

FUN WITH ST. FRANK'S AT STAMFORD BRIDGE!

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HANDY'S EMPIRE
DAY STRAFE!



HANDFORTH THE MARTYR!

Meet the Boys of St. Frank's
in a rousing long complete
story of School and Sport.

New Series No. 5.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY, May 29th and June 5th, 1926.



Headforth took a long run and shot up at the bar. Instead of clearing it, he caught it with one of his feet and broke it neatly in two. Church and McClure grinned as Handy thudded back to earth with a fearful crash: he was trying to show them how to clear a six-foot jump!



By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

Handy tied to the stake! Read all about it in this stunning long complete yarn of the St. Frank's Empire Day Sports at Stamford Bridge.

CHAPTER I.

HANDFORTH BREAKS SOMETHING.

"**H**OPELESS!" said Handforth critically.

The famous leader of St. Frank's shook his head as he helped Church to rise.

"Hopeless!" he repeated. "Why, you can't even clear five feet, my son! How do you expect to win the high jump at that rate? I don't like to be too blunt, but any elephant could do better!"

"Hang it all, I've had no practice," protested Church. "I stand just as good a chance as the others, don't I? None of us has had much practice for these athletic sports, so we're all in the same boat."

Edward Oswald Handforth shook his head.

"That doesn't make any difference," he retorted. "As it happens, I'm not entering for the high jump, but I'll just show you how it ought to be done. Mac, old man, set that bar for six feet."

McClure grinned.

"Haden't you better let it remain at five, the same as Church?" he asked.

"No; set it for six!" said Handforth firmly.

The three celebrated Removites were not on the St. Frank's playing fields, as might be imagined. Their surroundings, indeed, were novel. For they were on the grass of the Chelsea Football Club's famous enclosure at Stamford Bridge, London. It was Saturday

evening, and the grounds were veritably swarmed with St. Frank's juniors. The general public was not admitted, and only one or two of the club officials were in view. To all intents and purposes, the Remove, the Fourth, and the Third held full sway.

In practically every part of the grounds feverish activities were in progress. The boys themselves were doing all the necessary preparatory work. For time was short, and it would not be possible to do anything on the morrow, that day being a Sunday. And the St. Frank's junior athletic sports were due to commence at two-thirty sharp on the afternoon of Whit-Monday. So the fellows only had this Saturday evening and the Monday morning for their preparations.

Handforth had been here, there, and everywhere, under the mistaken impression that he was superintending the operations. For some peculiar reason, he had an idea that everything would go wrong unless he gave it his personal attention. The truth was the various operations only creaked when Handforth arrived on the scene. For he had a habit of criticising everybody, and putting them off their stroke.

But his intentions were good, so nobody minded much. Besides, they all knew Edward Oswald and his peculiar ways, and they indulged him. And nobody quite forgot that the whole idea had been Handforth's in the first place. Certainly Handforth never allowed them to forget it.

It was his brilliant suggestion that the St. Frank's junior athletic sports should be held on Whit-Monday, in London. But William Napoleon Browne, the brainy skipper of the Fifth Form, was responsible for the business arrangements. Left in Edward Oswald's hands, these would probably have been hopelessly muddled. But Browne was a kind of genius for arranging things.

Nobody quite knew how he had secured the Chelsea ground for Whit-Monday. True, it was the off season for the club, but this famous enclosure is used throughout the summer for baseball, galas, athletic sports, and so forth—and Whit-Monday is a really important day. But Browne had made up his mind that Handforth's idea should be put into effect—and when William Napoleon Browne made up his mind the result was generally a foregone conclusion.

"Everything going on all right here?" asked a brisk, cheery voice.

Church and McClure turned, and beheld Handforth minor. Willy had come up in a business-like way, and he gave a glance of surprise at his major, who was on the point of taking his run.

"Out of the way!" said Edward Oswald curtly.

"Hallo! Are you going in for the high jump?" asked Willy, grinning.

"No, he's only just showing me how it ought to be done," said Church solemnly. "I've entered, although I haven't got much chance of whacking Munroe, of the East House. He's a terror—only in the Fourth, too!"

"You—you fathead!" snorted Handforth aggressively. "There's a fine way to talk! How the dickens do you expect to win the high jump when you've made up your mind to lose? Blow Munroe!"

"But he's hot stuff—"

"That doesn't matter a fig!" interrupted Handforth. "You've got to be hotter! I've made up my mind that Study D has got to win the high jump—Munroe or no Munroe! So if there's any rot, Church, my lad, you'll have to answer to me! All you require is determination."

"He's becoming old Browne's echo!" murmured Willy.

"What?" said his major.

"Oh, nothing!"

"Browne's echo, am I?" snorted Handforth. "I'll admit that Browne is a go-ahead chap, but who thought of this idea in the first place?"

"You did," acknowledged Willy.

"Who put Browne on to it?"

"You did!"

"Who fired the whole junior school with enthusiasm?"

"You did!"

"Who bragged and boasted—"

"You did!"

"Eh?" said Handforth, starting. "You young ass! I was going to say, who bragged and boasted that they'd crow over us for starting a wild-cat scheme?"

"Oh, sorry!" grinned Willy. "But it was a perfectly natural slip, wasn't it? I suppose lots of chaps were pretty cock-sure that we shouldn't get the Chelsea ground for our sports—"

"Half the school!" said his major gruffly.

"But they didn't know the man at the helm!"

"They jolly well didn't!" agreed Handforth.

"They didn't know his braininess," went on Willy, nodding. "They didn't know what a marvel he is for getting things done."

Edward Oswald lost his frown.

"Oh, well, if you put it like that—" he began.

"I'm talking about Browne," interrupted Willy blandly.

"Why, you—you fat-headed young chump!" roared Handforth. "Clear off! I'm blessed if I know what you're doing on the grounds, anyway! Who told you to come?"

"As skipper of the Third, I'm superintending the Third Form events," replied Willy. "But I was just wondering if you were going in for the high jump, old man! Let's see what you can do."

Edward Oswald sniffed, and stepped back.

"As I am entering for the obstacle race and the half-mile and the mile, I am leaving the high jump to Church," he remarked. "I don't want to pinch all the Study D honours, you know. Must allow these chaps to have a look in."

"Go ahead," said Church patiently. "I just cleared four foot nine, which isn't bad, with practically no practice."

"I'll just show you how to take six feet," said Handforth.

There was no bragging spirit about him. Strangers frequently accused him of boasting, but it was nothing of the kind. Handforth was a super-optimist, and he always thought that he could do these impossible things. He took it for granted that they would present no difficulties. It seemed to him that a six-foot jump was a mere trifle.

"Watch!" he said impressively.

He took a long run, broke into a spasmodic series of leaps, and then took off about eighteen inches before he ought to have done. He soared up and shot under the bar without even touching it, and landed with a fearful crash on the turf.

"Ha, ha, ha!" howled his chums.

Handforth looked up dazedly.

"You fatheads, what's the cackle for?" he asked breathlessly.

He saw the bar in position, and thought for a moment that he had actually skimmed over it. Willy shook his head sadly.

"Not bad, of course," he remarked, "but I've always thought it was the usual thing to go over the bar, Ted. Perhaps I'm wrong—I wouldn't assert my opinions against yours. I suppose this under the bar business is a new idea?"

"Under the bar?" gasped his major.

"Didn't I go over it?"

Willy shook his head again, and marched

off, having caught sight of a group of fags skylarking about in the offing. And no skylarking was allowed! This was a time for hard work.

Handforth picked himself up disgustedly, and noticed, with relief, that Church and McClure were perfectly grave—and neither mentioned the fact that he had jumped from the wrong side of the bar! He had another shot at the bar, and this time he succeeded in cracking it in two, having caught it forcibly with one of his feet. As an exhibition of high jumping it was scarcely enlightening. But it enlightened Handforth on another point.

"Well, I'm blessed!" he ejaculated in astonishment. "It's harder than I thought. You didn't do so badly, after all, Church."

"Thanks," said Church drily. "The fact is, Handy, you're a bit too heavy for this sort of thing. Throwing the hammer is more in your line—lug-of-war, and such things as long distance races, where a chap needs stamina."

"All right! Go ahead with your practice," said Handforth, nodding. "This jumping stunt is jolly hard, and there's nothing like sampling it for yourself. What's Monroe's record?"

"I don't quite know, but I believe he can clear six."

"Can he—the beggar!" said Handforth, whistling. "The nerve! One of those East House slackers, too! We can't let an East House worm whack Study D, so the more practice you can put in the better."

"Words of wisdom, Brother Handforth," remarked Browne as he strolled up. "From such lips as yours they are even startling. But practice is the watchword. Time is short, and Whit-Monday will be upon us all too soon. Let there be no falling off. Enthusiasm is the stuff which will keep us keyed up to the necessary pitch."



CHAPTER 2.

BROWNE!

WILLIAM NAPOLEON BROWNE was looking cool and neat in spotless flannels, and one would hardly have given him the credit for being the controlling brain of the whole enterprise. But this, in short, was the truth.

Browne had thrown himself whole-heartedly into the affair, although there were no seniors engaged in the sports themselves. But Browne considered it a good cause, and he had benevolently appointed himself general manager.

His activities had not been merely confined to making the necessary arrangements for securing the grounds. He had filled the juniors with his own indomitable spirit, although they were not aware of this fact. And he was determined, if possible, to give the sports an Empire interest.

Browne did not lose sight of the fact that there were boys from almost every part of the Empire in the St. Frank's junior school, and they were all competing in the various events. It was a golden opportunity to encourage the Empire spirit, particularly as Whit-Monday itself was Empire Day.

"Things are moving smoothly but surely," he declared. "I trust that you gave full attention to the newspapers this morning, brothers?"

"Newspapers?" repeated Handforth. "Daily publications which litter our breakfast table," explained Browne kindly. "Sheets which are produced with the alleged intention of informing us of the current events."

"I know what a newspaper is, you ass!" said Handforth. "But I should hope we've got something better to do than read those fat-headed things! We were up at six o'clock this morning, and Willy and I were practising in the garden by the time Church and McClure came round at seven!"

Browne sighed. "While appreciating this unbounded energy, I deprecate the neglect of the morning papers," he said. "Scarcely one of them escaped my attention. They contained long paragraphs concerning the athletic sports—appeals to the general public to support the Empire *entente cordiale*. Earnest appeals for the generous rolling up of many thousands on Monday afternoon—"

"The general public?" interrupted Church, staring.

"John Citizen and family!" nodded Browne.

"But—but you don't mean to say that the public's going to be admitted?" asked Handforth in astonishment. "They're just our school sports, you know. We're only holding 'em here because we haven't had time at St. Frank's."

This was true enough. From the very commencement of the term St. Frank's had gone mad on sports, particularly in connection with the Young England versus Young Australia Test Matches. There had already been two games played out of the series of five, and so far the honours were even—one win each. In addition, Fenton, the school captain, had instituted a sort of sporting carnival, and these Whit-Monday events were part and parcel of the whole programme.

Unfortunately, the Headmaster of St. Frank's had come down rather heavily. He had failed to see eye to eye with his pupils, and considered—much to the indignation of the school—that St. Frank's was spending too much time in the playing fields. Dr. Stafford held the extraordinary idea, the truly grotesque belief, that the fellows had come to school for the purpose of studying! At least, this was what the school thought.

And the Head had announced some special exams for the whole school, and every boy who failed to obtain a certain percentage of marks would be banned from every kind of sport until he had improved his general knowledge. So wotting was absolutely necessary.

Things had been hectic at St. Frank's of late. Cranking for the exams, sports practice, games, carnival events, cranking for the exams again, and so on in a continuous round. Scarcely anybody had had a minute to call his own. Even the recognised slackers—such as Bernard Forrest & Co.—had been compelled to swot.

So Handforth, in one of his brilliant moments, had suggested holding a junior athletic sports during the brief Whitsun vac. And what better place than Stamford Bridge? And what better day than Whit-Monday? The two Handforths, indeed, were wildly enthusiastic about the whole thing, and had succeeded in imparting their enthusiasm to others. William Napoleon Browne's genius for organisation had made the dream possible.

But this new suggestion of Browne's was something fresh. Handforth & Co. stared at him rather blankly.

"They're just our school sports!" repeated Handforth. "Nobody's interested except St. Frank's. You'll never get the general public to come in."

"Heaps of our relatives will be here, of course," said Church. "They generally roll up on sports day, just to see us make asses of ourselves. But if you fancy the public is interested, you're on the wrong train!"

Browne smiled.

"The general public will not only be interested, but the general public will pay handsomely for admission," he said calmly. "Given fine weather—and the prospects are genial at the moment—we shall reap a rich harvest."

"You mean to say they'll pay?" yelled McClure.

"Terraces, one shilling; stand, from half-a-crown upwards."

"You—you hopeless optimist!" roared Handforth. "Our own people will naturally come in free, and nobody else will pay a cent."

"It grieves me to contradict you so flatly, Brother Handforth, but I would like to point out that the free list will be entirely suspended," said the Fifth Form skipper. "Even our own parents—our own flesh and blood—will find the barriers firmly but coldly closed to them unless they pay up."

"Well, I'm jiggered!" said Church blankly.

Browne made a sweeping gesture, indicating the enormous terraces which surrounded the great ground—those terraces which, in the winter-time, were packed with tens of thousands of eager football enthusiasts.

"To think of this space being empty and idle," said Browne calmly. "Is not such a thought devastating? Have you no true conception of your own abilities and pulling powers? Remember, brothers, that the St. Frank's junior athletic sports are on the bill for Monday. All London will flock to see you, to witness the prowess of these public school giants!"

"We might get a couple of hundred in if we admit them free, but even that's an optimistic view," put in Reggie Pitt, who had

just strolled up with Jack Grey and Dick Hamilton. "We admire your spirit, Browne, old man, but you can't work miracles."

"He's only spoofing us," grinned Jack Grey.

"Of course!"

"Chuck it, Browne!"

"Alack, that such serious words should be misunderstood!" sighed Browne sadly. "Let me assure you, my brethren, that I am dreaming no dream! On Monday these terraces will be crowded. The grandstand will be packed—always providing that we have a fine day. It is merely a question of organisation and publicity. In the hands of an expert these things are simple."

"You're a bit of a wonder, Browne, but you've got your limitations," smiled Dick Hamilton. "We're all as keen as mustard on these sports, and we're booming the Empire spirit: but you'll have a long way to go to induce the public to pay good money to see school sports."

"On a Bank Holiday, too," sniffed Handforth.

"Such modesty grieves me," said Browne, shaking his head. "I am all in favour of modesty, it is true, but it can be carried too far. Remember that the general public is interested in our exploits in the Test Matches. People will flock to see these valiants."

"But it can't be done, Browne," insisted Pitt. "How on earth can we make people pay? It wouldn't be square, either. We've got no right to fix a charge for seeing our junior sports."

"Let me disabuse you of such notions," said Browne smoothly. "I am always ready to improve your infantile minds. When in doubt, come to Browne! Let that be your slogan. I have approached the Empire Industries Fund—a worthy organisation, which has been formed by diverse patriots for the fostering of Empire trade. It is my desire to hand them a cheque for several thousand pounds on Monday."

The juniors yelled.

"Several pence, you mean!" grinned Church.

"Fifty thousand shillings are, I believe, equivalent to two thousand five hundred pounds," continued Browne. "We will say another two thousand pounds for the occupants of the grandstand—"

"But you're not reckoning on getting a crowd of fifty thousand here, are you?" shouted Dick Hamilton. "You're mad!"

"We shall see," smiled Browne serenely. "Fortunately, I possess faith in vast quantities. And I also possess the courage of my convictions. It is merely necessary to work up the public, and the rest will be easy. Wait, my brothers! Wait, and you will see that London will nobly respond."

He walked off, and the juniors chuckled more heartily than ever.

"Just one of his little jokes," smiled Pitt. "But it would be rather fun if we had a crowd of spectators looking on, wouldn't it?"

I mean, people who aren't personally interested."

"It's a dream," said Dick Hamilton, shaking his head.

"More like a nightmare," grunted Handforth. "Now then, my lads! What's the idea of hanging about here?" he went on briskly. "What about those hurdles? Pitt, you were looking after them, weren't you?"

Pitt saluted.

"Sorry, Chief—forgot for the moment!" he said respectfully.

"Ass!" frowned Edward Oswald.

He hustled off, and proceeded to interfere with all sorts of operations which were progressing quite well without him. And he and the others forgot all about William Napoleon Browne and his hare-brained scheme for getting the general public interested.

But it wasn't so hare-brained as they supposed!



CHAPTER 3.

ARCHIE MEANS BUSINESS.

SIR EDWARD HANDFORTH removed his glasses, and laid the evening paper aside.

"Upon my word, this boy Browne appears to be a remarkable character," he exclaimed. "Knowing him personally, as I do, I am not altogether surprised at his activities. But he even takes my breath away."

"Browne's a corker, dad," said Ena Handforth.

"I object to these slang terms, young lady!" said her father sternly. "You are getting just as bad as the boys! The Moor View School, I fear, is in too close a proximity to St. Frank's."

"Cheese it, dad!" protested Ena. "Unless we use a little slang we can't make ourselves understood in these days! What's Browne been up to now? Anything fresh in the evening paper?"

"Read it for yourself, Ena," said Sir Edward. "The article is quite a stirring one—and I must confess that my own enthusiasm has been aroused. The boy actually urges the public to visit Stamford Bridge on Monday to witness these Junior Sports—and, by George, to pay for admission!"

Ena took the paper and read the column—which was surmounted by big, effective headlines. She and her father were in the garden of Sir Edward's London home, and the May evening was delightfully fine. Dinner was over—for the hour was nearly eight o'clock—and Edward Oswald and Willy were partaking of a tardy meal, having arrived after the rest of the family had nearly finished.

"Browne's going to win, too," declared Ena, glancing up from the paper. "I shouldn't be surprised to see thousands of people roll up on Monday afternoon. Hallo, Ted!" she added, as her brothers appeared.

"Seen the evening paper? Browne's been at it again."

Handforth took the paper, and grinned.

"This sort of thing is all very well, but he'll never get the public to pay for admission," he said. "A cricket match would be a different thing. When we hold the final Test Match at Lord's, for example—"

"At Lord's?" interrupted his father, looking up.

"Yes, pater."

"You mean these schoolboy Test Matches?"

"Of course," replied Edward Oswald. "The real Tests are all right in their way, but it's the Young England v. Young Australia games that really matter!"

"That depends upon the point of view," said Sir Edward drily. "But what nonsense is this about Lord's? Your Tests are being played at St. Frank's, aren't they?"

"Two more at St. Frank's—and the final at Lord's, pater," explained Handforth. "That's the programme. Of course, it isn't definitely settled yet, but Browne's talking about it, and he means to push it through, too. Imagine it! The schoolboy Test teams at Lord's!"

Sir Edward laughed.

"I can certainly imagine it—but that's about as far as the matter will get," he replied. "You mustn't entertain any such foolish idea, Edward. Even this wonderful fellow Browne will not be able to effect such—"

"Why not, dad?" broke in Willy. "What about the Eton and Harrow match at Lord's? If they can play there, why can't St. Frank's? There's nothing impossible in it—and Browne's well on the job. And he looks like scoring over these junior sports, too. If it's fine, we'll have thousands at Stamford Bridge on Monday."

"We're going to be packed!" said Edward Oswald enthusiastically. "In fact, I doubt if there'll be enough space to hold everybody!"

