

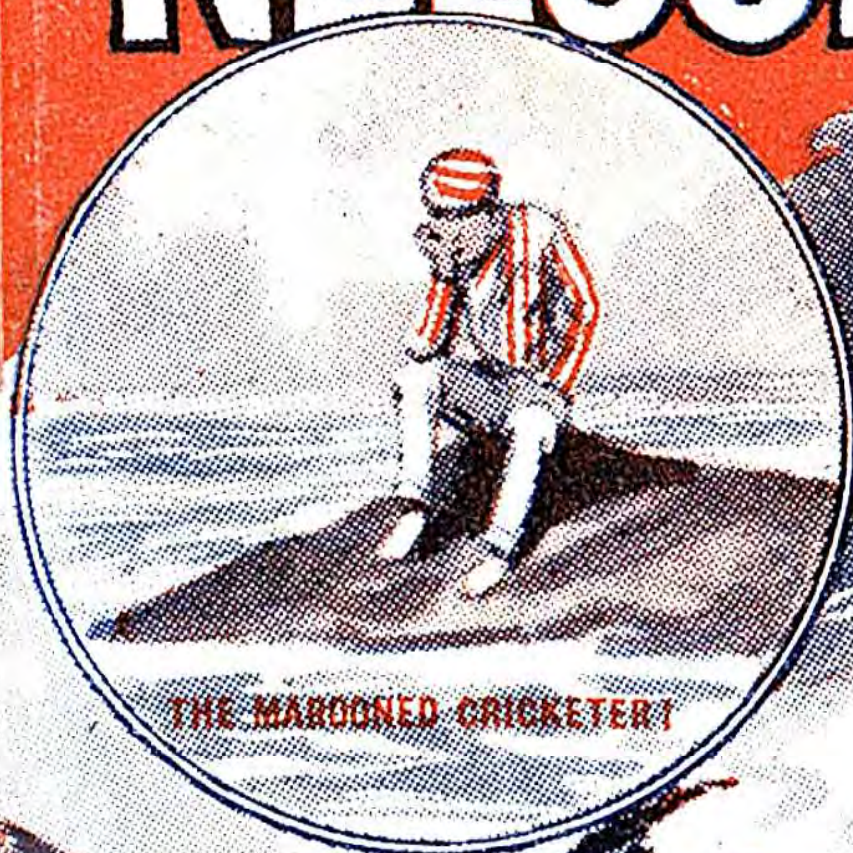
THERE'S A FEAST OF FUN AND SPORT INSIDE!

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THE MAROONED CRICKETER!



HANDFORTH TO THE RESCUE!

HANDFORTH GOES THE LIMIT
in this live, long complete yarn
of the Third Schoolboy Test
Match at St. Frank's.

New Series No. 7.

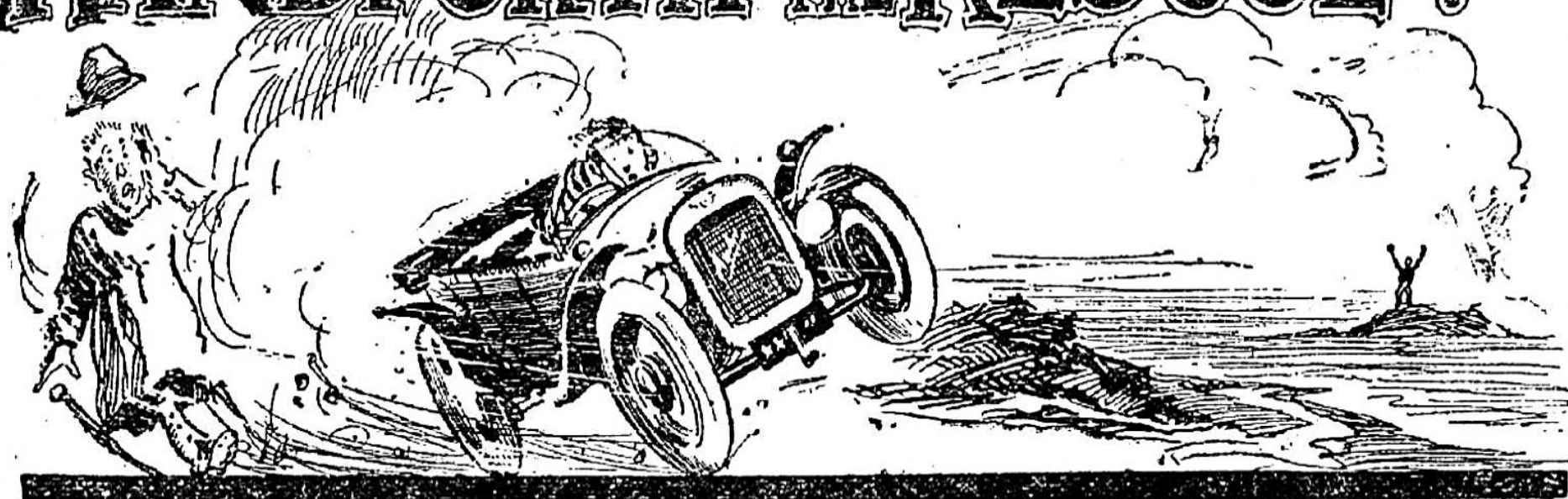
OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

June 19th, 1926.



"Stop!" roared Browne. "I'll give you ten pounds if you'll come back!" The man in the boat smiled grimly and shook his head. He had marooned Browne on the rocky little island, and there Browne would have to stop—Test Match or no Test Match!

HANDFORTH TO THE RESCUE!



By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

Good old Handy! He goes all out to help St. Frank's win the Third Schoolboy Test Match. You will enjoy this rousing long complete yarn of school life and sport.

CHAPTER 1.

THE TOPIC OF THE HOUR.

SWISH—thud!

The leather, released from William Napoleon Browne's supple fingers, sped down the pitch, broke on an unsuspected hump, and rose acutely. Arthur Morrow, of the Sixth, dropped his bat with a cry of agony, and fell writhing to the ground.

Browne, the lanky Fifth Form skipper, stared. Then he raced down the pitch to the fallen senior's side. At the same moment Fenton and Wilson and two other seniors rushed up. Morrow was still writhing.

"He's crocked!" exclaimed Edgar Fenton, aghast.

The captain of St. Frank's revealed his acute anxiety in his voice. For this was the day of the third Test Match in the Young England v. Young Australia series, and Morrow was one of the giants of the England Eleven.

It was early morning—the last opportunity for practice—and Fenton and his men were hard at work. With so much swotting for the coming examinations, the team was handicapped enough, without losing one of its best men!

"Quick! Lend a hand here!" panted Fenton.

"Be calm, Brother Fenton—be calm!" urged Browne concernedly. "No good will come of flurry. Alas, I fear Brother Morrow is lost to us. This is not one of our lucky days."

Morrow was grasped by many willing hands, and pulled up. He was nursing his right wrist, and his face was contorted with agony. The beads of perspiration were standing out on his face.

"It's all right—only a knock!" he gasped. "I don't think it's much. But, by Jove, it gave me a twisting. The ball whipped up like lightning, you know, and got me before I could—Pheew! Steady, old man!"

"I'm frightfully sorry," said Browne, as he gently took hold of Morrow's wrist. "It was only just an ordinary ball—"

"Shut up!" muttered Morrow. "You couldn't help it, you ass! It was my fault. I ought to have been quicker. But I wasn't quite ready—"

"Anything wrong here?" shouted Dick Hamilton, running up. "Is Morrow hurt? Don't say he is, for goodness' sake! We can't afford to lose a man like him."

"I'm all right, I tell you," growled Morrow, shaking himself. "Don't fuss over me, you idiots! It was only a trifle—"

"A plucky remark, Brother Morrow, but do not delude yourself," interrupted Browne gently. "There will be no further cricket for you to-day. Indeed, I am not exaggerating when I declare that you are fairly splashing about in the oxtail. Two weeks must elapse before you handle a bat again."

"Don't be a born lunatic!" growled Morrow.

By this time, the other members of the Eleven were gathering round, filled with concern. Cecil de Valerie, Reggie Pitt, Edward Oswald Handforth, and Hussi Kahn were also

in the team, and they were naturally at practice with the rest. They could hardly credit that Browne's pessimistic view was right. But how could it be otherwise? For Browne was such an optimist.

"There's no need to make matters worse than they are, Browne, old man," said Fenton gruffly. "No bones broken, are there? Try and move your wrist a bit, Arthur. Take it easily——"

"I'm absolutely fit," said Morrow, wincing.

He was moving his wrist, and he pretended that the pain would vanish within a few moments. He fooled himself into believing that no real harm had been done. For the thought of being dropped out of the big match startled him—horrified him. It was a ghastly idea.

"Let's get on with the batting," he added, reaching for his willow.

"Thank goodness!" said Reggie Pitt fervently.

"One moment, brothers—one moment," put in William Napoleon Browne. "Whilst I have nothing but admiration for Brother Morrow's courage, I have nothing but condemnation for his foolhardiness. He will touch that bat at his peril. That wrist must be nursed with care, massaged, and placed gently but firmly in a sling. Have no illusions on the point. Observe closely, and you will already see a sinister swelling."

Morrow regarded his wrist ruefully. It was throbbing frightfully, and it was certainly larger than usual. There was an ugly puffiness, too, and an ugly redness.

"Browne's right," he admitted, with disgust. "I'm crocked! This wrist will be about as big as two within two minutes. I shan't be able to move it at all. By Jove, look at it! You can see the infernal thing swelling!"

Fenton drew a deep breath.

"Just your luck!" he said grimly. "And I've never seen you bat better, Arthur. I was just saying to Handforth that you were in tip-top form. And now we've lost you! What ghastly luck!"

"Hard lines, old man," chimed in the others.

"Yes, I'm a passenger all right," said Morrow, trying to smile. "I'm not even sure that I shall be fit for the final match, at Lord's! I say, what rot if I'm not!" he added in alarm.

"Let us take an optimistic view, and trust that you will be fully recovered in time for that auspicious occasion," said Browne. "But you are useless for to-day, Brother Morrow. Forward, the first aid squad! Let us have bandages, let us have soothing liniments and balms."

Morrow was led towards the pavilion by two or three of his comrades, and William Napoleon Browne sadly shook his head as he watched them go.

"Luck was always a fickle jade!" he mur-

mured. "One of our best men crocked on the very morning of the match! Alack! What misfortune can befall us now? Are we not beyond all hope of victory?"

"Never say die, Browne," said a cheery voice. "Morrow's a fine bat, but we're not so poverty stricken of talent as you make out. I expect Fenton will find a decent substitute."

Browne looked round and found Willy Handforth by his side. The smiling skipper of the Third was optimistic, as usual.

"My major's in the team already, but what about Fullwood?" he asked. "What about Grey? Or Church? There's a chap for you! Church!! Why has he been overlooked by the selectors? A ripping cricketer, if ever there was one."

Browne looked thoughtful.

"I will grant that Brother Church has recently revealed remarkable prowess," he admitted. "But does he come up to the necessary standard, Brother William? His fielding is above reproach—his batting is improving daily. But has he the correct temperament for a big match? That, my son, is the crux of the matter. That is where we place our finger upon the vital spring."

Willy nodded.

"H'm! You're a brainy chap, aren't you?" he asked.

"So others have said," confessed Browne.

"That bit about temperament is jolly true," said Willy, nodding. "Lots of fine cricketers are pretty well useless in a big match. You can't touch 'em in a house game, but they simply fall to pieces when they're up against a formidable side. Do you think Church is like that?"

"I think he might be like that," said Browne cautiously. "One cannot tell until he has been placed under the fire. But is this a time for experiments, Brother William? Greatly as I admire Brother Church's increasing agility, I deprecate anything in the nature of an experiment. The other sportsmen you mention are equally dubious. Swotting for the exams. has not improved their form to any noticeable extent."

