this for his own pleasure. Good luck to him for havin' the decency to come on such a beastly errand! He's too good-natured!"

"Good thing you didn't show yourself," commented Lennard.

"By glory, yes!" nodded Dorrie. "It would only have meant a lot of explanations, an' I wouldn't like to embarrass the fellow. Far better to let things remain as they are."

He took good care to keep his back turned, in case Mr. Stokes should glance in his direction. Dorrie had no fear that Mr. Stokes would misunderstand his own presence here, for the chief inspector's companionship was guarantee enough of his innocent motives. Dorrie merely wished to

save the Housemaster from any possible embarrassment.

Unfortunately, the incident wasn't over.

"Anythin' for a quiet life," repeated young Lambert as he stood up. "Where's my coat? Waiter, where the deuce——"

"Chuck it!" interrupted one of his companions. "You're not goin', Rodney? There's dancin' before long!"

"Pater's anxious," explained Rodney genially.

"Daddy wants you, eh?" jeered one of the others. "Goin' to desert us because the old boy is anxious about his prodigal son? For the love of Mike, you're nothin' but a kid!"

"Runnin' home because papa calls!" grinned one of the others.

Rodney Lambert turned red, and his face took on a sudden expression of obstinate anger. Barry Stokes read the signs only too plainly, and he glared at the other young fools with no uncertain meaning.

"Can't you hold your tongues?" he asked curtly. "Leave the fellow alone! You've done enough harm already!"

"Infernal nerve!" roared one of them.

"Who the deuce are you?"

"Steady, old boy!" urged another. "Not so much din!"

Mr. Stokes clenched his teeth. Although he didn't actually look round, he knew that all eyes were upon him. The disturbance at this table was attracting general attention. The affair was becoming acute. And this tension had only developed during the last few seconds.

"Come along, Lambert!" said Mr. Stokes gruffly.

"Go to blazes!" shouted Lambert. "These fellows are right! I'm hanged if I'll go like a confounded school kid! I'm stayin' here until it pleases me to leave!"

"Don't be foolish!" said Barry. "Come along, Lambert, pull yourself together! Don't take any notice of these young fools!"

"They're my friends!" shouted Lambert.

"Very well, but——"

"My friends," repeated Lambert thickly. "I don't know you—not as a pal, anyhow. Clear out of here! Go an' tell my father to mind his own infernal business!"

Mr. Stokes breathed hard. His own temper was rising now. To be addressed in this manner by a half-intoxicated young idiot was rather too much for his good-nature.

Behind the palms, Lord Dorrimore was finding it difficult to remain in his seat. Indeed, he half rose, his jaw set squarely.

"The young donkey!" he muttered. "I'll help Barry Stokes to carry him outside. It's the only way."

"Better not interfere, sir," urged the chief inspector. "I know these affairs. It won't do a mite of good—and may do a

lot of harm. There's no telling how it'll end if we butt in."

"Perhaps you're right," growled Dorrie reluctantly.

But he was a fighting man, and all his instincts urged him to take Rodney Lambert by the scruff of the neck and kick him out. It exasperated him to realise that Barry Stokes had come here solely in the young fellow's interests, only to be treated in this scurvy fashion.

But Barry Stokes was not a weakling, either.

"You're coming with me, Lambert!" he said harshly. "Enough of this foolery! As for you others—interfere at your peril! I didn't come here to be insulted! Lambert, you're coming—now!"

He seized the young fellow's arm, and jerked him out into the centre of the room. The Housemaster didn't care a jot who saw now, or what publicity resulted. All eyes were on the party, anyhow. His one fixed idea was to fulfil his promise to Mr. Lambert. He wasn't going to leave the Smugglers' Lair empty-handed!

"Confound you!" shouted Lambert. "Lemme go! I won't be pulled! Lemme go! Gad, I give you warnin'!"

"Push his face in, Rodney!" suggested one of his companions.

"So I will!" yelled Rodney.

Crash!

On the impulse of the moment, he obeyed the suggestion. Before Barry Stokes could dodge, Lambert's fist struck him in the face, and he went over. Lambert's companions gave a wild whoop of triumph. Everybody else in the night club leapt to their feet. Waiters came hurrying up in dire distress.

In a second, Mr. Stokes was on his feet again. He was intent upon mischief. By hook or by crook, he would drag this young idiot away! But one of the others lifted a glass of wine, and flung the contents of it into the Housemaster's face as he rose.

And at the same second there came a curious, puffing explosion from the other end of the room, accompanied by a blinding flash of sizzling light

CHAPTER VI.

A HOUSEMASTER'S WORD OF HONOUR.



CONFUSION reigned.

Indeed, it was even worse than confusion, for it approached a panic. The majority of the habitués of the Smugglers' Lair were in

hourly expectancy of a raid, or something equally thrilling. And that sudden flare from the flashlight, coming right on the top of the incident at Rodney Lambert's table, created the utmost excitement.

"Good man!" gurgled one of Guy Sinclair's companions. "You couldn't have snapped it at a better moment. Did you get 'em in?"

"You bet I did!" said Charteris. "Come on, we'd better bolt."

"Rather!" said Guy Sinclair. "I say, I believe you've got old Stokes in that snapshot, too—just when he was having that glass of wine in his face! What a lark! I shall want one of those prints to-morrow!"

"I'll give you a dozen, old boy," promised Charteris.

He had already tucked his camera beneath his overcoat, and it was no difficult matter for the trio to push their way out through the crowds and reach the exit. In the confusion, nobody even knew that they were the idiots responsible for the panic.

"Didn't I tell you we'd have a spree?" gurgled Charteris, when they found themselves in the street. "By gad, that's the best piece of work we've done for centuries! Won't those fellows go green when they see that snap to-morrow? I got them in beautifully!"

"I'm thinking of Stokes!" said Sinclair.

In the meantime, the unfortunate Barry Stokes was nearly white-hot with rage. It had been bad enough when Lambert had knocked him down by an unexpected blow. But it was beyond all human endurance when one of his sodden companions hurled that glass of wine into his face.

"You confounded young hound!" shouted Mr. Stokes furiously.

He had forgotten young Lambert. He was only human, after all, and his one idea was to wipe out the insult. He leaned across the table, grasped the wine-thrower by the scruff of the neck, and dragged him across the table. A flower vase crashed over, a syphon splintered on the floor, and a number of glasses were smashed to smithereens.

There was no telling how the incident would have ended, but the manager came rushing up, in response to frantic calls from the head waiter. He pushed himself between the combatants.

"Gentlemen—gentlemen!" he shouted excitedly. "What is this?"

He was a foreigner—and his English was broken. He worked himself up into a fine pitch within a few seconds. Rodney Lambert's companions lost no time in pointing out Mr. Stokes as the culprit. And Rodney himself thickly shouted that he wasn't going to be dragged out by anybody.

The manager took drastic measures.

It was obvious to him that Mr. Stokes and young Lambert were the central figures. He couldn't take any chances. He gave curt orders for both of them to be escorted out—and he hinted that gentle measures were not necessary. In a word, Mr. Beverley Stokes was being thrown out of the night club!

It was too much for Lord Dorrimore.

"I'm goin' to set this straight!" he said grimly. "These confounded fools——"

"Don't, sir!" begged Lennard. "What's the use? You'll only get yourself mixed up in a scandal. You can't do any good, anyhow—you'll probably get thrown out with the others. Let it stand, sir! I know these places."

Dorrie breathed hard.

"But, man alive, it goes against the grain!" he muttered.

"So it does—but please take my advice," growled the Yard man.

"Well, anyhow, I'm a witness," said Dorrie grimly. "If Barry Stokes gets into any trouble over this, I'm in a position to explain what happened. That's one good thing! The man came here with the best of intentions, an' I'll speak up for him whenever he wants! The whole thing's a confounded shame!"

Lord Dorrimore felt swindled. He had badly wanted to spring into the thick of the fight, and prevent Mr. Stokes from being ejected. The thing seemed so utterly unjust. But perhaps it was better to remain in obscurity. By doing so, Mr. Stokes would know nothing—he would never imagine that a friend of his had witnessed the entire episode. Mr. Stokes certainly had no inkling that a St. Frank's senior had seen it, too!

He and Lambert were hustled away towards the exit. The manager and waiters attempted to work up a spirit of indignation—as though they were shocked at the idea of such an incident in their well-conducted club. And within a minute or two Barry Stokes and Rodney Lambert were in the street, and there was no sign of what had recently taken place.

"Taxi, gentlemen?" asked the doorkeeper.

"Yes!" snapped Barry. "If there's one handy——"

"Coming now, sir."

The taxi answered the doorkeeper's signal, and swept up. Young Lambert was protesting feebly—for Mr. Stokes had grasped him firmly by the arm. But the Housemaster was cooler now, and not entirely dissatisfied with the result. At least, he had got the fellow out of the place—and his undesirable companions had been left behind.

"Inside!" ordered Mr. Stokes curtly.

"I'm not goin'!" shouted Lambert. "Hang you, I'm not——"

Barry Stokes opened the door with one hand, and fairly flung his companion into the taxi. The cabby and the doorkeeper grinned, and took no further notice. This sort of thing was quite customary to them.

A minute later the taxi was bowling off.

There was a silence within. Mr. Stokes was feeling too upset for conversation—he had plenty to think about. And Rodney Lambert had been so sobered by the whole affair that he was decent enough to feel ashamed of himself. He was just beginning to recover his normal senses.

Mr. Stokes instructed the taxi-driver to go direct to his father's residence, for Mr. Lambert senior would probably be waiting there. And by the time the cab arrived, young Rodney was in a humbled mood.

"I say—awfully sorry!" he muttered, as Mr. Stokes urged him to wake up. "Can't understand what possessed me——"

"That's all right," growled the Housemaster. "The least said the better."

They entered the house, the door being opened by Mrs. Stokes—for she had been worrying over her husband. Mr. Lambert had not hesitated to tell her of the errand on which he had sent Barry.

"You have got him?" asked Mr. Lambert fussily, as he caught sight of his son. "Splendid! Thank you, Barry—thank you heartily! Rodney, my boy, what madness——"

"Barry!" exclaimed Mrs. Stokes, aghast.

He was certainly an extraordinary sight—dishevelled, stained, and with his shirt-front splashed and discoloured.

"It's all right, Joyce," he muttered. "There was a bit of trouble. Not much—but you know what those places are——"

"It was my fault," interrupted Rodney in a shamed voice. "Hang it all, I don't know what to say! You're Mr. Stokes, aren't you? Why on earth didn't you thrash me in that infernal club? I didn't know what I was doin'! If an apology's of any use, I'll——"

"My dear fellow, I don't want any of your apologies," interrupted Mr. Stokes gruffly. "You weren't responsible for what you did. I'm only too thankful that you are now realising the nature of your actions."

"I'm infernally ashamed of myself, sir!" said Rodney shakily. "I've no right to expect any sort of forgiveness. It was my weakness again, pater. It isn't often I get loose, but—— Oh, hang! What's the good of saying anything? I've made a fool of myself—and a blackguard, too!"

"Well, Rodney, none know of this episode except just ourselves," said Mr. Lambert quietly. "Mr. and Mrs. Stokes and I. I am sure they will keep it secret. You quite realise the need for silence?"

His son bowed his head.

"Yes, I know, pater," he muttered. "If Lord Swaffield heard of this he'd kick me out of his employment—and I'd deserve it, too. We're startin' for the Riviera in a couple of days, anyhow. Honestly, I'll swear this is the last time I'll be such an unmitigated cad!"

The young fellow's repentance was so earnest that all animosity left Barry Stokes on the spot. One had only to express regret to him, and he couldn't possibly keep up any ill feeling.

"You needn't worry at all, young 'un," he said kindly. "Mrs. Stokes and I will keep this secret absolutely to ourselves. You have my word of honour that not a single word of it shall pass my lips."

"My word of honour, too," said Mrs. Stokes, nodding.

Both father and son were grateful. But even they had no idea of the possible consequences of that promise. Mr. Beverley Stokes certainly failed to realise how that cheerfully-given promise was to land him into a sea of startling trouble.

CHAPTER VII.

ST. FRANK'S AGAIN.



WILLIAM NAPOLEON BROWNE paused in the gateway of St. Frank's, and cast a kindly eye upon the stately Tudor buildings of the famous old school.

"Forgive me, Brother Horace, but I am inclined to be poetical," said Browne musingly. "The first sight of these historic piles always inspires me with the celebrated Browne gift for lyrical utterances. Here we see the hardy chestnuts, the greensward, the noble buildings rising on all sides, their summits lost amid the fleecy clouds of a wintry afternoon—"

"That's a bit of an exaggeration, isn't it?" interrupted Stevens. "We're not in New York, you know—there aren't any skyscrapers here. Besides, it's cloudless to-day, anyhow—"

"Alas, Brother Horace, I fear you have no soul for true poetry," sighed Browne. "A mere figure of speech, and you take me literally. It grieves my poor old heart to realise that we live in a world of hard cynicism."

Horace Stevens grinned.

"Well, you can get on with your poetry, if you like—but I'm making a bee-line for the Ancient House," he said briskly. "We've got to get our things straight, and it'll be tea-time before we know where we are. Lyrical utterances may be all right—but give me toasted scones any day!"

"I am prepared to acknowledge that toasted scones sound promising—even poetical in themselves," admitted Browne. "I would advise descent upon the school shop. On former occasions I have discovered that the supply of scones is rarely adequate to the demand. Let us make sure of our champing material, Brother Horace."

"Hallo, here's old Browne!"

Willy Handforth, of the Third, strolled up with several of his famous platoon. Chubby Heath, Juicy Lemon, Owen minor and Dicky Jones were in evidence, and all the fags were looking suspiciously innocent. In fact, there was such an air of carelessness about them that Browne halted.

"Let us not beat about the bush, Brother William," he said firmly. "I detect a murky plot here. Aside with all subterfuge. Let me have the sordid details. Do you wish to borrow a shilling, or more?"

Willy Handforth grinned.

"We don't want to borrow anything," he replied calmly.

"Splendid! Brother Horace, kindly chalk it up!"

"I don't believe in borrowing," said Willy. "The general idea was to stroll into the school shop and have a feed. We just want you to come along and pay the bill. That's all. Your treat, you know," added Willy generously. "We thought you would like the honour."

Browne rubbed his chin thoughtfully.

"Has this mottled scheme been worked upon others earlier?" he inquired.

"You're the third!" grinned Chubby Heath.

"Of all the nerve——" began Stevens.

"Peace, Brother Horace," urged Browne. "Let us delight the young cherubs by consenting to their simple wishes. Always remember that I am the third victim. It is humanly impossible for them to consume much, and the bill will be proportionately small."

They descended upon the school shop, and Mrs. Hake proceeded to hand out everything that the fags demanded—according to Browne's instructions. But even Browne looked mildly astonished as the good things vanished with extraordinary speed and mysterious cunning.

"Forgive me for sounding crude, Brother William, but what is the exact idea?" he inquired. "I have already detected a number of pastries vanishing into pockets instead of mouths. Is this dirty work at the cross-roads? I understood you desired a feed—but hardly anything further."

"It's all right—we're laying in a stock of stuff for tea," explained Willy. "The chaps have had about as much as they can eat, so they've got to put it somewhere. We shall have enough for two or three days by the time we've done. This sort of thing can only be worked on the first day, you know. That's right, Mrs. Hake—another two dozen of those buns."

Browne gazed at Stevens, and shook his head.

"Something prompts me to express the opinion that in later years this gang will be known far and wide as the World's Cleverest Burglary Club," he observed. "In the course of a varied career, I have seldom encountered such highway robbery as this. For once, Brother Horace, we have been caught on the hop. Let us repair the omission. Mrs. Hake, you will deliver further supplies at your own peril."