Willy grinned.

"That's a different yarn to the one you told earlier this evening," he chuckled. "You were saying that the public wouldn't come at all! And now you expect a giddy multitude!"

"I can change my opinion, can't I?" asked Handforth tartly.

"It's Browne again," said Ena wisely.

"He's been getting at Ted, and talking him round. It's amazing how Browne can make you see things in a different light. Even this article makes me want to go to the sports on Monday."

"Didn't you want to go anyhow?" asked Willy.

"Not particularly," she replied candidly. "There's nothing much to see in schoolboy sports—at least, that's what I thought. But now that I've read this article I can understand that Monday's programme will be about the finest entertainment in the whole of London," she added, chuckling. "It's just

the way Browne puts it, you know. The man's a mivvy!"

"A which?" asked her father severely.

"A marvel, dad."

"If you mean marvel, you should say marvel, and not use such a ridiculous term as 'mivvy'!" frowned Sir Edward. "Besides, Browne isn't a man."

Ena sighed, but made no attempt to argue.

"Well, we can't hang about here," said Handforth briskly. "At least, I can't. I'm going to make a round of the chief entrants, and see that they are trained properly. Every minute has got to be utilised."

"Why not do a bit of training yourself, instead of bothering the other chaps?" asked Willy. "Can't you trust 'em to be at it?"

"Not likely!" retorted his major. "For two pins they'll go off to pictures, or something. It's up to us to keep their noses to the grindstone. You'd better come with me, Willy. We're both in this game."

"Just as you like," said Willy agreeably. "Let's start with Archie."

"By George, yes," said Handforth. "The hopeless ass has had the nerve to enter for the quarter-mile, half-mile, and one or two other events. Archie Glenthorne, you know! That slacking chump!"

"He's a dark horse," said Ena. "He'll surprise you yet."

"We shall probably find him sound asleep on the lounge," grinned Willy.

But his sister was not far short of the mark. For when Handforth and his minor arrived at Archie Glenthorne's address, they received a bit of a shock. The genial ass of the Remove frequently took advantage of his officer-brother's flat in Jermyn Street. Captain Glenthorne only used it occasionally—on leave, and at such times—and he never objected to Archie being there, because Archie always brought Phipps. And Phipps was about the most conscientious valet under the sun.

"Archie in?" asked Handforth briskly, as Phipps opened the door.

"Yes, Master Handforth," said Phipps.

"Asleep?"

"No, Master Handforth," said Phipps, with a curious little smile. "You will find Master Archibald in the sitting-room. He gave instructions that he was not to be disturbed, but perhaps—"

"Not to be disturbed, eh?" roared Handforth. "That means that he's lounging about doing nothing! We'll soon shake him up a bit. Come on, Willy!"

"Hallo! Just in time to get in!" said Reggie Pitt, appearing up the outer stairs—the flat being on one of the upper floors. "We'll all go in together."

Reggie had come round, as a matter of fact, to keep an appointment with Grey and Fullwood. Quite a number of the fellows used Archie's flat as a kind of meeting-place, for it was so conveniently situated near the heart of the West End. And the genial Archie never objected.

"We'll show him!" said Handforth gruffly.

He broke into the sitting-room like a tornado, grimly determined to hurl Archie off the lounge, and knock some energy into him. But Handforth suddenly paused, and gulped.

"My only hat!" he said faintly.

It hardly seemed necessary to put any energy into the elegant Removite. For Archie Glenthorne, scantily attired in singlet and shorts, was standing in the centre of the room, engaged in dumb-bell exercises. His arms were working up and down regularly, and the perspiration was gathering in beads on his good-natured countenance.

But Archie was doing something else, too.

A music-stand, was propped immediately in front of him, and upon this stood an open book—a book which Handforth recognised, with a slight shiver, as a Greek lexicon.

"By George!" he said feebly. "What—what's this?"

"High-pressure stuff, by the look of it," grinned Reggie Pitt. "Archie, the champion slacker, has beaten the lot of us! You never can tell!"

Archie glanced round, frowning.

"What-ho! The good old lads of the village, what?" he exclaimed breathlessly. "I say, isn't this a bit thick, piling on a fellow when he's up to his dashed eyes? I mean to say, what about Phipps? I distinctly told the laddie to exclude the populace!"

"We're privileged," explained Willy.

"What's the idea, anyhow?" demanded Handforth, indicating the music-stand.

"Oh, that?" said Archie. "I mean this? The jolly old Greek atrocity? Good gad! The bally grey matter is still reeling from the frightful effects. But it's all for the cause, old tulips!"

"The cause?"

"I mean to say, we've got to open the throttle in these hectic days," explained Archie. "It struck me as a priceless scheme, as it were. I mean, why not practise for the good old sports, and shove in a bit of sweating at the same time, what?"

"Well I'm hanged!" said Reggie Pitt slowly.



CHAPTER 4.

THE VOICE ON THE RADIO.

ARCHIE GLENTHORNE automatically recommenced his exercises.

"Make yourselves absolutely at home, old chunks of gaiety," he observed. "Disport yourselves upon the chintz to your hearts' content. But don't interrupt the good old doings. In other words, Archie carries on!"

"Good old Archie!" said Willy enthusiastically. "My hat! We've had to come here to learn a lesson in energy. That dumb-bell stuff is pretty strenuous, but with a Greek flavour added to it—well, I'd rather work a treadmill any day!"



"What—what's this?" gasped Handforth feebly. Archie Glenthorne, the champion slacker, was attired in vest and shorts, doing dumb-bell exercises while he studied a Greek lexicon!

Archie continued his labours with a light of determination in his eyes. He ignored the visitors, and returned to his Greek. There was no spoof about this business. He was actually cramming for the exams, and exercising at the same time.

"Given yourself a time limit?" asked Pitt, smiling.

"Eh? Oh, rather! Absolutely!" said Archie, tearing himself away from the Greek dictionary. "Until nine-thirty, laddies. Another dashed twenty minutes, to be exact. Odds Chinese puzzles! Kindly push the old grammar across, Handforth, old bean!"

"Twenty minutes more of that, and you'll be done in!" said Handforth grimly. "You mustn't overdo it, you chump. Have you seriously entered for these events on Monday, or is it just a joke?"

Archie stared.

"Entered for them?" he repeated. "Odds slurs and insults! Laddie, if the old tissues will allow it, I'm absolutely going to win the half-mile. I mean to say, it's just my length—and the old heart is set on it."

"In that case, we won't interrupt you any more," said Pitt. "I'm just waiting here for two of the chaps. They ought to have been here already, the lazy beggars. What's your game, Handy?"

"Oh, I'm going round seeing that everybody's training properly."

Handforth spoke carelessly, and Reggie grinned.

"It's a good idea, but I'm afraid you won't find them all as amiable as Archie,"

chuckled the latter. "You're liable to be biffed out on your neck, you know. If I were you, I'd let the athletes severely alone until Monday. Can't you trust them to do their training?"

"As soon as my back's turned they dodge off!" replied Handforth darkly. "They've got no strength—no will power! Before you can say Jack Robinson, they're off to the pictures, or something!"

"A jolly good idea, too," chuckled Pitt.

"That's just where you make your mistake, Handy. Overtraining is worse than no training at all. In any case, I didn't know that you were chief athletics instructor. I suppose somebody appointed you while my back was turned?"

Handforth went red.

"You sarcastic ass!" he snorted. "I've simply got the interest of the sports at heart—"

"It's all right, Pitt, old man," interrupted Willy. "You needn't worry about Ted. Why do you think I've come with him? Just to see that he doesn't get into mischief. If there's any trouble, you can rely upon me to get him out of it."

Handforth glared.

"Your silly young ass—" he began.

But Phipps entered the room at that moment, and the argument ceased. Phipps had brought in a late edition of the evening paper, and he placed it on the side table.

"The Final, sir," he murmured.

"What? I mean, eh?" said Archie, glancing round. "Here, dash it! I thought

you were rallying to the young master's rescue with a cup of the good old brew, and you merely produce the bally news rag!"

"I am not sure that tea is advisable, sir," said Phipps slowly.

Archie started.

"Good gad! You don't mean to say that you've stopped the supplies, you frightful torturer?" he asked, aghast. "I mean, tea! You might just as well pinch all the dashed oxygen out of the atmosphere. I mean, no normal chappie can live without tea!"

"The wireless page might interest you, sir," said Phipps calmly. "Have you, by any chance, noted the item for nine-thirty? I rather fancy it will be of special attraction, sir."

"But about this tea, Phipps—"

"Thank you, sir," said Phipps smoothly.

He glided out of the room, and Archie gazed blankly at his grinning companions.

"Did you hear all that poisonous stuff, old things?" he asked plaintively. "The blighter absolutely refused to take any notice! I mean, he seems to think that tea is another dashed term for prussic acid, or something. And everybody knows that it's the only fluid to save a chappie's life in a crisis!"

Reggie Pitt chuckled.

"Phipps is right," he said, as he took up the paper. "You mustn't drink tea until after Monday, Archie. It has a harmful effect on the heart—especially when a chap soaks it in by the spongetful, as you do. Phipps knows what he's up to, old man. He's a good trainer."

Archie had staggered across to the lounge, and was sitting upon it dazedly. Now that he came to think about it, he hadn't had any tea all day. Phipps had made some excuse or other at breakfast-time, and given him cocoa. And for two or three days the tea had been growing weaker and weaker. And tea, to Archie, was a part and parcel of his very existence.

"I suppose the old boy knows best," he murmured at last. "I mean, it's no good jibbing, what? The only thing a lad can do is to suffer these blows with fortitude—"

"Hallo!" said Pitt eagerly. "So this is what Phipps meant! Who do you think's on the radio at half-past nine?"

"Goodness knows!" growled Handforth. "We can't be bothered with the wireless at a time like this, you ass. One of those talks, I suppose? How to predict the winners of the first Test Match at Trent Bridge next month, or some piffle like that!"

"Perhaps Collins is making the speech," suggested Willy.

"Collins!" ejaculated his major excitedly. "The Australian skipper! By George, where's your wireless, Archie? I don't believe these Australians are as good as they are cracked up to be, but I'd like to hear old Collins, anyhow. He hasn't got any men in his team to compare with Hobbs, or Tate, or—"

"Shut up, Handy!" interrupted Pitt. "What's the good of jumping to conclu-

sions? The chap who's speaking to-night—in about seven minutes—is old Browne."

"Browne!" echoed the others.

"At least, I think it's Browne," chuckled Pitt. "Let's have another look. I've only seen the headlines so far, but it's not much of a guess—"

"Browne!" roared Handforth. "Do you think I'm going to waste my time listening to that gasbag? The—the traitor! The cunning rotter! Why the dickens didn't he ask me to go to the B.B.C. with him, and make the speech? I'm the best chap for a job like that—and I've had experience of broadcasting, too!"

Willy nodded.

"Yes, the less said about that experience the better," he said drily. "Let's have a look at that paper, Pitt, old son. Browne on the wireless ought to be worth quids. Remember how he wrote those newspaper notices? He's the very chap to work the public up for Monday afternoon!"

They had a look at the wireless column, and even Archie Glenthorne forgot about his tea and took an interest. There was quite a big headline: "Public Schoolboy to Broadcast To-night," and everybody was advised to listen in at nine-thirty. It was announced that there would be a ten-minutes' speech by Browne, the captain of the Fifth Form at St. Frank's, in aid of the Empire Industries Fund. A few notes were added to the effect that St. Frank's needed no introduction, this great school having been in the public eye for some weeks, owing to the miniature Test Matches which were in progress there.

"Just like old Browne to do the thing thoroughly," said Pitt, with enthusiasm. "I wonder how the dickens he wangled it? This charity stunt, I suppose. That was a brain-wave of his—and it'll all help the Empire spirit, too. I suppose you've got a set here, Archie?"

"Oh, rather," replied Archie Glenthorne. "Shove the good old bell-push, and Phipps will tickle the controls. Phipps is frightfully good at that sort of thing. He knows all these valves and things by their pet names!"

While Phipps was switching on the wireless, Pitt discovered another reference to St. Frank's in the paper—this time on the main news page. There was an enthusiastic little article, written by "An Old Boy," advising everybody to visit Stamford Bridge on Monday afternoon to witness the St. Frank's Junior Sports. Browne again. Pitt strongly suspected that the Old Boy was Browne's own father, Sir Rufus Browne. The newspaper would naturally be eager to publish anything from such a celebrated pen as his.

It was increasingly evident that the Fifth Form skipper was leaving no stone unturned to assure a big success for Monday afternoon. As an organiser, he was a remarkable success. There was something irresistible about him, in his writing as well as his speech-making.

But Browne was shrewd enough to realise that nothing could compare with the personal touch. No matter how cunning his pen, no

matter how forceful his writing, it needed a speech to bring about the desired effect. And what better medium than the radio? For he would reach millions in this way. And once fairly going, Browne had enough confidence in himself to know that he would blaze the way for Monday's crowds.

After all, it was a wildly ambitious idea, this desire to fill the Stamford Bridge grounds with the general public. If only a few thousands came, it would be well worth while. If the grounds were half-filled, it would be a triumph. If they were full—

But even Browne himself, super-optimist though he was, had no such fantastic delusions.



CHAPTER 5.

PEPPING UP THE PUBLIC.

HERE we are!" said Willy crisply. "Shush, you chaps!"

A warning confusion of sounds from the loud

speaker made it evident that somebody was at the microphone, getting ready to speak. It was just nine-thirty, and the occupants of Archie Glenhorne's sitting-room were expectantly waiting. Incidentally, scores of other St. Frank's fellows, in various districts, were also eagerly listening-in. And hundreds of thousands of the general public were almost as eager, for the recent publicity had caught their fancy.

Archie's wireless set—or, rather, his brother's—was one of those super-affairs with about eight valves, and a cunningly-concealed loud speaker, fitted into an inlaid mahogany cabinet. So far as listeners were concerned, there were no valves or wires or instruments in sight.

"London and Daven-try calling," said the announcer briskly. "We have pleasure in introducing Mr. William Napoleon Browne this evening, who will talk to you for ten minutes on the Empire Industries Fund." This brilliant young gentleman needs no further introduction, for he is known as one of the crack cricketers of that famous public school, St. Frank's College, and he has figured prominently in the recent schoolboy Test Matches. Mr. Browne!"

"The nerve!" murmured Reggie Pitt, grinning.

"Not for Browne!" said Willy, with a

chuckle. "He does these things as a matter of course."

"Hallo, everybody!" came Browne's voice, with uncanny clearness. "Browne calling! Brothers and sisters all, I require your ears for ten minutes—or longer if Brother Announcer permits. He will probably be so enthralled by my eloquence that time will be a mere nothing to him. We shall see. Our fate is in the laps of the gods. Do not come to the hasty conclusion that this is one of the ordinary wireless talks. Do not turn to your valves and switch them off. Refrain from that habit of tickling the cat's-whisker, or you may miss valuable snatches Do not allow the children to interrupt, but fix your headphones securely, and—listen. Words of great import are about to flow. Brother Browne is on the point of letting himself go."

"Poetry!" murmured Willy. "Twig the rhyme."

"Shut up, fathead!" frowned his major.

"While ostensibly speaking on behalf of the Empire Industries Fund, you will doubt-

A READER SAYS :

"I was very pleasantly surprised with the bronze medal which I have just received from the St. Frank's League. I thought that it would only be a tin-pot thing, but it is really splendid, and any fellow could be proud to wear it on his watch-chain!"

Would you like one of these fine medals? Then join the

..... ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE!

Dominion of Canada and the Commonwealth of Australia and the Dominion of New Zealand and the Union of South Africa are independent countries, with no real ties to the Motherland. Away with such scurvy insults! They are tied to us with bands that can never be shattered, and it is our duty, brothers and sisters, to make these ties even stronger. Let us, therefore, foster the Empire spirit, and rally round to some purpose."

"He's warming up well," murmured Reggie Pitt, nodding.

"Good gad! The lad's absolutely amazing!" breathed Archie.

The reception was so good that it seemed hard to credit that Browne himself was not in the room. There was no trace of "microphone nervousness," and the cool Fifth-Former's tones were even and serene. Somehow he managed to get that magnetic personality of his across the ether, too. There was something irresistibly compelling in this speech. Not in the words, but in the way in which they were spoken. Even Willy Handforth, who was something of a specialist in irresistibility himself, listened with open admiration.

"What we've got to do is to become thoroughly enthusiastic," continued Browne firmly. "And, while we are about it, we might as well be perfectly candid. Let truth be the watchword. Away with deceit and subterfuge. So I will come out boldly with the actual object of this talk. I want you all to turn up at Stamford Bridge on Monday afternoon, at two-thirty precisely, and pay cheerfully for admittance. If you all come—and I hope I am speaking to a few millions of you—there may be a somewhat uncomfortable jam. But don't let that deter you. Chelsea, I have been told, is famous for its jams. No, I am not talking about preserves, but football crowds. And the Stamford Bridge officials are past masters in the art of packing. Many, I have heard rumoured, have entered the sardine industry with unqualified success. So fear nothing on Monday, and roll up in your thousands."

"Odds miracles!" breathed Archie. "The populace will roll up, too!"

"It must not be imagined for a moment that your money will be seized on behalf of the British Industries Fund, and that you will get no return," pursued Browne smoothly. "In the first place, brothers and sisters, this cash will be utilised for the purpose of publicity in connection with Empire friendship. And every patriot who enters the Stamford Bridge Stadium will receive his money's worth over and over again. The celebrated juniors of St. Frank's will be on view, and I myself will also be there; and this alone should assure you that you will not be paying your money for nothing. But, in addition to the mere joy of seeing these types of British boyhood, you will also have thrills innumerable. For the St. Frank's junior athletic sports are calculated to instil enthusiasm into a waxwork dummy. The sports will commence at two-thirty sharp, and the various events will be run off with the celerity of a race meeting. No bookmakers, however, will be allowed on the course.

"In asking you to support the Empire Industries Fund, I am also asking you to enjoy the St. Frank's junior athletic sports. There will be running races, jumping, hurdles, and all the thrilling events which go to make up such an occasion. And many of the entrants are the heroes who have been figuring in the recent schoolboy Test Matches, and who will figure in the forthcoming Test

Matches. Give them some encouragement by cheering them on to victory. The prices will be modest—merely one shilling for the terraces, and from half-a-crown to five shillings in the stands. Needless to add, not one farthing of this money will go to any of the school funds—not one cent will be touched for expenses. All preparations are being made by the boys themselves. The total receipts will be handed over, intact, to the Empire Industries Fund, and it rests with you, brothers and sisters, to swell that total to the biggest possible amount.

"You will realise that we of St. Frank's are quite disinterested. These junior sports are held annually, and it will make no difference to the runners and jumpers whether they are surrounded by empty terraces or by an enthusiastic sea of humanity. At least, it will make no financial difference. But the enthusiasm for sports will be magnified if the general public takes a keen interest in the proceedings. So once again let me urge you to cancel your charabanc tickets, to postpone your Hampstead Heath visit, to leave the Crystal Palace until another day, and to seek the shortest route to Stamford Bridge.

"You have my personal assurance that your money will be returned to you if you are dissatisfied with the afternoon's sport, and as my time is now at an end, and Brother Announcer is making mystic signs which I interpret as meaning that I have outstayed my welcome, I most reluctantly tear myself away. But one moment, Brother Announcer, I beseech you, with tears in my eyes, to allow me one moment. There is something of vast importance that I have forgotten to say."