"Whom do you think Fenton will choose?" asked Willy.

"I wonder," said Browne, gazing at the Third Former absent-mindedly. "I wonder!"

"Well, while you're wondering, perhaps you'll give me some bowling?" suggested Willy brightly. "I know it's a bit of a nerve, but you're doing nothing at the moment. And I'm in the Second Eleven, anyhow. Are you game for it?"

"Never has it been said that the Brownes are lacking in gameness," declared William Napoleon. "Let us see what you are made of, Brother William. I am always ready to humour the whims of the youthful."

But there was a purpose behind Browne's apparent good nature. Willy Handforth was only a fag, it was true, but his form was far

and away above the average in the Third. Indeed, he played regularly in the Second Eleven, and was quite accustomed to meeting big Fifth and Sixth Formers on equal terms.

This morning he was brilliant. Browne was one of the finest bowlers that St. Frank's had ever produced. He was a terror to all visiting teams, and his average was remarkable. He was generally regarded as the strongest man in the St. Frank's First Eleven—ranking higher, in the school estimation, than Fenton himself.

And Willy Handforth calmly, coolly, and deliberately proceeded to knock William Napoleon Browne into the middle of next week. And Browne didn't spare him, either. He bowled with the set purpose of shattering Willy's wicket. But Willy simply loved it. For a boy so small, his strokes were singularly powerful. And his placing was unique. Indeed, he proved quite clearly that he was a brainy bat. His eye was like that of a hawk, and never once was he deceived by the bowler's wiles.

"Brother Willy, I give in," said Browne, at length. "Young man, you are improving. Let me warn you against the danger of acquiring an enlarged cranium. One of these days you will doubtless be playing for your county. And perhaps—who knows—you may even figure in a real, genuine Test Match."

Willy nodded.

"What about to-day's real, genuine Test Match?" he asked cheerfully.

Fenton came up at that moment, full of enthusiasm, and he clapped Willy on the back with genuine pleasure.

"Bravo, young 'un!" he said heartily. "I've just been watching you, and you did splendidly. I suppose you were taking a bit of the sting out of them, though, Browne?" he added.

"On the contrary, Brother Fenton, I included all the sting of which I am capable," declared Browne. "Let me assure you that I gave Brother Willy no quarter. You have, I assume, made up your mind concerning Brother Morrow's substitute?"

"Well, I'm not quite certain——"

"Then be certain now," said Browne. "Your substitute stands here! Brother Willy, regard yourself as a fully-fledged Test player. To-day you are entrusted with a noble task."

"But look here, Browne!" protested Fenton. "Handforth minor is only a fag, you know! I'll admit he's hot, but I'm not quite sure—— By Jove, though," he added, "he deserves his place! We'll put it to the committee, and come to a quick decision."

Five minutes later, Willy Handforth was definitely chosen as Morrow's substitute, and when the Third Form heard about it, it nearly went off its head with excitement. The only fag who remained serenely calm was Willy Handforth.



CHAPTER 2.

AUSTRALIA MAKES CERTAIN.

ELEVEN-THIRTY found St. Frank's inwardly and outwardly seething.

Everybody except the actual members of the team were, of course, obliged to attend morning school. This was an outrage which the headmaster callously inflicted, much to everybody's disgust. The fellows simply couldn't understand how any schoolmaster could be so stony-hearted.

While the Australians were actually on the spot, while the great game was positively beginning, the school was compelled to stew at lessons. It was not merely an outrage, but a positive disgrace. But this, it must be mentioned, was merely the school's point of view. The masters held quite a different opinion.

The Australian boys were a fine set of cricketers. They had been drawn from various big schools within a radius of thirty or forty miles. Two of them, for example, came from the neighbouring River House School, another from Redcliffe, another from Helmford, another from Bannington, and so forth. One valiant Australian—Jerry Dodd—was actually a St. Frank's junior. But in these big matches he was playing against his own school.

For they were test matches in the true sense. St. Frank's simply represented England, and there was no question of school honours. They were games between English boys and Australian boys, and there were to be five matches in the series, as in the real Test Matches.

England, as represented by the St. Frank's First Eleven, was rather handicapped. For Dr. Stafford had ordered some extra heavy exams. this term, and even the members of the eleven had been compelled to swot with the rest of the school. Fenton had not been able to give his men the practice he would have liked. They were by no means stale, but their form could have been better.

And luck, having started badly for St. Frank's that day, continued its relentless course. For Australia won the toss. Beaton, the Aussie skipper, promptly decided to send England into the field. And so the Australian innings opened.

The visitors were under no such handicap as St. Frank's. Their own schools had been only too ready to grant the boys special facilities for training, and the Australian team came to St. Frank's in tip-top condition. This was the third match of the series, and the Australians were well accustomed to one another's play—despite the fact that they came from different schools.

From the very first moment of the game, St. Frank's was compelled to fight, and to fight hard. The weather was cloudy, and rather showery. But there was not sufficient

rain to cause any delay, or stoppage of play. The wicket, however, was on the uncertain side, and great things were expected of Fenton, Browne, and Hussi Kahn—the star bowlers for England.

But the Australians were cool and calm, and Beaton and his partner proceeded to set up a fine first wicket partnership. The runs came slowly at first, but when the school trooped eagerly out, no wickets had fallen—and the score was over the 50 mark.

When the luncheon interval came, the partnership was still unbroken, and 73 runs had been made. It was undoubtedly a good beginning. The weather was clearing a little now, and it was some consolation to know that the barometer was rising.

"It's going to be a glorious afternoon," declared Handforth, as he inspected the sky after lunch. "And I bet we shall have a blazing hot day to-morrow, too. There's no need to get the wind up about these Aussies. We'll soon skittle 'em out this afternoon."

"Thank goodness it's a half-holiday, anyhow," said Church. "I say, Handy, your minor was doing well this morning."

"Not so badly," admitted Handforth.

"He did some marvellous work in the field," declared McClure. "Some of the chaps are growling at Fenton for putting him in the team, but that's all rot. Age doesn't count in these matches. Ability's the main thing."

Handforth nodded.

"Well, after all, blood tells, you know," he said modestly. "You can't get away from the fact that my minor's a Handforth. He's a cheeky young beggar, but he takes after me when it comes to cricket."

Edward Oswald was very proud of the fact that he was playing for the First Eleven this season. He was a good, sound field, and his energy was unbounded. As a batsman, he was a rather uncertain quantity, but he had one good quality. He was a demon run-getter in a tight corner. When things were going badly, he would slog with the utmost recklessness, and yet keep his end up. He took chances no other batsman would dare to take. And his amazing luck generally held.

The resumption of play cheered St. Frank's up enormously. The sun was now shining brilliantly, and in the very first over Willy distinguished himself, and fully justified his selection by bringing off a brilliant catch.

Beaton was dismissed just as he was about to settle down. It was a catch that nine junior players out of ten would have missed. It was only by a piece of amazing dexterity that Willy brought it off. A swift, lightning run, a flying leap, and the ball was in his outstretched fingers.

"How's that?"

"Out, by jingo!"

"Hurrah!"

"Oh, good catch!"

Willy was given a loud and well-deserved cheer. And St. Frank's felt in good humour.

This was the sort of thing they liked to see. But fifteen minutes later the crowds settled themselves to watch with grim patience. For the Australians were still at it.

Browne's cunning met with its reward on three occasions during the afternoon, and slowly but surely the Australians were worn down. But under no circumstances could it be said that they were skittled out. There wasn't a man who didn't bat well. And England was compelled to work at high pressure all the time.

Just before the tea interval Willy made another catch—almost as brilliant as his first. And even the jealous seniors—those who felt they ought to have been in Willy's place—were forced to admit that the fag was doing splendidly. His fielding, throughout the Australian innings, was first class.

Hussi Kahn took two wickets, and even De Valerie succeeded in capturing one. And the Australians were finally dismissed half an hour after the tea interval, after batting nearly all day. Their total score was 223. For a schoolboy match, this was an excellent figure.

And then, after only a brief interval, Fenton and Wilson opened the batting for England, and Australia went into the field. Within five minutes Wilson came back to the pavilion—with a nasty looking "0" showing on the score board. It was hardly a dazzling beginning.

Further consternation was occasioned when Stevens, of the Fifth, much to his surprise, was caught by the wicket-keeper. He could hardly believe it. He had meant that ball to go shooting through to the boundary, and the wicket-keeper was calmly skying it.

And the St. Frank's score showed—5 runs for two wickets. This was simply too ghastly for words.

Fenton was grim, and he realised that it was up to him to stop this early rot. He played cautiously, and gradually settled down. Fortunately, Phillips, who joined him, looked like a stayer. Between them they managed to make a stubborn stand, and the score mounted.

The anxious crowds felt that there might be some hope, after all; 223 wasn't such an overwhelming score, and when Browne started his famous swiping, and when Handforth let himself go—well, all sorts of things were possible. The joy of cricket is its uncertainty.

And then, just when Fenton was beautifully set, the telegram arrived.



CHAPTER 3.

FENTON'S MYSTERIOUS WIRE.

CHAMBERS, of the Fifth, took the telegram from the page-boy who brought it to the pavilion. He gave it a brief glance.

"For Fenton, eh? Well, it'll have to wait.

I expect it's only a wire to wish him luck, anyhow. He can't be bothered with this now. Leave it to me—I'll give it to Fenton later."

Chambers stuck the wire into his pocket and forgot all about it. But ten minutes later, when Phillips carried his bat out for a sound 19, Cuthbert Chambers remembered that telegram again. He pulled it out, and looked at it thoughtfully.

"What's that?" asked Bryant, of the Fifth.

"A wire for Fenton—it came some time ago," said Chambers. "Who's in next?"

"Hamilton, I think—or Browne."

"Perhaps I'd better seize this chance to nip out to the wicket and give this to old Fenton," said Chambers. "After all, it might be important. He won't be able to send a reply to-night unless he opens it now. One never knows. Shan't be a minute!"

Before Dick Hamilton came out, Chambers ran lightly across the green and caught hold of Edgar Fenton, who was chatting with the Australian wicket-keeper. He looked at Chambers in surprise—for Chambers wasn't in the eleven.

"Thought you'd like to see it, Fenton—a wire for you," said Chambers.

"Oh!" said Fenton. "Thanks! Excuse me a tick."

He tore open the buff envelope, and rapidly scanned the telegraph-form. A puzzled and rather startled look came into his eyes. He stood there, staring strangely. His former cheeriness had vanished.

"All right?" asked Chambers casually.

"Eh?" said Fenton, starting. "Oh! Yes, thanks!" he added, stuffing the wire into his trousers-pocket. "Thanks, Chambers!"

"No reply?"

"No, I don't think so," replied Fenton. "No, of course there isn't. Here's Hamilton, anyway. You'd better dodge back, Chambers. Thanks, old man!"

Chambers nodded, and ran back to the pavilion. He was immediately collared by William Napoleon Browne. There was a light of battle in Browne's eye.

"May I ask, Brother Cuthbert, the nature of your errand?" he asked ominously.

"I only took out a wire to Fenton."

Browne clasped helplessly at the air.

"Are there words in the English language to describe this imbecile?" he pleaded plaintively. "Alas and alack! Now I know, with all truth, that your cranium is indeed a vacuum, Brother Cuthbert."

"Here, I say!" protested Chambers, turning red.

Browne stared sombrely out at the wicket. Dick Hamilton received the last ball of the over, then the bowling came to Fenton. There was a crash, and Fenton's wicket was shattered!

"Oh!"

"Out, by George!"

"Well, I'm jiggered!" muttered Chambers, starting.