Mrs. Hake was in the act of handing over a bag of cream puffs to Juicy Lemon. She withdrew it hastily, and Juicy gave a snort.

"Here, come on!" he urged. "They're mine, Mrs. Hake."

"They are if you pay for them, Master Lemon," she replied firmly. "Or will Mr. Browne be good enough——"

"Mr Browne will not," interrupted William Napoleon firmly. "Kindly tot up the bill, Mother Hake, and we will search our pockets for the necessary amount. But we cannot allow ourselves to be stung in the same place twice."

The bill was pretty heavy as it was, and Willy & Co. felt that they had done well, on the whole. As soon as Browne and Stevens had gone, they kept their eyes open for further victims. And Willy gave a chuckle as he caught sight of an elegant youth emerging from the West House.

"Come on!" he said briskly.

The fags fairly swarmed round the new victim—who happened to be Lord Pippinton—a comparatively new fellow in the Remove. But he was celebrated for his possession of endless quantities of cash.

"Hallo, Pippy!" said Willy cheerfully. "Glad to see you looking so bright this afternoon. How about coming to the tuck shop, and treating us? Quite the usual thing on the first day, you know."

"Always done!" said Chubby Heath casually.

Lord Pippinton was in his usual condition of abstraction. He generally went about in a kind of trance, and it required a fairly big jolt to bring him to a sense of realities.

"Eh?" he said, looking at the fags with a start of surprise. "Hallo! Where are we? I mean, I didn't know you were with us! Some of the lesser lads, what?"

"Lesser in size, but greater in everything else," explained Willy calmly. "Are you fully awake yet? Can you understand what I'm saying?"

"What?"

"Are you coming to the tuck shop with us, or not?"

"Yes, rather!" said Lord Pippinton, nodding.

"Good! Then we'll——"

"Or not, I fancy," said his lordship. "That is, why? The tuck shop fails to appeal. Tea will be along soon——"

"But we want you to treat us!" said Juicy Lemon impatiently.

"A kind of sport or new sort of game—kind of?" asked Lord Pippinton mildly. "Don't mind me! Go ahead with it! Heaps of luck!"

"But we want you to pay the bill!" roared Chubby.

"Splendid!"

"Well, are you coming?" demanded Willy.

"Coming?" said old Pippy. "Eh? Coming where?"

"To the tuck shop, you dreamy ass!"

"But why? I mean, it doesn't seem necessary——"

"Oh, my goodness!" groaned Willy. "This is too strenuous, my sons! Old Biggleswade has just floated through the gates. Let's abandon this hopeless chump, and go for old Biggy. He generally turns up trumps."

Biggleswade was an Ancient House prefect, and one of the most popular seniors in the school. He was famed for his leniency, and he had some little reputation, too, as a comedian.

He came up to the scratch well. And two minutes later he was in the tuck shop, with the fags swarming round him.

Other fellows were arriving in a continuous stream—most of them having come by train, but a few by car. Archie Glen-thorne, for example, rolled up in state in his pater's limousine. Cecil de Valerie and the Duke of Somerton also arrived by car. And even Guy Sinclair, of the Sixth, turned up in the family saloon.

Sinclair was a fellow who thought an immense lot about himself. He took great care to emerge slowly from the luxurious car, so that everybody could take due notice of the stately equipage, and be duly awed.

He had given Kenmore a lift—for Kenmore was the Head Boy of the East House, and one of Sinclair's particular friends. As Willy Handforth observed, they were birds of a feather.

Sinclair waited until his luggage had been carried in, and until the car was dismissed. Then he turned casually towards the East House—satisfied that he had created a big impression.

Before he could move far, however, three juniors descended the Ancient House steps, and advanced. They were Handforth & Co., of Study D—and Edward Oswald Handforth was looking unusually happy. Anybody could tell he was happy by the fierce, war-like light in his eyes.

CHAPTER VIII.

GUY SINCLAIR PREPARES.



DICK HAMILTON chuckled.

"This ought to be worth watching," he said, with a smile.

"I'm inclined to agree with you, Nipper, old boy,"

said Sir Montie Tregellis-West, nodding. "Begad! Handforth looks frightfully business-like—he does, really! I'm not the chap to make prophecies, but I've got an idea that we're goin' to witness a display of fireworks."

"We ought to be in this, too," said Tommy Watson.

"Let's watch," grinned Nipper. "It'll be less strenuous."

ANSWERS
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They were near the fountain, and they paused expectantly. Over by the West House Reginald Pitt and Jack Grey were also watching, in company with the Hon. Douglas Singleton, Solomon Levi, and a few other prominent Removites.

Handforth strode up to Sinclair, and planted himself fairly in front of the East House senior. He felt that he could act with impunity—for Sinclair, of course, had no authority over the boys of another House.

"Hallo, Sinclair," said Handforth fiercely.

"Good afternoon, Sinclair!" echoed Church and McClure, obedient to earlier instructions. "How do you do, Sinclair?"

"Lovely afternoon, Sinclair!" said Handforth.

Sinclair and Kenmore halted. They were frowning deeply. This affair savoured very much of a rag. And as both the seniors considered their dignity a thing of vast importance, they were considerably incensed.

"Clear out of this!" said Sinclair curtly.

"None of your rot!" snapped Kenmore.

Handforth eyed him coldly.

"We're not talking to you," he said.

"We wished Sinclair a polite 'good afternoon,' and all he can do is to tell us to clear out! That's how the seniors set a good example of manners!"

"You young sweep——" began Sinclair.

"We come with the best of intentions, and get nothing but insults!" went on Handforth bitterly. "By George! Is this the kind of thing to encourage good fellowship and kamarad?"

"And which?" whispered Church hastily.

"Kamarad, you ass!"

"That's a German word!" hissed McClure.

"You mean camaraderie!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The crowd had drawn closer, and seemed highly amused.

"Look here, who's conducting this affair, anyhow?" roared Handforth, turning red. "What does a word matter?"

Sinclair breathed hard.

"You'd better stop this rot!" he said darkly. "I'm not one of your prefects, Handforth, but I shall take good care to report you to Fenton! He won't allow this sort of insolence——"

"Insolence!" hooted Handforth. "We came over especially to do you a good turn! You've lost something! We've got it here, and we're going to return it to you with compliments. And all we get——"

"Don't talk rubbish!" snapped Sinclair. "You've got nothing of mine."

"Haven't we?" sneered Handforth. "Think again! Think carefully—if you've got anything to think with! You lost something during the holidays, and we thought it only decent to hand it over. It's your property and we wouldn't dream of keeping it."



"Sinclair!"

The Sixth Former started so violently that his fool's cap jerked sideways in a most drunken fashion.

"What does the young idiot mean?" asked Kenmore, staring.

"How the deuce should I know?" snapped Sinclair. "It's only a rag! I lost nothing——"

"What about this?" grinned Handforth, with fierce enjoyment. "Half a tick, Sinclair! Let's have those disinfected gloves, Church. We can't afford to take any risks."

With elaborate precaution, Handforth pulled on a pair of gloves, and then took a cardboard box from McClure. He was about to remove the lid when Church grasped his arm.

"What about your gas-mask?" he asked urgently.

"By George!" panted Handforth. "Nearly forgot it!"

He donned a grotesque imitation of a gas-mask—made of cardboard and brown paper. The crowd pressed round, grinning with greater enjoyment than ever. It was impossible for Sinclair and Kenmore to escape—much as they wished to.

Handforth whisked off the lid of the box, and he was now holding a pair of pliers. With these, he gingerly withdrew nothing more harmful than a school-cap. He held

it at arm's length, and offered it to Sinclair. "Yours!" he said thickly through the mask. "Take it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A yell of laughter went up. All this elaborate by-play for the sake of a cap! Of course, there was a deadly insult contained in the action—since it implied that Sinclair's cap was contaminated.

Sinclair himself turned as red as a beet-root.

"You—you infernal young cub!" he snarled. "What's the idea? That's not my cap! If you think you can rag me with impunity——"

"Not his cap!" yelled Handforth. "What about the initials?"

He yelled so violently, in fact, that he blew his gas mask off altogether, and he forgot to keep his gloves on. He turned the cap inside out—apparently risking the consequences—and displayed the initials "G.S." on a tab.

"This is the cap we grabbed on New Year's Eve!" shouted Handforth. "We found Sinclair acting like a hooligan in Piccadilly Circus—and he was wearing the school colours, too! So we took 'em away!"

"And now he can have them back!" yelled Church.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The incident was over—and the crowd dispersed. Guy Sinclair took the cap—it was, indeed, practically a new one. He and Kenmore went into the East House together, followed by a series of cat-calls and unmusical hoots from the recent audience.

"Young demons!" snapped Sinclair, as he flung himself into his study. "I never dreamed they'd rake up that affair against me!"

"Was it particularly bad?" grinned Kenmore.

"It was nothing!" growled the other prefect. "But they were in force, and thought they'd make me look small! They took the same advantage just now! By gad, I'll make them sit up."

Kenmore laughed.

"That's a bit hollow," he remarked, as he prepared to go off to his own study. "You can't do much, Sinclair. You've got no control over the Remove. Besides, the best thing you can do is to forget that incident altogether. By what I heard it's none too savoury."

"Wait a minute!" said Sinclair gruffly. "This term isn't going to be the same as other terms, Kenmore. And I'm not staying in this House, either. I'm transferring to Stokes's," he repeated.

"What the thunder for?"

"Because I shall have a better time there," said Sinclair. "Later on I'll probably get you to come over, too——"

"Thanks all the same, but I prefer Goole," interrupted Kenmore. "He's a bit

of a fidget in his own way, but he's not half so keen as Stokes. The East House for me every time. We're more slack here. No strict rules."

Sinclair smiled.

"You won't say that after a few days," he remarked coolly. "Anyhow, I'm willing to chance Stokes. I'm transferring into the West House."

"Then you're mad," said Kenmore. "Clean mad!"

He went out, and closed the door. Guy Sinclair sat on the corner of his table, and his eyes gleamed. He had everything planned in his own mind. Ever since that affair at the Smugglers' Lair, on New Year's Eve, he had been thinking—he had been planning.

Those companions of his had put the idea into his head. The idea had taken root—had found fertile soil in which to flourish. For, in his own way, Sinclair was a fellow of strong personality.

He hadn't had much opportunity yet. He had distinguished himself on the cricket field—being, in fact, one of the best bats the First Eleven had ever turned out. But he had rather spoiled his prowess in this direction by indulging in more than one despicable trick. The school still remembered how he and two or three other seniors had been kicked out of the eleven by Edgar Fenton, the school captain.

Sinclair had envied Kenmore's position for a long time. He felt that he was the prefect who ought to occupy the position of Head Boy. He had often thought how nice it would sound to hear himself referred to as "the Head of Goole's." But he had never had the chance.

"I'll make things hum this term, though," he told himself exultantly. "Morrow's the head prefect in the West House now—but I'll soon get him pitched out. I've got power—I've got influence! By gad! The Head of Stokes! Sounds infernally good!"

He wondered if he should take the first step immediately. But after a brief spell of temptation he decided against such a move. No, it wouldn't do to be precipitate. There was plenty of time—and caution was the watchword. It would be quite early enough on the morrow to bring off his coup.

And that evening, while each House shook itself down into something like the usual shape, Guy Sinclair kept to himself. He was gloating—gloating over the success which Chance had delivered into his hands.

The idea of power had always appealed to him. Ever since he had entered the Senior School he had longed to be in the position of authority. As a prefect he had partially realised his ambition. But this authority had only been of use where mere juniors were concerned.

But now things would be different!

As Guy Sinclair lay in bed that night he indulged in waking dreams. He pictured

himself as the most dominating influence in the West House. Everybody in that building would be under his sway—the highest and lowest.

"Yes, by gad!" he breathed tensely. "The Dictator—that's what I'll be!"

CHAPTER IX.

A STICKY BUSINESS.



BERNARD FORREST regarded his reflection in the mirror with entire approval.

"Ready, you chaps?" he asked, turning away.

It was the following morning—actually, the first day of term—and Forrest & Co., of the Remove, were about to leave their dormitory in the Ancient House. They were unusually early—for, as a rule, they were not in the habit of tumbling out until the last possible minute.

"Yes, we're ready," said Gulliver. "Buck up with that tie, Bell."

Bell looked dubious as he glanced at Forrest.

"I'm not sure about that waistcoat, old man," he said. "You'll be chipped no end. You dragged us out of bed early on purpose to show the bally thing off—"

"Rot!" interrupted Forrest. "You needn't have got up unless you liked. And what's the matter with the waistcoat, anyhow? I rather pride myself on my being ahead of the fashion."

Gulliver grinned.

"You're about right there," he acknowledged. "By gad! That waistcoat is the most startlin' thing at St. Frank's. I wouldn't risk it if I were you. There's a limit."

Forrest scowled. He considered himself to be ultra smart. Such fellows as Archie Glenthorne and Sir Montie Tregellis-West were smart in their own way, but Forrest reckoned that he was the leader of fashion in the Remove. Of course, he was suffering from a delusion.

While Archie and Sir Montie displayed correct taste, Bernard Forrest was inclined to err on the side of display. Anything particularly blatant appealed to him. And the waistcoat he was now wearing was a gorgeous affair of many colours—a kind of Fair Isle design gone mad.

Archie Glenthorne might have been fascinated by it—for Archie, unfortunately, had rather a tendency for colour himself. But Phipps would have put his foot down firmly. It was Phipps, indeed, who always saved Archie from appearing in anything but the "correct" thing.

"I paid an awful lot of money for this vest!" said Forrest curtly. "You're both dotty! Most of the fellows will go green with envy when they see it. Aren't you ready yet? Get outside, you asses!"

Forrest opened the door, and playfully heaved Gulliver outside—a simple matter, since Gulliver was bony and skinny. But the trivial incident could not have happened at a more inopportune second.

Tubbs, the pageboy, was shooting by, bent on his business.

There was something very brisk about Tubbs. He seldom loitered, in the way that pageboys are supposed to loiter. He always sped down the passages as though he had no time to waste. Just now he was en route for one of the senior bed-rooms, in order to effect a little repair.

"What the— Hi!" howled Gulliver madly.

He collided with Tubbs with considerable violence. For Tubbs had had no indication that somebody would suddenly shoot out of a doorway. The effect was rather disastrous.

A pot in the pageboy's hand flew ceiling-wards, tipped en route, and delivered two enormous splodges on Bernard Forrest's new waistcoat—for Forrest was just coming out of the doorway, in the rear of Gulliver.

The pot thudded to the linoleum, but failed to break. Its contents formed a glutinous-looking pool. Tubbs stood back, aghast. In a flash, he realised that a catastrophe of vast immensity had occurred.

"Sorry, Master Gulliver!" he panted. "Wasn't my fault, sir! I didn't know you was comin'—"

"What's this filthy stuff?" hooted Forrest wildly.

"Oh, corks!" gurgled Tubbs.

He stared at Forrest's waistcoat glassily. Gulliver and Bell grinned. For an instant they thought that Tubbs was fascinated by the varied colouring. They weren't surprised to see that dazed expression. But, actually, Tubbs was looking at the two sticky splodges.

"What is it?" roared Forrest furiously.

"Pup-please, Master Forrest!" gasped Tubbs. "It's—it's glue!"

"Glue!" thundered Forrest.

"Yes, sir—hot glue!" panted Tubbs. "I was just goin' along to Mr. Browne's bedroom, sir—he wants his wardrobe stuck up. There's one of the panels cracked—"

"I don't care about Browne's confounded wardrobe!" howled Forrest. "Look at this waistcoat! Ruined! Two horrible splodges on it! You careless young reptile—"

"It wasn't my fault, sir!" interrupted Tubbs indignantly.