"My hat, what a nerve the chap's got!" said Handforth grudgingly.

"Fear not!" said Browne. "Brother Announcer has given me the All Clear signal, and you may breathe again. I am not yet going! The vital point I omitted is that among these St. Frank's juniors will be representatives of the Empire—of Canada, Australia, South Africa, New Zealand, India. There will be Irish, Welsh, and Scotch. I would mention that there will also be English, but perhaps this fact will be of no interest to you, since it is our custom to take the English for granted. I wish to tell you that these representatives of the Empire will all feature in a special relay race, and there will be a silver cup for the winning country. So all you Overseas British visitors will have a special tit-bit to look forward to. Come to Stamford Bridge on Monday, and cheer your own representative to victory! As this is an Empire gathering—on Empire Day itself—your very conscience will not allow you to keep away. Unfortunately, I cannot hear your assurances that you will be with us on Monday, but I know that you are voicing them. And now, as I am in serious danger of being dragged forcibly out of the studio, I must bid you a reluctant good-night! I will not say good-bye, for I shall see you on Monday, at two-thirty sharp."

His voice ceased, and the juniors in Archie's sitting-room looked at one another with flushed faces. Even accustomed to Browne as they were, they felt strangely excited.

"The chap's a marvel!" said Pitt, at length. "That speech has done a tremendous amount of good. He's rendered yeoman service, my sons. I shouldn't be surprised to see the ground packed."

"With everybody bubbling with the Empire spirit!" said Handforth enthusiastically. "By George, this is going to be a tremendous occasion. It's a pity I didn't make the speech, though—"

"Oh, well, we can't have everything," said Willy. "Browne has done jolly well, and you couldn't have had a better substitute, Ted."

The others grinned, and Handforth nodded. "Old Browne's given out the impression that Stamford Bridge is the only possible place to go to on Monday afternoon," he chuckled. "But will the public respond? That's the question. Will they think our sports good enough?"

"If it's a fine day, they'll stampede the place," declared Pitt, with conviction.



CHAPTER 6.

A PIECE OF STRING.

AS Church glanced about him, he said hurriedly: "All clear!"

"No hobbies about?" asked McClure.

"Not that I can see!"

In the subdued early morning light, Church and McClure vaulted to the top of the high brick wall at the bottom of Sir Edward Handforth's garden, and nipped over. They felt like a couple of burglars, although their motive was innocent enough. They were, indeed, anxious to avoid being spotted by an alert constable, for such an event would have meant explanations.

It was Monday morning—Bank Holiday—and the hour was exactly five o'clock. It was just about sunrise, and the cloudless sky was tinged with pink in the east. There was every prospect of a glorious day, and this fact served to mitigate the woes of Church and McClure in their early morning turn-out.

For the two unfortunates had been compelled to rise in the dark, at the unearthly hour of four a.m. They had stolen out of their respective homes, met at an appointed spot, and had walked to Handforth's address. By now they were fully awake, and rather enjoying the experience.

Edward Oswald had given his orders, and they had obeyed.

They were to call him at five o'clock—secretly, for Sir Edward might raise a few objections if the whole household was disturbed at such an early hour. It was Handforth's plan to indulge in a final practice before breakfast. There was ample space in the big gardens and lawns.

"We did that neatly," murmured Church, as they found themselves on the garden path. "And there goes five! Here to the minute!"

McClure yawned.

"And only just light, too," he growled. "That's the worst of this giddy daylight saving. It's jolly nice in the evening, but pretty awful in the morning. I can sympathise with all the farmer chaps who kick up a fuss. It's only just four o'clock, really."

"Well, never mind! We're here on time, so Handy can't scalp us," said Church. "It's a lovely morning, and we're in for a fine day. There's everything to smile about. Let's go and rout Handy out."

Certain secret arrangements had been made the previous evening. Handforth had an alarm-clock, but Church and McClure didn't trust to it—or, to be exact, they didn't trust to Handforth's waking up at its warning note. They didn't sleep with him at Sir Frank's for nothing. Logs weren't in it with Edward Oswald!

And so they had insisted upon a little addition. Handforth had undertaken to tie a string round his big toe, and to trail the end of it out of his bed-room window. It would thus be a simple matter to pull this, and thoroughly arouse him. It was better than any alarm-clock.

"Here we are!" chuckled McClure, as they padded silently along the paved path in their rubber shoes, and halted beneath Handforth's window. "Here's the string, which shows that the giddy clock was no good. Better give it a gentle tug to begin with, eh?"

"That's no good," said Church. "Pull it hard."

He took the string himself, and gave it a business-like jerk. The bed-room window above was wide open, and a faint sound floated out. It wasn't exactly a cry, but a kind of gasp. Church tugged again, and the gasp became a yell.

"Rummy!" said Church, staring. "That sounds like Willy."

"Can't be! They don't sleep together."

"They're using the same bed-room just now," said Church. "Wasn't Handy grumbling about it yesterday? They've got a household of guests, or something, and—Hang it! There's something queer about this! I'll swear that was Willy's voice!"

"Why should Willy yell when you tug Handy's toe?" asked McClure.

Up in the bed-room the explanation was simple. Willy Handforth was wide awake, and he was sitting up, rather dazed. He was very startled, too. For some unaccountable reason, there was an acute pain in the big toe of his left foot. It was so severe that it had awakened him.

"Ooooh!" he gasped suddenly.

There it was again—only worse. He was quite scared by now, and the last vestige of sleep had left him. It was only just dawn, and he was never in the habit of waking up with such peculiar pains.

"I must have overtrained!" he muttered, aghast.

The thought was, indeed, enough to scare anybody. Willy had entered for practically every event in the Third Form sports, and the possibility of being crooked nearly unnerved him. He flung the bedclothes back, and examined his big toe in horror.

"My only sainted aunt!" he gasped blankly.

A string was tied round it and knotted. Before he could take any action, another pull came, and he jumped.

"Oh!" he howled wildly. "Hi, stop it, you idiots! You nearly tore my giddy toe out by the roots!"

Outside, Church and McClure stared at one another.

"There you are—it *is* Willy!" said Church. "What on earth—"

A face appeared at the window above—a face which burned with indignation.

"Oh, so it's you chaps!" said the face. "You fat-headed chumps! What's the idea of trying to cripple me? Have you gone dotty, or something? Who tied this rotten string round my big toe?"

"There's something wrong," said Church, staring up. "We arranged to call your major at five o'clock, and we understood that the string was to be tied round his toe—not yours. Do you mean to say you don't know anything about it?"

"Know anything about it!" hooted Willy. "Do you think you can stretch my toe about a yard without me knowing it?"

"I mean, didn't you tie the string on yourself?" asked Church. "Or didn't Handy tell you—"

"No, he didn't!" snorted Willy. "I went to bed first, and I must have been asleep when Ted came up. Do you think I was going to wait until he'd finished reading a rotten detective shocker? The rotter must have shoved that string on my toe instead of his own!"

Church and McClure grinned.

"Well, it's acted, anyhow," said McClure. "Give your major a shake, and tell him we're waiting."

Willy gazed down coldly.

"You can go and eat coke!" he retorted. "And my major can snore until he's blue in the face! He can't mess me about like this! I'm blessed if I'm going to wake him after playing a dirty trick like this!"

"You young ass—"

"I'm going back to bed—and you can buzz off home!" said Willy tartly. "It's like your rot, coming here at five o'clock in the morning, anyhow. What d'you think you're going to be when you grow up—milkmen?"

Willy vanished from the window, and Church and McClure gazed at one another in alarm.

"The young fathead's not going to call him!" gasped Church. "We shall get the blame for this, of course. You know what an unreasonable chump Handy is! Of all the idiots—tying that string on Willy's toe instead of his own!"

McClure scratched his head.

"Well, we've got to do something," he

growled. "I'm blessed if I'm going to get up at four o'clock, and have my manly efforts end up in a frost! Hi, Willy! Willy, you young demon!"

But Willy turned a deaf ear, and was already back in bed. He considered that his major needed a strong lesson for making a convenience of him. It would have been a different thing if Willy had expressed a desire to be up at five, but Willy didn't want to turn out until seven, which, in his opinion, was a thoroughly respectable hour.

An examination of his toe, after the string had been removed, had proved that no real damage had been done. Edward Oswald, of course, had affixed the string while Willy was asleep, coolly assuming that his minor would submit to this base treatment tamely. Edward Oswald had, furthermore, assured himself that Willy's howls would awaken him. For he had a totally wrong impression regarding the way in which he slept.

"We've got to do something—and quickly, too," growled Church, glancing round. "Where's a ladder? That window isn't particularly high."

"What about chucking in a few cabbages and things?" suggested McClure brilliantly. "One of them's bound to hit something. Or this lettuce, for example! It looks a bit rotten. Just the thing!"

The window overlooked a portion of the kitchen garden, and a row of lettuces were invitingly near. One of them had been neglected, and the centre of it was not merely sloppy, but in a pulpy condition. It had been half-hidden by a neighbouring bush.

McClure pulled it out of the ground, and hurled it unerringly through the open window above. If he had aimed at a given objective he would probably have missed by yards. But he flung that lettuce blindly—and, consequently, scored a bullseye.

By the greatest of good fortune it landed fairly in the middle of Edward Oswald Handforth's face. Handforth was fast asleep, flat on his back, snoring, with his mouth half-open.

"My hat!" said Willy, sitting up in bed.

He gazed at his major happily. In fact, he was so pleased that he forgot all about his annoyance, and he was restored to his usual genial state. There was something particularly pleasing in this little scene.

"Gug-gug-gugh!" said Handforth thickly.

"Exactly!" grinned Willy.

Handforth lurched upwards, spluttering and gurgling. The lettuce fell off his face and dropped inside the open neck of his pyjamas. And anybody who has had a cold, dew-besprinkled, half-defunct lettuce dropped on his chest, will know exactly what this means.

Handforth shivered all over, and gave a wild leap in the bed. He opened his eyes dazedly. Something was crawling on his nose—slowly, deliberately. His nostrils were filled with a dank, noxious odour.

"Great pip!" he gurgled. "What—what's happened?"



With all his strength Handforth crashed Forrest's camera to the ground, then he jumped on the wreckage with both feet and trampled it into the grass. "And that's that!" he said calmly, then strode off: Forrest and Co. stared after him, too horror-struck to move.



CHAPTER 7.

THE EMPIRE SPIRIT.

"YOU hit something!" said Church breathlessly.

"Handy's awake, anyhow!" grinned McClure.

"That's the main thing.

He can't blame us for chucking things in the window, can he?"

At the moment, Handforth was too bewildered to blame anybody. He didn't quite know where he was. Willy, who was watching with the keenest enjoyment, had come to the conclusion that Church and McClure were two of the finest sportsmen he had ever met. His recent antagonism had vanished.

"What—what's happened?" repeated Handforth, looking round vacantly. "By George! There's—there's something on my nose!"

"That's all right—it's nothing," said Willy.

"Nothing?"

"Only a young slug."

"A what?" hooted Handforth wildly.

He clutched at his nose and tore away the offending creature—which was unquestionably a miniature slug of the type which makes its home in lettuce. Handforth flung it through the window in disgust, and it narrowly missed dropping down McClure's neck. As a matter of fact, it met with an even more

startling fate. For McClure was standing with face uplifted, about to give a hail. His open mouth received the slug very neatly.

He gave one awful gasp, and picked the intruder out of his mouth and gazed at it—thinking, at first, that it was a pellet of some kind.

"Oh, my goodness!" he breathed feebly.

He turned a sickly green, and staggered away.

In the meantime, Handforth was fully awake. And Willy was kindly and obligingly explaining the situation.

"No need to get into a stew, old man," he was saying. "It's only Church and McClure. They arranged to wake you at five, didn't they?"

"But—but this—this awful stuff—"

"That's only a squiffy lettuce," said Willy. "One of 'em biffed it in and scored a bulls-eye. It was like your beastly nerve to tie that string round my toe," he added, frowning. "I wasn't going to wake you up—just to teach you a lesson!"

"A squiffy lettuce!" repeated Handforth deliberately. "And they chucked that in—"

He broke off, threw the bedclothes back, and put his legs on the floor. At the same moment the squiffy lettuce slid down an inch or two, and a startled, horrified expression came across Handforth's face. A rapid

investigation revealed the awful truth, and he fairly tore his pyjamas off.

"Somebody's going to pay for this!" he panted thickly. "As for that string, you young fathead, I tied it round your toe because your bed's near the window—and mine isn't! I knew your howling would wake me up."

"Well, it didn't!" snapped Willy. "A thousand cats having a fight under your bed wouldn't wake you up! It's a wonder that lettuce—"

But his major had gone—having flung a bath-robe round himself. A quick cold bath had a magical effect, and in ten minutes he was out—attired in running shorts and singlet. Willy, in the meantime, had gone off to sleep again.

"Oh, so here you are!" said Handforth, as he emerged from the side-door and found his chums. "Who threw that lettuce? No evasions, my lads! I'm going to smash—What's up with you, Mac?" he added, in sudden alarm. "You're looking a bit white about the gills this morning!"

"Don't go for him, poor chap," said Church. "That slug, you know."

"Slug?"

"It fell in Mac's mouth," explained Church sympathetically.

"Oh, did it?" grinned Handforth. "Well, that's different! The biter bit sort of thing, eh? *Nulli secundus!*"

"Eh?"

"Hoist on his own petard—"

"You silly ass, *nulli secundus* means second to none!" said Church. "I suppose you meant to say *quid pro quo*—one thing for another?"

"Don't quibble about trifles," growled Handforth. "All Greek's the same—it's all a lot of tosh."

"It isn't Greek, either—it's Latin—"

"What do I care what it is?" roared Handforth. "Anyhow, Mac got paid back, so I shan't slaughter him. Let's go on with that training. My hat! Half-past five! We've lost half an hour!"

"It was all your fault—for tying that string round Willy's toe instead of your own," declared Church. "See what a lot of bother over nothing!"

"I—I suppose you haven't got an orange, or an apple, or something?" asked McClure plaintively. "Even a drink of water would be better than nothing. I keep fancying I can taste—Ugh!" he added, with a shudder.

"Don't be so squeamish," said Handforth tartly. "There's nothing in a slug. People eat lots of 'em in lettuces—"

"Don't!" pleaded McClure, turning pale again.

"Perhaps you'd better have an apple, or an orange," said Handforth, looking at him critically. "We'll all have one, in fact—there's nothing better in the early morning. Come indoors. There's piles of fruit on the dining-room sideboard."

Thus invited, Church and McClure fol-

lowed their host into the house, and they proceeded to raid the sideboard. No other members of the household were up yet—for even the most energetic maidservant did not turn out until six-thirty, or get downstairs until a quarter to seven. Handforth & Co. had the entire lower floor to themselves, and the household slept.

"These apples are first-class," said Handforth, as he took a second bite. "Sun's up already," he added, glancing out of the window. "It's going to be a ripping day, by the look of things. We shall be packed at Stamford Bridge this afternoon."

"I'm not so sure of that," said Church, peeling his orange, and carelessly tossing the peel under the table. "It's all very well for Browne to get these optimistic ideas, but the public isn't so easily led. We shall be lucky if five hundred people pay to see us."

Handforth sniffed.

"Five hundred!" he retorted. "You hopeless ass, we shall have five thousand—twenty thousand—fifty thousand! Old Browne's wireless speech has roused the Empire spirit! Why, all the Sunday newspapers were full of it—and that's more publicity still. It's the finest spirit in the world, my lads," he added firmly. "We've all got to foster it."

"Of course, it's jolly good—"

"The British Empire first!" interrupted Handforth, nodding. "That's my policy from now onwards, my sons! No foreign-made articles—no dumped foodstuffs! British or nothing!"

"Then you'd better go and choke up that apple!" grinned Church.

"Apple?" said Handforth, gazing at the remains of his apple in a startled way. "What's the matter with it?"

"Nothing—it looks jolly good," said Church. "But it happens to come from Oregon."

Handforth looked relieved.

"Well, that's all right," he said. "There's nothing wrong in eating a Canadian apple, is there, you ass?"

"Canadian!" grinned Church. "Oregon's in the United States!"

"What?" said Handforth fiercely, gazing at the remains of his apple in an accusing way. "My only hat! Yankee apples! They're going to be shifted out of this room—now!"

"We'll shift 'em, if you like," said McClure obligingly.

"They're going to be chucked away!" roared Handforth sternly. "It'll be a lesson to my pater not to buy fruit that doesn't come from the Empire! I'm not sure about Oregon, either," he added dubiously. "I've always thought—How do you know they're Oregon apples?"

"Well, they're all wrapped," said Church. "Have a look at one."

Handforth was soon convinced, and he gave an indignant snort.

"What's the good of us fostering the Empire spirit, and doing all we can for the cause, if our people buy foreign apples?" he asked.

"People don't look upon America as foreign—"

"The Americans call us foreigners, anyhow," retorted Handforth grimly. "When it comes to a question of law, these apples are foreign! And they're going out—into the dustbin!"

"You silly ass—"

"By George!" Handforth stared hard at the oranges, and picked one up. "Look at this! Spanish!"

"My dear chap, they're lovely—"

"I'm not saying anything about the quality—they're Spanish!" said Handforth coldly. "That's enough! Out they go! The best oranges in the world come from South Africa and the West Indies—"

"But you can't throw everything away because it's foreign," protested McClure, in alarm. "All this fruit must be worth thirty bob. I believe in the Empire spirit, but there's no need to carry the thing to extremes—"

"Look at this grape fruit!" roared Handforth abruptly. "It's Florida grape fruit! American again! Why can't they buy West Indian?"

"The Florida is the best," said Church. "My mater won't have anything else—"

"Then she's a traitor!" interrupted Handforth firmly. "I'm dashed if these dates aren't from Tunis! Why can't we have Egyptian dates, or South African, or Australian? I'm blowed if there's any British fruit on the whole sideboard!"

Church and McClure were looking thoroughly alarmed by this time. There was any amount of fruit there—and it was quite true that the majority of it was foreign. And Handforth was quite capable of throwing the whole lot away. He had embraced the "Empire spirit" wholeheartedly, and when he was in a mood like this he generally went to extremes. It was one of his little ways.

"Don't eat another thing!" he said curtly. "Put that orange down, Walter Church!"

"That's what I'm going to do—"

"Put it down!" roared Handforth. "I don't want any of your funny jokes now, my lad! Help me to carry the whole lot out on to the rubbish heap! I won't let it stay in the house!"

"But, your pater and mater—"

"I'll tick them off at breakfast-time," said Handforth gruffly.

It seemed to Church and McClure far more likely that Handforth himself would get ticked off—and probably thrashed into the bargain. But it was no good arguing with him. He had made up his mind—and his chums might as well have entered into an argument with the fire-irons.



CHAPTER 8.

THE WHOLE HOG!

FIVE minutes later, Church and McClure were looking sadly at the pile of fruit in the garden. There was a secluded corner where the gardener piled his rubbish, and Edward Oswald Handforth had selected this spot as the dump for the discarded fruit. He in no way relented as he saw all that good stuff lying there.

"It only shows you," he said, shaking his head. "Until you investigate these things, you don't even know what you're eating!"