"I am inclined to wish, brother, that you

were, indeed, jiggered!" said Browne angrily. "Can somebody help me in this hour of trial? Can some kindly soul supply me with adequate words? Brother Cuthbert, what have you done?"

"I?" gasped Chambers. "Look here, don't blame me——"

"But I do blame you—vigorously and relentlessly!" said Browne, inwardly boiling, and only remaining calm by an effort. "I would like to call you an idiot and an imbecile, but good breeding makes such a thing difficult. Brother Cuthbert, I shall make it my business to have you transferred immediately to a padded cell!"

"You funny idiot——"

"Hang it, he's right!" said Bryant gruffly. "You ought to have had more sense than to take that wire to Fenton just when he was set. It's probably some bad news—and it put him right off his stroke. When that ball came down, he didn't even see it."

By this time Fenton was in the pavilion.

"Sorry!" he said, as Browne met him with a forced smile. "Afraid I made a muck of that, Browne, old man. You in next?"

"Yes," said Browne.

"Try to stop the rot, for goodness' sake," went on Fenton quietly. "By the way, what's the time?"

"About five-past six——"

"By Jove, I shall just catch it!" muttered Fenton quickly. "I shan't be wanted after this. All right, Browne—hurry out, you know. Don't keep the field waiting."

"That telegram," said Browne firmly. "Bad news?"

Fenton pretended to look careless.

"Oh, that?" he said. "Don't bother about it now, Browne. Only a private matter. Sorry I can't say any more. But there's no death in the family, if that's what you mean. Buck up!"

Fenton hurried off, and Browne went out to bat—sad and concerned, but grimly determined to carry the battle on with every ounce of his energy. Luck had been against England all day, and it was just about time that the tables were turned.

It wasn't bad luck, however, which was responsible for St. Frank's being all out for a mere 93 at the end of the day's play. Browne batted splendidly, but the rest of the team fell to pieces—not because they were poor batsmen, but because the Australian bowlers were as hot as mustard. Willy did quite well to make 10 runs off his own bat, but his major slogged at the very first ball, and missed it. One of life's little tragedies.

"Well, that's just about killed us!" said Stevens, when play finished. "Ninety-three all out—what a score! Of course, we shall have to follow-on to-morrow, and the chances are we'll be all out for less than 130. And Australia will win the match by a giddy innings!"

Browne sighed.

"While sympathising with you in this pes-

simistic view, Brother Horace, I do not think we shall be so luckless as that," he said. "When a side does poorly in a first innings, it generally makes amends in the second. Such is the law of average. We must not despair."

"We've had some vile luck to-day," admitted Stevens. "I never dreamed that Fenton was coming out when he did——"

"By the way, where is Brother Fenton now?" asked Browne.

"Haven't seen him," said Stevens. "At least, not since he carried his bat in. I should have thought he'd have been about somewhere, though."

They went indoors. The Australians, of course, were staying at St. Frank's over night—for all big fixtures this season were two-day matches.

There were many anxious faces in the various Houses that evening, but on the whole St. Frank's kept its pecker up. There was no actual reason to be despondent. England would bat first on the morrow, and if anything like the average form was attained, the game would assume a different complexion. There was plenty of time to give the Australians a hard tussle.

Morrow's misfortune was, of course, a serious blow. His wrist was now greatly swollen, and Browne's prediction that he wouldn't be able to play for a fortnight was probably true.

Browne remembered Fenton's anxious query regarding the time, and he knew that a local train left Bellton Station at 6.23. It was a train which went to Caistowe, and then down the coast. Browne wondered. What possible reason could Fenton have for going in that direction? His people didn't live there, and — Well, it wasn't his business, anyway.

All the same, Browne made inquiries. And it was soon clear that Fenton was not in the school. He had gone off during the match, without saying a word to anybody—a strange thing for a captain to do. Obviously, that telegram had contained some news of vital importance.

William Napoleon Browne was not the kind of fellow to pry into another's affairs. But he was genuinely concerned about Fenton—and more worried than ever when bed-time arrived, and there was still no sign of the skipper.

He went to the Housemaster's study and made inquiries.

"Forgive me, Mr. Lee, for bothering you at this hour, but have you any word of Brother Fenton?" he asked. "Do you happen to know if he has returned?"

Mr. Lee glanced at the clock.

"No, but he ought to be back by now," he replied. "He came to me this evening and asked for a late pass."

"And you gave it to him, sir?"

"Naturally."

"Would it be impolite to ask if you are aware of Brother Fenton's destination?" asked Browne. "Pray do not imagine that I am inquisitive, sir——"

"Not at all, Browne!" interrupted the Housemaster. "As a matter of fact, I thought it rather curious myself that Fenton should hurry off before the day's play was finished. Probably a very urgent matter. I cannot imagine a conscientious fellow like Fenton acting in such a way otherwise. He hinted that he might be late."

"There are no trains now, sir."

"Well, that's merely a detail," replied Mr. Lee. "We have no knowledge that Fenton went anywhere by train. He will probably turn up very soon, Browne. I shouldn't worry about him. You've had rather hard luck to-day, eh? Let's hope for something better to-morrow."

"Our lives, sir," said Browne, "are made up of hopes."

He took his departure, and pondered outside. Clearly, Edgar Fenton had said nothing to anybody regarding his errand. He had gone off almost at a moment's notice—without even time to change—and he had taken a train journey. There was no proof of this, but Browne himself was convinced.

And the Fifth-Form skipper was vaguely uneasy.



CHAPTER 4.

BILL MARTIN, OF DEEPING COVE.

EDGAR FENTON, in the meantime, was having a surprising experience.

As Browne had imagined, it had to be something very exceptional to take the captain of St. Frank's off in the middle of a Test match. Not that Fenton had jeopardised anything by his action.

His own innings was over, and he knew that he would not be required any more that evening—for St. Frank's had been batting. If St. Frank's had been in the field, it would have been quite impossible, of course, to go, no matter how urgent the call. Besides, Fenton was fully determined to be back long before supper.

He caught the 6.23 train with a minute to spare, having taken a ticket for Deeping Cove. This was a quiet, sleepy little fishing village about twenty miles along the coast, and well beyond the town of Caistowe. Fenton had heard of the place, but he had never visited it.

There was a train back—the last one—which arrived at Bellton just before nine, and he reckoned that he would have plenty of time to fulfil his mission in the meantime. He was worried, and not a little annoyed.

"Confound the man!" he muttered repeatedly, as he sat in an empty compartment of the rattling local. "Why on earth couldn't he telephone me—or come to the school? What's the idea of this mystery? I hate anything underhand. But Gerald was always an infernal fool!"

He took the crumpled telegram out of his flannels, and looked at it again. The words



"A wire for you, Fenton—it's just come!" The Captain of St. Frank's slit the envelope and rapidly scanned the telegraph form. A startled look came into his eyes; he remained with the message in his hands, staring strangely, while the Australian Test Team stood around, watching him in silence.

were compelling, but not particularly enlightening. For the telegram ran in this fashion:

"Am in frightful hole. For Heaven's sake lend a hand. Come to Deeping Cove at once. Inquire for Bill Martin's Cottage. He'll direct you. If you fail me, I'm sunk. GERALD."

Fenton frowned more deeply.

"It's such a mad sort of wire!" he told himself irritably. "Go to Deeping Cove and inquire for Bill Martin's cottage. Of all the utter rot! I'm nothing better than a fool for taking any notice."

But what else could Fenton do? The sender of the telegram had left him no alternative. It was impossible to telephone to a cottage, and even a telegram would be useless. There was something so indefinite about the whole business. But Fenton knew Gerald, and wasn't surprised.

Gerald Fenton was his elder brother, and it is to be feared that the St. Frank's captain had no particular respect for him. Gerald had been a great deal of trouble to his parents since he had left Oxford a year or two earlier. There was nothing wrong with him—he was as honest as Edgar Fenton, and as clean. But he was such a hopeless chump.

Fenton's people had hardly known what to do with him after he had failed at Oxford. He was one of those amiable chaps who get

on splendidly with everybody, and who make first-class company at a light-hearted house party. But when it came to making a living for himself, Gerald was a problem.

And his father insisted that he should make his own mark in the world. Fenton senior was determined that his sons should not be slackers. Gerald was a splendid fellow, and so thoroughly decent that it seemed rather hard-hearted to make him work. But it would be a good experience for him.

Occasionally, Edgar Fenton would recollect his elder brother's record at St. Frank's. Gerald had been one of the most popular fellows in the school, and a brilliant cricketer. Indeed, he was still brilliant, for he sometimes played for his county. But when it came to study, Gerald had been hopelessly out of the running. He was a slacker, and he knew it—in everything except games. Edgar, of course, was a different type—active, resolute, and powerful. There was no hint of leadership in Gerald.

"Just like the idiot!" muttered the skipper, as he looked at the wire again. "But it must be something serious, or he wouldn't bother me to-day. He knows we've got this match on. That's why I can't understand it."

He frowned thoughtfully.

"Deeping Cove," he murmured. "I think Gerald was there last summer. Anyhow, I've heard of the place before. But why all this mystery? Anybody might think the chap had done something wrong. And that's ridiculous."

Gerald couldn't steal a piece of cheese from a mousetrap!"

Fenton was not particularly worried regarding his brother. He knew what a chump Gerald was, and how he would get excited over nothing. But he couldn't possibly ignore the wire. There was such an urgent note in it that it would be a dirty trick to carry on as though it hadn't come.

It was after seven when the train rattled into Deeping Cove station—which was really a kind of halt. Only the very small trains deigned to stop there at all.

Fenton got out, and found that he had a walk of half a mile to the Cove itself—a cliff-surrounded bay, with a few cottages nestling at the bottom of it, where the main coast road skirted the beach. The little village of Deeping was higher up, on the downs.

"Bill Martin's cottage," muttered Fenton. "There's an address to give a fellow!"

He happened to pass a rural postman by a lucky chance a minute or two after he had left the station. He brought this worthy to a halt, and made inquiries.

"Bill Martin's?" said the postman. "Why, yes, sir. One o' them cottages down near the beach."

"You can't mistake it," put in a whiskered face, looking up from over a neighbouring hedge. "Straight down the road to the beach, and then to the left, young gent. You'll know Bill's cottage by the green porch. It's the only one like it."

"Thanks!" said Fenton, nodding to both of them.

He went on, leaving the postman chatting with the whiskery one; between the pair of them, they made quite a lot out of this young stranger in white flannels. Deeping Cove was a very small place, and strangers were rare.

Arriving on the beach, Fenton found himself amid some very pretty scenery, and it looked particularly attractive in the evening light. The cliffs rose, picturesque and rugged, behind him. And the highway stretched from right to left, climbing a steep hill on either hand. Immediately in front lay the bay, with quite a number of rocks showing. A wild place in winter, probably.

Clustered at the foot of the cliff, bordering the road, were a number of little cottages. And one of them was different from the rest by reason of a green porch.

Fenton made straight for it.

His approach was closely watched by an elderly gentleman in enormously wide trousers and a blue jersey. His face was weather-beaten and rugged, and was adorned by grizzled whiskers, to say nothing of a clay pipe.

"Hold hard, young gent," said this individual, lifting a finger to his ancient peaked cap. "Mebbe you'll be wanting Bill Martin?"

"How on earth did you know that?" asked Fenton. "Oh, I suppose you're Bill Martin yourself? On the look-out, eh?"

"Ay, I was watchin' for ye!" said Mr. Martin, nodding.

"Is Mr. Fenton here?"

"I'm a bit hard of hearin'," said Mr. Martin, holding a hand to his ear. "What's that ye said, young gent?"

"Is Mr. Fenton here?" repeated the St. Frank's captain.