"Glue!" shouted Bernard. "Look at this, Gully!"

Gulliver and Bell gazed at the ruin without much horror.

"It's rather added to the pattern," said Bell callously. "Just a little water will wipe it off—"

"You fool, nothing can put it right now!" interrupted Forrest. "Grab that confounded boy! It's no good reporting him. We'll punish him on the spot! I'll skin him alive!"

Tubbs tried to escape, but was just too late. He knew well enough that the fellows had no right to touch him, but these little regulations were always being broken. It wasn't allowable to tip him—but he was always being tipped. In the same way, he frequently received a bumping if his efforts failed to please. These were incidentals to his job.

But when Forrest & Co. got hold of him it was rather a different matter. On one occasion they had rolled him in the mud, and had ruined a new suit. And Tubbs had got into dire trouble over it, since it had been impossible for him to give the names of the culprits. Life wouldn't have been worth living if he had sneaked.

And he saw visions of another ruined suit now. A new one, too—donned for the first time that very morning. It was gloriously green, and the buttons were dazzlingly bright.

"Steady, young gents!" gasped Tubbs. "Don't go spoilin'—"

"Down with him!" snapped Forrest. "First of all we'll biff him to pot, then we'll roll him in that glue! I'll teach him not to be so confoundedly careless."

"Good wheeze!" grinned Gulliver and Bell maliciously.

Anything that involved destruction pleased them. Tubbs gave a howl of anguish, and was smothered beneath the weight of his attackers. He crashed to the floor, and Forrest knelt on his chest. Gulliver and Bell held his arms and legs down.

"Now, my lad!" panted Bernard. "Take that!"

He delivered a fearful slap on Tubbs' face, and followed it immediately by a cowardly punch. With his arms and legs held, Tubbs could do nothing. There was no excuse for such a caddish assault as this.

Crash! Thud! Biff!

A perfect rain of blows descended upon the unfortunate pageboy's face and head. He was half-dazed and stunned.

"By George!"

Forrest looked up, startled, as he heard that loud ejaculation. A door had opened just near them, and Edward Oswald Handforth was looking at the havoc. Church and McClure were there, too.

And at the same moment another door opened, and Nipper & Co. emerged. To the cads of Study A it seemed as though the corridor had sprung into life from end to end.

"You cowardly rotters!" roared Handforth. "I say, you chaps! Look at this! These beasts have got Tubbs down, and they've pulverised him! Take that, you bullying cad!"

Crash!

Bernard Forrest reeled over as Handforth's fist struck him in the middle of the chest. He had been caught red-handed. He might have expected it—but he had been so angry at the ruin of his waistcoat

that he had never thought of any possible interference.

"You—you idiots!" he gasped. "Tubbs deserves it! He's ruined my waistcoat—smothered it with glue!"

"Glue!" said Handforth fiercely.

"You're standing in it!" said Church, with a yell.

"Great pip!" gasped Edward Oswald, stepping aside and lifting his foot from the floor with difficulty. "Somebody's going to pay for this!"

Tubbs was in the hands of Nipper and Tommy Watson. Forrest & Co. would have loved to escape, but the passage was crowded. Nipper was looking very grim as he inspected Tubbs' hurts.

"The poor kid's been battered about frightfully!" he said angrily. "Forrest, you cad, you ought to be flogged for this!"

"Flogged, be hanged!" snorted Forrest. "He deliberately ruined my waistcoat—"

"It ain't true, Master Nipper, sir!" interrupted Tubbs feebly. "Master Gulliver run out of the bed-room, an' knocked into me. It was a pure haccident. The glue-pot was swep' out o' my hands. I couldn't help those splashes—honest, sir!"

"I believe you," said Nipper, nodding. "Poor kid! You're properly battered! You go to the bath-room and clear yourself up. Come along to my bed-room afterwards, and I'll give you some ointment—"

"What about Forrest?" interrupted Handforth darkly. "He's going to pay for this—and I've got a good idea how to make him suffer!"

CHAPTER X.

FORREST HAS TO STICK IT.



GULLIVER shrank back.

"We're not in this!" he bleated. "Bell an' I didn't do anythin'!"

"Of course we didn't!" howled Bell nervously.

"We'll deal with you chaps later!" said Handforth. "Forrest's going to sit down in that pool of glue!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Poetic justice, by jingo!"

"You—you mad idiots!" gurgled Forrest. "You can't do that! This is a new suit—"

"All the better!" interrupted Handforth. "It'll be a stern lesson, my lad! We can't do it, eh? We'll jolly soon show you whether we can or not! Lend a hand, you fellows!"

There were plenty of juniors ready to oblige—for it was universally felt that Forrest deserved something particularly severe. In spite of Bernard's frantic protests and struggles, he was swept off his feet and dumped into the very centre of the glue puddle.

He landed with a squelchy thud, and the expression of horror on his face was comical

—at least, the onlookers seemed to think so. Nipper himself took an active part in the business, for he felt that it was an excellent punishment.

"What about the glue-pot?" asked Church. "There's still some in it—"

"By George, so there is!" said Handforth exultantly. "Hold him there, you chaps—keep him down so that he sticks! There's nothing like glue! We'll avenge Tubbs properly."

Handforth seized the glue-pot, and grinned as he found a fair quantity of warm glue left. He calmly tipped it over Forrest's head, and the sticky mass ran through his hair, and down over his face. Bernard gave a mournful groan, and put a hand to his head. It came away with a treacle-like sucking noise. He was undoubtedly in a frightful mess.

"That's about enough," said Nipper grimly. "I don't believe in this sort of thing as a rule. But we've got to make exceptions sometimes. Poor old Tubbs will have a black eye for a week—and a swollen nose for days. He might have been careless, but he didn't deserve that cowardly treatment."

The Removites dispersed, and Handforth gave a whoop when he discovered that Gulliver and Bell had made themselves scarce during the excitement. Church and McClure found themselves dragged into a man-hunt. The Ancient House was scoured from end to end for Forrest's accomplices.

In the meantime, Bernard was left utterly alone in the upper corridor. He was dazed by the extent of the catastrophe. He sat there, too miserable to make any attempt to rise. He had intended to startle the natives this morning with his gorgeous attire. And what was he now? A wreck! A sticky, horrible caricature of humanity.

And when he did attempt to get up he received a fresh shock. In spite of all his efforts, he couldn't rise! He was fairly stuck to the floor—glued there by the seat of his trousers.

"Oh, the beasts—the rotters!" he moaned unhappily.

Archie Glenthorne emerged sedately from his own bed-room at that moment. He was about to pass along to the head of the stairs when he was arrested by a plaintive cry of anguish. He paused, startled.

"Good gad!" he ejaculated. "I mean to say—"

"Help!" shouted Forrest. "I say, Glen-thorne, lend a hand!"

"Absolutely!" said Archie, hurrying forward. "What-ho! Archibald to the rescue, what! Odds visions and apparitions! What, I mean to say, is absolutely this?"

He paused, horrified. He beheld a junior sitting in the centre of the corridor, dusty, dishevelled, and with hair that seemed to be matted with black treacle. The stuff even ran down his face.

"Thanks!" gasped Forrest. "Heave, Glenthorne!"

"But, dash it—I mean!" said Archie. "Laddie, laddie! You're looking absolutely frightful!"

"Don't jaw!" snarled Forrest. "Give us your hand!"

Archie held out his hand automatically, staring at Forrest with fascinated horror in the meantime. Then he suddenly shuddered from head to foot. Something had touched his elegant palm—something sticky and glutinous.

"Good gad!" he gasped, leaping a yard into the air.

He backed away, staring at his hand with glassy consternation. A number of thin, sticky strings were hanging from his fingers. And as he moved his hand, his fingers stuck together in the most ghastly fashion. To Archie, this sort of thing was worse than an earthquake.

"You absolutely foul blighter!" he panted. "I mean to say, you've positively done the dirty on Archibald! Glue, what? The good old digits are adhering like the dickens! Phipps—Phipps! Help, laddie! S.O.S., and all that sort of bally thing! The young master is wilting."

He staggered away, utterly unconscious of Forrest's frantic calls. The leader of Study A was getting desperate now. He was stuck more firmly than ever. It maddened him to see Archie reeling off just because two of his fingers were sticky. And he—Forrest—was glued from head to foot!

Footsteps sounded behind him. He tried to turn, but couldn't. But he heard the well-known voice of William Napoleon Browne. The captain of the Fifth, in fact, was just going downstairs, in company with Horace Stevens, of the Fifth.

They drew opposite the unfortunate Removite, and paused.

"Ah!" said Browne kindly. "Here, Brother Horace, we see a member of the junior school indulging in his favourite pastime! It has always puzzled me to understand how these affairs can be looked upon as a pleasure."

Stevens grinned.

"There seems to have been some trouble," he remarked.

"Let us pass along, and leave the foolish youth to his unaccountable game," said Browne, smiling benevolently upon the enraged Forrest. "It appears that he is playing Indians, or some such childish amusement. You will observe that his hair is already prepared for the feathers. Probably he is waiting for the palefaces to spring to the rescue. A truly wonderful exhibition of the art of pretending, Brother Horace. But there! It has been truly said that boys will be boys!"

They passed on, unmindful of Forrest's yells. As a matter of fact, William Napoleon knew exactly what had happened, and he and Stevens chuckled hugely after they had turned the corner. They came face to face with Gulliver and Bell, who were both looking scared and hunted.

"Did I not say that we should encounter the palefaces?" asked Browne smilingly. "You will notice, Brother Horace, the ghastly pallor on these undistinguished countenances. You will observe the drawn lines of anxiety."

"Seen Handforth anywhere?" asked Gulliver hastily.

"Ah, now we get a grasp of the situation," said Browne. "Handforth, apparently, is the hunter. Doubtless he has two staunch supporters by his side. Need we mention names? And these wretched youths are in mortal fear of their scalps."

"Chuck it, Browne!" said Bell. "Where's Forrest?"

"You will find the unhappy brave seated on the floor round the corner," replied Browne kindly. "One wonders why he chooses to dispose himself in the fairway, but there is probably an excellent reason. Who am I to question his motives? But let me advise, Brother Bell, a swift retreat. I venture to suggest that you could do no better than place at least a couple of parangs between yourself and the hunters who are even now on your trail."

"Gully—Gully!" came a frantic howl from round the corner. "Bell!"

Gulliver and Bell glanced at one another, and went to the rescue. There was really nothing else to be done. They reached Forrest in safety, and found him nearly speechless with fury. He was further handicapped by the fact that his mouth was getting stuck up.

"You fools!" he panted hoarsely. "Why didn't you come before? I'm stuck!"

"Stuck!" repeated Bell, with a gulp.

"I can't get up, you jibbering idiot!" hooted Bernard. "Lend a hand!"

Gulliver and Bell seized his two arms, and heaved. There was a rending of material—an ominous tearing sound. In a way, the manœuvre was successful. At least, Bernard Forrest rose to his feet.

"Great Scott!" yelled Bell. "Look there!"

Bernard Forrest had risen, but the seat of his trousers was still on the floor. And Bernard Forrest's rear was composed of nothing more substantial than the tail of his shirt. With horrified cries, Gulliver and Bell hustled him into their dormitory.

There were three vacant seats at the Remove table during breakfast, however.

CHAPTER XI.

GUY SINCLAIR SHOWS HIS HAND.



wards them. They were fellows of his own breed.

GUY SINCLAIR paused near the entrance to the West Arch, and looked at Forrest & Co. with an inquiring glance. Although they were juniors, he was rather friendly to-

"You're looking pretty miserable, my sons," he said, staring. "What on earth's the matter with you? Fed up with school already?"

Bernard Forrest glared. It was nearly time for morning lessons, and although he was spruce and tidy again, he had had to put up with the grins and chippings of the other juniors ever since breakfast. And he and his pals had been forced to buy a snack at the school shop.

"I'm fed up with the Ancient House, anyhow!" growled Forrest. "Those cads there make me sick! What with Handforth and that rotter of a Hamilton, life isn't worth living! A chap can't do a bally thing without being jumped on by a pack of goody-goody prigs!"

Guy Sinclair nodded sympathetically.

"Yes, your House is a bit of a hotbed, isn't it?" he asked. "Even worse than the West House. But there's going to be a change, Forrest. Take my tip, and work a transfer, if you can."

"A transfer?" asked Forrest. "Where to?"

"The West House."

"Rot! Stokes' crowd is just as bad!"

"But it won't be!" said the East House prefect. "Just wait a day or two, my sons, and you'll see some startling changes. I happen to know. No, I'm not saying anything more—but take a tip from the horse's mouth."

He walked on, leaving Forrest & Co. puzzled. Sinclair wondered if he had been unwise in giving a hint. But what did it matter? He had already made up his mind to show his hand without delay.

He entered the East House, and went to the Housemaster's study. Mr. Barnaby Goole was there, but he did not give Sinclair a particularly friendly look. Sinclair was one of the prefects that Mr. Goole could have dispensed with quite easily. He instinctively distrusted the fellow. The Housemaster was rather eccentric, being a vegetarian among other things. But he was an excellent controller of boys.

"Well, Sinclair?" he asked diffidently.

"Sorry to trouble you, sir," said the prefect. "The fact is, I was wondering if it would be possible for me to transfer into the West House?"

Mr. Goole sat up.

"Indeed?" he said, in surprise.

"I know it's not the usual thing," went on Sinclair. "But there are one or two fellows here I can't get on with—nothing I can complain about, sir, but you know what it is. I shall hate to leave the East House, but if there is any possibility—"

"I am afraid you must go and see Mr. Stokes about this," interrupted Mr. Goole. "He is concerned even more than I am. I will tell you, however, that I will place no obstacle in your way, Sinclair," he added drily. "For my part, you are quite welcome to leave the East House whenever you please."

Sinclair frowned. He didn't quite like his Housemaster's tone.

"Glad to get rid of me, sir?" he asked sourly.

"At least, Sinclair, you have not distinguished yourself in any particular capacity that I'm aware of," said Mr. Goole. "No, I shall not be glad to get rid of you—but, to be quite candid, I don't think you will be missed."

"It's just as well to know the truth," said Sinclair insolently. "I am glad I came, I'll soon clear out. I don't want to be where I'm not wanted."

He passed out before Mr. Goole could make any further comment. He went straight across to the West House—in a rather ugly mood. His Housemaster's words gave him just the required recklessness for his present task. Without that spur he might have hesitated before embarking upon such a rascally errand. But there was no turning back now.

He reached Mr. Beverley Stokes' study, and strode in without even knocking. Mr. Stokes was trying a couple of new dance steps he had read about in the morning paper, and he spun round, frowning. It was like Sinclair's nerve to butt in, and thus rudely surprise him.

"Where are your manners, Sinclair?" he asked sharply.

Sinclair closed the door, and turned carelessly.

"Did I come in without knocking?" he asked coolly. "Too bad, Mr. Stokes! I didn't know you were so hot on etiquette!"

Mr. Stokes looked at him in surprise.

"We won't argue, Sinclair," he said curtly. "What do you want?"

"I've had a talk with Mr. Goole, and I've arranged to transfer into the West House," replied the prefect. "I thought I'd better come along and let you know, so that you'll expect me."

Mr. Stokes was positively startled.

"Upon my word, Sinclair!" he ejaculated. "I have met a few examples of effrontery in my time, but this beats everything! You impertinent young rascal! How dare you adopt such a dictatorial tone?"

Sinclair shrugged his shoulders.

"No need to get on the high horse!" he retorted.

"You have apparently forgotten, Sinclair, that I am entitled to respect even from a prefect," said the Housemaster curtly. "When you address me again, you will remember that!"

"Yes!" said Sinclair.