"It seems a shame to waste all that lovely fruit," said Church regretfully. "I'll admit it's foreign, but the poor fruit can't help it, I suppose? You've got to take things rationally, Handy, old man. It's such a dotty idea to go the whole hog like this—"

"Yes, by George, the whole hog!" interrupted Handforth. "There's nothing like it! Do you think I'm going to be satisfied with mere fruit? Come on—we'll have a look at the store cupboards!"

"The store cupboards!" gasped McClure. "You—you don't mean—"

"I say, Handy—" began Church.

"We'll turn them out, and see what they contain!" interrupted Handforth crisply. "Everything foreign is going to be pitched out! I'm not going to let my mater have a lot of foreign stuff in the house! English—Irish—Scotch—Welsh—she can fill her store cupboards to the limit if she likes. Anything from Canada or Australia or the other Colonies, too—it's all welcome. But nothing foreign. We've got to think of the Empire!"

"But—but won't it be time enough to start that after these stocks are used up?" urged Church. "You'll only get yourself into an unholy mess, Handy! You can't expect your mater to see her store cupboards turned inside out, and then pat you on the back for it! You'll get slaughtered."

Handforth sniffed.

"I'd like to see my pater slaughter me for being patriotic!" he said tartly. "You asses, he'll probably give me a big tip! They don't realise what they've been doing—so it's up to me to show them the straight path! Not that I believe there's any foreign stuff in the store cupboards, anyhow!" he added. "That would be too thick!"

McClure made a last effort—guessing, only too well, what the store cupboards would actually reveal.

"Look here, Handy, it's nearly six o'clock," he pleaded. "What about our training? We were going to do a lot of running round the garden, and Church was going to practise for the high jump."

"It's our last chance," urged Church. "Isn't it more important to be ready for the sports this afternoon? Leave this other business until another time. Let's stick to our plan."

For a moment Edward Oswald wavered, and then he set his jaw.

"No!" he said. "There's nothing like striking while the iron's hot. We've got the kitchen quarters to ourselves for an hour—and we're going to be busy."

"Oh, corks!" groaned Church, in alarm.

For a second he had hoped that his leader would be reasonable. Within a day or two this phase would be completely over, and Handforth would be rational again—still full of the Empire spirit, but not crazy with it.

"All right—don't drag us into the awful business!" said Church rebelliously. "We shan't take any blame, you mad hatter! We shall tell your pater straight that we were against it from the very first!"

"Rather!" said McClure. "We're not going to uphold you in this hare-brained rot!"

Handforth regarded them coldly.

"It's a good thing for you chaps that I'm sweet-tempered!" he said, with a sniff. "I thought you were patriotic? I thought old Browne had filled you with the Empire spirit, too? You're nothing but a pair of traitors!"

"Yes, but—"

"But nothing!" roared Handforth. "I'm ashamed of you! You'll either help me to throw away everything foreign, or I'll smash you!"

"But you can't do it!" gasped Church. "What about your mater's piano? I expect you'll make a bonfire of it?"

"Isn't it English?" demanded Handforth.

"My hat!" groaned McClure. "He lives here—and doesn't know that his mater's piano is a German one—made in Berlin!"

"German!" panted Handforth, aghast.

For a moment he stood there, staring wildly. He had a vision of that wonderful piano going up in flames in the middle of the garden. But he also had a vision of his father with a big strap. After all, there was a limit—even for Handforth. He decided that it might be sufficient to urge his mother to exchange the piano for a British-made one. She couldn't possibly refuse if she had an ounce of patriotism in her.

"Well, never mind the piano," he said gruffly. "Let's go and have a look at those store cupboards."

It was no good. Church and McClure had done their best, and they had failed. Almost the first thing they saw, as soon as one of the store cupboards was opened, was a whole row of tinned fruit—peaches, Bartlett pears, and pineapple. Handforth gave a triumphant whoop.

"Californian!" he exclaimed. "Out with it!"

"Handy, old man—"

"Hawaiian pineapple," said Handforth grimly. "Where's Hawaii? Somewhere in South America, isn't it? Anyhow, it's not British—"

"Hawaii's in the Pacific, you ass—owned by America—"

"America again!" growled Edward Oswald. "Take an armful each, and dump

'em on that pile! And look at this tea! Chinese!"

"Everybody uses China tea—"

"The best tea comes from India and Ceylon," interrupted Handforth coldly. "If Empire tea isn't good enough, we'll drink nothing! Out with the whole lot of it!"

But Church and McClure rebelled. They simply couldn't do it. They were staunch patriots, but this sort of thing was a bit too thick. Even Handforth was going beyond his usual limits in his Empire enthusiasm.

"Rats!" said McClure hotly. "Church and I are going outside to do some training. You can go and eat coke, Handy! We're not having any hand in this rot!"

They marched out, and Handforth breathed hard.

"All right—they'll be sorry for this!" he muttered. "They'll climb down a bit when my pater congratulates me for doing the right thing. I'll bet he hasn't got the faintest idea of all this! Or the mater, either. She just orders things, and the stores send what they please!"

Handforth was feeling quite safe. Sir Edward was an intense patriot, and he had been warmly approving of Browne's activities. He couldn't possibly be angry with his son for taking strong action where foreign goods were concerned.

In half an hour Lady Handforth's store cupboards were looking positively barren. And the rubbish heap in the garden had grown to enormous proportions. There were dozens of sauce bottles, packets of wrapped Danish butter, boxes of Continental cooking eggs, and other articles in bewildering variety. Even Handforth was staggered at the extent of the collection. But he was as grim as ever—he knew that he was doing the right thing. Why, hang it, wasn't it Empire Day? Could there have been a better day for such a glorious piece of work? The only cure for this blight was to pull it out by the roots!

Willy came down just before the household stirred itself, but he went out into the garden by the side door, and knew nothing of his major's activities. He found Church and McClure in the garden—training in a half-hearted sort of way. They were never really alive in the absence of their leader.

"Where's Ted?" asked Willy. "And what's the matter with you chaps? You look as if you've just come from a funeral."

"It's your major," growled Church. "He's dotty!"

"I knew that ages ago," said Willy calmly. "What's his latest?"

"Oh, he's worse than he's ever been before," put in McClure. "He's actually turning out your mater's store cupboards—and chucking everything foreign on to the rubbish heap. The Empire spirit, you know! He says that everything foreign has got to be pushed out of the house as if it was contaminated."

Willy slowly smiled.
 "This is going to be rich," he said happily.
 "Poor old Ted! Just wait until the pater gets on his track!"



CHAPTER 9.

THE LAST STRAW.

MUCH was to happen when Sir Edward Handforth got on to "poor old Ted's" track—and the first portent of the coming storm appeared in the kitchen.

"My!" Ellen, the parlourmaid, didn't make use of a very long exclamation, but there was a world of consternation in it. She was the first member of the domestic staff to come down. She stood in the kitchen, looking round her, utterly bewildered.

"Whatever's happened?" she murmured, agast.

The inquiry was by no means uncalled for. Ellen knew well enough that the kitchen had been left as clean and tidy as a new pin the previous night, for the housekeeper was a hard taskmistress on that score. But now the kitchen was looking as though a bullock had been loose in it.

The cupboards were standing open—for most of the store cupboards were actually in the spacious kitchen itself. Their shelves were looking forlorn and depleted. On the floor were litters of paper, one or two broken bottles, a mess of spilled sauce, a pile of tea, and many other evidences of upset groceries. The back door was open, too, and a further trail led outside.

"Hallo, Ellen," said Willy, strolling in and eyeing her calmly. "How goes it this morning? You're looking bright and cheerful—and a bit scared, too! Anything wrong?"

Ellen turned a pair of startled eyes upon Willy.

"The kitchen, Master Willy!" she said breathlessly. "Oh! Have—have you—I mean—"

"Not this time!" said Willy, shaking his head. "Don't accuse me of this! This is some of Ted's work. He thought it rather a great idea to turn the cupboards out, you know."

"But—but what ever for, Master Willy?" asked the horrified girl. "There's going to be rare trouble with the mistress—"

"I've got an idea there'll be rarer trouble with the master!" grinned Willy. "I've already advised Ted to change his clothes—and I've told him where he can find some padding."

"Change his clothes, sir?"

"Well, running shorts are a bit thin," explained Willy. "I've a feeling that the pater won't quite agree with this Empire spirit of Ted's. You see, he's chuckled out everything foreign—Californian pears, China tea, Danish butter, Dutch eggs, and all that

**THIS IS THE
 BRONZE MEDAL**
 which a reader praises on
 page 11.



*Have you joined the St.
 Frank's League yet?*

sort of thing. It's got to be British or nothing! So Ted's pushed out the lot!"

"You mean to say he's thrown it all away?" she asked, scandalised. "Is—
 Master Edward quite normal, sir?" she added anxiously.

"Of course he isn't," replied Willy. "Ted's never normal. But that's nothing. He does worse things at St. Frank's than this. The chaps take no notice of him, you know."

Handforth himself appeared at that moment.

"Oh, I was wondering if you were down yet, Ellen," he said briskly. "Sorry about this litter. How about sweeping it up? You don't mind, do you? One or two things got spilled. Those so-called chums of mine wouldn't help, the giddy cowards!"

"Ellen's a good sort—she'll do it," said Willy. "She can't answer you now. Her breath's all gone. The best thing you can do, Ted, is to write a letter to the Empire Industries Fund, and tell 'em what a noble work you've accomplished. They'll be overjoyed."

Handforth started.

"By George, that's a good idea!" he said crisply. "As a matter of fact, I should have thought of it myself in a minute or two. You ought to go and have a look at that heap in the garden! It's perfectly disgraceful. Quids' worth of foreign stuff in the house—and we're supposed to be patriotic! And the pater an M.P. who's undertaken to support the Empire! Why, the whole thing's a scandal. He'd lose his seat if people knew!"

"Talk about losing seats, you'll probably lose the use of yours pretty soon," said Willy

thoughtfully. "On a day like this, too—just when you want to be in tip-top form."

Handforth frowned, failing to understand the depth of this remark. He hurried off, and Willy went outside to Church and McClure—who were gazing sadly at the pile on the rubbish heap.

"Have an orange?" suggested Willy. "Take a lucky dip, my sons. Of course, nearly all this stuff can be rescued—it's mostly tinned or bottled. Besides, it's quite clean here—only a few pea-sticks and things like that. But don't disturb it. I want to see the pater's face when he spots it."

"I think we'd better be going," said Church nervously.

"And miss all the fun?" asked Willy. "Don't be an ass! I'll prove an alibi for you chaps. I'll go indoors now, and see how Ted's getting on with his letter. He might need some help."

Edward Oswald was run to earth in the library—although, strictly speaking, the boys were forbidden to use this sacred apartment. But Handforth was actually sitting at his father's typewriter. Sir Edward did quite a lot of work at home, and dictated straight to his secretary at the typewriter.

"Go it!" grinned Willy. "I can imagine the pater's expression if he comes down and sees you at that giddy machine."

"This is a special occasion," frowned Handforth. "It's Empire Day, and he can't grumble at me for writing a patriotic letter on Empire Day. No foreign goods! That's my slogan in future. British or nothing!"

"In that case, what's the idea of using an American typewriter?" asked Willy blandly. "Of course, it's only a detail—"

"American!" yelled Handforth, leaping up, and staring at the typewriter as though it was about to bite him. "You—you mean to say— Yes, by George! 'Made in U.S.A.' Is ANYTHING British in this house?" he asked helplessly.

"Well, you needn't growl about typewriters," said Willy. "The American machines are pretty good. It's not—"

"Well, it's going outside—on that rubbish heap!" said Handforth firmly.

Even Willy's imperturbability was shattered.

"You—you lunatic!" he gasped frantically. "It's a brand new one—it hasn't been in the house more than a week! You'll be skinned alive if the pater finds—"

"Out of the way!" said his major gruffly.

He marched out with the typewriter in his arms, and two minutes later it was dumped upon the pile. Fortunately, it came to rest on a heap of tins, and was not harmed in any way.

"The best thing we can do with this lot is to burn it," said Handforth thoughtfully. "We'll get some sticks and make a bonfire. I'd better get an axe and break some of the stuff up a bit—it'll burn better then, and—"

"EDWARD!"

The voice came like a thunderclap, and Handforth gave a violent start.

"Your pater!" gasped Church hoarsely.

They all turned, and found Sir Edward Handforth himself at one of the upper windows, leaning out. Sir Edward was attired in his dressing-gown, his hair was anyhow, and his face was nearly purple.

"Morning, pater!" said Handforth, steeling himself.

"What—what is that pile?" demanded his father quiveringly. "Is that my typewriter?"

"Yes, pater—"

"Wait!" panted Sir Edward. "Wait! Good heavens! Has the boy gone absolutely off his head?"

He vanished, and Willy sighed.

"Take my tip, Ted, old man, and scoot!" he said. "We'll do the best we can to explain. But don't you dare to come back until to-night. In fact, if I were you, I'd go to a hotel, or something, until the term begins."

"Rot!" said Handforth uneasily. "What's the idea of bunking? The pater can't blame me—"

"Upon my soul!" puffed Sir Edward, rushing up—still in his dressing-gown and slippers. "What is the meaning of this? Edward! WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS?"

"All—all these things are foreign, pater," said Handforth stubbornly. "It's Empire Day to-day, and it's our duty to throw out everything foreign. We've either got to have British stuff—"

"Good heavens!" interrupted his father, aghast. "You—you mean to say that you have deliberately thrown these things on the rubbish heap because they are not British? Have you taken leave of your senses, Edward? Are you demented, boy?"

But Edward Oswald had become icily cool. He assured himself that he was in the right, and he feared nothing.

"There's got to be a change in this house, dad," he said firmly. "If we're patriotic we've got to support British Empire industries. And the only way to start is to chuck all the foreign stuff away! Well, I've started!"

"Bless my life and soul!" ejaculated Sir Edward blankly.

"Don't be hard on him, pater," grinned Willy. "He means well—but he's a bit of an extremist. These chaps tried to stop him, but he wouldn't listen. He's got the Empire spirit, you know—he's a whole-hogger on the subject. And it's Empire Day. You can't scalp him for being patriotic."

Sir Edward nearly choked.

"I—I can understand your patriotism, Edward, but this—this ridiculous exhibition is altogether too much!" he said angrily. "All this stuff will be taken indoors again—all of it, that is, that can be rescued. I will talk to you later."

"But look here, dad—"

"Not another word!" thundered his father. "You may thank your lucky stars that I do not thrash you within an inch of your life! It is your patriotism which has saved you from that fate. Remember!"

He stalked off, and Handforth sighed.

"What's the use?" he asked bitterly.

His chums said nothing—for there was nothing to say. But Edward Oswald had not had his work for nothing. At that very moment Sir Edward, with a twinkle in his eye, was explaining the situation to Lady Handforth.

"Of course, the boy's gone beyond all bounds of reason," he concluded, "but we can't get away from the fact that his motives are good. Really, my dear, I had no idea that we had so much foreign stuff in the house."

After Lady Handforth had recovered, she was thoughtful.

"Perhaps we ought to be a little more conscientious," she said slowly. "In future I will instruct the housekeeper to buy British goods whenever possible. Edward's rashness has made me realise."

"Yes, by George, and I'll buy a British typewriter, too!" declared Sir Edward firmly. "Why not? It's our duty to support the Empire."



CHAPTER 10.

STANFORD BRIDGE!

HORACE STEVENS, of the Fifth, smiled.

"I'd like to wager you a fiver on it, old man," he said.

"Unfortunately, Brother Horace, I am not a betting man," replied William Napoleon Browne. "Otherwise I should hail with delight this opportunity of relieving you of five pounds. It is your opinion that less than ten thousand people will pay for admission to the Chelsea ground?"

"A great many less," laughed Stevens.

"You are, I trust, bearing the weather in mind?"

"Oh, the weather's gorgeous—better than we ever hoped for," agreed Stevens. "Warm and sunny, with a cooling breeze. In fact, ideal for sports."

"And ideal for watching athletic sports."

"Yes."

"And you would still risk your fiver?"

"Of course."

"Alas, I have no alternative but to take this as a grievous slight upon my own capacity as a publicity expert," sighed Browne, shaking his head. "You know my methods, Brother Horace—you know the efforts I have made. Without undue optimism, I predict a vast multitude of spectators. It is a great pity that I disapprove of betting, for this would indeed be easy money."

The two Fifth Formers were bowling along Fulham Road, Browne at the wheel of the smart Morris Oxford saloon. It was his own car, and he had persuaded Stevens to accompany him to the Junior Sports, to help with the various events. Mr. Beverley Stokes and Mr. Clifford, and one or two of the other masters, had promised to be there, too.

It was only a little after two, and Browne wanted to be on the scene in good time. He

was delighted with the weather, and felt confident that his publicity efforts would bear substantial fruit.

"Nearly there," said Stevens. "There seems to be a lot of traffic about here, though," he added. "We've been crawling for half a mile. Look at that congestion of taxis and private cars ahead."

"Enthusiasts attempting to enter the Stadium," observed Browne.

"Rats!"

Stevens laughed the suggestion to scorn; but he changed his tone a few minutes later. For it was indeed a fact that most of the private cars were parking themselves in the side streets opposite Chelsea Football Ground—and the taxicabs were disgorging their occupants outside the main entrance.

"Well, I'm hanged!" said Stevens in astonishment.

"I am not sure that you don't deserve to be," said Browne. "It indeed concerns me to think that you will escape scot-free. Lack of faith, Brother Horace, is a troublesome disease."

"But—but this is positively startling!" said Stevens, as they drove in—Browne's car being privileged, as the property of an official. "By Jove, look at them! They are queuing up at the turnstiles. It's like a football crowd!"

Browne merely smiled in his calm way.

"Merely what I anticipated," he observed smoothly.

By the time they entered the private quarters, and emerged into the arena, Stevens was even more staggered. The enormous terraces opposite were filling with people. The stand itself was gradually taking on an animated appearance. The whole ground was becoming gay with colour—for it was noted that a large percentage of the spectators were ladies, mostly young.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" ejaculated Stevens. "I should have lost that fiver all right! There must be ten thousand people here already."

"More like fifteen thousand!" said Dick Hamilton delightedly, as he greeted the seniors. "Browne, old man, you're a marvel. You're the eighth wonder of the world!"

Browne shrugged his shoulders.

"I beseech you, Brother Hamilton, not to make these obvious comments," he said. "There are still twenty minutes before the first event is due to start—and you must remember that the crowd always waits until the last moment. What we now see is merely the preliminary trickling."

"There's nothing like optimism, Browne," said Mr. Stokes, chuckling. "But I must admit that your efforts are meeting with their just reward. The Empire Industries Fund should be very grateful to you."

"We're all grateful, sir," put in Reggie Pitt enthusiastically. "Why, our sports will go with a terrific whizz now. A fellow is always inspired to do his best when there's a crowd watching."

"Absolutely," agreed Archie Glenthorne, nodding. "Why, odds tissues and sinews! The old gore is bubbling through the arteries

at a frightful speed. I mean to say, a chappie can do frightfully priceless things in front of a crowd like this."

"You're going to win the half-mile, aren't you, Archie?" smiled Pitt.

"Absolutely," said Archie firmly. "That is to say, I shall absolutely win it, unless some other chappie gets there first."

Mr. Stokes filled his pipe, glancing round.

"Yes, they're coming in rapidly now—through every turnstile," he said, with satisfaction. "I think that wireless talk of yours, Browne, is largely responsible. The London public is realising that the athletic sports of St. Frank's are worth watching."