"Oh, ay, he's here!" said the old fisherman. "Leastways, if he ain't here, I'll soon take ye to him. Just you come along with me, young gent, an' ye'll soon be with him."

Mr. Martin turned, and commenced walking down the beach. Fenton stared. He had been expecting to go into the cottage, and was wondering why his brother had made the appointment at such an extraordinary place. He hurried down the beach, and found that Bill Martin was preparing to push a boat down into the tide.

"Wait a minute," said Fenton. "What's the idea?"

"Beggin' your pardon?"

"What's the idea?" shouted Fenton. "I thought you were going to take me to Mr. Fenton?"

"That's what I am a-doin'!" nodded Mr. Martin.

"But—but he isn't hiding in the cave, or round one of these other coves, is he?" asked Fenton, in amazement. "Look here, I've had enough of this mystery. I want to know where you're taking me."

The old fisherman scratched his beard.

"If ye'll step aboard, I'll soon show ye," he replied. "'Tain't wise to say too much, young gent. I might tell ye that Mr. Fenton is mighty anxious to see ye. 'Bring the young gent to me as soon as he comes,' he sez. 'Right, sir,' I sez. 'An' don't waste no time,' he sez. So there ye are."

"Oh, all right," growled Fenton. "I'm hanged if I can understand it, though. I think he must have gone off his rocker!"

He stepped into the boat, and they pushed off.



CHAPTER 5.

FENTON'S PREDICAMENT.

BILL MARTIN said nothing as he stolidly plied the oars. And Fenton was in no particular mood for conversation. He was more puzzled than ever. There must be something exceptionally wrong for his brother to take all these exaggerated precautions.

As far as Fenton could make out, he was being rowed to an island. There were plenty of them round the coast in this part. Some were grassy little spots, and others were mere rocks, containing scarcely any vegetation. They were bleak and desolate in the winter time, but during the summer months they were rather popular as camping grounds.

But it was still early in the season, and there were scarcely any holiday-makers—either here or at any other part of the coast. Deeping Cove was still asleep after its long winter and spring.

"Thought so!" muttered Fenton gruffly.

They were making straight for one of the bigger islands—one that stood quite to itself. The sun was glinting upon it, and the island was picturesque and romantic in that glow. So far as Fenton could see, there was no indication of any human being.

"Bill Martin swung the boat round, and managed to edge it alongside a jutting portion of rock, where the waves lapped energetically.

"Now then, young gent—jump!" he advised quickly.

Fenton seized his chance, and scrambled ashore without getting his feet wet. By the time he turned round, the boat was drifting back into the deeper water, and was already some yards away.

"Hold on!" shouted Fenton. "What's the idea of landing me like this? I thought you were bringing me here——"

"Hallo, Edgar!" came a familiar voice from a little distance. "That's all right. I told Bill to bring you here, and then get back. Thanks awfully for coming. You're a young brick!"

Fenton, who had begun to get suspicious, felt rather relieved. He turned, and beheld his brother some twenty yards away, scrambling over the rocks. Fenton went to meet him.

"It's a rough passage," said Gerald, "but that makes it all the more interesting. And there's not much fear of anybody else landing here. I knew you'd come along in answer to that wire."

Gerald Fenton was a young man of about twenty-five—tall, well built, and healthy. As a rule, he had a permanent air of amiability. But just now he was wearing an anxious look. He didn't resemble his younger brother much, for he lacked the resoluteness which was such a distinguishing feature of the St. Frank's captain.

"Well I'm hanged!" said Fenton, as he shook his brother's hand. "Why in the name of all that's mysterious did you come to this outlandish spot? Jolly glad to see you, Gerald, old man, but it's a bit thick dragging me all this way."

"I know," said Gerald contritely. "But I wouldn't have done it at any ordinary time. I'm simply worried to death. I had to tell somebody, and you've always been a pal, Edgar. I'm in the deuce of a mess."

"But where are you hanging out?" asked Fenton, in surprise. "You don't mean to tell me you're just sitting among these rocks, like—like a crab?"

"Good lor', no!" said Gerald. "This is my camp, you know. I was here last summer—had a fine time with one or two other fellows. I'm alone now, of course. I stored everything in Martin's cottage, so it was an easy matter to rig up the camp."

He led the way over the rocks, and Fenton received a surprise. There was a little hollow beyond, grassy and pleasant, and quite hidden

You'll find

ALL ABOUT THE

ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE

. on .

PAGES 42 and 43.

from the beach and any passing boats. In the centre of it stood a comfortable-looking tent, with one or two chairs outside, and a table.

"Well, of all the queer fellows!" said Fenton, looking round. "I can understand you becoming a hermit for a week or two, Gerald, but why drag me into the affair? And on a day like this, too!"

"I had to have you here," said Gerald, as they sat down. "Old man, I'm in a most frightful mess."

"You said that before."

"Hang it all, I mean it!" said Gerald earnestly. "You know I work at the bank? The pater shoved me in the confounded place, whether I liked it or not. An awful life, Edgar! Don't you have anything to do with it!"

"What about the bank?" asked Fenton, who generally treated his elder brother as though he were the younger. "Get to the point, old son."

"Well, I've always been a duffer at figures," complained Gerald. "I told the pater what it would be if he pushed me into that rotten bank. I've got my books mixed, or something."

Fenton stared.

"Go on!" he said grimly.

"Well, yesterday I heard that there was a frightful shortage of money somewhere—in my department, I mean," said Gerald earnestly. "And, with my books like that, you know, I simply got the wind up. I thought the best thing I could do was to clear out. I mean, what a fearful disgrace for the family——"

Fenton had gone pale.

"Terrible!" he gasped. "You—you don't

mean that you—— That money! You didn't——"

"Great Scott, no!" said his brother, staring. "Pinch it, you mean? You infernal young ass, do you think I'm a thief? Of course I didn't pinch it. I believe one of the other chaps is a wrong 'un, and he's been doing this sort of thing for months."

Fenton was aghast.

"Then—then why in the name of goodness did you bolt?" he asked blankly.

"Well, my books, you know——"

"Hang your books!" shouted Fenton. "If you don't know anything about that missing money, you had nothing to fear. Gerald, you hopeless idiot, you've probably done for yourself now! It was the worst thing you could do to bolt. Why, you madman, they'll suspect you!"

Gerald nodded gloomily.

"Of course they will," he admitted. "But isn't it better for them to suspect me when I'm safely out of the way? Why, if I had stayed there, I should have been arrested, and that would have just about killed the mater. I thought the best thing I could do was to scoot."

"You're crazy!" said Edgar Fenton, standing up and glaring.

"Well, I was jolly nervous about my books," said his brother. "You see, I know they're wrong. I made a few mistakes, and then did a bit of a wangle to make them balance. And then, of course, after that, the figures got worse and worse, and I had to keep wangling them all the time. But there's nothing wrong, you know—absolutely nothing rocky about the affair. I haven't touched a cent of the bank's money—why should I? The pater is jolly generous with his allowance. The trouble is I don't get it if I leave the bank."

Fenton was simply staggered. But it was just like his brother. He had done nothing wrong, and yet he had bolted—because he had made a hash of his books. Quite suddenly the St. Frank's skipper burst into a roar of laughter.

"I say!" protested Gerald. "It's nothing to grin at, you know."

"You hopeless old duffer!" chuckled Fenton. "It's the funniest thing I've heard for years! After all, I'm an ass for getting alarmed. All you've got to do is to go back to the bank to-morrow and explain to your chief."

"But that missing money——"

"I don't suppose there is any missing money—you're always getting things muddled up," said Fenton. "In any case, everybody knows that you couldn't steal anything, even if you tried. I'm laughing at all this melodramatic by-play of yours. Coming to this island, hiding yourself away, and sending me frantic wires!"

"Only one wire," said Gerald.

"That was quite enough!" grinned his brother. "By Jove, old man, I don't like to

call you a gibbering idiot, but just tell me of a better term."

"Oh, I say!" protested Gerald feebly. "Steady on, Edgar, you young ass! Don't forget I'm older than you are——"

"You're just a priceless duffer, Gerald!" interrupted Fenton firmly. "It's a sin and a shame to shove you in a bank. You were born to play cricket and polo and generally fool around."

"I know," admitted Gerald gloomily. "I've told the pater that scores of times. But you know what he is. One word, and he's down your throat! You see, if I don't stick in that bank, I get cut adrift without even the good old penny. So I've got to spoil those account books and annoy my chief just to get the allowance."

Fenton chuckled.

"Well, you wired to me for some advice, and the best thing you can do is to get straight back to London, and see that chief of yours," he said. "If we start off straight away, you'll catch the evening train——"

Gerald looked blank.

"But we can't get off the island," he protested.

"Eh? Why not?"

"Well, I arranged with old Bill to come back for you in the morning."

"In the morning!" shouted Fenton, in alarm.

"Well, you see, I thought I should be pretty lonely here to-night, and I wanted to make sure that you'd stay——"

"But—but isn't there any boat here?" demanded Fenton, with a gulp. "Can't we signal, or something? You don't mean to say that we're completely cut off from the mainland—without any hope of getting in touch?"

"Bill will be here in the morning, of course," said Gerald apologetically. "You see, I thought this thing was serious—but you've shaken me up a bit, and perhaps you're right about it. Old Bill Martin's a pal of mine, you know—as true as a die. I gave him a few hints, and he's sort of in my confidence."

"But I've got to get back to St. Frank's!" roared Fenton. "Do you realise, you idiot, that we're in the middle of a big match?"

"Well, that's all right," said Gerald, nodding. "Bill will be here at eight o'clock, and that'll leave you heaps of time to get back before play starts. They won't worry about you, I suppose? And I shall have you here for the night. Jolly comfy beds I've got, too. You've got nothing to growl about, my son."

Fenton could do nothing but resign himself.

"What's the good of growling, anyhow?" he asked. "If that fisherman chap comes for us at eight o'clock it'll be all right. But if he doesn't—— Gerald, old man, aren't you just about the limit?"

CHAPTER 6.

WILLIAM NAPOLEON BROWNE
ON THE TRACK.



UBBS, the Ancient House page-boy, looked upstairs cheerfully as William Napoleon Browne put in an appearance. It was

only seven o'clock, and St. Frank's was still more or less asleep.

"Morning, Mr. Browne," said Tubbs, grinning.

"I wish, Brother Tubbs, that I could copy your splendid example, and gaze upon the world with a smiling face," said Browne gravely. "But I fear my heart is too sad. I am bewailing the loss of Brother Fenton. What news, varlet? What news of the missing hero?"

Tubbs opened his eyes wide.

"What, ain't he back yet, Mr. Browne?" he asked blankly.

"Alack, what have I done?" sighed Browne. "Speedier than light, the rumours will soon be flashing round that Brother Fenton is still missing. Be warned, knave, and keep a silent tongue in that brainy head of yours. You would not wish willingly to alarm the entire establishment?"

"You are a one, Mr. Browne!" said Tubbs, grinning again. "We never knows when you're joking or when you're serious."

Browne beamed.

"We must be thankful for small mercies," he said benevolently.

Browne spoke lightly—as was his custom—but he was feeling rather worried this morning. He had already looked into Edgar Fenton's bed-room, and it had been empty. The bed had not been slept in. Proof enough to Browne that Fenton had not yet returned from his mysterious mission. Surely he would turn up soon?

The matter was urgent in the extreme. With Australia in such a leading position, and with St. Frank's with such a poor first innings total, the latter would be compelled to follow on. And Fenton would naturally open the batting with Wilson. Unless he did so, the whole innings might go wrong. Browne was a firm believer in a strong first-wicket partnership—and Fenton was the one man for the job.

Browne was thinking of making a tentative suggestion that he should open the innings with Fenton. He had no wish to oust Wilson, but he had a feeling that he and Fenton could do great things together. And this was no time for personal feelings.