"Yes, what?" thundered Mr. Stokes.

"Yes nothing!" replied Sinclair calmly.

Mr. Beverley Stokes opened his mouth, but didn't speak. He gazed at the prefect closely. For an instant he feared that the fellow was out of his mind. There was certainly a strange pallor in Sinclair's cheeks. But Mr. Stokes did not know that this was caused by his inward excitement. Sinclair



A few curt orders and Mr. Beverley Stokes was literally thrown out of the night club!

was only calm outwardly—this initial interview, which he had rehearsed so often, was proving to be very difficult.

"Have you been drinking, Sinclair?" asked Mr. Stokes quietly. "I feel bound to ask that question—even at this early hour of the day. I can think of no other explanation of your extraordinary conduct. Unhappily, I have heard rumours to the effect that you sometimes indulge—"

"Never mind about my indulgences," interrupted Sinclair insolently. "I've not been drinking, and I'm not mad. I've come here to tell you that I'm transferring into the West House to-day."

Mr. Stokes leapt to his feet.

"And I will tell you, Sinclair, that you will leave this study at once!" he exclaimed grimly. "Put all such ideas out of your head. If you had come to me in the proper spirit, I might have consented. As it is, I shall make it my duty to inform the Headmaster of your outrageous impertinence."

Sinclair felt like bolting, for Mr. Stokes' manner was ominous. But he carelessly sat down in the nearest chair, and crossed his legs. This action, alone, proved that Guy Sinclair was a fellow of considerable strength. It required a great effort of will-power to effect that indifferent air.

"I don't think you will," he said, yawning.

Mr. Stokes could hardly believe the evidence of his senses.

"Sinclair!" he thundered. "Is this a deliberate piece of foolery? Remember you are a prefect—"

"That reminds me," interrupted Sinclair. "I'm only second prefect in the East House, but that position won't do for me here. You've got to make me Head Boy."

"Good gracious!" gasped Mr. Stokes.

The thing was getting beyond an expression of anger. It was useless being enraged with this young lunatic. By his calm manner, he apparently had no notion of his impertinence.

"Indeed!" went on Mr. Stokes. "So you want to be made Head Boy?"

"That's the idea."

"I commend your modesty, Sinclair," said the Housemaster, calming down. "The best thing you can do is to go away as quietly as possible, and get to bed. I will lose no time in 'phoning to Dr. Brett—"

"So you think I'm off my head?" interrupted Sinclair calmly. "No, Mr. Stokes, I'm sane enough. Why beat about the bush any longer? You'll give me the head prefectship of this House because you'll have to. I'm a reasonable fellow—I won't make any outrageous demands."

Mr. Stokes was still nonplussed. He could only conclude that Sinclair was wandering—and yet he looked so normal. He went to the door, and placed his fingers on the handle.

"Come along, Sinclair—" he began.

"Just a minute," interrupted the prefect. "You'll understand everything in two seconds. Am I going to become Head Boy in this House—or shall I let the school know of that incident on New Year's Eve?"

Mr. Stokes stared in blank astonishment.

"Affair on New Year's Eve?" he repeated.

"Yes—when you were kicked out of the worst night-club in London," replied Sinclair smoothly. "Now, Mr. Stokes! What about it?"

CHAPTER XII.

HELD BY HIS PLEDGE.



MR. BEVERLEY STOKES stood stock still.

Those last words of Sinclair's had been spoken quietly, but their effect was like that of a bombshell.

Until that second Mr. Stokes hadn't had the faintest suspicion of the senior's motive.

Indeed, ever since the unfortunate incident, he had believed that his wife and the two Lamberts were the only people in the world who knew. There had been other people in the club, of course, but Mr. Stokes had assumed that they were all total strangers.

He stood there, staring at Sinclair, aghast. He wasn't particularly alarmed that a St. Frank's fellow knew the story—but he was aghast at the idea of Sinclair attempting to make capital out of it.

"Well?" asked the senior. "Does it make any difference?"

Mr. Stokes fought hard to control himself.

"Get out!" he said thickly.

There was such an amount of suppressed fury in his tone that Guy Sinclair started to his feet.

"Better go carefully!" he said uneasily.

"No need to lose your temper, Mr. Stokes! You've either got to consent to my plan, or I'll tell the whole school that you were chucked out of the Smugglers' Lair—"

"You infernal young rogue!" thundered Mr. Stokes. "Are you going out of this study quietly, or shall I boot you out?"

"Look here—"

"You've got two seconds!"

"But I tell you—"

Sinclair paused in dismay as Mr. Stokes flung the door open wide, and then reached out. He seized Sinclair by the scruff of the neck, planted his boot fairly in the prefect's rear, and heaved.

It was fortunate for the Sixth Former's dignity that nobody happened to be within sight. He shot through the doorway like a stone from a catapult. In a confused heap he landed against the opposite wall, and the door slammed with such a crash that the very walls shook.

Sinclair picked himself up dazedly—having received the biggest surprise of his life. He had expected Mr. Stokes to cow down—to meekly submit. And Mr. Stokes had booted him out!

Every one of Sinclair's carefully thought-out conclusions were shattered. He went off down the passage in a tearing rage. All right! He'd show the fool what he could do! He'd get him sacked within an hour! Once the school got hold of the yarn, there would be no peace for Mr. Beverley Stokes.

And while Sinclair tottered out of the West House with this determination, Mr. Stokes sat at his desk, staring straight in front of him, and breathing hard. He was a young man, and he had let himself go in no uncertain fashion. He calmed rapidly. Perhaps that action of his had been too undignified. But human flesh and blood could only stand a certain amount.

"The young cad!" breathed Mr. Stokes. "The unmitigated young scoundrel! Black-mail! Nothing more nor less than black-mail!"

And then he began to think in a different strain. What if Sinclair did tell the school? Would it make any difference? His own

boys, at least, would no doubt discredit the whole yarn. But the East House fellows would probably—Then, of course, there was the Head. Even if the Head didn't believe it, he might feel compelled to inquire into the matter.

That would be awkward! An inquiry! Of course, the affair had been quite innocent—and Mr. Stokes knew that he had done absolutely nothing to be ashamed of. A word of explanation to Dr. Stafford, and the latter would soon put his foot down sharply on the scandal-mongers.

There was nothing to be really alarmed about. All the same, it was unpleasant enough. Some of the boys would just love to whisper that sordid yarn all over the place. And it might mean a bothering interview with the Governors, too. A thing of that sort—so harmless in itself—could be exaggerated by rumour into a huge affair.

"Confound it!" muttered Mr. Stokes, puzzled. "The very last thing I wanted! By Jove, it makes a fellow vow that he'll be cautious before he sets off on these errands, saving people from their own follies. There's such a thing as being too good-natured."

He wasn't allowed to think more deeply on the subject, for the door opened, and his wife entered. Mrs. Stokes was quite young, and very charming. She looked particularly fresh this morning, for she had been for a walk in the crisp, frosty January air.

"Barry!" she exclaimed. "Has something happened?"

"What on earth—" he began. "How do you mean, Joyce? What makes you think—"

"I met one of the seniors just now," she replied, looking rather alarmed. "I don't know him—except that he's one of the boys from the other side of the Triangle. But he actually stopped me in the lobby."

"The young cub—" "Please, Barry!" she begged. "Please tell me what it means. He wasn't rude, but he just said this—'if you are seeing Mr. Stokes, please tell him that I'm inclined to wait until noon—but no longer.' It was such an extraordinary thing. What in the world did he mean?"

Barry Stokes could see that it was useless to pretend. Besides, he had no secrets from his wife. It would have been better, perhaps, to have kept her from knowing this worrying affair. But he wasn't going to risk any misunderstanding because of Sinclair.

"Don't be alarmed, dear," he said quietly. "The senior you saw was Sinclair. I don't know how he found out, but he knows about that confounded business at the Smugglers' Lair. You remember—young Lambert."

Mrs. Stokes looked startled. "Oh, Barry!" she exclaimed. "This is dreadful!"

"Nonsense!" he laughed. "I did no wrong, and it can easily be proved. I'm furious because this young fool came here

and practically ordered me about. I thought he was mad at first. Wanted to become Head Boy in this House. Told me I should be forced to agree."

Mrs. Stokes looked more alarmed than ever.

"What a terrible development, Barry!" she said. "You are practically in that boy's hands—in his power. You mustn't offend him, or he'll tell the story to everybody."

"Mustn't offend him!" echoed Mr. Stokes. "I kicked him out!"

"But think of what might happen!" she protested. "I can understand what he meant now—he's going to keep the secret until mid-day. He's giving you another chance—"

"The infamous young hound!" snapped Mr. Stokes. "Another chance, eh? The thing's laughable, Joyce. It's absolutely comic."

"It isn't—it isn't!" she insisted. "Oh, Barry, why can't you realise? Unless you agree to what he says, he'll tell the story to everybody!"

"Let him!" growled her husband. "Do you think I'm going to calmly sit here and be blackmailed by one of the boys of this school? I've never heard of such a preposterous thing in all my life! Let him spread the story—let him shout it from the housetops! Who'll believe it?"

"That's not the point—" "But it is the point, Joyce," he said gently. "Probably the Head will hear something, and will ask me about it. Well, I've only got to tell him the truth, and he'll —"

"But you can't!" said his wife desperately. "Can't?"

"Barry, why are you so silly? Of course you can't!"

"What on earth—" "Don't you remember your promise?"

"My promise?" repeated Mr. Stokes. "Why, you don't mean— Good heavens!" he said slowly.

For a moment they looked at each other in dead silence.

"It wasn't merely an ordinary promise!" went on Mrs. Stokes. "You gave both Mr. Lambert and his son your solemn word of honour that you wouldn't breathe a word of that affair! And I did the same! Don't you see? Our lips are absolutely sealed!"

"But under exceptional circumstances—" "Barry, your pledged word!"

"Yes, you're right!" he said ruefully. "I can't possibly go back on that—whatever the circumstances. Hang it! This position is intolerable! I can't realise it, Joyce—I can't believe— Look here," he added, "it's impossible for me to submit to Sinclair's tyranny. That's final. What will the result be? He'll tell the school."

"But you mustn't let that happen!" she said, in alarm.

"How can I help it?" said Mr. Stokes. "And won't that be the same as if we broke our word to Mr. Lambert?"

"That's why you mustn't let it happen!"

"Oh, that won't do, Joyce!" said Mr. Stokes firmly. "Our lips are sealed, but we're not responsible for Sinclair's! Upon my soul, there is a limit to these things! If Sinclair speaks——"

"But even then the position will be just as bad!" interrupted his wife, with shrewd insight. "Why are you so dense, Barry? Indeed, the position will be altogether worse! This story will be all over the school, and you won't be able to say a word in your own defence!"

"By Jove!" breathed Mr. Stokes. "That's right, Joyce! Now you come to put it like that, I'm beginning to think the affair is grave, after all!"

tioned Mr. Stokes on the matter, he could give absolutely no satisfactory answer. Indeed, he would be compelled to maintain complete silence.

And what would that look like? Obviously, any disinterested party would assume at once that Mr. Stokes was guilty of a disgraceful orgy. His incapacity to refute the charge would be taken as an expression of guilt. Whichever way one looked at the problem there was no solution.

"You'll have to see the boy again, and agree to what he wants," said Mrs. Stokes. "For your own safety, Barry, you've got to keep his tongue still."

"But it's out of the question!" said her husband, rising to his feet and striding up

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CHAPTER XIII.

THE ONLY COURSE.



WITHOUT question, Mrs. Stokes had hit the vital nail on the head. It was one that was so liable to be missed—but one so all-important.

Neither Barry Stokes nor his wife were obliged by their pledge to keep Sinclair's tongue silent. But if Sinclair spoke, they would be in the intolerable position of standing by in silence. If the Head ques-

and down. "Life wouldn't be worth living under such conditions! To have that insistent young puppy lording it over me, and giving me his orders—— No, Joyce, it's ridiculous!"

"Then what will you do?" she asked quietly.

"If he wants to make trouble—he'll have to make it."

"And you will lose your appointment here, and be utterly disgraced," she said. "That's what it will end in, Barry. Why, the Head will make inquiries before this very evening! He'll be bound to—he couldn't let it stand. And, without any satisfactory ex-

planation from you, he will assume the very worst. Thrown out of the worst night club in London! Imagine it! Even the manager of the place would declare that it was true."

"All I've got to do is to get released from that promise," said Mr. Stokes stubbornly. "I can explain to Mr. Lambert that the circumstances compel me— Oh, but—"

He broke off, and looked at his wife in a startled way.

"Jove!" he muttered. "Mr. Lambert's gone to New York."

"And his son is in the South of France," said Mrs. Stokes.

"Of all the infernal luck!" said the Housemaster, looking really alarmed. "It seems too unnatural— But we've got to face the facts, of course," he added soberly. "I don't even know Lambert's address—or his son's. Surely we should be justified— No, of course not," he added. "A promise is a promise. What can be done?"

"Perhaps Sinclair won't be too unreasonable," said Mrs. Stokes. "You've got to see him again, and agree. In the meantime, you can find out Mr. Lambert's address—and his son's address. You can write, and get them to release us from our promise. They'll naturally do that as soon as they know the facts."

"And let Sinclair dictate to me until the release comes?" mused Mr. Stokes. "By Jove, if I do that, I'll have it up against him when I can open my mouth! It'll mean instant expulsion for the young brute!"

All the talking in the world made no difference. The only way was to do as the young Housemaster had just said. He would have to submit to Sinclair's intolerable impertinence until his tongue was untied. Pending the arrival of that double release from Mr. Lambert and his son, the utmost caution would have to be maintained.

At last Mr. Stokes was obliged to confess there was no other course. He told his wife not to worry, and sent her into the private quarters of the West House. Then he sent for Guy Sinclair. Lessons, of course, were in progress by now, but Sinclair came within five minutes. He was looking calm again, but he wore a certain air of uneasiness.

"Come in, Sinclair," said Mr. Stokes grimly. "Shut the door."

"You've been thinking things over?" asked the prefect.

"I have."

"So have I, sir," said Sinclair. "I'd just like to mention that I'm not willing to stand any more rough-handling. I'm not a kid—"

"You are certainly not a kid, Sinclair," interrupted Mr. Stokes. "You are an unmitigated young blackguard."

"Look here, Mr. Stokes—"

"I am amazed that a scholar of this school should betray such criminal tendencies," continued Mr. Stokes. "I don't wish to pro-

long this interview. You have not carried out your threat?"

"Not yet," said Sinclair. "But if you don't agree—"

"One moment," interrupted the Housemaster. "How do you know of this affair at the Smugglers' Lair? And how do you think you can prove that I was in the place? It would be useless to tell you that my visit was quite innocent."

"That's not the point, sir," said Sinclair coolly. "The question is, would people believe it was innocent? If a word of that came out you'd lose your appointment here. As for proving it—what about this?"

He took something out of his pocket, and handed it over the desk. Mr. Stokes saw that it was a snapshot—a flashlight photograph. Instantly his mind went back to that night. He remembered the flash which had occurred on the other side of the room.

"Upon my word!" he muttered.

"Pretty, isn't it?" asked Sinclair.

Barry Stokes squared his jaw. The scene was recalled vividly to him. He was staggered when he found his own figure clearly defined among the others. The snap could not have been taken at a more disastrous moment.

There was Mr. Stokes, reeling drunkenly, with wine splashed over his shirt-front. To anybody who didn't know the truth, it seemed obvious that he was one of the most intoxicated revellers.