"People have been talking about us because of the cricket, sir," said Dick Hamilton.

"That's another reason—"

"Hi! Just a minute, sir!"

Edward Oswald Handforth came bustling up just as Mr. Stokes was about to light his pipe.

"Can I have those matches a tick, sir?" he asked grimly.

Mr. Stokes smiled.

"Certainly," he replied. "But you needn't give me such an accusing look, Handforth. Have I your permission to light my pipe first?"

"I'd rather have them now, sir."

Mr. Stokes passed them over, and the other fellows wondered what was in the wind. There was certainly something unusual about Edward Oswald's manner. And it was like his nerve practically to demand the matches from the Housemaster in this way. He took them, glanced at the box, and grunted.

"Thought so!" he said indignantly. "Belgian!"

He threw the box on the ground, and crushed it to smithereens under his foot. Mr. Stokes look on in amazement—and the other fellows simply stared.

"That's that!" said Handforth curtly.

"So it appears," said Mr. Stokes, his voice dangerously calm. "And now may I ask for an explanation, Handforth? I don't think I am an unreasonable man, and I should like to know why you have subjected me to this unprecedented affront?"

"He's mad!" said Hamilton warmly.

"Those matches were Belgian!" exclaimed Handforth, glaring. "Isn't that enough? Sorry, Mr. Stokes, but I've come to a certain decision, and it's my duty to act promptly and drastically."

"And because of your fantastic ideas of duty, I must be left without a light?" asked Mr. Stokes. "Upon my word, Handforth, you deserve a thrashing—"

"Those matches were Belgian, sir."

"Confound it, what do I care what they were?" said the Housemaster angrily. "How dare you destroy them without any explanation—"

"It's Empire Day, sir, and that's enough explanation, isn't it?" said Handforth accusingly. "You're a Housemaster, sir, and it's up to you to set everybody else a good example. No offence, sir, but I've got to stick to my principles"



"The best thing to do with this lot is to burn it!" said H. had looted from the house. "I'll get some—". He the tails of his dressing-gown flying. He gazed at the pile, w

"What is it?"

"What on earth—"

"There's a programme-seller ten yards away, sir, and he's got cigarettes and matches on his tray," went on Handforth calmly. "English matches, too; I've had a look at 'em! I'll go and get you a box, sir."

He rushed off, and Mr. Stokes lost his angry look.

"I suppose this is some new form of patriotism," he remarked.

"The poor chap's touched, sir," whispered Church hurriedly. "He's been like it all day—ever since five o'clock this morning. He turned his mater's cupboards inside out, and he even threw his pater's typewriter on the rubbish heap because it was an American one!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The crowd yelled.



"The best thing to do with this lot is to burn it!" said Handy thoughtfully, as he stared down at the pile of foreign goods he had looted from the house. "I'll get some—" He jumped as a hoarse voice sounded, and his father came rushing up, the tails of his dressing-gown flying. He gazed at the pile, with his eyes starting from his head. "Upon my soul!" he gasped. "What is the meaning of this?"



thoughtfully, as he stared down at the pile of foreign goods he saw a hoarse voice sounded, and his father came rushing up, his hands starting from his head. "Upon my soul!" he gasped. "Of this?"

"Fact!" said Church hastily. "He's got a bee in his bonnet—so I warn you! If he sees anything foreign, he'll drop on it like a ton of bricks! It's got to be British or nothing!"

Handforth hurried back with a new box of matches.

"Sorry to keep you waiting, sir, but it's all for the cause," he said crisply. "You'll find these matches tons better than those others."

"Upon my word, I believe I shall!" chuckled Mr. Stokes. "And I'm not so sure that you're not justified, my boy. It would do us all good to embrace this British Empire movement a little more warmly."

He walked off, and Handforth looked round defiantly.

"There you are!" he said. "I knew Mr. Stokes would be O.K. when he understood. Down with foreign goods! That's my slogan,

my sons! Just let me catch you with anything foreign on you, that's all. This is Empire Day, and we've all got to be British to the backbone!"



CHAPTER 11.

CANADA FIRST.

LL ready, there?"

It was almost time for the first event—the Hundred Yards Sprint. The competitors were lining up, and there were representatives of all the St. Frank's Houses among them, including Tregellis-West, Hart, Bob Christine, Fullwood, and others. Clive Russell was the Canadian hope.

Handforth himself had not entered for this race, for he instinctively knew that he was not cut out as a sprinter. At least, Church and McClure instinctively knew it, for it was they who had persuaded him not to enter.

Everybody was feeling extraordinarily happy. There was a tension in the air, and the juniors themselves felt that these athletic sports were to be the most successful they had ever held.

They had every reason to be elated.

For an amazing change had come over the terraces and the stands. It is no exaggeration to say that they were packed. The thousands had continued to roll in, and a vast sea of faces looked down upon the sunlit green of the arena, with its cinder path, and the white-clothed and numbered figures of the contestants. Other juniors, waiting for the following races and events, were strolling about in the gaily-coloured blazers of their particular House. The whole scene was brilliant in the May sunshine.

And all the St. Frank's juniors were startled.

After William Napoleon Browne's efforts, they had expected to see a fairly decent crowd in the enclosures, but they had never dreamed of this enormous multitude. And yet the explanation was comparatively simple.

First and foremost, it was a Bank Holiday, with hundreds of thousands of people free to enjoy the sunny afternoon. The London papers, also, had recently made quite a feature of the schoolboy Test matches at St. Frank's. So St. Frank's was very much in the public eye at present.

London generally throngs to Lord's to see the big Public school matches, and London thronged to Stamford Bridge to-day to see the St. Frank's Junior Sports in very much the same spirit. The grand stand was filled with relatives, and there were parades of smartly-attired relations on the grass.

Here and there refreshment-tents were dotted, with gaily-decorated ice-cream stands in other places.

Most of the Moor View schoolgirls were present, and they were almost as excited as the contestants themselves. And the vast crowds were prepared to cheer the boys at every opportunity. They had come to enjoy themselves. As Browne observed, the brilliant weather was mainly responsible. For even Browne knew that his eloquence would have been wasted if the day had turned out rainy.

"Hold on!" said Handforth, hurrying up, as the starter was getting ready to fire his signal. "Where's Christine?"

"He's lined up with the others."

"Good!" said Handforth grimly.

"Out of the way, there, Handy!" shouted Stevens. "I'm just going to start this race. You can't butt in here—"

"I want Christine!" interrupted Handforth, with a glint in his eye. "Oh, there you are! Where's your watch?"

"My watch?" repeated Christine, staring.

"Yes."

"I've left it with Boots."

"Oh, all right, then!" said Handforth, turning away. "Anybody seen Boots?" He looked round. "Where's that fathead, Boots? He's got Christine's watch, and—"

"Hi!" gasped Christine, with a sudden start. "You leave my watch alone, Handy! You silly maniac, if you touch it, I'll smash you! Blow you and your Empire rot!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He's going to smash my watch up!" howled the Modern House junior. "Wait a minute, Stevens—don't fire that signal yet, you chump! How do you expect me to run while Handy's destroying—"

"Can't help your troubles now!" interrupted Stevens firmly. "Are you entering for this race or not? Get ready, there! I can't bother about your watch now, my lad. We're a minute late already. Now, then!"

Christine gulped, and took up his position. Everybody watched expectantly, for there was no sense in taking one's eyes off a Hundred Yards Sprint, a race that would be over in ten seconds or so.

Under ordinary circumstances, Handforth would have watched with the keenest possible interest. But he was scarcely himself to-day. His thoughts were all concentrated upon his latest mania. Edward Oswald was generally affected in this way. He would get a sudden idea, and it would burn itself out within him like a raging fire. While it lasted, he was in a continual fever of action.

There was no moderation with him. He couldn't think of several things at once, and even these sports—many of which he had entered for himself—were now of quite secondary importance.

It was Empire Day, and there could be no better occasion for the ramming home of the Empire lesson! Down with foreign goods! With an eagle eye, Handforth was searching everybody and everything, determined to ferret out any article that savoured of foreign origin. Such articles were doomed.

The affair had a comic side.

Handforth himself was in deadly earnest; he felt that he was doing something of national importance, and he threw himself into it with heart and soul. But the other juniors grinned with delight, and looked upon Edward Oswald as a comic relief. Their patriotism was probably as keen as his own, but they weren't quite so bull-headed.

"They're off!"

A shout went up from the stands, and there was a momentary hush. The contestants for the Hundred Yards Sprint were on the run, but Handforth didn't even glance round. While everybody else was watching the race, Handforth was striding up to John Busterfield Boots, the bluff, burly Fourth-Form skipper.

"Where's Christine's watch?" demanded Handforth.

"Go it, Clapson!" yelled Boots excitedly.

"Oh, good man! You'll win! You'll—"

"Christine!" roared Yorke. "Christine's winning!"

"Hurrah! Modern House!" shouted Boots delightedly.

"Never mind about Christine winning!" snapped Handforth. "Where's Christine's watch? I want to know—"

"Clear out!" thundered Boots, rushing off.

"By Jove, that was such a close finish that I'm blessed if I know who won even now! About three of 'em seemed to breast the tape together."

Loud Remove cheers dampened the Fourth-Form captain's ardour for a moment. The Removites round the tape wouldn't cheer if one of their own men had failed. But perhaps Tregellis-West had come in second, or—

"Canada wins!" said Dick Hamilton cheerfully. "Good! Couldn't have anything better on Empire Day!"

"Christine isn't a Canadian, you ass!" panted Boots.

"No, but Clive Russell is," grinned Dick. "He's won the Hundred Yards! Tregellis-West second, Hart third. Sorry, Buster! Bob seems to have been fourth, and the rest nowhere."

Boots stared.

"Fourth!" he ejaculated. "But—but Christine was going to win this race! The ass! What the dickens—"

He was interrupted by rousing cheers from all sides, particularly from the packed terraces. The winner's number had gone up on the great board, and it was a popular victory.

"Where's—where's my watch?" panted Bob Christine, hurrying up breathlessly.

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"Bother your watch!" roared Boots. "What the dickens do you mean by lagging home fourth? I thought you were going to win this race?"

Handforth dashed up.

"You rotter, running off like that just when I was speaking to you!" he snorted. "Where's Christine's watch? Somebody told me it's Swiss, and it's got to be smashed!"

Buster Boots stared.

"Oh, so that's what's biting you!" he snapped. "Well, I've got Christine's watch, and I'm going to stick to it. I don't care if it's Swiss, or German, or Portuguese, or Dutch! It's a good watch, and it's not going to be busted by any madman who gets a sudden craze!"

"But it's Empire Day!" hooted Handforth.

"You—you raving lunatic!" said Christine fiercely. "I should have won that race if you hadn't put me off my stroke! I was worrying about that watch so much that I couldn't run properly."

"I believe it," said Boots, nodding. "Here, gather round, you chaps! Come on, the Fourth! There's somebody here who needs pulverising! Let's jump on the idiot and teach him a lesson. He's dangerous!"

But Edward Oswald Handforth had vanished, having scented an American-made camera in the hands of an enthusiastic Third-Former.



CHAPTER 12.

HONOURS FOR STUDY D.

TOMMY HOBBS was the enthusiastic Third-Former, and he was just explaining to Willy what a ripping snap he had secured of the expression on Clive Russell's face as he breasted the tape.

"It's a good dodge, you know, taking these snaps," said Hobbs. "When I show the prints to the various chaps, they'll pay an awful lot of money for the negatives—just to destroy 'em! You know how a fellow looks when he's breasting the tape."

"You young villain!" said Willy grimly.

"Oh, cheese it!" grinned Hobbs.

"Why, it's nothing short of blackmail!" snorted Handforth minor. "You can take as many snaps as you like, my son, and we'll have a lark later on. But no offering the negatives for sale! My hat! If you go on at this rate, you'll end up in Borstal."

Tommy Hobbs grinned even more widely.

"You chump, I'm only joking!" he said. "I wouldn't take any money for those negatives, even if they offered it. Forrest's the chap who's out for blackmail, if you want to know the truth. He and his pals are taking snaps of all the finishes. They're too lazy to compete in the races themselves. And they're boasting about the cash they'll make on the negatives. Nobody likes to see a picture of himself with a face like a dying codfish."

"Hold on!" interrupted Handforth major, striding up. "Let's have a look at that camera, young Hobbs."

"Scoot!" advised Willy briefly.

"What the dickens for?" asked Hobbs.

"Ted's going to bust up your camera?"

"Rats! It's English," said Hobbs calmly.

Handforth seemed quite disappointed when he found that this was an actual fact. In his present mood, he was relishing the destruction of foreign-made goods. And his unerring instinct wasn't so trustworthy, after all.

"It's a rummy thing," he growled. "Somebody told me there was a foreign camera at work here."

"Perhaps you mean Forrest's?" asked Tommy Hobbs. "It isn't foreign, either; it's American. We don't look upon America as a foreign country. Aren't they our cousins?"

Handforth sniffed.

"If that camera's American, it's going to be done in!" he retorted. "It's not English, or it's not British—and that's enough! Where's Forrest?"

As a matter of fact, Bernard Forrest & Co., of Study A, were thoroughly enjoying themselves. Forrest's camera was a good one, and he was taking these snaps in a mean sort of spirit. So he was obviously enjoying himself. Mean things always delighted the cads of Study A.

"That was a beauty," Gulliver was saying, with a grin. "Tregellis-West was gorgeous as he crossed the line. His face was all twisted up and he looked like a cross-eyed monkey."

"And Tregellis-West is a chap who goes dotty on his appearance," said Forrest, nodding. "If we threaten to take a hundred prints from that negative and plaster them over St. Frank's on the first day of school, he'll give us a fiver for the negative."

Bell gloated.

"Why not threaten to distribute the prints among the girls?" he asked.

"That's a good idea," said Forrest, nodding. "Hallo, what the dickens do you want, Handforth? Here, confound you! What on earth— Give me that camera, you lunatic!"

Without warning, Edward Oswald Handforth had swept down upon the trio, and he had seized the camera before Bernard Forrest could grasp his intentions. Handforth gave a whoop of triumph.

"I knew it!" he roared. "Made in U.S.A.!"

"Hold him!" gasped Bell. "He'll smash it!"

Everybody knew about Handforth's "latest," and Forrest & Co. had roared with glee as they had witnessed the destruction of one or two articles. But they didn't roar with glee now.

"If you harm that camera, I'll make you pay—" began Forrest hotly.

Crash!

"Has that harmed it?" asked Handforth, with perfect coolness.

The camera certainly appeared to be in no way improved. For Edward Oswald had flung it to the ground with all his force. It was a box camera, leather covered, and the sides were now gaping open, and the film forlornly escaping. In order to make assurance doubly sure, Handforth brought both feet down upon the wreckage, and converted it to matchwood and debris.

"And that's that!" he said, striding off.

Forrest & Co. came to life—Forrest himself simply burning with hot fury. He rushed after Handforth, and grabbed him by the arm.

"You infernal cad!" he shouted. "You destructive hound! That camera cost five guineas, and you've got to pay up! Hold him, you fellows!"

But as Gulliver and Bell attempted to hold him, Handforth lashed out, and Forrest's chums crashed over. The spectators in the immediate vicinity gave a cheer of enthusiasm. This was something that was not included on the programme.

"Where's Mr. Stokes?" snarled Forrest.

"I'll soon show you—"

"Just a minute!" interrupted Dick Hamilton, hurrying up with a number of other Remove fellows. "Stop this brawling, you idiots! The Two Twenty Yards race is just starting!"

"I don't care what's starting!" roared Forrest. "He's smashed my camera!"

"A good thing, too!" snapped Dick. "We've heard about your mean game, Forrest. I was thinking about smashing that camera myself. The best thing you can do is to clear off the ground!"

"Hear, hear!"

The chums of Study A were startled, for the attitude of the group was so threatening that they would obviously receive no sympathy. In any case, Handforth was hurrying off, a startled expression in his eyes.

"The Two Twenty Yards!" he ejaculated.

"Great Scott! Church is in that race, and I haven't got him ready. Where's Church? Who's seen Church? What's the idea of hiding the clap up somewhere?"

"Don't be an ass," said Church, who was only a couple of yards away. "I'm here, Handy, and I don't need any help, either. I shall do my best to win, but some of those Fourth Form chaps are as hot as mustard. Christine means to win this race—to make up for his failure in the last."

"We can't help Christine's worries," said Handforth firmly. "You'll either win the Two Twenty, my lad, or answer to me! Feeling fit?"

"Rather!"

"Everything trim?" went on Handforth, inspecting his chum. "You'd better pull that belt a bit tighter; it helps to brace you up. Sprinting is pretty strenuous—Why, what the—My goodness!" he gasped. "You— you traitor!"

Church jumped.

"What's wrong?" he asked blankly.

With one fearful jerk, Handforth tore the unfortunate Church's belt from him. While tightening it, he had chanced to see a tiny label, with the maker's trade mark upon it, and the words "Marque Deposte" beneath it.

"Italian!" said Handforth accusingly.

"You ass, it's French!"

"Well, you're not going to wear a foreign belt!" snorted Handforth. "It's likely I'm going to let you run in a race—"

"Hi, Church, waiting for you!" sang out one of the seniors. "Everybody's lined up—hurry along!"

Church looked round helplessly. Grasping his slackened shorts, his plight was perilous. Under no circumstances could he indulge in a sprint without even a belt. He gazed at Handforth with bitter hatred.

"You—you maniac!" he panted. "I can't enter this race now; I'm left at the giddy post! You and your crazes! It's a pity somebody doesn't come along with a strait-jacket, and cart you off to the place that's waiting for you!"

"But this belt's French!"

"What do I care?" hooted Church. "It's a good belt, the best I ever had! Are you trying to make out that the French people can't manufacture things?"

"Here you are—wear this one!" exclaimed McClure, removing his own hurriedly.

"I've got a piece of string in my pocket—I'll make that do until the race is over, and then I'll dodge into one of the dressing-rooms and borrow another belt for you. My hat! You can't drop out of the race!"

Church was greatly relieved, and fortunately Handforth forgot to examine McClure's belt—which, in fact, was American. There was no time for any such examination, for the race was already overdue.

Church took up his place, and crouched ready for the flying start—knuckles on the starting line, knees bent, and quivering with eagerness. The other competitors were equally tense.

Bang!

"They're off!" yelled Handforth. "Go it, Study D!"

Bob Christine had thoroughly made up his mind to make amends for his failure in the last race, and he was off like a streak. But it so happened that all the others resembled streaks, too. Church had forgotten all about his belt, and his whole energy was centred upon the race.

Until almost the last second it seemed that Christine was the winner—but by a tremendous effort Church succeeded in breasting the tape a mere inch in advance of the others.

"Hurrah!" roared Handforth. "Good old Church! Good man!"

"Christine second!" growled Boots. "Dallas third. Well, anyhow, we've got two Fourth Formers among the first three! That's something!"

"But the Remove's got the honours!" said Handforth briskly. "Splendid, Church, old



Handforth was chained to the stake, and the Fourth Formers tell away, leaving him exposed to the public gaze. Handforth glared around him, and everywhere he saw laughing faces—even the girls from Moor View School were laughing at him!

man," he added, grabbing his chum's fist. "I knew you'd win!"

"It was a jolly close thing," said Church, gasping.

"That belt, of course," nodded Handforth. "Being British, it gave you heaps of confidence. You'd never have won in that French thing. How the dickens can you expect to win a race with a foreign belt round you?"