But what was the good, if Fenton was still absent?

The Fifth Form skipper was so anxious that he decided to make a few discreet inquiries. It was only just after seven, and nobody else was down, and he might just as well do something to pass the time. So he went round to the garage and brought out his neat Morris-Oxford saloon.

If the hour had been later, Browne would

have affected a calm, sedate exterior. But at seven o'clock he was alone, and he had allowed himself the rare pleasure of outward anxiety. He soon had the Morris going, and a minute or two later he was speeding down the lane towards Bellton village.

Browne hated the thought of prying into Edgar Fenton's private affairs. But, hang it all, cricket was more important than anything else, and if there was anything rummy about Fenton's all-night absence, it would be just as well to discover the truth as early as possible.

So Browne went to the station, and found the clerk in a rather grumpy mood. The first local train had just gone, and a lot of unexpected parcels had been disgorged from it.

"Do I remember a young gentleman going anywhere by the 6.23 last night?" he repeated impatiently. "Sorry, but I can't keep everybody in my head—"

"One is not expected to perform miracles," interrupted Browne. "At the same time, if you perform a few mental gymnastics, I have no doubt that you will recollect Brother Fenton—a tall, Adonis-like figure, in white flannels—"

"Oh, him?" said the clerk.

Browne winced.

"We will let it pass," he murmured. "Pray enlighten us regarding Brother Fenton's movements. We have definitely established the fact that he left by the 6.23 train. Can you by any chance discover the destination he booked to?"

"He took a ticket for Deeping Cove," said the clerk, nodding.

"Splendid! Single or return?"

"Return."

"The plot thickens," said Browne gravely. "Brother Fenton takes a return, and returns not! I am deeply indebted to you, brother. May the blessings of an earnest student be yours."

"Scatty!" said the clerk briefly.

He was a newcomer to Bellton, for it was only during the summer season that the station boasted a booking clerk. For eight months out of the year the stationmaster and an aged porter were the total members of the staff.

Browne knew that Deeping Cove was a little village about seventeen miles beyond Caistowe. He glanced at his watch as he climbed back into the Morris-Oxford. Twenty minutes past seven. It might be worth taking a run there. He could easily be back before nine. A speed limit or two might be shattered in the process, but the roads were clear at this early hour.

With Browne, to think was to act. He generally made up his mind, one way or the other, within a second. And he was soon speeding along the Caistowe road, en route for Deeping Cove.

He made good time, for his saloon could hop along at a fine turn of speed. And before eight o'clock struck, Browne was

entering the outskirts of the little fishing village. The only soul he could see was a rather bewhiskered old fellow, digging in his allotment. This, evidently, was the same enthusiast whom Fenton had spoken to the previous evening. One might have been excused for thinking that he had been at work all the time, for he was in just about the same position.

"Pardon me, brother," said Browne, leaning out of the car, as he pulled up. "Forgive me for interrupting your manly labours, but can you give me news of a sprightly young gentleman in white flannels? To the best of my knowledge, he came here last night—"

"That's right—the young gent who went down to Bill's cottage—I seen him," said the horticulturist.

"Splendid!" beamed Browne. "But may I ask after Brother Bill? Having never met the cheery fellow, I am naturally in the dark. I should be grateful for all information concerning Brother Bill."

"Why, Bill Martin," said the other, giving Browne a queer look. "Him as lives down in the cottage with the green porch—down by the beach. That young gent was inquiring after Bill last night, so like as not Bill can tell ye more than I can."

"Like as not," agreed Browne smoothly. "My gratitude is great."

He passed on, congratulating himself.

"A noteworthy step in the art of detection," he murmured complacently. "The scent is growing stronger and stronger."

Browne was indeed pleased with the result of his little investigation. Quite unexpectedly, he had discovered some facts concerning Edgar Fenton's movements—although, of course, in such a little village as Deeping Cove, Fenton would naturally have been noticeable in white flannels.

Browne was delighted to find that he could drive his car straight down to the beach. He was now on the coast road, which joined the main highway a little further along. And he had no difficulty in locating Bill Martin's cottage.

He halted outside, and parked the car on a little stretch of green, well to the side of the road. Then he walked elegantly to the cottage door, and rapped upon it.

"Mr. Martin?" he asked, as the door opened. "I beg your pardon!" he added, as a stout lady was revealed. "Doubtless your husband—"

"Bill has just gone out, sir," said Mrs. Martin, nodding, and giving Browne a keen glance. "Mebbe you'll be in time to catch him before he gets the boat off—"

She paused so abruptly, and gave Browne such a suspicious look that he wondered if there was something wrong with his appearance. He was even more startled when Mrs. Martin closed the door with a slam.

"This is becoming somewhat murky," murmured Browne, turning, and glancing down the beach. "Ah, what is this we see? A

stocky gentleman in blue, shoving a boat into the briny. Brother, let us investigate this without any further loss of time."



CHAPTER 7.

A STRANGE ADVENTURE.

MR. BILL MARTIN looked round in a rather scared sort of way as William Napoleon Browne hailed him. He saw a tall, keen-looking young man, in spotless attire. Browne looked much older than his actual age.

"Bust my sails!" muttered Mr. Martin.

He was just about to start off for the little island, according to Gerald Fenton's instructions. He was rather late, but Bill was not particularly famous for his punctuality. He was inclined to regard "eight o'clock" as any old time between eight and nine.

"Before you heave your coracle into the ocean depths, I would have a word with you, Brother Bill," said Browne, striding up. "It is possible that you are in a position to give me some desirable information. I might inform you, for your edification, that this sound is not a mere decoy."

He jingled some loose silver in his pocket, and Mr. Martin looked suspicious.

"Sorry, young gent," he growled; "I can't stop. I'm in a hurry. I've got to get out to my nets—"

"I shall merely detain you for a moment," put in Browne. "I have reason to believe that you can tell me the whereabouts of a certain Brother Fenton. But you wilt at the sound!"

Bill Martin had certainly started. He had started so obviously that Browne knew that he was still safely on the scent. A change came over the old fisherman. He not only looked scared, but a stubborn, obstinate expression crept over his face.

An alarming thought had occurred to him.

He knew something of Gerald Fenton's object in retiring to the little island. He was a great friend of Gerald's—since Gerald had stayed here for some weeks the previous summer, and had paid Mr. Martin with singular liberality for totally inadequate services. The old fisherman had a vague idea that Gerald was in danger of the police, although he was quite certain that Gerald was innocent of any wrongdoing.

And here was somebody inquiring for him. Mr. Martin was not to know that Browne was far more concerned regarding Gerald's brother. He had been told to affect ignorance if anybody made any inquiries, for Gerald, the previous evening, had been unwarrantably pessimistic.

Without a doubt, this smooth-mannered young gentleman was one of those smart detectives from London!

So Bill Martin froze up solid.



Fangs of rock jutted from the water, surf-surrounded and treacherous. Desperately Browne tried to keep clear of them, but the heaving waves drove him on towards the sinister patch. He was in deadly danger. Only by the greatest of good luck could he win through and safely reach the shore!

"I can see that I have made no mistake," said Browne. "If you could give me any information regarding Brother Fenton——"

"I can't tell ye nothin'!" interrupted the old fellow gruffly.

"But, listen, Brother Bill——"

"I ain't your Brother Bill, neither!" said Mr. Martin aggressively. "How do you expect me to know anything about your swell friends? I'm only a poor fisherman. I ain't the kind to go about with gents. I never heard of Mr. Fenton, so it's no good of you askin' of me. And that's all there is to be said, young gent."

This was such an obvious evasion that Browne smiled.

"Come, come, brother," he murmured. "Surely you can do better than this. For some reason—best known to yourself—you wish to maintain secrecy regarding Brother Fenton's movements. I must inform you that he is urgently needed for a cricket match."

Mr. Martin wasn't at all impressed.

"I don't 'old with them games!" he said severely.

"Another sad blow to cricket," sighed Browne. "The whisper goes round that Brother Bill disapproves of cricket! But it is just possible that the game will survive. But I fear that you fail to appreciate the urgency of this call. Without Brother Fenton England will be lost. That is to say, young England."

Mr. Martin, who had got it firmly fixed into his mind that Browne was a detective, regarded all this as a cock-and-bull story to trap him. On the face of it, the thing was ridiculous. This detective had come here to arrest Gerald Fenton—not to take him off to a cricket match.

"I ain't never heard of Mr. Fenton, so it's no use you standing there, wasting my time," growled the old fellow. "An' it ain't no use you wastin' your time, neither. If I was you, young man, I'd get back into that there car of yours, and try somewhere else."

"But why should I try somewhere else when the information is here?" asked Browne. "Come, I'm quite harmless. I desire nothing but friendliness towards Brother Fenton. Cannot you see the honesty in my face?"

Mr. Martin frowned.

"It strikes me as you're talkin' too much, young gent," he said. "I tell you I don't know nothin'. And that's flat! You can ask me from now until Doomsday, but you won't get no more out of me."

Browne realised that Mr. Martin was obstinate, and for some reason he regarded his questioner with suspicion. It would be a mere waste of time to continue this argument. So the Fifth Form captain shrugged his shoulders, and took a stroll up the beach. He certainly had no intention of leaving the affair in such an unsatisfactory state.

And Mr. Martin ceased his attempts to

launch the boat, and walked up the beach and sat on a stone. He decided that it would be a foolhardy proceeding to go anywhere near the island while this detective was on the watch.

Thus, Edgar Fenton was fuming helplessly on the island, wondering why the old fisherman didn't come. And as the minutes passed, Fenton's anxiety increased. Until eighty-three he had been quite cheerful, for he had firmly convinced his elder brother that there was nothing whatever to worry about, and that his best course would be to go straight back to the bank.

As long as he could reach St. Frank's by eleven, everything would be fine, Fenton had decided. He had had an excellent night's sleep, and he was feeling very fit. And then he had had the first doubts. No sign of Bill Martin and the boat!

"Look here, Gerald, are you absolutely sure that you told that old fellow to come this morning?" he asked grimly.

"My dear Edgar, I fixed it all up," said Gerald, scanning the sea with an anxious expression. "I told him quite clearly——"

"He couldn't have mistaken you?" asked Fenton. "There's no chance of him turning up at eight o'clock to-night, instead? Great Scott! What a thought! Marooned on this confounded island all day——"

"Impossible!" said Gerald. "I can't understand it, you know."

In the meantime, Browne was strolling leisurely up a cliff path, his thoughts busy. He couldn't pretend to understand what it all meant, but he was quite certain that Edgar Fenton was at no great distance from this spot.

But where?

Obviously somewhere out to sea. Or why should Brother Bill have been busily preparing his boat? No islands were visible, but Browne had an idea that there were a few off this part of the coast. And if Fenton was helpless on an island, it would explain why he hadn't returned.

But the whole thing seemed so fantastic. It was perfectly ridiculous to imagine that a prosaic chap like Edgar Fenton would get mixed up in some lurid melodrama involving imprisonment on islands.

However, there were the concrete facts. Fenton had come to this spot the previous evening, and he was still somewhere in the vicinity. And Mr. Bill Martin knew all about it, too. Somehow, Browne found it impossible to tear himself away until he had discovered something definite.

He would leave at 10.45, of course—for he had to be at St. Frank's for the start of the match at 11.30. But until 10.30 he felt that he might spend his time better here than elsewhere. And it was surprising how rapidly the minutes sped away.

Browne felt that he ought to be doing something. But, after all, what was there to be done? Mr. Martin still sat stolidly on his

stone, and appeared to be a fixture there for the day.

Browne tried one or two other local inhabitants whom he happened to meet. He wasted quite a lot of time asking them questions, but they all seemed to know nothing. Whether there was a conspiracy at work Browne didn't know, but it seemed very strange to him that he could get no information.