"Your cunning is even greater than I supposed, Sinclair," he said grimly. "So you were in that night club, too?" He started. "Wouldn't it be rather awkward if that fact came out?" he added keenly. "You'd better think carefully before proceeding with this blackmail—"

"I didn't say I was in the club," interrupted Sinclair. "As a matter of fact, that snapshot was given to me by a friend. He merely wished to point out some of his pals—and I spotted you by chance. It would be awkward if the school knew of your little night club doings, wouldn't it?"

Mr. Stokes breathed hard.

This photograph was quite enough to convince him that he would have to be cautious in the extreme. If he refused to obey Sinclair's will, the story would get abroad—the Head would learn of it—and Sinclair would be called upon the carpet to explain his reasons for starting the story. And that photograph would justify him. It would also mean instant dismissal for Mr. Stokes.

For the Head could not disbelieve the evidence of his own eyes. And with no explanation forthcoming from the young Housemaster, he would only have one course to pursue.

"Going to throw it into the fire?" asked Sinclair carelessly. "It doesn't matter to me if you do—I've got plenty more of those prints! I came well supplied. I thought it would be rather a good idea to distribute them round the various Forms. The fellows

are always liable to disbelieve a man's word. But that snap would clinch it."

"I wonder that I keep my temper, Sinclair," said Mr. Stokes harshly. "You are taking a contemptible, cowardly advantage of me. I assure you that my visit to the Smugglers' Lair was innocent. However, you have chosen to blackmail me, and for the time being I must submit. What are your demands? Would a sum of money satisfy you?"

Sinclair looked indignant.

"Hang it, I'm not a fellow of that sort!" he protested. "It's not fair to call it blackmail, either. We're all ready to take advantage of an opportunity. I want the prefectship of this House. There's nothing crooked in that, Mr. Stokes. You've simply got to appoint me, and the matter ends. I shan't bother you again."

Mr. Stokes was inwardly relieved—but he only nodded.

"Very well, Sinclair," he said curtly. "I will have a word with Morrow, and you may bring your belongings over during the day. From this moment onwards you may consider yourself Head Boy of the West House."

Sinclair's eyes gleamed with triumph.

"Good enough!" he said briskly. "That's all I wanted to know."

He took his departure at once, and although Mr. Stokes wanted to assist him through the doorway with his boot a second time, he restrained this impulse. And after Sinclair had gone, he sat at his desk, staring dully before him.

For the moment he was in Sinclair's power. But he was only biding his time. There would come a day when he would be able to face the rascally Sixth-Former, and defy him to do his worst.

But what of the intervening period?

CHAPTER XIV.

A SURPRISE FOR THE WEST HOUSE.



"**H**EARD the latest?" asked Ralph Leslie Fullwood, as he encountered Handforth & Co. in the Ancient House lobby shortly before tea.

"What's this—a catch?" demanded Handforth suspiciously.

"No, it's about Morrow, of the West House," said Fullwood. "Here's Russell—he's heard it, too. Come on, Clive—support me!"

"Sure thing!" said the Canadian boy.

"What about Morrow, anyhow?" asked Handforth. "He's not one of our chaps. He's the head prefect of the West House—"

"No, he isn't," interrupted Fullwood. "For some reason that nobody can fathom,

he's resigned. And Sinclair has been appointed in his place."

Handforth & Co. yelled.

"You fathead!" said Handforth, when he could get his breath. "Tell that yarn to the Marines! That cad, Sinclair? Head prefect of the West House? Piffle!"

"I tell you it's a fact—"

"You can't pull my leg like that!" said Handforth. "Sinclair isn't in the West House, anyhow—he's one of Goole's exhibits!"

"Cheese it, Fullwood," grinned Church.

"I thought you'd disbelieve the yarn," said Fullwood. "But it happens to be true. Sinclair transferred to the West House this morning. He's Head Boy now—in full possession as it were. Honest injun, you know. I'm not spoofing."

"You mean it's absolutely true?"

"Absolutely true," said Clive Russell. "There's something queer about it, I guess, but we can't fathom it. I passed Morrow not long ago and he was looking kind of pale."

Handforth strode out into the Triangle, and made a bee-line for the West House. There was a purposeful air about him. Church and McClure caught him back before he could enter the neighbouring domain.

"Hold on!" said Church. "What's the idea?"

"I'm going to inquire about this," said Handforth curtly.

"But Fullwood says it's absolutely true—"

"Then I'm going to ask the reason why!" roared Handforth. "You chaps had better come along, too. We'll pitch Sinclair out on his neck. Huh! We're not going to have that outsider on this side of the Triangle!"

"But it's not our business!" gasped McClure. "We're Ancient House chaps, we can't butt in—"

"Watch me!" interrupted Handforth furiously.

One might have supposed that he was the headmaster, by the way he spoke. Fortunately, Reggie Pitt and Jack Grey came out of the West House before he could do anything further. Dick Hamilton and Tregellis-West and Tommy Watson were with them.

"What's all this about Sinclair?" demanded Handforth, running up.

"No good asking me!" said Reggie Pitt disgustedly. "He's our head prefect. You could have knocked us down with a feather when we heard it. Sinclair, mark you! That East House bounder!"

"But what about Morrow?" asked Handforth, in amazement.

"We don't know—there's something funny about it," growled Pitt. "Morrow won't say a word. The Sixth's seething. The Senior Day-room is like an overheated boiler. Sixth Formers are going about with clumps of hair in their hands."

"It's a queer business, anyhow," remarked Nipper. "The most puzzling thing of all is this. Why did Stokes allow it? Morrow has always been particularly chummy with Mr. Stokes. And now he's been chucked aside, and this East House rotter is put in his shoes!"

"I spoke to Mr. Stokes about it half-an-hour ago, and he nearly bit my head off," said Jack Grey. "It's quite official, of course. Sinclair is with us with Stokes' consent, and we've got to put up with it."

These were not the only fellows who were discussing the remarkable change. As Pitt had declared, the Sixth was seething. They felt that Mr. Stokes had gone out of his mind. It would have been bad enough if Sinclair had been merely transferred to the West House. But what had possessed the Housemaster to appoint this known rotter to the position of Head Boy? There were several prefects in the West House already who deserved the post prior to any newcomer. And it wasn't as if Arthur Morrow had resigned. It was officially given out that he had resigned, but nobody believed it. And Morrow himself wouldn't give any information.

He was about the most popular senior in the West House—and certainly the best Head Boy the House could have provided. For he was not only diplomatic, but he possessed a blind eye which the juniors had frequently found very useful. Furthermore, he was the best all-round athlete in the House, and a great footballer.

Sinclair, on the other hand, was well known as a bully—a snob, too. He was fond of instituting card-parties in his study, and generally behaving in a disreputable manner. These facts were known far and wide—among the boys. How was it, then, that such a fellow was appointed in place of Morrow?

It was a staggering shock for the West House.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Stokes had had a very bad quarter-of-an-hour with Arthur Morrow. It had been impossible to explain the situation—or even remotely hint at it. Mr. Stokes had quietly requested Morrow's resignation, and had informed him that Guy Sinclair would take his place.

And Morrow, who was a senior with more than his share of shrewdness, had detected that there was something behind this. He felt convinced that Mr. Stokes was not willingly making the change. And so Morrow was decent enough to say nothing. He accepted the position, and vowed to himself that he would get to the truth of it, sooner or later.

By the middle of the evening the excitement had died down somewhat. Only the West House was really affected. There was a good deal of comment in the other Houses, but no actual excitement. And as Sinclair

had not made himself evident, even the West House was cooling down.

The new head prefect had kept strictly to his own study—not even visiting the Senior Day-room. He was wise. A storm would have greeted him if he had shown his face there.

But Guy Sinclair was not going to let this first day pass without a hint of his complete authority. Now that the power was actually in his hands, he was determined to wield it.

He happened to be passing through the West House lobby just as Reggie Pitt was coming indoors. Pitt looked at him queerly, and Sinclair came to a sudden halt. An idea had come to him. A dim recollection had stirred in his mind.

"Where have you been?" he asked curtly.

"Over in the Ancient House—why?"

"Did you have a permit?"

"A permit—to go into the Ancient House?" asked Reggie, in surprise. "What's the idea, Sinclair? You may be head prefect in this House, but—"

"I don't want any insolence!" rapped out Sinclair. "You belong to the Junior School, and you've been out of the House after calling over. Who gave you permission to leave this building?"

Reggie Pitt looked blank. Sinclair was beginning to enjoy himself now—particularly as he remembered that Pitt was one of the juniors who had helped to drag his cap off on that memorable New Year's Eve. He would be able to get some of his own back now.

"I'm waiting!" he said impatiently.

"Is this a joke?" asked Pitt. "Cheese it, Sinclair! When did the new regulation come in? How long has it been necessary to get a permit to visit one of the other Houses after locking up?"

Sinclair looked grim.

"As a matter of fact, it's one of the original school regulations," he replied. "You ought to know that as well as me. I'm head prefect now, and I'm going to see that the rules are adhered to."

Pitt seemed to remember something, now that Sinclair reminded him. There actually was a school regulation to the effect that juniors could not leave their Houses after a certain hour unless they had permission from a prefect or a master. But it was one of those regulations which had been allowed to fall into disuse. It was obsolete—although not actually officially scratched.

That Sinclair should bring it up now, was startling. Fellows were visiting Houses other than their own throughout the whole evening—with impunity. Even the masters took no notice. It was accepted as the proper thing to do.

"What's the idea?" asked Pitt quietly. "You know as well as I do that that rule is shelved, Sinclair."

"You have admitted that you went to the Ancient House," replied Sinclair calmly. "Did you have a permit or not?"

"Of course I didn't have a permit."

"In that case, you'll write me five hundred lines for breaking the school rules," said the head prefect. "What's more, I shall want them to-night, before bed-time."

"But look here——" began Pitt indignantly.

"That's all!" snapped Sinclair. "Mind you get them done!"

CHAPTER XV.

IN DEADLY EARNEST!



REGGIE PITT was still standing in the lobby a minute later, when Nipper and Handforth and Fullwood marched in.

"About football," began Nipper briskly. "We've got to fix up a match for Saturday, Reggie. You're just the man we want—— Hallo! Anything wrong?" he added.

Reggie Pitt reeled gracefully into his arms.

"Water, somebody!" he murmured. "I'm feeling faint! Sinclair's just given me five hundred lines for visiting you chaps in the Ancient House."

"Five hundred!" said Handforth, aghast.

"For visiting us?" said Nipper. "But that's not an offence!"

"It is according to Sinclair!" exclaimed Pitt cheerfully. "Pulled me up just as I was coming in, you know. Asked for my permit. Of course, I hadn't got one, so he whacked out five hundred lines."

"The man's mad!" said Fullwood. "There's no such regulation."

"Yes there is, although nobody takes any notice of it," replied Reggie. "Sinclair seems to have dug it up from somewhere. Naturally, I'm not going to do the lines. I'm not quite dotty."

"Sinclair's evidently out for trouble," said Nipper grimly. "If he starts by raking up obsolete rules he'll find himself in a pretty hopeless mess. You fellows won't let him do any of that high-handed business over here, I'll bet."

"Not likely," replied Reggie. "He's off his chump."

And the subject was dismissed in favour of football. Later on, Reggie related the story in the junior common-room, and there was much amusement. It was generally accepted that Sinclair had attempted to be funny.

But a few minutes before the bed-time bell was due to ring, Sinclair himself appeared in the common-room, and beckoned to Pitt. All conversation ceased. Somehow, the juniors felt that something

was going to happen. There was not a single friendly eye bent upon Sinclair as he advanced.

"Those lines, Pitt," he said briefly. "Done them?"

"Look here, Sinclair——"

"Have you done them?"

"Of course I haven't done them!" retorted Pitt indignantly. "What on earth's the idea of this? Do you think I'm going to write lines for nothing? If you don't feel satisfied, report me to the House-master."

"Hear, hear!"

"Cheese it, Sinclair!"

"Don't start any rot!"

"I'm not going to make it a rule to report everything to the Housemaster," said Sinclair, producing a cane from behind his back. "My policy is to deal with these things personally. I don't believe in tittle-tattle. Pitt, come here."

"What for?" demanded Pitt calmly.

"I'm going to cane you!" said Sinclair. "I'm going to give you ten cuts for disobeying my orders. You may remember that I'm a prefect—the head prefect of this House. When I give an order, it's got to be obeyed."

"You—you hopeless ass!" roared Pitt, losing his temper. "I haven't had time to write five hundred lines—even if I'd tried. I wouldn't write two lines—not for a supposed offence like that, anyhow! Go and eat coke!"

"Good old Reggie!"

"That's the way to talk!"

"This is going to do you no good," said Sinclair smoothly. "You've neglected that impo., you've descended to insolence, and now I'm going to thrash you. You'll take ten cuts, and do those lines to-morrow."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The common-room laughed uproariously at this joke.

Sinclair, of course, was expecting it—he had known from the first that he was giving a punishment out of all proportion to the offence. Indeed, actually, there had been no offence at all. But Sinclair felt safe because it was a school rule.

And he was taking this opportunity to reveal a little of his power. Already he was feeling a dictator.

He strode forward, grasped Pitt by the collar, and raised his cane. The juniors watched, dumbfounded. They had never believed it possible that Sinclair would attempt to put his threat into execution. Everybody was rooted to the spot on which he stood.

"Better go easy!" warned Pitt dangerously. "I'm not going to submit to any of this idiotic rot, Sinclair! I didn't do the lines because it was a mad thing to give them to me. And don't you use that cane!"

"Are you threatening me?" roared Sinclair.

"I'm telling you not to use that cane!" retorted Reggie, enraged.

Slash!

Sinclair brought the cane down with terrific force across Reggie Pitt's calves. It was a vicious blow, and one that would have aroused the genial junior skipper at any time. But just now he was exasperated by the continuation of this farce. For once he had lost his temper.

"You cad!" he panted fiercely.