McClure grinned.

"The idea!" he scoffed. "Buzz indoors, Churchy, and hide that belt away somewhere—before Handy can get it. It's American!"

Edward Oswald started back.

"American!" he repeated dazedly. "Why, you—you—"

But his further remarks were drowned in the roar of laughter which went up from everybody in the near vicinity.

was a severe test—for a race of this kind requires both pace and stamina. An ordinary sprinter is almost useless, for four hundred and forty yards is about the limit to which any sprinter can run—and many fellows with a rare burst of speed for fifteen or twenty seconds find it impossible to carry on for the longer distance. The half-mile, of course, is a different proposition altogether—a steady, even run until within measurable distance of the winning post.

The quarter-mile must be raced at top speed almost from the first second until the last. It was won, amid much enthusiasm from the West House juniors, by Reggie Pitt—although there was a little argument as to whether Vandyke, the South African junior, didn't tie with him. Duncan, of New Zealand, was third. Another good showing for the Empire competitors.

"We're getting down to the real business now," said Dick Hamilton, as active preparations were made for the half-mile. "Let me see, this is Glenthorne's race, isn't it? I hear that Archie's been training especially for the half-mile."

"Poor old Archie!" chuckled Tommy Watson.

"Don't be so sure, dear old boy," put in Sir Montie Tragellis-West. "Archie is a frightfully dark horse, if you ask me."

"Rats!" grinned Watson. "He doesn't stand an earthly."

Alf Brent, however, was of an entirely different opinion. He was giving Archie a final rub down, and delivering words of wisdom.

"Don't overdo it at the start, old man," he was saying. "Your strong point is stamina. You can afford to take it easy for



CHAPTER 13.

ARCHIE SPRINGS A SURPRISE.

THE spectators were not allowed to become bored. Something was going on all the time, for immediately one of the Fourth-and-Remove races finished, a Third Form event commenced. Willy and his stalwarts were not eligible for the other races, as they came within the "under fourteen" class. But they provided the spectators with plenty of good sport.

There were no eventualities concerning the quarter-mile race, for Handforth, much to his disappointment, could detect nothing of foreign origin to confiscate. The quarter-mile

the first half, and then open the throttle for the finish."

"Absolutely," said Archie. "I mean to say, old lad, that's absolutely the precise idea. Phipps has told me all this."

"What you've got to do is to flash up during the last hundred yards, and leave the rest standing," said Brent, who shared a study with Archie at St. Frank's. "For goodness' sake don't let yourself go in the first two or three hundred yards. You'll kill everything if you do."

Not that Archie really needed this advice. Phipps, his valet, had been secretly training him—and Phipps was a bit of a genius in his own way. He did not appear now, as he was of a modest disposition, and preferred to remain in the background. In any case, his part of the work was completed.

"Good gad!" breathed Archie suddenly.

An alarmed expression came into his eyes, and he was staring glassily across the grass, as though he had just seen a ghost. Brent glanced round quickly, but he could see nothing very alarming—merely Handforth hurrying up.

"What's up, you ass?" he asked in surprise.

"Handy, old thing! I mean, the very approach of that clappie makes the old tissues wilt!" said Archie nervously. "The blighter is absolutely on the warpath to-day."

Archie Glenthorne was not the only fellow who felt this sensation at Handforth's approach. There was something so purposeful

in his attitude that it was impossible to be at ease. And Archie's fears were not unfounded.

Handforth came straight up, and tore Archie's blazer open. He plucked at the revealed singlet.

"Off with this!" he said curtly.

"Eh?" gasped Archie. "I mean, what?"

"You've got five minutes before the race starts," retorted Edward Oswald. "Buzz into the dressing-rooms, and take that thing off."

"But, my dear old fright, I mean, what?" stammered Archie. "Is the thing torn, or something? Odds horrors and disasters! Not dirty?" he added, aghast.

"It's Austrian," explained Handforth firmly.

"Austrian?"

"Yes."

"I mean, Austrian?" repeated Archie dazedly. "But—but it cost a frightful lot of money, old thing! It's absolutely the finest quality."

"I'm not questioning the quality," interrupted Handforth in a dictatorial tone. "It's Austrian—and you're not going to run in it! Go into the dressing-room and put an English one on."

"English?"

"Or Irish—or Scotch—or Canadian—anything as long as it's made in the Empire," said Handforth firmly. "And, look here," he added, "I'm willing to fight any fellow who disagrees with my view! With or without

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gloves—and on the spot! That's all I've got to say!"

Brent, although grinning, was exasperated. "Look here, Handy, cool down!" he advised. "Don't be such an extreme ass! There's nothing wrong with Archie's singlet, and you'll only put him off the race if you bother him. And how do you know it's Austrian, anyhow? Did YOU tell him, Archie?"

"Good gad, no!" said Archie. "I mean, I didn't know the bally thing WAS Austrian. Dash it, I don't believe it is! This is one of this priceless chump's jokes, dash it!"

"Phipps told me," said Handforth coolly. "And he ought to know."

"Absolutely," agreed Archie, with a sad shake of his head. "If Phipps told you, laddie, it's absolutely official—because Phipps buys the bally stuff. Austrian, what? Good gad! You're absolutely right, Handforth, old cheese! I shall tick Phipps off pretty severely for this."

He marched off to the dressing-rooms grimly, and Handforth shrugged his shoulders.

"There you are!" he said carelessly. "Thank goodness there's some patriotism left in some of the chaps!"

Brent snorted. "I'm hanged if you haven't infected Archie with your piffle now!" he grunted.

"Piffle!" roared Handforth. "Is that what you call patriotism?"

"Patriotism is a totally different thing—and if you question mine I'll biff you over!" roared Brent. "You can't frighten me with your giddy threats! There's a time and a place for everything—and even patriotism ought to be taken in moderation. It's a wonder you're not turned out of the grounds!"

"Well I'm jiggered!" said Handforth.

He walked off, rather astonished at Brent's outburst—but not in the least bit moderated. This was proved five minutes later, when he heard that Len Clapson, of the Modern House, was committing the atrocious offence of openly walking about with French brilliantine on his hair. For if this wasn't extreme, nothing on earth was!

"Where's Clapson?" demanded Handforth, marching through the groups of fellows with battle in his eyes. "Where is he, the traitor?"

"Rats! You can't touch Len!" said Buster Boots. "He's wearing nothing but British stuff—"

"He's got French brilliantine on his hair!" roared Handforth.

"What?" gurgled Boots, aghast.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Everybody who heard that remark fairly howled.

"Oh, Handy, you're getting worse and worse!" said Fullwood, with a chuckle. "You can't scalp a chap because he's using brilliantine—French, or any other kind. That's not an article! You can't destroy it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But I can make him go to the dressing-rooms and wash his head!" snorted Hand-

forth. "He ought to be ashamed to walk about with that French stuff—"

"Never mind it now," interrupted Dick Hamilton briskly. "Next race."

"By Jove, yes."

The half-mile was just about to start, and Handforth was forgotten. Clapson himself was one of the competitors in the half-mile, so he was safe for the moment. There were a great many contestants for this race, and the handicapping had been very cleverly engineered by Mr. Clifford, the sportsmaster—who knew the form of every boy almost by heart.

The signal went, and the runners were off. Within half a minute Clapson was leading, and it was noticed that Archie Glenhorne was almost at the rear, among the stragglers. Alf Brent was watching him anxiously—for he knew how keenly Archie had set his heart on winning this particular event.

Of course, it seemed ridiculous. Archie was obviously a hopeless outsider. How could the slacker of the Remove hope to win any event, except a sleeping contest? He was showing, even now, how foolish he had been in entering at all.

"Poor old Archie!" grinned Boots. "He's going off into one of his naps, by the look of it. Forty of the best and brightest!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The half-mile doesn't take more than two minutes, and it's nearly half over already," said Armstrong. "It seems to me that Clapson is the winner. Good old Fourth! More honours for us!"

"Hold on!" said Brent grimly. "Look at that, my lads! How about Archie now? Hurrah! Go it, Archie! By Jove, that's the way! Stick it, old man—show 'em what you can do!"

The onlookers were staring—hard. For Archie Glenhorne had apparently discovered an extraordinary store of speed. Two hundred yards from the tape, he fairly let himself go, and developed a sprint which surprised even Alf Brent. But Phipps, in the stand, watched with quiet composure.

"Great Scott! Archie's winning!" went up a roar.

And, astonishingly enough, the genial ass of the Remove breasted the tape a clear yard ahead of any other runner, and won the half-mile with comparative ease.



CHAPTER 14.

STILL AT IT.

LEN CLAPSON smiled ruefully.

"Well, I came in second, anyhow, Buster," he said.

"It only shows you, you know. I thought it was my race until Glenhorne came barging by! You could have knocked me over with a feather!"

"Archie's speed was pretty nearly a record during the last hundred yards," said Boots enthusiastically. "He may be a Remove

chap, but he's a wonder. There ought to be a law prohibiting these dark horses!"

"Oh, here he is!" said Handforth, arriving. "Just a word with you, Clapson."

Boots swung round.

"What, again?" he roared. "Look here, you drivelling idiot! Haven't you got any more sense than to worry the life out of everybody with this crankiness of yours? If you touch Clapson's head—"

"My head?" asked Clapson blankly.

"Yes," said Boots, with a sniff. "He's come here with a scalping-knife, or a razor, and he's going to carve all your hair off because you've got brilliantine on!"

"The chap's off his rocker!" gasped Clapson. "I've always thought he was a bit mad, but we ought to get some of these ambulance men to take him off to Colney Hatch! What's the matter with brilliantine?"

"That stuff you've got on your head is French!" said Handforth accusingly.

"Oh!"

"French!" repeated Handforth with indignation. "I'm going to forgive you for calling me mad—all pioneers have to suffer like that. The first inventor of the steam-engine was looked upon as a lunatic."

Len Clapson stroked his hair affectionately.

"That brilliantine is jolly good stuff—and it's the first time I knew it was French," he said. "I suppose you had a look at the bottle in one of the dressing-rooms? Like your nerve!"

"Well, you're coming with me," said Edward Oswald. "You've got to wash your hair, and—"

"Call the Fourth up!" interrupted Boots curtly. "Bring a big crowd here. There's nothing doing while those Third Formers are fooling about with their races. We've got to give this chump a lesson."

In about ten seconds a dozen Fourth Formers were on the spot, and Handforth was surrounded—much to the amusement of the spectators. Ordinarily, the Remove would have rallied round on the instant, and a general Form rag would have resulted. But it was felt that Edward Oswald Handforth had asked for this trouble, and he was calmly left to his fate. But he remained quite calm.

"Oh, so you're going to start some fooling, eh?" he asked grimly. "Well, it's not going to make any difference. I'll soon show you Fourth Formers a thing or two! Hi, Remove! Rescue!"

Several Removeites glanced round, and turned away.

"Hi!" roared Handforth.

This time they didn't even look at him, and the Fourth Formers grinned with appreciation. The only Remove fellows who seemed anxious to help were Church and McClure. They were hovering in the vicinity, but, somehow, they didn't like the look of that crowd.

"My only hat!" said Handforth in real alarm.

"Good!" chuckled Buster. "Now, Handy, look here. We're not particularly anxious to make an exhibition of you in public—don't

forget there are thousands of eyes upon us—so we're willing to give you a chance. There couldn't be anything fairer than that."

"It's jolly sporting!" said Bob Christine, nodding.

"Too sporting, if you ask me," nodded Billy Nation. "Handy's asked for it, and he ought to get it! What's the chance, anyhow?"

"What you've got to do, Handy, is to give us your promise that you'll chuck up this orgy of destruction and act like a sensible human being," said Boots grimly. "That's all. Give us your word that you'll look a foreign article in the face without flinching—without possessing a wild desire to annihilate it."

"You can go and eat coke!" said Handforth promptly.

"What?"

"If you expect me to ignore my principles, you'd better go on expecting!" declared Edward Oswald. "I've realised the need for a new mode of living. It's Empire Day, and I've made a resolution that from now onwards I'll buy nothing but British stuff, and stick to the old flag!"

"Good!" said Boots. "Splendid!"

"They're our sentiments, too," added Bob Christine, nodding. "But we don't go about like steam-rollers, interfering with everybody else's property, do we?"

"Nobody's going to grumble at you, Handy, for sticking to the Empire—but that's no reason to go dotty," said Boots. "So you'll either give us that promise, or take the consequences."

This was a perfectly sensible argument, and nine fellows out of ten would have accepted the inevitable. But Edward Oswald Handforth had never been known to give in. Even if the odds were a thousand to one he would still persist. He glared at the Fourth Formers and sniffed.

"You won't get any promise out of me," he said flatly.

"All right—then the slaughter must commence," said Boots regretfully. "We can't do anything too violent, because it'll affect his form. But what about roping up his hands behind him, and securing him to one of these stakes?"

The other Fourth Formers grinned joyously. "Marvellous!" said Bob Christine with delight.

"It won't harm him for racing, and we'll cut him free two minutes before the obstacle race—I think you've entered for that, Handy, haven't you?" said Boots. "But until then you'll be chained up. Out of harm's way, see? And in full sight of everybody—including the Moor View girls."

"Irene Manners!" grinned Yorke.

Handforth gave a violent start.

"You—you rotters!" he gasped. "Do you mean to say you're going to tie me to a stake in full view?"

"Exactly—out of harm's way," replied Buster Boots. "We'll be extra generous and give you that last chance again. Do you promise?"

"NO!" roared Handforth hotly.

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Without further ado, he was tipped over, with about eight Fourth Formers sprawling on him and holding him down. His wrists were forced behind him, and securely bound. There was a heavy wooden stake in the ground quite near by, and somebody found a real chain. Within two minutes Handforth was released, and the Fourth Formers fell away on all sides—leaving him there, fully exposed.

The public probably thought that this was some sort of game, and a roar of laughter went up. Handforth's face burned. There he was, in full view, chained to the stake like a bear at the Zoo! The chain was about ten feet long, so he had a fair radius for freedom. But it was quite impossible for him to get away.

"So they've chained him up at last?" chuckled Clive Russell, as he and several other Removites strolled round. "Well, I guess he asked for it."

"He's safe there, anyway," said Dick Hamilton, smiling.

"You—you blacklegs!" hissed Handforth fiercely. "Aren't you going to cut me free?"

"Too dangerous," said Dick. "You might run wild."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Safety first," said Fullwood. "I might as well tell you that I've got an American pencil in my pocket. Now that I know you're out of harm's way, I can safely confess."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And my plimsolls are American, too," said O'Grady, of the Fourth. "Faith, and it's uneasy I've been whenever Handforth came near."

Handforth could do nothing except glare. He moved up and down, and the chain clanked continuously. He knew that Irene was looking at him, too, and the thought maddened him. He looked round wildly for Church and McClure, but they, wise youths, were vastly interested in the Third Form events, and had sought the other end of the huge ground.

Handforth's last hope had gone, although it wasn't really a hope at all. For Buster Boots & Co. had already decided to keep a sharp eye on Church and McClure, and to hustle them away if they got too near.

And Handforth grew bitter.

"By George, I've read about martyrs!" he muttered, pacing up and down with the chain clinking behind him. "I've often wondered how they felt—and now I know! And it's a rummy thing that martyrs always suffer for doing something good! Just because I'm patriotic, I'm chained up!"



CHAPTER 15.

THE EMPIRE RELAY RACE.

THE Junior Athletic Sports continued with complete success.

Everything went a lot better now that Handforth was chained up, and lots of fellows had lost their anxious expressions. It was firmly resolved that Edward Oswald should only be released temporarily—to take part in such events as he had entered for. As soon as these were over, he would be chained up again.

Perhaps this imprisonment had something to do with his unbounded energy in the obstacle race. He wasn't released until the last moment, and his one desire was to smash everybody within reach. But this wasn't quite possible, for Mr. Stokes was on the scene.

So Handforth's bottled rage had to find another outlet. And his performance in the obstacle race was little short of startling. He took hurdles in his stride, he wormed his way through the most confusing traps, and finished up about a hundred yards ahead of anybody else. In fact, he did so amazingly well that the crowds cheered him to the echo.

But what was the use? He hadn't been free for more than three minutes after the end of the race before his Fourth-Form tormentors swept upon him, rushed him back to the stake, and chained him up again. And he was altogether too breathless to say a tenth of what he desired.

"It's all right, Handy—don't worry," said Boots kindly. "You've won the obstacle race with honour, and we're proud of you. But you're going to stay 'put' until you promise that you won't do any more destruction."

"You—you—"

"Yes, I know," agreed Boots sympathetically. "But that's obvious. Only one word, Handy, old man. It'll be easy to say."

Handforth thought rapidly for a moment. Why should he suffer this martyrdom? A gleam entered his eye. He was thinking of O'Grady's plimsolls, and O'Grady was actually preparing to enter for the high jump in those American shoes. And the high jump was the next event on the programme.

"All right, I promise!" he panted tensely.

Buster Boots nearly fainted.

"Water, somebody!" he breathed. "Get a piece of chalk and mark it up! For the first time on record, Handy's climbed down."

"I don't wonder at it," grinned Bob Christine. "He probably knows that Irene and the other girls have been watching him ever since he was chained up. It's rather a pity that we've got to cut him free, but a promise is a promise."

The chain was removed, and Handforth was set at liberty. He looked round anxiously and noted that most of the activity was now centring round the high jump.

"Where's that Irish ass, O'Grady?" demanded Handforth tensely.

"What about your promise, you idiot?" said Boots. "You distinctly said—"

"Oh, I'm not going to destroy his plimsolls," growled Handforth. "Can't you take my word, you rotter? But I'm blessed if I'm going to let him compete in American foot-gear! I'll lend him a pair of real English jumping shoes, and if he doesn't agree to burn those plimsolls, I'll punch his head."

Handforth was off before they could stop him.

"The cunning bounder!" said Christine. "He's dished us!"

"Well, hardly!" grinned Boots. "He's given us his word that he won't do any more destruction, so we've got him on a string."

"It was better to have him on a chain!" growled Yorke.

In the meantime, Handforth had rushed to the dressing-rooms, and had returned with the English jumping shoes, which he believed would fit O'Grady perfectly. The contest for the high jump was just about to begin.

"Good!" panted Handforth. "I'm in fine. Here, you Irish beggar, take off those rotten plimsolls!"

"Faith, he's free again!" said Terry O'Grady, staring.

"Clear off, Handforth! Don't be such a blithering ass!" said Stevens, of the Fifth. "I thought they'd got you chained up."

"Don't worry, I'm going to lend these shoes to O'Grady, and he can keep his rotten American things if he wants to," interrupted Handforth coldly. "Off with 'em, O'Grady! Try these!"

"Better humour him," muttered Stevens.

As it happened, the substitute shoes fitted O'Grady even better than the plimsolls, and after one or two leaps he made the startling discovery that they were infinitely superior to the plimsolls. He not only felt more springy, but they gave him confidence.

"Begorra!" he ejaculated, grasping Handforth's fist. "It's a good chap ye are entirely! Sure, you can take the plimsolls and burn them!"

"Good man!" said Handforth heartily. "You're going to win the high jump, O'Grady, take my word for it."

(Continued on page 40.)

THE CASE of the BLACK COBRA!

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CHAPTER I.

THE TRAIL OF THE SNAKE.

IT'S one of the most deadly reptiles in the world! A black cobra, Mr. Lee! Roaming about London—and I'm expecting every second to hear that some poor chap's been killed by it!"