He tried Mr. Martin again, and earnestly informed him that he was a schoolboy (palpably absurd, according to Mr. Martin), and that Fenton was a schoolboy, too (which was an absolute lie, as Mr. Martin well knew). So the second interview was rather a dismal failure.

The time was now going alarmingly, and Browne felt that he would have to give it up as a bad job, and get back to St. Frank's. As a last resort, he climbed the cliffs again, and went a lot higher. As high as he could go, in fact—to have a good look round, in case there were some islands he hadn't seen yet.

No, they were just the same—— Hallo! What was that? Browne pulled out a pair of small binoculars, and focused them. His eyes were aching because of those binoculars already, but he was game for anything. He felt certain that he had seen a figure—far off on the big island.

"Success!" he breathed. "At last we have Brother Bill in the soup!"

For, quite clearly, William Napoleon Browne could see the flannelled figure of Edgar Fenton.



CHAPTER 8.

ROUGH ON BROWNE.

BILL MARTIN was exercising his brain to such an extent that he already had a severe headache—a phenomenon which had not occurred for many years. As a rule, Mr. Martin's brain was somewhat dormant.

He was intensely worried.

He didn't know whether to go out to the island, or stay where he was. That young detective chap had gone now, but Mr. Martin had a vague notion that detectives were in the habit of watching people. So he remained stolidly on his stone, gazing pensively out to sea.

And then, sure enough, Browne reappeared.

"Brother Bill, the time has arrived for us to hoist our slacks, and get a move on," declared Browne firmly. "Let there be no more pretence. Brother Fenton is on yonder island, and you are about to take me there."

Bill stared grimly.

"I don't know nothin' about no island!" he growled.

"It might enlighten you if I remark that I have seen Brother Fenton with my own

eyes," continued Browne, who was in no mood for dalliance. "With these glasses I have not only seen Brother Fenton, but I have recognised him. So the time for action has arrived."

Mr. Martin recognised that fact, too. There was something about Browne's attitude which warned him to be careful. This young detective was quite capable of knocking him over and taking the boat out single-handed. Then he would be able to effect Mr. Fenton's arrest with ease.

Mr. Martin gave a low growl.

"Oh, well, since ye must go, ye must!" he said stubbornly. "But I warn ye it's a bad day's work——"

"Time is precious," interrupted Browne. "Let us begone."

Rather to his surprise, Mr. Martin took the hint, and led the way down to the boat. Without a word, he started heaving her towards the water; a minute or two later they were afloat, and the old fisherman was rowing vigorously out through the bay.

Once clear of the headland he veered round into the slight breeze, and made for the rocks and islands which rose from the water some distance away. They seemed comparatively near—and Fenton, indeed, had thought about swimming ashore. But his brother had warned him that the currents were treacherous, and that even if he managed the swim, he would be utterly exhausted, and unfit for any cricket.

Browne was far more anxious than his attitude revealed. The time was late now—between half-past ten and eleven. Even if he found Edgar Fenton at once, it would hardly be possible to get back to St. Frank's in time.

He was relieved when the nose of the boat ground itself into the sand of a little strip of beach. Without waiting for Mr. Martin, Browne leapt ashore.

"Thanks, Mister!" shouted Bill, his voice triumphant. "That's just what I wanted ye to do! Now, that's where ye'll stop!"

Browne looked round him rapidly. The boat, carried by the current, was sweeping away, and was already beyond his reach. The captain of the Fifth was not often caught napping, but this was one of those rare occasions.

For one thing, he had been preoccupied and thoughtful—worrying about the question of time. For another thing, he had not given Mr. Martin credit for attempting any trickery. Browne could have kicked himself. But, after all, he was not infallible—although he was generally cautious.

He guessed the truth in a moment.

Bill Martin, instead of landing him on the island which contained Fenton, had brought him to one of the little rocky islets which were dotted about. These could easily be distinguishable from the cliff top—quite distinct from the grassy island.

But from the level of a rowing-boat one mass of rock looked very much like another, and until it was too late, Browne had no

suspicion of the truth. But now, in a flash, he realised the enormity of the catastrophe.

"Stop!" he shouted desperately. "Brother Bill, I will give you ten pounds if you will reconsider——"

"Ye'll stop there!" roared Mr. Martin. "I ain't havin' no truck with fellers of your sort! I know what ye are, my bright young man! You can't fool me at my time o' life!"

He vanished round the rocks, and Browne gritted his teeth. He was simply furious with himself. He had been led into this trap with his eyes open, and he hadn't had sense enough to realise it. He was marooned! Until somebody came along to rescue him, he was as helpless as Fenton.

And the cost for St. Frank's!

This morning, of all mornings, when the First Eleven had a desperate battle to face, two of the best members of the team were missing! And Morrow was crooked! What possible hope was there for young England now?

And the worst of it was that the whole series of events had occurred owing to misunderstandings. By sheer ill-luck, Browne and Fenton were helpless, but nothing could alter the fact that circumstances had conspired with amazing cunning to this end.

But the position was not quite so bad as Browne believed.

For Bill Martin forthwith proceeded to the main island and landed. Fenton and his brother rushed down and met him—Fenton simply boiling with rage.

"Why didn't you come at eight o'clock?" he panted. "It's nearly eleven now—and I've got to be at St. Frank's at half-past——"

"There's a good reason why I didn't come, young gent," interrupted Mr. Martin. "It's a good thing for you, Mr. Gerald, I'm a man with eyes about me. Them suspicions o' yours was correct."

"What do you mean?" asked Gerald, staring.

"Why, I was just settin' off at eight o'clock—like we arranged—when who should come up but a detective chap!" said Bill Martin impressively. "Lookin' for you, he was, sir!"

"Great Scott!" panted Gerald, turning pale. "There you are, Edgar! What did I tell you? I was sure of it! Well, Bill?"

"I was suspicious of 'im right away," said Bill triumphantly. "I wouldn't answer none of his questions, but at last he caught sight of you from the cliffs. Had a pair o' them spy-glasses—provin' as clear as daylight that he's up to no good! I knew he was certain to come here, so I brought him out in the boat."

"But he's not in the boat now!" said Gerald, staring.

"No—I landed him on one o' these rocks!" grinned Mr. Martin. "That's me! They can't fool old Bill! I thought as I'd give you a chance to get clear away, Mr. Gerald. 'Tain't right, I know, but nobody can't make me believe that you're guilty of anythin' wrong. So I don't mind helpin' ye to escape."

"I knew it!" breathed Gerald. "You see, Edgar?"

"Rubbish!" said Edgar Fenton sharply. "How on earth does Martin know that the man was a detective? It might be somebody looking for me—one of the fellows from the school, perhaps—"

"He ain't no schoolboy," denied Mr. Martin. "He's a detective!"

"Well, I'm sorry, Gerald, but all this strikes me as being sheer rubbish!" growled Fenton. "And the quicker I can be put ashore the better. Man alive, don't you understand that I've got to get to St. Frank's. Take my advice, and go straight back to the bank."

"I will!" muttered Gerald, nodding. "Yes, by Jove, I will!"

Fenton breathed again when he felt himself in the boat, and knew that his period of helpless imprisonment was over. All his thoughts were for St. Frank's. For nearly three solid hours he had been growing more and more anxious—until his brother's affair seemed an insignificant trifle.

It was practically eleven o'clock now—and play began at half-past! How on earth was he to get to the school in time? All Fenton's thoughts were concentrated upon this acute problem.

Bill Martin's story of a detective, and the landing of the latter on one of the rocks—Gerald's fears of arrest—these things were merely vague shadows in the background of Fenton's thoughts.

How was he to get to St. Frank's in time? This great puzzle, to the exclusion of all else, filled him. The importance of this Test match was paramount. It was the third of the series, and, so far, the honours were even. If Australia won— But Fenton breathed hard, and refused to nurse the thought.

Fenton knew well enough that it was essential that he should be at St. Frank's. Not only was he needed to open the innings—for England, of course, would be obliged to follow on—but his very presence was necessary as captain. Without him, the Eleven would be skipperless, and the effect of his absence, too, would show itself on the morale of the whole team.

What would Fenton's thoughts have been had he known that William Napoleon Browne, the soundest all-round man of the England Eleven, was marooned not a quarter of a mile distant?

moment. But his anxiety had got the better of him, and he had hurried out, on a flimsy excuse, to make swift inquiries.

Mr. Suncliffe was a cricket enthusiast, and he had been deeply concerned to hear that Fenton had gone off the previous evening and had not returned. He had been quite alarmed, just before school, to receive the added information that Browne was also missing.

Half an hour of the class-room had been more than he could stand, and he had rushed out. Willy Handforth and Reggie Pitt had been just crossing the Triangle, much to the Form-master's joy. But they had given him no cheering news.

"Extraordinary!" he repeated. "Ten o'clock! And no sign of either of them! Surely, Handforth minor, somebody must know something? With the game in such a vital state—"

"That's the rummy part of it, sir," interrupted Willy, shaking his head. "Nobody got the wind up at all until just after breakfast. Lots of the fellows knew that Fenton had gone off somewhere last night, but it was taken for granted that he would be here this morning."

"Naturally—naturally," agreed Mr. Suncliffe.

"But when he wasn't seen at breakfast-time some of the fellows got worried, sir," put in Reggie Pitt. "And then we found out that he hadn't been here all night!"

"Yes, and we found out that Browne's missing, too," added Willy.

"There seems no reasonable doubt that Browne knew of Fenton's errand, and went off in search of him this morning," said Mr. Suncliffe. "We already know that Browne was seen quite early, and that he went off in his car. But he appears to have told nobody of his plans."

"The same with Fenton, sir," said Pitt. "Wilson and Stevens have been up and down the school from end to end, and they haven't discovered a single thing. It's the rummiest affair you could possibly imagine!"

"Of course, there's no need to get alarmed yet," said Willy evenly. "Play doesn't begin till half-past eleven. Plenty of time for them to turn up—"

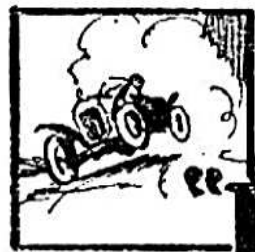
"I believe they've been kidnapped!" said Handforth grimly, as he joined the group. "That's what's happened! Fenton was kidnapped first, and Browne went to his rescue—and he's been kidnapped, too."

"Nonsense," said Mr. Suncliffe, frowning. "There is no necessity. Handforth, for you to get these wild notions. Your own common sense should tell you that the only people to gain by the kidnapping of these boys are the Australians, since we should be obliged to play substitutes. And we all know that the Australians are perfectly clean sportsmen."

"Oh, rather, sir," agreed Reggie Pitt, nodding. "Don't be an ass, Handy! I'm blessed if I know what'll happen if Fenton and Browne don't show up. As skipper of the Second Eleven, I suppose I shall have

CHAPTER 9.

THE ALARM AT ST. FRANK'S



"EXTRAORDINARY!" declared Mr. Suncliffe, frowning.

Ten o'clock had just boomed out from the Clock Tower at St. Frank's, and Mr. Suncliffe, the master of the Third, should really have been looking after his Form at that

to take charge— But that's all rot!" he growled. "They're bound to turn up."

"Good gracious, yes," said Mr. Suncliffe. "Handforth minor, I shall regard it as a favour if you will send me a message the instant something definite is heard."

"Count on me, sir," said Willy promptly. "It's pretty hard lines on you, being stewed up in the giddy class-room."

"Ridiculous!" said Mr. Suncliffe indignantly. "On the occasion of these big matches the headmaster should have sufficient common sense to grant— Ahem!" He paused, and turned red. "Don't be absurd, Willy," he added hastily. "My duty is in the class-room, as you well know."