With one grab he pulled the cane out of Sinclair's hand and swung it across the prefect's back. It was only a touch, and Sin-

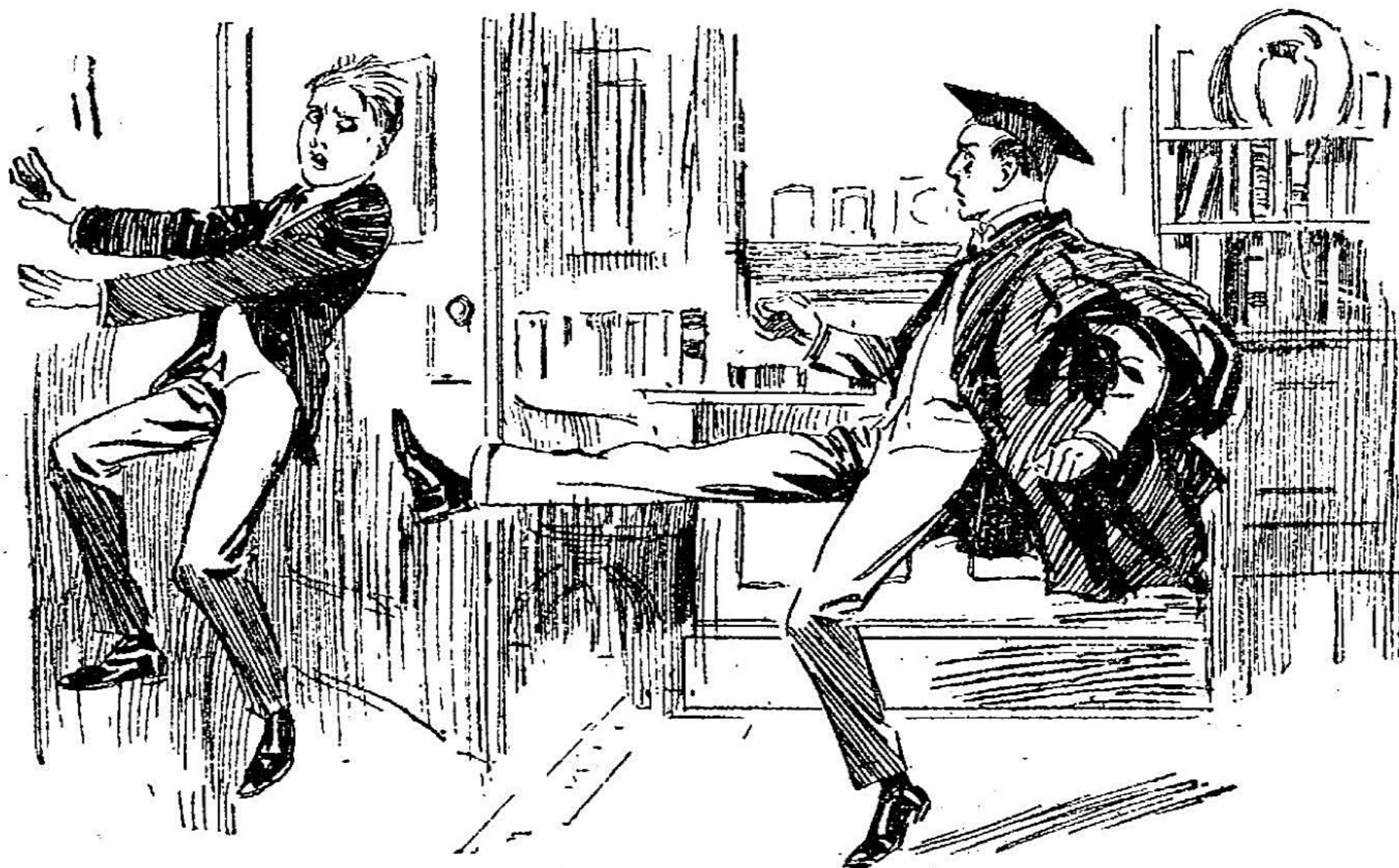
Sinclair, however, went straight to the Housemaster's study, and strode in. Mr. Stokes looked up from his desk with a frown. His eyes narrowed as he recognised his visitor.

"What do you want?" he asked coldly.

"Two minutes ago I had occasion to cane one of the juniors—Pitt, of the Remove," said Sinclair. "He pulled the cane out of my hand, and used it against me. I want you to report Pitt to the headmaster for a flogging!"

Mr. Stokes put his pen down.

"I can hardly believe this, Sinclair," he said quietly. "Pitt is not the kind of boy to do anything of that sort. No, I shall



It was fortunate for the Sixth Former's dignity that nobody happened to be within sight. He shot through the doorway like a stone from a catapult.

clair was hardly hurt. Pitt lowered the cane, sobered.

"Sorry!" he muttered. "Didn't mean to do that, but you shouldn't have goaded me. You must be mad, Sinclair! I demand to be taken to Mr. Stokes!"

Sinclair's eyes were gleaming.

"You'll be punished in another way," he said gloatingly. "You'll hear more of this later!"

He strode out of the Common-room without another word, and a babel of voices broke out. Everybody had expected the prefect to thrash Pitt within an inch of his life, and his sudden departure was puzzling. But it was generally felt that he had thought better of his earlier project.

not report him to the Head. I will look into the matter personally."

"I want him reported to the Head!" said Sinclair insolently. "If you don't do your duty, Mr. Stokes, I shall do it for you! Shall I report to the Head, or will you?"

Mr. Stokes rose to his feet, quivering.

"We will see!" he said curtly.

Within two minutes they were in the Common-room, and Mr. Stokes was looking rather pale. He was under no misapprehension regarding Sinclair's intention. If Pitt had really committed the offence, and Mr. Stokes failed to report it, he would get into trouble. It was a flogging job if a junior attacked a prefect.

"Pitt," he said quietly, "did you attack Sinclair?"

"I pulled a cane out of his hand, sir," said Pitt, glad of the opportunity of putting the case before Mr. Stokes, who was celebrated for his sense of justice.

"He used the cane against me!" declared Sinclair angrily.

"Is that true, Pitt?"

"I think I gave Sinclair a slash, sir, but he provoked me," replied Reggie. "He gave me five hundred lines for visiting the Ancient House."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Stokes, looking at the prefect.

"It is a school regulation, sir, that no junior boy shall leave his House without permission," said Sinclair, with perfect composure. "But that's beside the point. Pitt attacked me, and he admits it. This is my first day in this House, sir, and I want my authority to be recognised."

Mr. Stokes clenched his teeth.

"You will probably hear more of this later, Pitt," he said. "I feel that the matter is serious."

He went out, leaving the Common-room freshly amazed. The bell rang a moment later, and when the Remove went up to bed there was plenty to talk about.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SCHOOLBOY DICTATOR.



MR. BEVERLEY STOKES regarded Sinclair grimly.

"This is absurd!"

he said. "You can't proceed with this ridiculous charge, Sinclair. Pitt confessed to striking you with the cane, but a private flogging in this study will be sufficient."

"Not for me, sir," said Sinclair.

"You young hound!" snapped Mr. Stokes fiercely. "What is your idea of persecuting this boy? You give him lines for an offence which is no offence at all! And because he fails to obey your ridiculous order you attempt to cane him. I have not the slightest doubt that you deliberately provoked him to turn upon you. I refuse to take further action."

Sinclair shrugged his shoulders.

"The punishment for a junior striking a prefect is a public flogging in Big Hall, sir," he said. "I shall go straight to the Headmaster, report the whole affair, and tell him that you have refused—"

"Stop!" panted Mr. Stokes. "Is this further blackmail?"

"I wish you'd drop that word, sir!" growled Sinclair. "I'm Head Boy, and I'm trying to maintain discipline. What is the Head going to say if he finds that you are taking sides with the juniors against me? I want Pitt publicly flogged to-morrow morning."

"But I tell you—"

"In fact, Pitt will be publicly flogged to-morrow morning," said Sinclair, making for the door. "Think it over, Mr. Stokes. We'll probably have a final word about this to-morrow."

He nodded, and walked out of the study. In every intonation of his voice, in every mannerism, he told Mr. Stokes that he was the autocrat of the West House—the dictator whose word was to be obeyed. Even on this very first day he was revealing his desire for absolute power.

And the next morning Mr. Stokes had no alternative but to place the bare facts before Dr. Stafford. Sinclair had warned him to make no mention of the fact that Pitt had been given five hundred lines for an imaginary breach. In Mr. Stokes' unenviable position, he had obeyed. But he was determined that this sort of thing should not continue. He would rather accept dismissal than submit to such humiliation.

Indeed, the Housemaster would probably have defied the rascally prefect altogether but for Mrs. Stokes. She had made her home at St. Frank's, was happy there, and it would be a cruel wrench to tear her away. For her sake he was willing to submit to Sinclair's dictatorship.

"This is very serious, Mr. Stokes," said the Head, when he had heard. "Pitt, I understand, turned upon the prefect, and wrenched the cane out of his hand—afterwards using it?"

"So I understand, sir."

"I will speak to Sinclair, and hear the full story from his own lips," said Dr. Stafford, frowning. "It is a very serious case, and must be dealt with drastically. When you go, will you please tell Sinclair that I desire to see him."

"Certainly, sir," said Mr. Stokes.

A fierce impulse came upon him to blurt everything out. But he held back, and took his departure without speaking. After all, his whole career was at stake. Dismissal from St. Frank's would mean the end of all his ambitions. Once a schoolmaster is relieved of his appointment in disgrace, he has little or no chance of securing another berth.

Mr. Stokes was not a single man. He had his wife to think of—his home. True, he could accept an allowance from his father. But such a thing as that was abhorrent to a worker like Mr. Stokes.

The result of Sinclair's visit to the Head was, of course, foregone. And when the school collected in Big Hall for prayers there was a sensation. Before the usual dismissal came, the Head came forward.

"This morning I have a painful duty to perform," he said quietly. "Pitt step forward."

This was the first time Reggie Pitt had of the sentence, and he instinctively felt that a flogging was coming. He boiled within him. The injustice of it! The utter, absolute tyranny!



"Pitt, it has been reported to me that you turned upon the head prefect of your House, and struck him with a cane," continued the Head. "What have you to say?"

"Nothing much, sir."

"You admit the offence?"

"Yes, sir," said Pitt, "but the circumstances were exceptional. Sinclair had given me lines for a ridiculous——"

"I cannot listen to any excuses, Pitt," interrupted Dr. Stafford curtly. "You have confessed to striking the prefect, and that is enough. You will come up here on this platform. Sinclair—Wilson—I shall require your assistance."

A hum went through the school.

The West House fellows, of course, knew how arrantly unjust this public flogging was. They were not only amazed, but startled—scared by the thought that such a thing could actually happen. It was clear in a moment that Guy Sinclair was in possession of far more power than any other prefect in the school. And he had only been appointed the previous day!

Without question, he had made a spectacular start!

"It's a rotten shame!" said Handforth fiercely. "A public flogging for nothing! We ought to do something, you chaps! Why not start hooting, or something?"

"We can't hoot the Head, you ass!" breathed Church.

"We can hoot Sinclair," said Handforth. "The rotter ought to be kicked out of his prefectship! If he's going on like this in the West House, life won't be worth living for those poor chaps."

"Silence, over there!" said one of the Ancient House prefects. "Handforth, any more talking from you and there'll be trouble."

Reggie Pitt was on the platform now, and he noticed that Guy Sinclair was looking at

him with sheer gloating. Indeed, Sinclair was supremely happy. Even at this early stage, he had not only imposed his will upon Mr. Stokes—but actually upon the Head! For that was what it amounted to. Sinclair was encouraged to go further with his scheme for added power. He felt that he could do just as he wished.

Reggie Pitt took the flogging without a sound. He knew how unjust it was, but if he told the full truth he would involve Mr. Stokes in an awkward inquiry. And, somehow, Reggie felt that Mr. Stokes had not been a party to this outrage. The housemaster was looking pale and drawn. His face expressed the agony he suffered.

The flogging over, the school was dismissed. On all sides Pitt received expressions of sympathy. There wasn't a fellow in the junior school who didn't know the actual facts—and who wasn't burning with indignation. Out in the Triangle, half-a-dozen independent meetings were being held.

"It's no good making a fuss, you chaps," said Pitt, as a crowd swarmed round him. "Sinclair's the chap to blame—and he's evidently out for mischief. But he's shown us pretty clearly that we can't defy him."

"There's something uncanny about it," declared Nipper shrewdly. "Sinclair isn't an ordinary bully—he's succeeded in forcing his will upon your Housemaster. Even the Head has been drawn in! You fellows will have to go pretty carefully."

"If I was a West House chap, I'd punch Sinclair on the nose!" snorted Handforth. "I wouldn't put up with his rot!"

But the juniors of the West House were very soon to discover that they would have to put up with all sorts of startling things! Guy Sinclair was on the warpath—he had appointed himself supreme commander of the West House, and he was determined that nothing should stand in the way of his ambition.

THE END.

How Sinclair's terrorism leads to the beginning of a serious revolt will be related Next Week in Another Powerful Story;

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CHAPTER I.

AGAINST TIME.

THE summer storm had burst with terrific violence. Lightning blazed all over the black sky, and the crash of thunder seemed to shake the very hills.

Harry Redwin had reached the old, half-ruined windmill on the hillside just in time to escape a drenching. He watched the streaming rain with amazement. Never had he seen anything like it before. In a few moments the weed-grown track that led down to the main road had become a foaming river of chalky water.

"Too much of it to last any time, that's one consolation," he thought. "But who's going to ride a bike through this flood when the rain gives over? It's a motor-boat I'll need, instead of the jigger."

He pulled his machine through the narrow doorway, so that it would be quite out of the rain, and then found a seat for himself. He was fairly tired, for he had done a sixty-mile spin that day, and the last few hours had been very close.

It was a pity the storm had not kept off a little longer, because another five minutes would have seen the cyclist safe indoors; but he was not the sort to fume at any delay. This was all part of the fun.

Outside the gloom deepened, and here, in the circular store-room below the wooden windmill, it was utterly dark. Harry had his cycle-lamp, however, and this he lit. Then, after a further wait, he got up and went to the door to consult the weather.

The rain still fell heavily, but the lightning was growing less frequent, and the thunder-rattle had changed to a distant rumble.

Suddenly, as Harry Redwin stood in the dark doorway, he was startled by a strange sound from overhead.

It might have been only the rising wind rattling a loose door up there; but then, he thought, why hadn't the wind rattled it before? Was there somebody else sheltering in the mill—somebody who had let himself into the upper part, and now couldn't get out?

He stepped out into the rain and darkness, and flashed his cycle-lamp on the door that gave entrance to the upper section.

"Hallo!" he bawled.

The door rattled violently, and then came a sound that set Harry's flesh creeping.

"Help!" That was the cry, although it was so faint as to be almost lost in the noises of the storm.

Three steps at a time, Harry bounded up the crazy wooden stairs leading to the door. In one hand he held the lantern; in the other he grasped a block of wood with which he meant to burst in the door, if necessary.

It was necessary, as Harry at once discovered, and he went to work with a will. Half a dozen swinging blows, and, crash, the door flew inwards!

Standing at the top of the steps, Harry flashed the lantern into the doorway, and next moment the bright light was playing upon a wild-looking figure that clutched at the jamb for support.

"Hallo!" cried Harry again. "What's the trouble?"

The stranger—he was only Harry's age—burst into speech, but his voice broke at once, and he stopped, with one hand at his throat.

"Here, steady on!" said Harry, gripping him by one shoulder. "You're not ill, are you?"

"No; only just about done!" The words came jerkily, in a rasping tone. "The gag!"

"What's that? You've been gagged?"

The poor fellow nodded.

"For five hours; an age it seemed," he panted, leaning weakly against the door-post. "And I thought I'd never get free. Even now—" He paused, and passed a hand across his forehead. "It isn't myself I'm thinking about. I'll be all right soon. But my uncle—it may be too late to save him!"

"Look here," said Harry, keeping very cool, as he always did in a critical moment. "this seems to be a case for the police, and so I reckon I'd better cut off on my bike for help."

But the stranger cried out against this suggestion.

"No, not the police!" he groaned. "Give me a few minutes, and then—then I'll do whatever can be done. If the police know, the whole world must know, and we can't have that. There's a reason."

"Oh, really?" Harry was silent for a moment, taking stock of the fellow before him. Then he stepped into the mill, and motioned him to take a seat.

"Hope I don't appear inquisitive," said Harry, "but I can't leave matters like this. I find you fighting to get out of this place, after being a prisoner—gagged and bound, it seems—for five hours. That's ugly; but you won't hear of the police being told, and—well, perhaps I may be told instead?"

Again there was silence, whilst the two eyed each other. Then the prisoner of the mill sat down and braced himself together.

"Yes," he said, "I'll tell you. You're one of the right sort, I can see, and perhaps—perhaps you can help a fellow who's in a tight corner. My name is Cyril Harcourt. I was made a prisoner to-day simply because I had been fool enough to let an anonymous message lure me to this out-of-the-way place. There were two men, and they overpowered me, and left me gagged and bound, meaning that I should not get free this side of midnight."

"And now?"

"And now," groaned Harcourt, smiting a knee with one fist, "these men are forty miles away, waiting with a third to rush my uncle's home by night. Desperate men they are, and they have good reasons for sticking at nothing. If I could get there by train— But that's impossible. There are no trains, I know. Tell me," added the speaker eagerly, "could I hire a motor?"

"A motor?" repeated Harry, jumping at the word. "No need to talk of hiring. You shall borrow the dad's car, of course!"