"But I'm not a big-game hunter, Mr. Keen," Nelson Lee protested. "Your own keepers are surely the people to find your snake—not a private detective."

Nelson Lee was irritated, but Nipper felt inclined to grin. The idea of the detective being called down to the East India Dock to find an escaped snake seemed ripe and rich—to the youngster.

But King Keen, England's biggest importer of wild stock, was quite serious. For a moment he didn't seem to understand Nelson Lee's refusal to take up the case; then he suddenly laughed, and banged his fist on the table.

"Well, there, now! I've been so upset that I clean forgot to tell you the snake was stolen!" he said. "It isn't just a case of the thing escaping. It's been deliberately stolen, Mr. Lee! I want the snake back, of course, but I called you in to find the chap that's pinched it, and I want to know why anyone should pinch a reptile that most people would run a mile from!"

Nelson Lee's eyes narrowed, and Nipper began to think there might be something in the job, after all.

"The cobra's cage is smashed to bits," Mr. Keen continued. "Why anyone should risk snake-bite has me guessing—"

"But guessing won't bring your snake back," Nelson Lee said briskly. "We'd better step across to the menagerie and see just what your strange burglar has been doing."

The wild-beast importer nodded, and led the way to the long, low building where he housed

some of the finest specimens of savage creatures that ever came out of the East.

"Gosh, guy'nor," Nipper whispered, "we've hunted some queer beasts in our time, but a cobra's going to be a pretty tricky customer to handle."

Before Nelson Lee could reply, King Keen threw open the door, and Nipper almost forgot the object of their visit. Lions, tigers, wolves, and hyenas started a snuffling uproar, and glared in a way that made Nipper imagine what a nice dinner he'd make for one or two of them!

But Mr. Keen never even glanced at the restless beasts. He stepped quickly across to a corner, and pointed to a big box that was raised about four feet from the ground.

"That's the cobra's box," he said. "Nice bit o' firewood it'll make now."

The night visitor certainly hadn't tried to hide his handiwork. The box was still padlocked, but the front bars had been forcibly ripped out, and the glass screen was broken to fragments.

"These bits of straw lying about mean that the cobra's been repacked into a smaller box," Mr. Keen said. "You'll also notice that there's a broken window yonder, showing how the chap got into the place."

The fellow's trail was so plain, in fact, that both Nelson Lee and Nipper were content with a single glance. They were each busy in other directions, and Nipper was the first to speak.

"Guy'nor!" he suddenly yelled, poking his head into the box. "You can still sniff chloroform here! The beastly snake's been doped, and that explains the chap's pluck in handling it!"

"Of course, it's the only way he could handle it," Nelson Lee said absently. "I smelt chloroform as soon as we came near the box, but this is much more interesting."

He had dropped on his knees beside the

litter of broken glass, and was carefully examining it, piece by piece. He now lifted up one section by its jagged edges, popped it against the box, and pointed to a mark on its polished surface.

"Your thief has left as plain a thumb-print as I've ever seen," he said quietly. He turned from the glass and stared at Mr. Keen. "The fellow who stole this snake must be very well used to handling such dangerous reptiles. Are you satisfied your own men know nothing of the affair?"

King Keen shook his head.

"I've only two men who ever touch the snakes, and they've been with me for years," he said. "The other fellows'd run a mile from 'em."

"Well, have you dismissed one lately?" Nelson Lee persisted.

Mr. Keen again started to shake his head, then suddenly stopped.

"By thunder!" he exclaimed. "There was one fellow that left me. I didn't sack him. He went to prison for some affair he got mixed up in."

"How long is it since this chap left you?" Nelson Lee demanded. "D'you think he'd know you had a black cobra in stock?"

"He'd know that, for I've always one or two ready for buyers," Keen answered. "Lemme see! It'll be about two years since Joe Peddar got into trouble."

"And his address—d'you remember that?" Nelson Lee asked quickly.

"He lodged at some place in Braxted Street, but I doubt if you'll find him there now," Mr. Keen answered.

"No, but I'll probably find someone who'll give me news of him," Nelson Lee smiled. He turned to Nipper. "Young 'un, while I'm hunting friend Peddar, I want you to take this scrap of glass to the record office at Scotland Yard. You know Ralston—ask him if this thumb-print belongs to the Joe Peddar who served a sentence two years ago."

"Right-ho, guv'nor," Nipper answered, as he placed a second strip of glass over the marked one, and carefully wrapped them in a handkerchief. "And where do I report? Here?"

"Yes. I'll 'phone Mr. Keen in an hour, if I haven't traced Peddar by then," Nelson Lee replied. "Now, off with you, young 'un—and handle the glass carefully."

Nipper was known and liked by most of the Yard officials, and Ralston never hesitated to do him any little favour of this sort. It took about fifteen minutes to dust, photograph, and print off a copy of the thumb-mark, and when this was placed beside the prison print of Peddar's fingers they proved to be identical.

That was mere office work. The interesting part came when Nipper was being shown a photo of Peddar, and Inspector Redmayne walked into the room.

"Hallo, youngster!" he said. "Finding us more work to do, eh?"

"Saying you work you mean," Nipper grinned. "Fact is, sir, if it wasn't for me

and the guv'nor you'd have to put in lots more overtime than you do."

Redmayne chuckled, and was about to "rag" Nipper in return, when he caught sight of Peddar's photograph.

"Oh, is Joe Peddar in trouble again?" he asked.

"Old friend of yours, isn't he, Redmayne?" Ralston smiled.

Redmayne nodded.

"Yes, and early this morning I dropped on him again, outside Victoria Station," he said. "He was carrying a strapped box so carefully that I asked him if he was now making a living in the egg trade." The smile left his face, and he whipped round on Nipper. "But why have you nosed his prints out, youngster? What game has he been up to now?"

But Nipper wasn't giving the guv'nor's business away.

"Hush!" he whispered, a finger on his lips. "Don't tell anybody yet, but Peddar's just lifted the Crown jewels!"

Then he bolted for the door, before the inspector could ask any more awkward questions.

He made for Victoria Station as fast as a taxi could take him, and inquiries at the booking offices brought him luck. A wide-awake clerk remembered the chap with the big wooden box. He'd bought tickets for himself and his luggage to Three Bridges, about four hours since!

The next train was due out in exactly four minutes, and Nipper had just time to 'phone his news to Mr. Keen before starting off on one of the queerest adventures that ever came his way.

CHAPTER II.

THE SNAKE STRIKES!

THE big box that Peddar carried was as valuable to Nipper as if the chap had left his visiting-cards lying about.

From Three Bridges the trail led to the little village of Oxted; and here a porter told Nipper that the man with the box had gone away in Mr. Harman Dowell's car.

"And who is Mr. Harman Dowell?" Nipper asked.

"The millionaire chap as owns Dane Court—up past Royle's farm," the porter explained. "Made a pot o' money, Dowell did, trading diamonds in Hatton Garden. He's too mean to spend it, though—keeps two servants to do the work of twenty."

Nipper left the porter, and the more he thought over the puzzle of the stolen snake the more bewildered he grew. The thing had plainly been brought to this quiet spot for some very sinister purpose, though Nipper couldn't think of any special use for a poisonous snake.

"But Dowell must have a use for it, or he wouldn't have had his car waiting for Peddar," Nipper mused. "Come to think of



Nipper almost feared to breathe as he watched the long, sinuous neck of the black cobra emerge and wave to and fro. He pressed back against the locked door behind him—escape was impossible!

it, Peddar's queer company for a millionaire, anyway. I might do worse than have a squint at old Harman Dowell."

Ten minutes' walk brought him to the iron gates of Dana Court. They were bolted and barred and a ten-foot wall surrounded the place. Through the gates, the youngster could see a long, straight drive leading to the grey stone mansion—but there was not a sign of anybody about, and he decided to get a closer view of the place.

A handy tree helped him over the wall, and he found plenty of cover until he came to a grass plot in front of the house. He dared not try to cross this, for a dozen windows looked out on the place, and he was beginning to edge round the clearing when the house door suddenly banged open.

A white-faced old man jumped out and made a weak attempt to run down the drive. Before he had taken six paces, two heavy brutes dashed out and grabbed him, and Nipper instantly recognised one as Joe Peddar, whose photograph he had inspected less than four hours since.

The old fellow hadn't a chance against the two beefy toughs who held him, of course. He screamed, struggled furiously for a moment, then Peddar hit him a cruel buffet with his open hand, and he was hustled back into the house.

"Gosh, I can't stand that!" Nipper whispered. "They've forgotten to close the door—I wonder if I can slip inside and get a chance to help the old 'un?"

The thought no sooner came than Nipper acted on it. Dashing round the clearing, he crept along the house wall and slipped into the open doorway. He stepped straight into a big stone hall, and was just in time to see the old man being marched along an overhead landing.

He ran lightly to the foot of the stairs, and was beginning to climb them when another door in the hall opened, and a grey-bearded fellow stepped into view. Nipper ducked behind a big palm-tub that stood at the foot of the stairs, wondering if he could possibly escape being seen.

"Joe—where are you, Joe?" the newcomer yelled. He strode to the stairs and stood almost on top of Nipper. "Where the deuce has the fellow got to? Jo-o-e!"

"I'm here, boss!" Joe called, from the landing. "Yer makin' enough row—what's the matter?"

"Joe, I've just been through to the Ritz, and the Maharajah of Bwalia tells me he'll be here not later than nine o'clock," the other said, as Peddar clumped down the stairs. "I want you two fellows to get into your footmen's uniforms, and if you'll only remember that I'm Harman Dowell, and act up to it, we'll be fifty thousand pounds richer to-night."

"You trust us, boss!" Peddar grinned. "By the time Mr. Bwalia finds out what's happened we'll be well away."

"And he can come back and argue the matter out with—Harman Dowell, eh?"

Nipper didn't quite see the joke, though it seemed to tickle the other two immensely. Before anything more could be said, they began to move away from the stairs—and Nipper suddenly heard a sharp little gasp.

"Look behind the tub!" Dowell yelled. "You've let somebody into the house, you fool!"

Nipper was on his feet in a second, and was making a bee-line for the door. But Dowell, with amazing speed, was there before him—a gun in his hand, and his eyes as hard as flints.

Nipper hadn't the slightest doubt that he meant to use it. Swerving aside, the lad sprang for a window—but Peddar was now on him and landed a swinging blow that made Nipper's head sing.

"Copped a spy, have we?" he yelled hoarsely. "No, you don't—come back here!" He bore down on the youngster, his arms driving like pile-hammers. Nipper hadn't much time to think, but he defended himself as well as he could and tried to edge towards the stairs.

He got in one straight drive that landed on Peddar's jaw and stopped the fellow's on-rush. He turned swiftly to the door again—then tripped over a loose rug and went down with the two fellows on top of him!

He was roughly jolted to his feet, and, whilst Peddar held him with his arms twisted behind his back, Dowell glared into his eyes with malignant fury.

"What d'you want in here?" Dowell snarled. "Who sent you spying?"

"Nobody sent me, you brute!" Nipper panted.

"Um—I don't know what you've seen or heard, my lad, but you're going to get no chance to use it," Dowell said. "You're trespassing on private property—very private!—and you'll go free when we choose to let you."

"I'll shove 'im upstairs, boss?" Peddar growled. "'E can't do no harm there—an' to-morrow it won't matter who finds 'im."

"No—we must keep him away from—," Dowell began, then stopped abruptly, as if fearing to say too much. "We'll put him in the store-room—he'll be safe there, and he'll have company."

He spoke the last words with a little laugh that brought a hoarse chuckle from Peddar's throat. Then they dragged him from the hall, down a short passage, and into a gloomy room that was littered with sacks and cases.

"Now, my lad, this is your home till morning," Dowell said briskly. "You'll notice the window is barred, and the door's an inch thick. You can amuse yourself any way you like, but if you make too much row I'll send Peddar to visit you—with a dog-whip."

"You do, boss, an' I'll lash the hide off 'im," Peddar grinned.

"I suppose that's the sort of work you would do really well," Nipper answered coolly.

He kept up a cheerful air until the scoundrels had closed and locked the door, then

stared gloomily round the prison into which he had been damped. A close inspection of the place quickly showed the impossibility of escape, and he grinned wryly at the pickle into which he had landed himself.

"Curiosity killed other things besides cats," he muttered. "If you'd been content to 'phone the 'guv'nor, instead of blunderin' in like a bear, you might have done some good. As it is, you're a back number, me lad, and these chaps are going to work some nice little swindle right under your nose."

The thought was maddening, and Nipper started to roam restlessly about the place. The growing darkness in the little room warned him that night could not be far away, and he began hurriedly poking amongst the sacks and cases in the hope of finding something that might be of use in wrenching out the window-bars. The sacks he pitched aside as useless, and the first three boxes he glanced into held only tinned meats.

Then, in a dark corner, he came on four boxes piled on top of each other. Not being particular how much row he made, he edged the highest one off its fellows, and brought it crashing to the ground.

By ill-chance it fell edgewise on the tiled floor, burst open—and was instantly followed by a loud, angry hiss!

"Gosh!" Nipper whispered, jumping back in alarm. "They've had the rotten cobra packed away here—and I've let it loose!"

In the deepening gloom he could just make out its wicked little head poking out of the broken lid. He jumped right back to the locked door—he almost feared to breathe as he watched the long, sinuous neck emerge and begin waving to and fro like a living pendulum.

Nipper's rough treatment had undoubtedly put the reptile in a real rage, and its bright beady eyes were darting lightning glances about the room, as if looking for something on which to vent its spleen. With the last of the light Nipper saw it emerge to its full length, flop to the cold tiles, and he heard it hiss more angrily than ever as the chill struck its warmth-loving body.

After that, he was forced to depend on hearing, for it was now too dark to follow the snake's movements. There came the scrape of its tough skin on the floor—then another angry hiss or two—and silence!

For a few moments Nipper wondered if the thing had spotted him and was preparing to strike. He was no coward—no one had ever called him that—but the pluckiest chap in the world might have been forgiven for feeling fear in such a terrible situation. Then reason came to his aid—he remembered flinging a pile of empty sacks into the middle of the floor, and he began to hope that the reptile had snuggled there for warmth.

Even then the situation was bad enough. If he yelled for help, it was any odds the brutes outside would ignore his calls—for they would never dream of the remarkable mishap that had given the snake its freedom.

Against that, his calls most certainly would rouse the thing to senseless rage again—and then his end would be sure and swift!

How long he endured the torture of standing absolutely still, he never knew. It seemed an age, and as time went on his mind grew numb, though every nerve in his body began to twitch and every bone to ache.

Then, without a sound to prepare him, the thin beam of an electric torch flashed into the room and focussed full on his face!

He had no idea whether friend or enemy was staring in on him, but he put a finger to his lips and pointed to the floor. As if in understanding, the beam dropped to the pile of sacking, lit up the glistening, greeny-gold coils for an instant—then the room was again plunged in darkness.

Two sounds came to Nipper's strained hearing—the hiss of the newly-roused cobra, and the crack of breaking glass.

"There's a sack by your foot, young 'un," came in Nelson Lee's voice. "When I shine the torch again, throw the sack over to me."

Bending cautiously down, Nipper lifted the sack and rolled it into a ball, stifling his surprise at the unexpected presence of Nelson Lee. The moment the beam again lit up the snake, the detective poked his hand through the smashed pane and caught hold of the bag that Nipper flung accurately across the room.

"Now, don't move an inch, young 'un," Nelson Lee ordered in a whisper. "Keep quiet, and I'll try to show you how they deal with cobras in India."

He held the beam steadily on the reptile, and, as its head began to lift and arch, he started to make little sucking sounds with his lips. That noise angers a snake as nothing else will do, and Nipper saw the cobra's neck swell and puff, and the skin work up into the hood which is peculiar to this kind of snake when roused. Its hisses grew louder and more frequent; it began to cross the floor with undulating movements—and, all at once, it lifted and struck at Nelson Lee's face!

But if the cobra was quick, the great detectives' reply was lightning-like. His face vanished, and the taut sack was in its place at one and the same instant. He was holding the torch between his teeth, and that allowed Nipper to see the cobra plunge its head like a living fury at the sack, and to see the sack pulled upwards and backwards with all the strength of the guv'nor's arms.

The reptile was hissing like a leaky steam-valve, but Nelson Lee now calmly put his hand through the pane and dropped the sack accurately over the sinister little head.

"Keep your hand away, guv'nor!" Nipper cried in alarm. "The thing's only got to get in one bite—"

"But he's lost his power to do harm!" Nelson Lee interrupted. "You've just seen me tear his sting out by the roots, my lad—though it's a job I don't want to do often." He examined the bars, but quickly saw that

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they were immovable. "Keep quiet a bit longer, young 'un," he said. "Never mind the snake—I'm going to find a way into the house, and I'll have you free in a few minutes."

CHAPTER III.

NIPPER SPOILS THE GAME.

ANOTHER half-hour passed before Nipper heard the click of a turned key and the squeak of the opening door.

"I'd almost given you up, guv'nor," he whispered. "I was beginning to think you'd fallen into Dowell's hands!"

"I've been kept waiting by some fellows who've called on Dowell," Nelson Lee explained. "I got into the house easily enough, found Dowell chatting to a couple of Indian nabobs in the hall, and had to lie low until they'd cleared. Now, Nipper, I've no idea what's happening in this house, so tell me quickly!"

"I haven't much idea myself, except that the Indian chaps are going to be fleeced in some way," Nipper answered.

In a few words, he told of Peddar's brutality to the old man and of the sinister hints that passed between Dowell and Peddar at the foot of the stairs.

"One of the dusky nibs you spoke of must be the Maharajah of Bwalia, guv'nor," Nipper said, in conclusion, "and that'll be the fellow Dowell hopes to cheat of fifty thousand pounds."

But Nelson Lee seemed far more interested in the old fellow who had tried to escape from the house. Nipper told all he knew, but

that didn't amount to much, and Nelson Lee decided they had better find this prisoner before dealing with Dowell.

"I've an idea the cobra was intended to frighten the old chap in some way," he said. "Anyway, if we hear why he's detained in this place, we'll understand Dowell's game better."

Creeping along the passage, they found the hall occupied by Peddar—now in footman's uniform and lounging about as if he owned the place.

"Nothing doing until he moves, guv'nor," Nipper whispered.

"When he does, we'll make a bolt for the stairs," Nelson Lee answered softly. "Dowell's third crook must be upstairs, young'un; and, as I'm armed, I'll go first."

The chance came a minute later—when a bell buzzed above Peddar's head, and he stepped briskly over to a closed door. He knocked, then entered the room—and Nelson Lee streaked across the hall like a moving shadow.

Nipper gave him ten yards start, then he also began to cross the danger-point. He had almost reached the foot of the stairs when Peddar suddenly reappeared, and Nipper jumped into a dark doorway just as the footman started to cross the hall.

Groping about in the darkness, the youngster bumped against a leather-covered armchair and guessed that he was in the library. He heard Peddar's steps drawing near, then the fellow entered the room, and Nipper dropped behind the heavy padded chair.

Peeping from his hiding-place, he saw Peddar light a big reading-lamp and arrange several chairs round the table; then, just as Nipper began to think the chap was about to clear off, there came a burst of laughter from the hall, and three other fellows crowded into the room.

"Now, your Highness, if you'll be seated, we can get to business right away," Dowell said smoothly. "If your man will open that case, I'll make a list of the jewels you intend to leave as security for the loan I am making you."