Mr. Suncliffe hurried off, and Reggie Pitt grinned.

"Poor old Sunny!" he said. "He'd give his last penny to see this match, and he let the cat out of the bag properly that time. He's so jolly proud of you, Willy, that he wants to see— Hallo! Where's Handy off to? Hi, Handy, old man!"

But Edward Oswald Handforth was striding off with a grim, purposeful step. An idea had suddenly come to him—a brilliant plan to end all this anxiety, and learn something really definite. St. Frank's was in a high state of nervous tension, and the sooner the suspense was over, the better.

Handforth didn't even hear Reggie's call, for when he was busy with his own thoughts he was deaf to everything that went on around him. There was a keen light in his eye, and he gave a sharp glance at the school clock.

"Nearly ten past ten!" he muttered. "I've got well over an hour. By George! It won't take me half that time to find the beggars!"

Church and McClure, coming round the angle of the Modern House, gave him a hail, but he heard nothing. He was just disappearing through the West Arch, and by the time his chums reached that spot, Handforth had crossed the square and had vanished through the West Gate.

He had made up his mind.

Similar to everybody else, he was worried and puzzled by the strange disappearance of Fenton. It would have been different if the captain had given a hint of his movements. But no, he had gone off unexpectedly, and without even leaving a message. And Browne had followed his example!

And now Handforth, all unconsciously, was about to do the same thing!

And yet all these movements were perfectly natural—to those who performed them. To the rest of the school they seemed inexplicable. Nobody would have taken any notice at any ordinary time—but in the middle of a Test match it was a very different matter.

The school was at work and had already concluded that Fenton and Browne were back. And the members of the Eleven simply refused to credit that eleven-thirty

would find the team incomplete. The two absent seniors were bound to show up before start of play. Any other thought was not merely absurd, but positively unthinkable.

For if Fenton had met with an accident, or if Browne had suffered a similar fate, they would have telephoned. Or somebody else would have telephoned. It was inconceivable that they would keep the school deliberately in suspense. Yes, they were bound to turn up in time.

But Handforth was not so sure—and, in his own way, he meant to make sure. What could be easier? Why hadn't he thought of this idea before? He had wasted the whole hour since breakfast, hanging about idle.

Before his chums could track him down he had taken out his neat little Austin Seven. Handforth was the proud owner of a real motor-car—an unexpected present from an eccentric aunt. He had had the car for over a week, and the school was astonished to see that he was still whole. In some uncanny fashion, Handforth bore a charmed life in that Austin Seven. Where everybody had expected him to meet with disaster, he had come through unscathed.

Handforth was no ordinary motorist. He took chances that any Brooklands racing man would have hesitated over. Yet he never came to any harm. The school wasn't sure whether it was fool's luck or extraordinarily good judgment. Probably a combination of the two. For Edward Oswald at least possessed a keen eye, and nobody questioned his judgment. As goalie for the Junior Football Eleven, in every important match he had proved his worth. A goalkeeper without the keenest of keen judgment is not much of a success.

It was his recklessness that nearly gave his chums heart failure. With the utmost coolness, he would shave everything by a hair's-breadth. In any ordinary car he might have courted a smash, but the Austin Seven was so nippy that it careered serenely through the tightest corners.

This morning he came out in his characteristic way.

There was a purr from within the cycle house, and Church and McClure dodged out of the West Gate just in time to see the Austin Seven swing out of the doorway, nearly on two wheels only. The near-side door-post was missed by an inch, and the next second Handforth was shooting down the private road towards the outer gates.

"Hi!" reared Church. "Hold on, Handy!"

"Where are you off to, you ass?" yelled McClure.

It was useless to run. The Austin was simply hurtling down towards the outer gates. And Handforth hadn't told his chums where he was going, or what his object was. And he was in the eleven, too! A third man going off without a word! There seemed to be something uncanny about this sudden mania. Church and McClure could only stand and stare.

"He'll kill himself!" panted Church. "Look at him! Shooting out into the lane at about thirty! If he doesn't overturn he'll probably smash into somebody! Oh, the reckless chump!"

Handforth always appeared to take dreadful risks. But actually he didn't. He knew that he could rely upon the four-wheel brakes of the Austin, and just before he reached the gateway he abruptly slowed down, and glided out without taking any chances.

But the instant he saw the road was clear he stepped on the accelerator, and the little car hummed furiously down towards Bellton. He swept into the village like a miniature cyclone, and pulled up suddenly alongside the surprised landlord of the George Tavern.

"Seen a Morris-Oxford through here?" asked Handforth tensely.

"Why, yes, to be sure!" nodded the landlord. "Not five minutes ago. Took the Bannington Road——"

"Good!" panted Handforth. "Thanks!"

With a fierce purr he was off again, gloating over his early success. So Browne wasn't so far off after all! He must have come back to Bellton for some reason, and then gone on to Bannington. This was easy!

Just before reaching Bannington, Handforth encountered a motor-cyclist, and immediately stopped him.

"Seen a Morris saloon pass this way?" he asked briskly.

"Yes, I passed one two minutes ago, branching off on the Caistowe Road," replied the motor-cyclist, who didn't appear any too pleased at being stopped. "Like your nerve to pull me up——"

But Handforth didn't wait. Instead of entering Bannington, he took the first turning to the right, and headed for Caistowe. It was a quiet road, and he met nobody. He skimmed along at a devastating speed, and didn't pull up until he met a constable opposite the Caistowe Town Hall.

"A Morris?" repeated the officer. "Why, yes. It's just gone."

"Where?" shouted Handforth excitedly.

"He took the road to Helmford——"

"Right!" panted Handforth. "Thanks!"

He was off again, but two miles farther on he came to a spot where the roads branched—one leading to Helmford, and the other southward towards the coast. Fortunately, some boys were playing about on the spot.

"Hi, you kids, which way did that Morris go?" demanded Handforth, pulling up. "Look alive! Don't stand there, staring at me!"

"Morris?" repeated one of the children blankly.

"A motor-car!" snorted Handforth. "It must have come along not two minutes ago——"

"Oh, that!" interrupted one boy. "He went straight along there!"

He pointed along the coast road, and Handforth patted himself on the back for his astuteness. He might have gone astray by taking the road to Helmford. He sped on, and a few miles farther along he definitely heard that the car ahead was indeed a Morris. He continued the chase, his whole being vibrating with the excitement of the hunt.

Another five miles, and he was still on the road alone. But he never failed to receive definite information of the Morris. It was always somewhere ahead. Somebody had always seen it.

And then, just when Handforth was beginning to feel a tiny doubt, he beheld his quarry. A Morris-Oxford saloon was coming towards him, and it pulled up outside a picturesque little country inn. Handforth swept down, and pulled up with a jerk.

"You silly ass!" he roared. "I've been chasing you all over the place—and now I meet you coming back! Of all the idiots—— By George! I—I—— Sorry! I thought you were somebody else!"

The Morris-Oxford was certainly identical with Browne's, but the driver was a total stranger. He was looking at Handforth rather curiously.

"What's the trouble?" he asked.

"I'm following a Morris," explained Handforth, chagrined by his discovery. "I've made inquiries everywhere, and heaps of people have seen it. But I'm blessed if I can——"

"Hold on!" interrupted the other. "Have you been simply asking for a Morris?"

"Yes."

"Not any particular colour or model?"

"Of course not," said Handforth. "Everybody knows what a Morris looks like! What's the idea of standing there and grinning?"

The stranger was not merely grinning, but roaring with laughter.

"You—you hopeless young optimist!" he chuckled, holding his sides. "Don't you realise that the countryside's simply swarming with Morris-Cowleys and Morris-Oxfords?"

"Eh?" gasped Handforth, with a sudden start.

"You could drive from here to Scotland, and somebody would have seen a Morris at every village!" grinned the other. "My dear boy, it's no good keeping up this wild-goose chase. You can go in any direction you like, and you'll be bound to find a Morris somewhere."

"My only hat!" muttered Handforth dazedly.

He had been so keen on the chase that he hadn't realised the extreme popularity of the Morris car, and that every one of the people he had questioned had probably seen different Morrises. The shock was a big one.

Another shock immediately followed. It was eleven o'clock, and he was nearly thirty miles from St. Frank's! He couldn't even get back in time for the start of play!



CHAPTER 10.

REGGIE PITT TAKES COMMAND.

REGGIE PITT despairingly ran his fingers through his hair.

"It's more than I can understand!" he said, staring anxiously across the playing fields. "Another minute, and it'll be half-past eleven. And still no sign—still no word!"

"And Handforth's missing now, too!" added Dick Hamilton. "What's come over the men? They're all scooting off without saying where they've gone—or why they've gone! We're three men short—three of the stars, too. And poor old Morrow is crocked! Ye gods! Here's a nice kettle of fish in the middle of a Test match—and with England in a losing position!"

"Might as well give the Aussies the game and done with it," growled Fullwood. "What's the good of carrying on, anyhow?"

"Never say die!" retorted Dick curtly. "The best efforts are always made when there seems no hope. We're not going to abandon this match—not while we've got an ounce of fight left in us."

"Sorry!" said Fullwood, nodding. "Thanks for making me look an idiot, Dick. You're right, by gad! This is a time when we've got to battle in deadly earnest."

"Rather!" agreed Reggie Pitt. "I think you'd better be temporary skipper, Dick."

Dick Hamilton shook his head.

"Not likely," he replied promptly. "You're the captain of the Second Eleven, and in Fenton's absence you've got to take charge. Browne is Fenton's usual deputy, but he's one of the missing!"

Things were certainly at sixes and sevens. It was practically time for play to commence, and the Australian team would naturally resent any delay—although they would probably express their willingness to wait. But what would be the good of waiting, when there was no definite knowledge of when the absentees would return?

Dick Hamilton regularly played for the First, but in these Test matches the players were chosen from both the First and Second Elevens, and it was undoubtedly Reggie Pitt's duty to take command now that the real skipper and his deputy were unaccountably absent.

Pitt handled the position creditably.

"Sorry, Beaton," he said, as he approached the Australian skipper. "Those men haven't turned up yet, and it's time to start. If you'll get your men into the field, we'll carry on."

Beaton looked dubious.

"But, I say, we don't want to walk over you," he said uncomfortably. "You're in a pretty rocky position as it is—without being

robbed of your best players. We're willing to wait——"

"Thanks all the same, but we'd rather accept no favours," interrupted Pitt quietly. "It would be a different thing if England had to go into the field. We couldn't very well do without our best bowlers. But there's always the chance that these men will turn up in time to take their knock. Hamilton and I will open the innings."

Beaton shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, all right, if you're really determined——"

"We are, thanks!" said Reggie.

So, two minutes later, with the Australian team in the field, Dick Hamilton and Reggie Pitt made a start. Such fellows as Wilson and Phillips, being seniors, were rather annoyed at the innings being opened by a couple of juniors, but Pitt's word was law. He was captaining the England Eleven now.

The whole affair still remained an extraordinary mystery—to the school.

There was only a pretence of work that morning, for even the masters were in a state of tension. The unfortunate Mr. Suncliffe was so upset that he allowed the Third to do very much as it liked, without even attempting to interfere.

Everybody predicted that Fenton would send a message before eleven-thirty, but now St. Frank's was still left in the dark. And Handforth's disappearance was only another cause for astonishment.

The game was looked upon as utterly lost.

With England compelled to follow-on, the fight would have been serious enough in any case. But with three of the best men absent, and the whole team on tenterhooks, it was generally taken for granted that the match would be over before lunch—with the England team dismissed for a mere bagatelle.