"But—"

"Now, if the matter is urgent, as I'm sure it is, don't let's waste time over words. My home's just on the other side of the valley road. The dad's away, but the car is there. I'll drive you that forty miles myself."

So saying, Harry darted to the door and looked out. The wind was still rising, but the rain had practically ceased.

"Come on," he cried, "and you shall explain the whole mystery as we go along. The main thing is to be on the move. Yes, I'll leave the bike here. We can do it quicker and better running together. Are you able to run?"

"Rather! You've put new life into me. My word," breathed Cyril Harcourt, as they dashed away side by side, "how eternally grateful to you I'll be for your help!"

Down the hill they pelted, splashing through the chalky water that gurgled all about them. It flashed across Harry's mind that this would mean heavy going for the car, but he did not mention the fact.

His new-found friend had quite enough to distract him already. If they were to be in time, they must ride the forty miles at top speed. That was the position, and a breakdown of the car was something too awful to be thought of.

Never once did they slacken speed on their way to the house, and in less than fifteen minutes they were streaking up the sopping gravel drive.

"Go right in!" panted Harry, throwing open the door to his friend. "Mary," he added, as a maid came forward, "this gentleman must have something to eat and drink at once before he joins me in the car. I am going to drive him on a journey that permits of no delay. Now I'm off!"

He ran down the broad stone steps, and round to the stables. Two minutes later he was back at the front entrance with his father's powerful motor.

Cyril Harcourt was gratefully swallowing a glass of wine when his friend-in-need popped his head round the door.

"She's ready!" cried Harry. "I'll be down in a sec., and then we'll be off."

With that he ran upstairs three steps at a time, dived into a room that was furnished as a study, and took certain things from a table-drawer. When he came down again, Cyril was waiting for him in the car.

"Right!" said Harry, jumping into his driver's seat. He was in capital spirits, and seemed to be enjoying the queer adventure. "Expect me when you see me, Mary!"

The horn sounded twice, and the car slid away down the gravelled drive. As they turned into the main road, one wheel dipped with a splash into a big puddle. It was a foretaste of what was in store.

"Forty miles!" repeated Harry. "But which way?"

"Due south, I should think. You know East Mear? My uncle's home is just outside that village."

"Good! That's quite enough for me. Nine o'clock! You don't think the attack will be before eleven?"

"Heaven knows!" answered Harcourt. "It may be deferred until midnight, and, again, it may take place directly the household is in bed. We are not late birds, either."

"Um! Well, here goes!" And Harry, jerking a lever, sent the car whizzing forwards at the legal limit.

The two head-lamps cleft the darkness with their dazzling fans of light, and many a big pool of storm-water gleamed for a moment before it was sprayed to right and left by the whirring wheels. The road was very uneven, and the car rocked like a boat at sea.

"I should like to say one thing," broke out Cyril Harcourt presently. "Whether we win or lose, my gratitude will be just the same. You have been too kind altogether. I should have felt ashamed of

accepting your offer if it had been for myself. But it's my uncle you are helping. If we are in time, you will have saved one of the finest men that ever lived, either from a violent death, or from disgrace that would be worse than death."

"That tempts me to put on another ten miles an hour," said Harry, with a forced laugh, "but it doesn't make things clearer. Hallo, here's the Royal Mail!"

The car and the motor-van exchanged a loud trump! trump! as they shot past each other; then Harry, bending well forward in his seat, with his eyes piercing the darkness ahead, snatched a daring spurt that brought them to the foot of a steep hill.

"Beastly slow climb this!" he growled, although the car was shooting up at twelve miles an hour. "But it couldn't be helped. Pardon?"

"I say, it is only fair you should know the whole case at once," answered Cyril Harcourt. "I don't know what you will think of it. The affair is an ugly one. I have told you that certain men are going to raid my uncle's house to-night, but it is not my uncle whom they are up against. It is his only son, my cousin Oscar. From what I have discovered, Oscar has served these men disgracefully. He was with them on an expedition into the heart of Africa. They found diamonds—enough diamonds to make all of them for life. But on the journey home, Oscar served them a cruel trick. It seems too hideous for words, but the men swore to me that it was true, and I believe them. He gave them the slip, after getting them into a tight corner with the savages. Think of it! They were white men like himself; they had vowed to stand or fall together. But he sneaked away, after robbing them of their shares in the treasure. And so he came to England at last, feeling sure his companions had been slaughtered in the wilds. It was only a week or so ago that he learned how they had escaped death, had followed him to England, and meant to wreak vengeance."

"And your uncle?" asked Harry, peering ahead as the car climbed the steep hill.

"My uncle knows nothing! It has been my hope that he never would know anything, for I am sure it would kill him. He is an old soldier, a man of honour, and his son—his son has played the double part of coward and traitor!"

"Ah!" breathed Harry, with a gentle nod of the head. "Yes, I understand now. You have tried to settle matters, tried to come between these desperate men and your cousin. But they would not be interfered with, and so they enticed you to the mill, so that you should be out of their way to-night. There's just one other point. Does your cousin Oscar expect this attack?"

Cyril Harcourt laughed bitterly.

"My cousin treats the thing lightly, as he treated his desertion out there in the wilds. He thinks if the men do turn up,

they'll put up with his bluff. But they won't. They'll kill him! I tell you there'll be a fearful scene, even if we are in time to come between them. In their blind rage, they may kill my uncle, too!"

"By the way," said Harry quietly, "I brought a couple of the gov'nor's revolvers with me. I thought it advisable. Now, then!"

They had reached the summit of the great hill, and before them, in the black darkness, lay a narrow, rutty road that dipped six hundred feet in a mile. Harry shifted the clutch, and felt for his brakes.

"Hold tight!"

All speech ended there. That great car, with its glaring lights, went whizzing downhill, the horn braying a warning at every other moment.

Trump! Trump! They had reached the level again, and were rocking and splashing along the main road. Ahead were the lights of a small town; in a minute the car was bounding through the High Street. Idlers in the road scattered to right and left; further on a youthful policeman thought the time had come to use his notebook. Trump! Trump! On they flew, the darkness shutting down again as the town was left behind. Whizz! Whir-r-r! Whoo-oo-oom! A beautiful stretch this! And Harry was making the best of it.

But time was flying as well as the car. At ten o'clock they had not completed half the distance, and what remained was likely to take longer. For now they had to leave the main road, and Harry was not so sure of his ground. However, he had Cyril Harcourt to help in looking ahead, and between them they risked the chance of a smash. Past ten, and another twenty miles to cover! They were desperate now.

The storm-clouds had all gone, but the wind was high, tossing the overhanging branches of trees that lined the road.

"Whoa!" roared out Cyril, on a sudden. And Harry, who had also seen the danger, brought the car to a dead stop in twice her own length. Only a few yards ahead the road was blocked by the upper half of an elm that the gale had brought crashing down.

Out jumped the motorists, and worked like mad to shift the barrier. It was a fearful job, and the blood was singing in their ears before the obstacle went crashing into a ditch.

Another five-mile stretch; then another village. This one was in darkness, and Harry scarcely reduced his speed as they shot past the houses. Almost as much as his friend, he was reckoning what might turn upon a moment's delay anywhere.

Those three desperate men, taking the house by surprise, a meeting with Oscar Harcourt, a fierce quarrel—bloodshed, perhaps. In any case, Cyril's uncle would learn the awful truth, and then—No, it was not to be thought of! The car must get them through in time to intervene.

The minutes slipped away, and the going seemed to become heavier. But at last, just where a ghostly signpost marked some cross-roads, Cyril Harcourt cried out that they were nearing the goal.

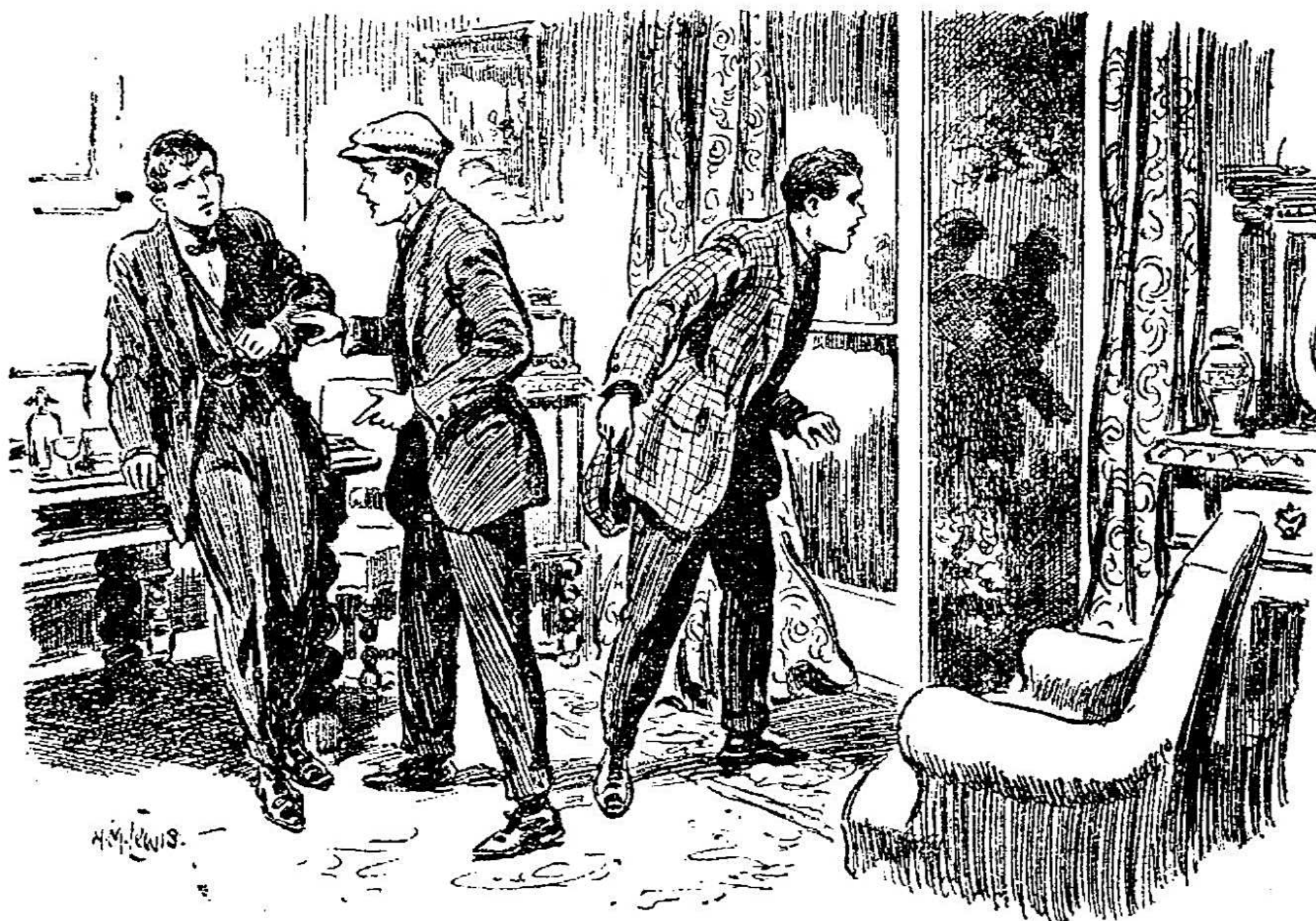
It was grand but lonely country they were running through now. Great hills hung above them in the darkness on either side of the narrow road. Not a light was to be seen anywhere until the car had spun out another four miles. Then Cyril, pointing straight ahead, indicated one speck of light that marked the journey's end.

"There's a long approach to the house, but no lodge at the gates," he said. "Could

"Here," whispered Harry, as they started to run towards the house, "you'd better slip this into your pocket." And he passed one of the two revolvers to Cyril.

They rounded a bend in the drive that revealed the whole house-front. It was quite in darkness, excepting for one French window that opened on to a grassy slope. Cyril plucked his friend by the sleeve, and then led the way to this window, which was wide open.

It was very odd, but not a sound came from the brightly-lit room. Cyril gave his companion an anxious glance, and then



Harry, out of sheer disgust for Oscar Harcourt, turned away. And it was just as he turned that he saw a dark figure—no; three figures—outside the window.

we leave the car just inside, and then go up to the house on foot?"

"That's the ticket!" agreed Harry. "What does the one light signify? I see it's a downstairs window that shows it!"

"Heaven knows!" answered Harcourt, moving restlessly in his seat. "I only pray that we are in time!"

In a couple of minutes the gates were reached. Harcourt jumped down and quickly opened them. Then Harry, having extinguished all lights, ran the car quietly a little way up the drive and turned her on to the grass.

bounded up the slope. Harry, being a total stranger to the place, was tempted to hang back, but anxiety overcame his scruples, and the two fellows reached the big window together.

Next moment they received a shock. Peering into the room, they saw the figure of a young man lying all of a heap on the floor, his head and shoulders well under the table.

"Oscar!" whispered Cyril hoarsely. "That's Oscar!"

"Then we're too late!" panted Harry, in a tone of horror. "They've been here before us, and he's killed!"

CHAPTER II.

THE VENGEANCE OF THREE.

BUT Cyril Harcourt shook his head. "I've seen him like this before," he said, with great bitterness. "Look at the table."

Harry noticed then that there was a decanter and a glass on the table, and he quite understood.

"If his father knew!" sighed Cyril. "It must all come out some day if he goes on like this. What's the time?"

Harry glanced at his watch.

"Eleven-fifteen. Shall I close the window?"

"No; better not. Let it attract the men, if they are lurking around. The sooner they come now the better. It will help to sober this chap."

Cyril knelt beside his cousin and shook him roughly.

"Here, wake up! Pull yourself together, man!"

Oscar Harcourt made a sprawling movement, sat up, and rubbed a hand lazily across his blinking eyes.

"Hallo!" he said thickly. "Where you come fro'? Guv'nor said you'd—you'd wired—sleeping night away from home."

"Listen, Oscar!" said Cyril. "If there has been a telegram, it was forged. I was kidnapped to-day, and my kidnappers are paying you a visit to-night. You can guess what it means."

"Eh?" Oscar stared about him in a maze. Then he made an effort to brace himself, and got upon his feet.

"Oh, I see!" he said, with a foolish laugh. "Who's this fellow?"

"Somebody you might behave decently to, if you can!" snapped Cyril. "He has probably saved your life by getting us both here in his motor-car."

"Oh, so you don't claim all the glory for yourself?" said Oscar, with a sudden sneer. "Saved my life! Pooh! You're a fool if you think these chaps can do anything! This is England! Beastly interfering beggar, you are! Why couldn't you leave me to fight my own battles, anyway? Suppose you hope to work up a row, so as the guv'nor will know! You've been wanting to come between me and him all along!"

Cyril flushed, but he choked back the words that were on his lips. Harry, out of sheer disgust for Oscar Harcourt, turned away. And it was just as he turned that he saw a dark figure—no; three figures—outside the window.

Harry's right hand flew to his pocket, which held his revolver; but it was not necessary to draw the weapon. For the three men, slipping swiftly into the room, came to a dead stop as they saw Cyril Harcourt standing there.

Oscar had given a gasping cry and had fallen into a chair by the table. Nobody took any notice of him. It was a duel of looks between the three desperate men and

the couple who had outwitted them by their forty-mile race.

"Good-evening, gentlemen!" said Cyril, the first to break the dramatic silence. "I am glad to be here to welcome you."

There was a long pause; then one of the men shook his head slowly and regretfully.

"You should have been content to stay where we left you, in the mill," he said. "Our business is with Mr. Oscar Harcourt—serious business—and we are not to be trifled with."

And suddenly the speaker turned upon Oscar.

"Coward! Cur! Thief!" he hissed. "This is the moment we have been looking forward to. Now we are going to settle scores!"