"Certainly, Mr. Dowell," the maharajah answered. "And perhaps you will, pardon me—table your money?"

"Why, of course, I will!" Dowell laughed. "I've the exact sum you asked for, in good Bank of England notes, waiting here in my safe."

Peering round the corner of his chair, Nipper watched Dowell open his safe and return to the table with a plump roll of bank-notes in his hand.

"There, your Highness," Dowell said, passing the notes on the table. "I've thirty thousand pounds there, but before the money passes into your pocket, you must satisfy me that your jewels are worth that amount."

"They are worth twice the sum you name," the maharajah said. "Sardee, open the case

for the hon'ble Dowell and let him feast his eyes on our treasures."

Dowell leaned forward with glistening eyes as the secretary tumbled out the contents of his case. It was like pouring a cascade of living fire on to the table—a heaped-up pile of stones that flashed white, green and red, and stood for a fortune.

Another moment, and they would have passed to Dowell's hands, but Nipper, now partly guessing the swindle, jumped from his hiding-place, dodged Peddar, and knocked Dowell's paw away!

"He's fooling you!" he yelled. "The notes are duds—they'll never give you sixpence at the bank—"

Then Peddar's hand closed over Nipper's mouth, and Dowell tried to carry the matter off with a laugh.

"Peddar, you ought to look after that poor lad of mine better," he said smoothly. He glanced at the Indians, tapped his forehead, and sighed. "His head's very weak—full of foolish fancies—"

But the Indians had taken fright, and Sardee was scooping the jewels back into his case. Then Dowell, seeing a fortune melting before his eyes, pulled a gun from his pocket and levelled it at the pair.

"Take your hands away!" he hissed. "Step back to the wall—lively, or I shoot!" He snarled an order over his shoulder: "Knock that pup on the head, Peddar, if he won't keep quiet!"

But before Peddar could obey, the door was flung violently open, and Nelson Lee appeared, with the white-faced prisoner on his arm.

"Leave the lad alone, Peddar—the game's up, my man!" he snapped—then turned to the bewildered Indians. "Gentlemen, allow me to present—the real Mr. Harman Dowell!"

For one tense second complete silence followed his dramatic words. Then the false Dowell sprang to his feet, and levelled his gun straight at Nelson Lee's head!

"You got me once, Lee, now I'll pay my debts!" he yelled—and fired!

A stab of flame shot from Nelson Lee's pocket—he was a split second quicker than the crook! The fellow screamed, dropped his gun as if it had bitten him, and began to nurse a shattered wrist.

"Nipper, pick up that gun and keep Peddar in order," Nelson Lee said quietly. "Now, Mr. Dowell, perhaps you'll explain to the maharajah how nearly he came to losing his jewels."

Dowell nodded and sank weakly into a chair.

"You wrote to me a week ago, Highness, asking me to advance you a temporary loan on some precious stones," he began. "I agreed, and arranged that you should bring them to me, here." He glanced at the groaning fellow who was nursing his wrist. "This man, Gregory Dexter, was once my secretary, and our letters, passing through his hands,

(Continued on next page.)

YOUR EDITOR'S CORNER.

REPLIES.

P. R. (Rugby) wants to know which continent has the largest population. Asia is the answer to that query; it has a population of 850,000,000. The population may have increased by two or three people by the time this meets P. R.'s eye; but I think the figure given will be near enough for his purpose. I might add, in case he wants to know it, that there are 300,000 people living in the Polar regions.

"Are the Pyramids of Egypt one of the seven wonders of the world?" inquires J. K. (Leeds). They are—and Edward Oswald Handforth is the eight wonder!

"Why are Cockneys called Cockneys?" Len H., of Stratford, London, E., makes that query. Well, a Cockney is a person born within the sound of Bow Bells.

But in the old days, town-dwellers were regarded with some contempt by people living in the country; they thought that townspeople were pampered and lived in luxury. At that time "Cockney" meant one who is petted and who loves comfort. So the folk living around London called all Londoners Cockneys.

MAD!

And now a few words about next Wednesday's big story—"ST. FRANK'S GOES MAD!"

If you can picture Handforth with straws in his hair—and the reproduction of next week's cover, on page 31, should help you to do it!—you can guess that you are in for something good when the Old Paper appears next Wednesday.

Everybody in St. Frank's goes crazy! Those fellows who aren't really a "screw loose" think that they are—or, rather, many of them do, while the rest are indulging in the biggest rag that the school has ever seen! Fun runs fast and furious in this rollicking story; it is one long laugh from beginning to end.

Mr. Brooks has thoroughly excelled himself, and I know that I shall get shoals of letters from you fellows telling me that you think it is about the best he has done. Letters always come piling into the office here when the Old Paper has produced something at all out of the way—and "St. Frank's Goes Mad!" is certainly a most unusual yarn.

THE CASE OF THE BLACK COBRA!

(Continued from previous page.)

tempted him to the amazing fraud that Mr. Nelson Lee and his assistant have just unmasked."

"But I don't understand—" the maharajah began.

"Two days ago, Dexter locked me in a room upstairs, and these other fellows he'd smuggled into the house dealt with my two servants in the same way," Dowell continued. "The rest was simple—you had never seen me, and once the jewels were in Dexter's hands you would never have seen him again." He turned to Nelson Lee. "I don't yet understand how you came into the affair, Mr. Lee."

"You'd better ask this bright youngster of mine," Nelson Lee smiled. "A black cobra was stolen in London last night, and I think he—found it!"

"And jolly well wished I hadn't!" Nipper shuddered. "But I am still wondering what it was stolen for."

"The maharajah knew my signature, and they had to have it on this document," Mr. Dowell explained. "When all other means

failed, Peddar suggested the cobra—and one hour of its fangs near my face forced me to surrender. He knew that I had a very real dread of snakes—and he traded on it!" Mr. Dowell shuddered a little at the memory of what he had been through.

"And the fraud nearly succeeded," the maharajah said. "Mr. Dowell, I think we owe Mr. Lee and his young assistant a very generous reward."

He began to finger the jewels still lying on the table, but Nelson Lee shook his head most emphatically.

"The owner of the cobra will attend to that, Highness," he smiled.

"If he doesn't sue you for damaging his goods," Nipper grinned. "I don't know what a snake's fangs are worth, guv'nor, but—"

But the guv'nor took him by an ear, and turned his face to the door.

"You'll find a telephone in the hall, young man," he said meaningly.

"Right-ho, guv'nor!" Nipper answered cheerfully. "I'll ring up the village bobby and tell him we've three nice parcels o' innocence waiting for collection!"

THE END.

("SLASHER'S DERBY!" is the title of next week's stirring detective yarn. Don't miss it!)

HANDFORTH THE MARTYR!

(Continued from page 32.)

And, as a matter of fact, Terry O'Grady did. But he afterwards confessed that Handforth was responsible in two ways—firstly, for lending him the shoes; and, secondly, by standing near and cheering him over the bar. When Handforth was enthusiastic, he went the whole hog, and O'Grady's decision to burn the plimsolls had pleased Edward Oswald enormously. His encouragement worked wonders at the crucial moment.

And after this came one of the most interesting events of the day—a novelty relay race, in which every part of the British Empire was represented. It was a concoction of all sorts of tricks and stunts, and was particularly interesting from the spectators' point of view.

It was quite a big event, too—lasting nearly half an hour. It was open to juniors of all ages, and the Third was well represented, Willy Handforth being the most prominent of the fags.

All manner of amusing devices were included. It was a mixture of several other races, and even included a run where the competitors had to discard egg and spoon, struggle into sacks, and then attire themselves in grotesque costume. One of the relays occurred when the costume was discarded, the new runner donning the clothes as they were thrown off.

Handforth entered for this race, but he was disqualified almost at the start, owing to the fact that he threw away his spoon in the egg and spoon section. By mere chance he had discovered that the spoon was German, being naturally a cheap, common article for such a purpose as this.

But Willy was much more successful. In fact, he proved to be the winner, and owed his success to the fact that he was about the most nimble junior of St. Frank's. His performance had been an amazing series of lightning movements, and he well deserved his success. He and his particular team had done far better than the other teams.

Church and McClure were thoroughly disgusted.

"A fat lot of chance we had!" snorted Church, after the race. "Handy goes and disqualifies us by throwing his spoon away! What was the good of us going all out in the race if one of our team plays the fool?"

"That spoon was German!" glared Handforth.

"What's that got to do with it?" hooted Church. "Couldn't you have waited till the race was over before—"

"German!" repeated Handforth. "It wouldn't have been half so bad if it had been French or American. I might have

stood them. But German, you know! It had got it on the back, as bold as anything—'Made in Vienna.'"

"Vienna's in Austria, you clump!" snorted McClure.

"Well, the Austrians speak German, don't they?"

"I suppose so—"

"Then don't quibble!" said Handforth severely. "My principles wouldn't allow me to race with that spoon in my hand."

Church was thoroughly cross.

"What about that wireless set of yours at St. Frank's?" he asked. "As soon as we get back to school I suppose you'll chop it up with a hatchet!"

"Why the dickens should I?"

"Because most of it is French," replied Church tartly. "Nearly all the components were made in France—"

"My only hat!" interrupted Handforth.

"That wireless set is going to be destroyed! At least, we'll get rid of it somehow!" he added.

"You've let yourself in for a pile of trouble," said McClure drily. "Half the things you buy are foreign—only you don't know it. I suppose you'll refuse to buy a newspaper or a magazine in future?"

"Aren't they British?" asked Handforth.

"The papers may be, but what about the wood pulp they're made from?" asked McClure, in triumph. "It nearly all comes from America or Norway or Sweden."

Handforth snorted and turned away, rather struck by the thought that there were indeed some things which he couldn't possibly control.



CHAPTER 16.

THE CLIMAX.

HERE was a half-hour's interval for tea—at least, so far as the Remove and Fourth were concerned.

The spectators were not obliged to remain unamused, however, for the Third-Formers were engaged in a comic cricket match—a most amusing event which was included in the programme.

Naturally a good many of the spectators had left by this time, well satisfied with the money they had spent on behalf of the Empire Industries Fund. But quite a number remained, in order to see the final events, after tea.

"By George, now I come to think of it, I can do with some tea, too!" said Handforth, as he and his chums prepared for a wash. "It may be a bit hot to-day, but all this exercise makes a chap hungry. Have they got plenty of grub in that marquee?"

"My dear chap, it's bulging with it," said Reggie Pitt cheerfully.

"Good egg!"

Handforth prepared to wash—in quite a happy frame of mind now. He felt that he had been doing good work from 5 a.m. onwards that day. He didn't notice that Reggie Pitt and Dick Hamilton and a few others were talking to Church and McClure in low voices. There were plenty of grins, too.

"Half a tick, Handy, old man," said Church, as Edward Oswald seized the soap. "What about your principles?"

"My principles?"

"You can't use that soap," said Church, shocked.

"Why not? It's British!"

"It's British made, if that's what you mean, but what about the ingredients?" asked Church. "I suppose you know that the world's supply of borax comes from Death Valley, in California? Anyhow, it's all foreign, and I'm pretty sure that this soap contains borax. And what about the fats? Most of that sort of stuff is imported. You can't wash with soap in future."

"Can't wash with soap!" repeated Handforth blankly.

"Not if you're a true patriot," said Dick Hamilton solemnly. "Don't I understand that you've made up your mind that you won't touch anything with a foreign ingredient in it? There's nothing like true patriotism, Handy. It'll be a bit harder, washing in plain water, but it's all for the cause."

"Oh, rather!" said Handforth feebly.

He washed without any soap—a most unsatisfactory affair. After all that he had been saying, he couldn't very well use the soap with the certain knowledge that it was partly foreign. There were so many fellows watching him, too.

Nothing more was said at the moment, and he felt relieved. But in the big marquee, as he was stirring his tea, Pitt came along and took the cup and saucer out of his hand.

"Not likely!" said Pitt firmly.

"Here, what the— Gimme that tea back."

"My dear Handy, do you realise that you've had a narrow escape?" asked Pitt, with a deep breath. "I've just been making inquiries, and I find that this tea is blended. It's got about ten per cent of China leaf in it!"

"Oh!" said Handforth, with a gulp.

He looked at the tea rather hopelessly. Pitt took it away, and placed it on a table, and Handforth had never felt the desire for tea as he felt it now. His whole being craved for it.

"The good old brew!" beamed Archie, strolling up, cup in hand. "This, I mean, is the stuff which absolutely restores the old tissues."

"I don't believe that about China leaf!"

snorted Handforth aggressively, turning to Pitt. "I want that tea back I'm not going to be dished out of—"

"My dear chap, it's official!" interrupted Pitt, staring. "I'm sorry, and I admire you for sticking to your principles so steadfastly. But, of course, you couldn't possibly drink tea with China leaf in it."

"Nanno, I suppose not," admitted Handforth sadly.

Church came along with a big plate of beautifully cut bread-and-butter—and it looked gloriously appetising. Handforth seized two or three slices, and decided to make no more mention of the tea. After all, he could manage with a bottle of lemonade, at a pinch.

"Put that down, Handy!" said Hamilton, scandalised.

"Eh? Which?"

"That bread-and-butter!"

"What the—"

"You mustn't touch it!" continued Dick, pulling the slices out of Handforth's enfeebled grip. "Why, you ass, I believe that this bread is made from American flour!"

"American flour!" repeated Handforth faintly.

"Not only that, but the butter is Danish," said Dick, frowning at Church.

They went off, the bread-and-butter with them. And Handforth, with a sickly sort of feeling within him, turned despairingly to the currant buns. By good luck, Pitt came along with a whole dish of them. But he seized Handforth's wrist as the latter was about to grab some buns.

"Impossible!" said Reggie sternly.

"What-a-at?" bleated Handforth.

"These buns are made from the same flour as the bread. Besides, what about the currants?" asked Pitt. "Don't you know that currants come from Greece? You couldn't stand there and eat Greek currants! A patriot like you!"

"Give me some doughnuts!" gasped Handforth faintly.

"Doughnuts?" repeated Pitt. "Boiled in oil from Spain or Portugal, and smothered with Continental beet sugar! Are you dotty, Handy?"

"Gimme some biscuits, then!" said Handforth, breathing hard. "I'm hungry! I've got to eat something, you silly fatheads! Do you think I'm going to starve?"

"But isn't that your idea?" asked McClure, in surprise. "I thought you said you were a martyr? Of course, if you're willing to forego your principles and knuckle under—"

"Perhaps—perhaps I've been a bit too extreme!" admitted Handforth desperately.

(Continued on page 44.)

RUNNING BETWEEN THE WICKETS

A Helpful Chat on one of the Most Neglected Aspects of Cricket.

THERE is one little thing that the batsman often leaves to chance—running between the wickets. How many fellows ever think about the best way of running?

There is a right and wrong way of running; by knowing the difference you may not only save valuable wickets, but avoid a lot of the disappointment which every player feels when he is run out. There is nothing in cricket more keenly disappointing than to be run out. It always seems like a wicket thrown away; and if you are run out owing to your partner's misjudgment, you naturally feel it badly.

Costly Mistakes.

The best way to avoid these costly mistakes is to have a thorough understanding among all the players in the team as to when to run and when not to run. The rule is—if it is the striker's call, and if he calls you, you must run; but there are times when this isn't the best policy! If you, at the other end, are in a better position to judge whether a run would be likely to be successful and call "No!" straight away, there is always time for the batsman to get back.

Unless you do call "No!" immediately the striker calls, don't call it afterwards. You've got to make up your mind at once and go through with it—either run or stay where you are.

How bad it looks to see two batsmen floundering about in the middle of the pitch, shouting frantic instructions to each other and losing their heads.

In cricket you should avoid hesitation. Always make up your mind quickly either one way or the other. If the decision turns out to have been wrong—well, you have learnt something from it for next time.

Quick Action.

You have all seen instances when a batsman's uncertainty which way to play a ball has resulted in the click of the ball on the stumps or a soft catch—or when two fielders have hesitated about whether to run for a catch, and in the end both have missed it—and you have seen a batsman's hesitation about running mean the loss of a wicket. Cricket is a game of lightning decisions and quick action. (And yet some people call it slow!)

As the misfortune of being run out is usually due to misunderstanding, it can often

be prevented. The best possible advice is: "Know your partner!" Some people might say: "Never take risks," but to anyone with the sporting instinct, risk is a necessary feature of any game, and half the fun is in being able to take risks and make them come off. It would be unwise to suggest that you should be consistently risky in your run-getting, but don't allow yourself to become timid and over-cautious, or merely lazy. That's altogether against the spirit of sport, but you ought to be able to take a certain amount of risk and trust to common sense to see that you don't go too far.

Taking Chances.

A lot depends on the team you're playing, of course. If you were up against the Australians, you'd find it advisable not to take any risks at all; but if your opponents are the Mud Lane C.C., and you happen to know that they're not lightning pickers-up and dead shots at the wicket—well, you're justified in taking chances now and then!

But always play up to your partner. That's really the key to the problem. If he doesn't like taking risks, he'll only let you down if you start the game, so don't. Besides which, you make him nervous and spoil his play. If two venturesome spirits get together, providing you have a good understanding with each other, let yourselves go, and have a run for your money if there's not very much at stake.

Avoiding Collisions.

Remember that the correct way to run is wide of the wicket, to your left; never down the middle where there is the danger of collision. You will find it worth while to pay attention to the way you run.

One of the weakest features of English first-class cricket is running between the wickets. The Australians do it much better, and make many extra runs in consequence.

We are too apt in England to run as though we had all day to get to the other wicket, and many a single might have been made a two, or a two a three, if only the batsmen had run the first one quickly.

Jack Hobbs is one of the best runners among English batsmen. It may seem strange, but you will often find more conscientious running in lads' teams than in county cricket; it is very seldom, in a boys' match, that one sees a run missed because one of the batsmen was lazy.



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HANDFORTH THE MARTYR !

(Continued from page 41.)

"After all, there ought to be moderation in everything."

"Then you'll throw up your principles?" asked Pitt.

"Yes, to that extent," said Handforth grudgingly.

"By the way, this is yours, isn't it?" asked Church, holding up a pocket microscope.

"Of course, it's mine," he said. "Look here, Church, you ass—"

"I found it in your pocket," explained Church. "Have a look at it closely."

Handforth examined the pocket microscope and discovered the words "Made in Czechoslovakia," upon it.

"I—I didn't know!" he breathed.

"Well, you know now," said Church. "Do your duty, and smash it up!"

"No fear!" roared Handforth. "I've had this microscope for months! I—I mean—"

THE END.

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He paused, glancing at the stern faces round him, and remembering how he had destroyed other fellows' property.

"Well?" said Pitt. "We're waiting!"

Handforth got a sudden inspiration.

"I gave my word not to destroy anything," he said triumphantly.

"Never mind about that," put in Buster Boots, pushing forward. "You're released from that promise from this minute. Stick to your principles, my son, and destroy that horrible foreign thing at once. We're ready to gloat over the remains. Down with foreign goods!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Edward Oswald Handforth, fairly caught in his own trap, sadly dropped the microscope to the ground and crushed it to debris. Words seemed to be useless. And the other juniors tactfully dropped the subject.

They felt that the lesson had been deserved. And it was a curious thing that from that moment onwards Handforth had nothing further to say regarding foreign goods. He was still patriotic, but he had realised that there was a limit!

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