Oscar forced a smile to his white face.

"I suppose it's because I'm tired," he said; "but I don't understand. Couldn't you call at a more convenient time?"

"Bluff! The coward's trick!" cried the leader of the three, striding forward. "You're going to pretend our case against you is all a fake. But you shan't! Where are our diamonds?"

"Diamonds? I know nothing about any diamonds!"

"Liar!"

"Here, steady!" cut in Cyril sharply. He gripped the man by one shoulder and dragged him away from Oscar. "If you will keep calm I think I can manage things for you. You shall have the diamonds, gentlemen."

"You know where they are—you?" cried the leader of the three. He shook himself free and called to his companions. "You hear that? He knows——"

"I do not know," declared Cyril quietly. "But I mean to find out. Gentlemen," he went on quickly, "listen a moment! I understand how you feel, for I know what you have suffered. But you are brave men, and honourable; and I ask you to think of the brave and honourable man who is that scamp's father. He has only to hear us quarrelling, and he will come down and find out everything. And then——"

"Justice!" muttered one of the three fiercely. "We can't think of others to-night. We have wanted to spare you and your uncle; but now——"

"In five minutes," pleaded Cyril, "the diamonds shall be in your hands. Oscar himself will get them."

"Not a bit of it!" burst out the cad. "I deny that these fellows have any claim at all!"

"Oscar," said Cyril, "go upstairs and get those diamonds—all of them. My friend, Mr. Redwin, will go with you, to see that you find them and bring them back inside of five minutes. You can trust Mr. Redwin to see to that?" added the speaker, turning to the three.

They looked hard at Harry, and then at Cyril. Then they nodded.

Harry stepped forward.

"You had better do as you're told," he

said to Oscar, who was glaring about him defiantly.

"All right!" hissed the coward. "I'll be even with you over this, Cyril! You've always been up against me, trying to cheat me right and left out of everything I possess; but I'll get even with you some day!"

"In the meantime," said Cyril, pointing to the door, "you had better get along."

And then Oscar slouched to the door. He went out, followed by Harry, and in silence the pair of them made their way upstairs to Oscar's bed-room. All was quiet about the place; evidently none of the household had been disturbed by the scene below.

Watched by Harry, who stood by the bedroom door, Oscar prowled about for a few moments in a state of revolt. Then, as though he had resigned himself to the inevitable, he knelt down, dragged a stout oak-case from under his bed, unlocked it, and took out a linen bag containing the diamonds.

"That's the lot," he said, standing up. "Even those cheats will admit that I've kept none of them back. Now, perhaps, you'll lead the way downstairs?"

Harry was about to do so, but in a flash he suspected treachery. He wheeled round, but even so he was too late. Oscar sprang at him, and flung both arms about him, and next moment they were struggling together.

"Ah, so you thought I was done!" blurted out Oscar, with a low laugh. He made a quick dash with one hand, and snatched Harry's revolver from a side-pocket.

"Don't you struggle, or you may get hurt! I mean to give the whole lot of you the slip. I'll beat you yet!"

Bang!

The weapon had exploded as Harry, scornful of the threat, renewed his struggles. The report of the shot was deafening, and although the bullet had done no harm, he knew that the noise must have aroused the whole household.

Still struggling with his opponent, Harry heard a few cries of alarm, and then the unlocking of bed-room doors. A moment's delay, and one door was flung open. Oscar Harcourt's father was standing there, his pyjama-clad figure showing dark against the square of light.

"Help! Thieves!" cried Oscar, and the words gave Harry an inspiration.

With a last mighty effort, he wrenched himself free of Oscar, and knocked him backwards with a good left-hander. Then, snatching up the bag of diamonds, he darted swiftly for the stairs.

Oscar's father saw a figure in full flight, but he also saw another figure—that of the son he doted upon—lying senseless in the corridor. And the father's love was stronger than any desire to capture a common thief. Paying no heed to the fugitive, the old man darted along the landing and knelt by Oscar's side.

Five seconds later Harry burst into the room downstairs, where Cyril was standing with the midnight visitors.

"Come away!" panted Harry, signing to the three to follow him stealthily through the French window.

He held up the bag of diamonds.

"I have them here—they are yours, if only you will come away with me."

"Yes, go!" pleaded Cyril, feverish with excitement. "A moment's delay, and the whole truth must come out! For his sake—for the sake of an old man to whom the truth will prove a death blow—go!"

Two of the men moved to the window; the third hesitated, looking hard at Cyril.

"You think this is all a trick?"

"I think," said the man gravely, "you and your friend are two of the best I ever struck. You have perhaps saved us from staining our hands with a coward's blood; you have certainly saved his unhappy father from a killing blow. And before we part—the man came a step nearer—"perhaps you'll strike palms?"

Their hands closed in a hearty grip, and then the three men, with Harry, vanished from the room.

A moment afterwards the door opened, and Oscar's father came running in, to find Cyril there alone.

In the small hours of the morning, Harry Redwin drove the big motor-car up to the front door of his own house.

He was quite alone, for he had parted with the three men before starting on the forty-mile run from the scene of that midnight drama.

And how had it all ended? He could not be sure, even now. He only knew that he had done his best to help another in need, as a fellow is bound to do. The motor must have left tracks. Would they afford the police a clue in the hunt for the supposed "burglar"?

Harry spent a whole day of anxiety. Then, towards evening, he received from Cyril Harcourt a letter that put all his fears to rest.

Oscar Harcourt, having no better explanation to offer, had stuck to the story of a midnight thief, and his father knew nothing of the three desperate visitors and their errand of vengeance.

So, by the courage and daring of Harry and Cyril, the situation had been saved. The secret of Oscar's villainy was a secret still.

"And where does Cyril come in over this?" mused Harry, as he folded up the letter. "'Pon my word, it seems a thousand pities that he should get never a thank you from anybody. He was thinking all along of his uncle's happiness and honour, but his uncle can never know what he owes to the fellow. Ah, well," concluded the young man, "it would be a sad world, indeed, if a good and brave action was never done in secret!"

THE END.

WHALE HUNTING

By LORD DORRIMORE

As told from the personal experiences of our sporting Peer.

THE highly exciting and thrilling sport of whaling is dying out as a business. The industry is carried on mainly by Norwegians, around Iceland, Newfoundland, and Faroe Islands, and South Africa, and parts of the Antarctic. The Antarctic fisheries are the most productive.

New Bedford, which used to be the greatest whaling port in the world, has nowadays practically given the industry up.

Many a tale is told of the "greenhorns" who used to ship on whalers from the latter port. The shippers would not take on experienced tars; they were too difficult to control over the long voyages, sometimes lasting two or three years which the whalers took. The "greener" the farmer's lad or the counter-jumper the better the shippers liked him.

There was no mistaking New Bedford's industry in those days. The stranger, placed on its wharves in ignorance of his locality would not be long without the material on which to found a reasonable guess.

At every few steps his progress would be hindered or obstructed by long tiers of huge, dirty casks, redolent of train oil, while every now and again he would stumble over a bundle of whalebone, or bring up against a pile of harpoons, lances, boat-spades, and other implements of dealing death to leviathans—all of which proclaimed the calling of the place.

Here and there he might have seen a patched, weather-beaten whale-boat, turned bottom up upon the shore and an occasional pile of oars.

There were two kinds of whale sought from New Bedford—the sperm whale and the "right" whale. The latter is found chiefly in higher latitudes, while the cachelot or sperm whale is sought for chiefly within the tropics.

A man was signed on to make a voyage "to the Indian Ocean, or such other seas and oceans as the captain might see fit to visit, in the pursuit of his business of taking whales."

No wages were paid, but the members of the crew shared in a proportionate division of the proceeds of the common voyage. This share was called a man's "lay," and varied greatly, according as a hand was more or less active and experienced.

Thus for a sailor to be told that he would be given the one hundred and twenty-fifth lay, meant that his share in

the gross proceeds of the voyage was at the rate of one barrel in every one hundred and twenty-five.

The lay of a green hand varied from one hundred and eight-five to two hundred. Boat-steerers, mates, and even captains, sailed "on a lay," receiving, as a matter of course, shares proportionate to their experience and the importance of their duties.

The actual whaling was performed from the ship's boats. Each boat had a crew of six hands in all; of these the officer, or boat-header, as he was styled, and the boat-steerer, or harpooner's man, were two. The four men at the oars were called the bow-oarsman, midship-oarsman, tub-oarsman, and stroke-oarsman.

It was the duty of the bow-oarsman, aside from his labour at the oar, to assist the boat-header in getting out his lances when about to kill the whale.

His particular office was to hold the line at special places on the bow, to keep the boat in a convenient situation to reach the whale. As being nearest to the scene of operations and the boat-header's right-hand man, the bow-oarsman's place was considered one of special honour, and he was first on the list for promotion.

The midship-oarsman was chosen with special regard to his length of limb and stoutness of muscle, as he wielded the longest and toughest oar in the boat.

The tub-oarsman threw water upon the line when the whale was sounding rapidly, to prevent the rope from igniting from the violent friction.

The man at the stroke-oar gave stroke to the rest in pulling, and was also of material service to the boat-steerer in keeping clear the line, and coiling it down as it is hauled in.

The names of the boat-header and the boat-steerer may be a little misleading as to their duties.

The two most important operations, and those requiring most skill in their execution in capturing a whale were those of "going on to him" to harpoon and killing him when once fast.

The boat-header took the responsible position in those manœuvres, and consequently he steered the boat until the whale was harpooned. The whale was harpooned by the boat-steerer.

Immediately afterwards the two changed places, the boat-header taking charge of the bow, to give the whale the death blow.

It was a very infrequent occurrence to kill a whale at the first blow with the harpoon.

Whales are so easily galled (frightened) that it was considered an object to get a harpoon solidly fastened in almost any place, the lance being always counted on to deal out the death blow.

THE ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE

My dear Leagueites,—With the publication last week of the first list of O.O.'s, continued this week, and appearing in subsequent issues, we have made a decided advance in the development of the League, as outlined a few months ago. When all the lists are complete I want you to look through them very carefully and to make a note of your nearest O.O. You will then communicate with him, giving your name and membership number, and asking him to register you as a member of the local club of the S.F.L. he is forming. In this way members will be able to get in touch with their O.O.'s.

THE NEXT STEP WILL BE THE ACTUAL FORMATION OF THE CLUBS, and I shall have more to say about that later.

As regards those 10,000 members I re-

quired before starting the clubs, I hope that now my readers see that I mean business they will come forward and join the League without delaying any longer.

From the enthusiasm displayed by those of my readers who have joined the League, I feel confident that its growth, although slow like the hardy oak, will eventually take a firm root wherever its seed has been planted. Its enduring strength lies in its cultivation of that most powerful of human bonds—friendship. A real friend is a priceless gift, and if the League achieves nothing else than the forming of many friendships, it will have amply repaid those who have taken the little trouble of qualifying for membership.

Your sincere friend,

THE CHIEF OFFICER.

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34. Matthew Anderson, 54, Centre Street, Whiteinch, Glasgow; 35. Albert E. Forse, 10, Redan Terrace, Coldharbour Lane, S.E.5; 36. J. Hearne, 10, Cleveland Place, Walcot, Bath; 37. J. Miller, 39 Railway Road, Darwen; 38. Leslie Martin, 87a, Penwith Road, Earlsfield, S.W.18; 39. John Smyth, 18, Leoville Street, Belfast; 40. J. Southwell, 1, Colenso Street, St. George's Road, Hull; 41. H. Mason, 20 Florence Road, Cathall Road, Leytonstone, E.11; 42. R. W. Hoile, 37, Campbell Road, Walmer; 43. Frank Hollingworth, 1, Crossley Street, Longsight, Oldham; 44. Frank W. Rimmer, 27, Walsingham Road, Wallasey, Cheshire; 45. J. Barnes, 162, St. James Road, Town Head, Glasgow; 46. "Kid," 218, Mackenzie Road, Beckenham; 47. G. Desmond Richardson, 127, Ferry Street, Stapenhill, Burton-on-Trent; 48. N. F. Oswald, 23, Mortonball Road, Edinburgh; 49. B. Scawley, 13, Beaconsfield Street, Liverpool; 50. E. A. Mittelholzer, Coburg Street, New Amsterdam, Berbice, B. Guiana; 51. W. S. Mannell, 22, Burnham Road, St. Albans; 52. Miss Mimi Verdier, Annecy, Nether Street, N. Finchley, N.12; 53. Miss Ena Howell, 18, Alexandra Road, Nutley, Plymouth; 54. Miss Betty M. Setford, 27, Plashet Lane, East Ham, E.6; 55. Miss Margery Brook, 7, Balfour Crescent, Wolverhampton; 56. F. Coomber, 101, Islip Street, Kentish Town, N.W.5; 57. K. Willott, 5, Dawes Avenue, Isleworth; 58. Miss Winifred Lovell, 40, Emscote Grove, Savile Park, Halifax; 59. "Dorrie," 4, Shay Syke, Halifax; 60. Ernest E. Dunckley, 15, Linden Gardens, Chiswick, W.4; 61. J. L. Rodgers, Jr., Birch Lea, 206, Hollins Road, Oldham; 63. Stephen Robinson, 10, Cleveland Terrace,

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(Continued on page iii of cover)

AS SIMPLE AS A B C.

ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE APPLICATION FORM No. 28.

Jan. 9, 1926

SECTION A	READER'S APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP. Being a regular reader of "THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY," I desire to become enrolled as a Member of THE ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE, and to qualify for all such benefits and privileges as are offered to Members of the League. I hereby declare myself to be a staunch supporter of "THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY" and THE ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE, and that I have introduced Our Paper to one new reader, whose signature to certify this appears on second form attached hereto. Will you, therefore, kindly forward me Certificate of Enrolment with Membership Number assigned to me.
SECTION B	MEMBER'S APPLICATION FOR MEDAL AWARDS. I, Member No..... (give Membership No.) hereby declare that I have introduced one more new reader, whose signature to certify this appears on second form attached hereto. This makes me..... (state number of introductions up to date) introductions to my credit.
SECTION C	NEW READER'S DECLARATION. I hereby declare that I have been introduced by (give name of introducer) to this issue of "THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY," which I will read with a view to becoming a regular reader of this paper.
(FULL NAME) (ADDRESS)	

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.

INSTRUCTIONS.—**Reader Applying for Membership.** Cut out TWO complete Application Forms from Two copies of this week's issue of THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY. On one of the forms fill in Section A, crossing out Sections B and C by running the pen diagonally across both Sections. Then write clearly your full name and address at bottom of form. The second form is for your new reader, who fills in Section C, crosses out Sections A and B, and writes his name and address at bottom of form. Both forms are then pinned together and sent to the Chief Officer, The St. Frank's League, c/o THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY, Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C.4.

Member Applying for Bronze Medal: It will be necessary for you to obtain six new readers for this award. For each new reader TWO complete forms are needed, and these must be taken from copies of the latest issue of THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY at the time when the forms are sent in. On one of the forms fill in Section B, crossing out Sections A and C, and write your name and address at bottom of form. The other form is for your new reader, who fills in Section C, crosses out Sections A

and B, and writes his name and address at the bottom of the form. Now pin both forms together and send them to the Chief Officer, as above. One new reader will then be registered against your name, and when six new readers have been registered, you will be sent the St. Frank's League bronze medal. There is nothing to prevent you from sending in forms for two or more new readers at once, provided the forms are taken from the latest issue of the THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY at the time when the forms are sent in.

Bronze medallists wishing to qualify for the silver or gold medals 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 $\frac{1}{2}$ d., providing the envelope is not sealed and no letter is enclosed.

ORGANISING OFFICERS*(Continued from page 39)*

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