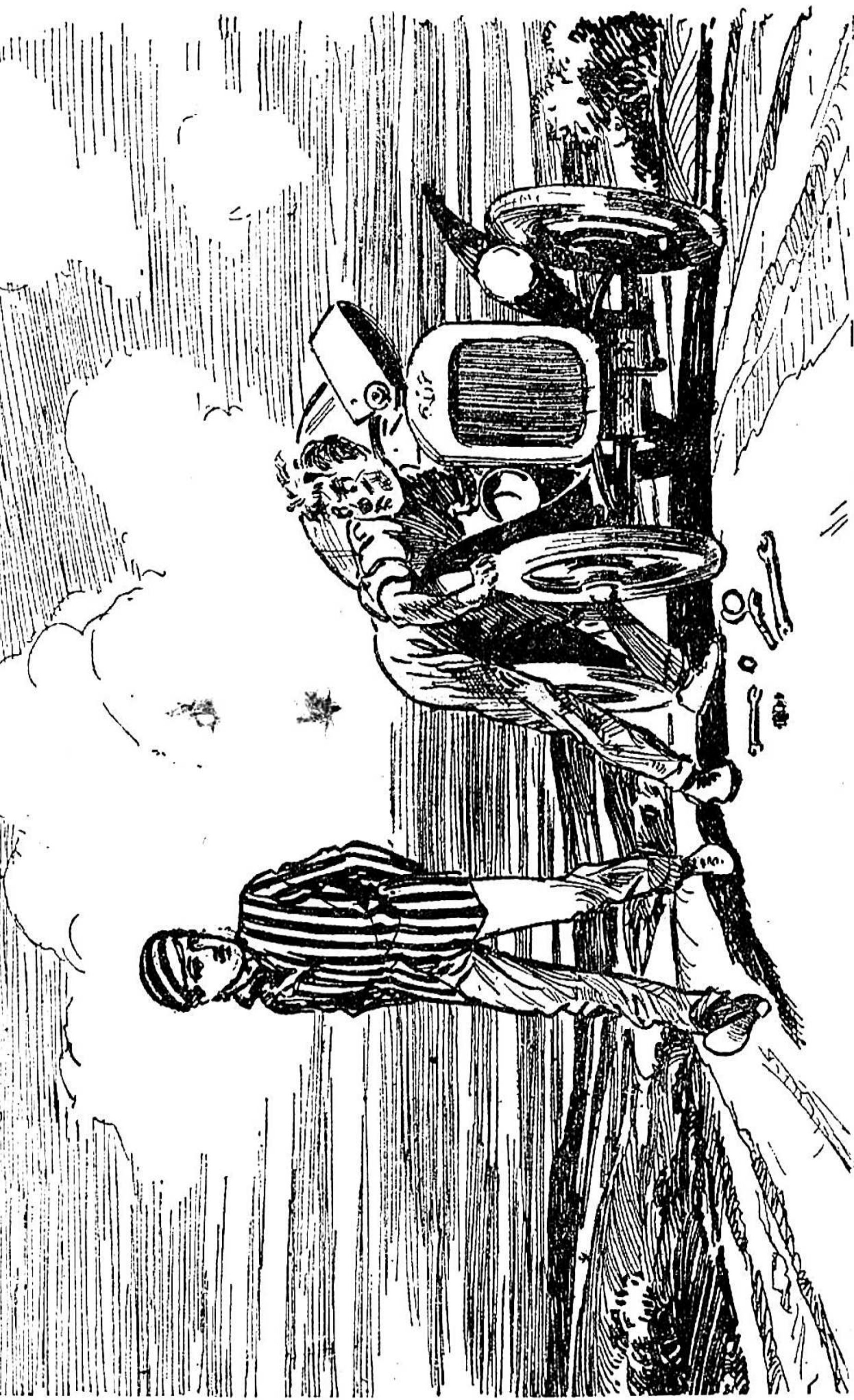
But Dick Hamilton's words were proving to be true.

He and Reggie Pitt surprised the school by making an excellent first wicket stand. They were cautious and slow—but they kept their ends up. It was an occasion which demanded pluck and grim determination. Dick and Reggie refused to be flustered, and they batted doggedly, and gave the Australians no opportunity.

At one minute past twelve, after the school had been dismissed, and the fellows were crowding eagerly round the ground, Reggie Pitt's wicket fell. He was caught in the slips, and he carried his bat out for a stubborn 12. Rather to the crowd's surprise, Willy Handforth was the next man in.

Pitt revealed his astuteness by sending in Willy early. The other members of the team were older, but they did not possess Willy's coolness. The captain of the Third was the very fellow to keep his nerve, and bat as though nothing unusual had happened.

And Willy proved the wisdom of Pitt's decision. Coolly and calmly he settled down.



Handforth, smothered in oil and grease, with tools scattered all about him, looked up from the silent engine of the Austin Seven. "I suppose, Brother Handforth," said Browne, "that you have enough petrol in—"

"Petrol!" gasped Handy; he'd forgotten about petrol. There was nothing wrong with the engine, they had simply run out of juice. They were stranded in the middle of the moor—and every minute counted.

and aroused the crowd to cheering enthusiasm by his plucky display. He never wasted a single chance—he took full advantage of every opportunity, and in his very first over he scored two boundaries.

But still there was no word of the missing trio!



CHAPTER 11.

HANDFORTH'S LUCK.

WITH a swish the Austin Seven cut nimbly round a lumbering bus, dodged between a lorry and a trap and sped onwards with a purring roar.

Handforth was in a hurry.

It was more than he dare do to look at the time. He only knew that he had made a hopeless ass of himself by leaving St. Frank's at a crucial moment, and going off on a wild-goose chase. His whole attention was now centred upon getting back in the shortest possible amount of time.

He realised how hopeless it was to look for a Morris-Oxford car—since the whole country was swarming with them. Earlier, he hadn't appreciated this aspect of the affair at all.

His mind was filled with acute worry—with rending anxiety. It was bad enough for St. Frank's to be without Fenton and Browne. But what on earth would happen to the team without him? That was what worried Handforth! How could Young England even start without him?

Of course, Handforth regarded this point from his own angle. He would hardly have been flattered had he known that the game was continuing calmly and sedately, and that his own name had scarcely been mentioned. Curiously enough, those at St. Frank's were not inclined to attach a great deal of importance to his absence. It was Fenton and Browne who caused all the anxiety. But Handforth only suffered in this way by comparison—for, actually, he was an extremely valuable man in a tight corner. His slog-ging had more than once come to the rescue in a time of stress.

But he seemed to think that the game would be at a complete standstill until he arrived back. So he was getting every ounce out of the little Austin, driving her relentlessly over good roads and bad roads, and keeping his foot hard on the throttle almost the whole time. Not that the Austin Seven objected. Indeed, she seemed to revel in this race, and sturdily rose to the occasion.

Handforth took a short cut home by following the coast road. At last, he thought it was the short cut. He had a somewhat hazy idea about geography, and it seemed quite logical to him that the coast road would be quicker, since St. Frank's was only two



Handforth, smothered in oil and grease, with tools of the Austin Seven. "I suppose, Brother Hand in—"

"Petrol!" gasped Handy; he'd forgotten about they had simply run out of juice. They were stranded if Browne was to get back to St. Frank's in time.

or three miles from the coast. And once an idea got into Handforth's head, it took a bit of shifting. It was not merely glued there, but secured by bolts.

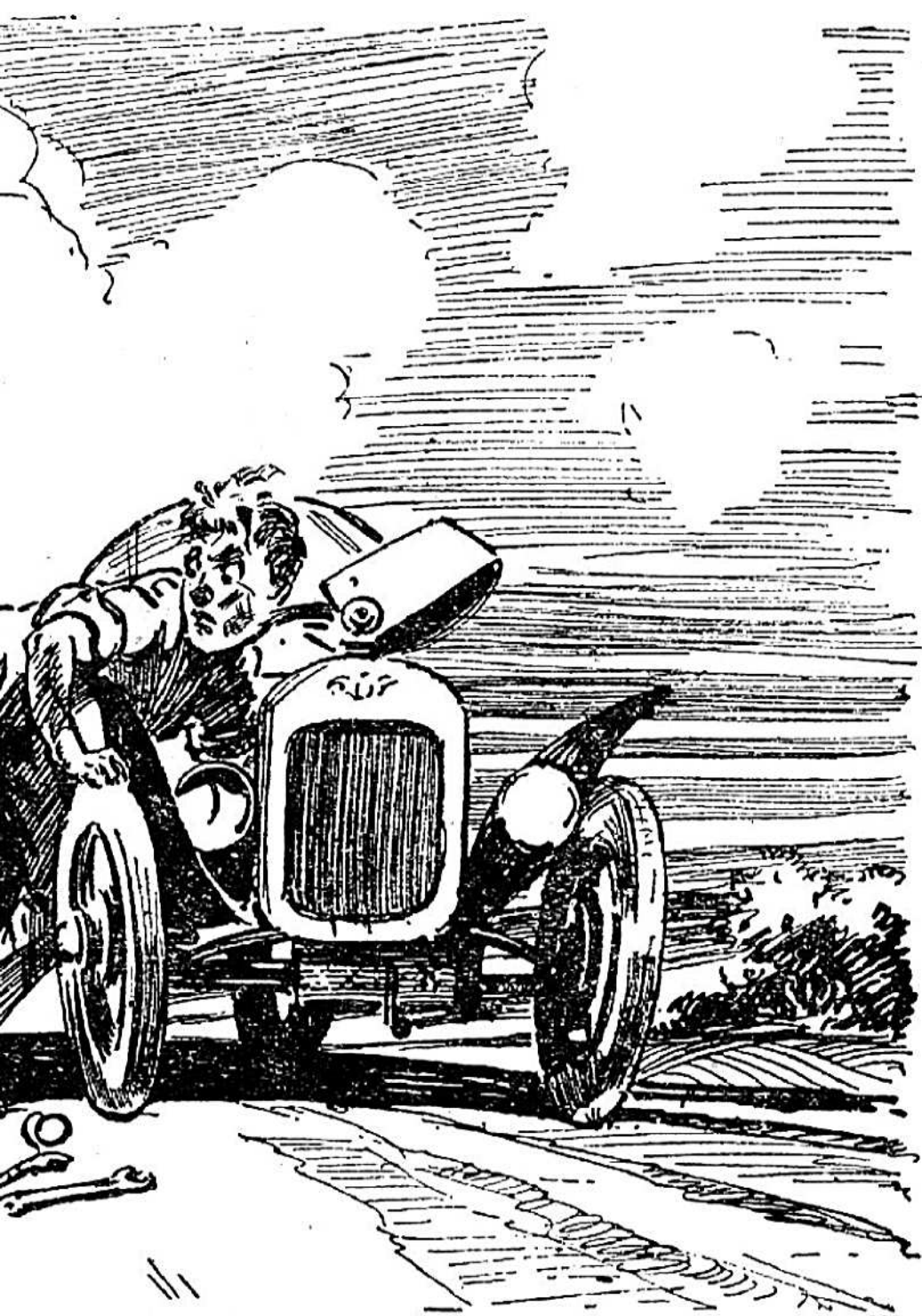
As a matter of fact, he was going eight or ten miles out of his way—just when he needed—or thought he needed—every second. But his proverbial luck was with him. His decision to take the coast road was a very happy one, as things turned out.

He found himself at the top of a steep little hill, with a peaceful cove lying below. There were cottages on one hand, and the beach on the other. And as he swept down, the Austin Seven roaring triumphantly, he caught sight of the familiar lines of a Morris-Oxford saloon. The car was standing on a little patch of green, just off the road.

"Huh!" grunted Handforth. "I'm not going to be caught again!"

He trod defiantly on the accelerator, and prepared to simply hurtle past the Morris-Oxford he had been seeking! But at the last moment his keen eyesight came to the rescue, and gave him a shock.

As he roared past the Morris-Oxford, he caught a glimpse of the mascot on the radia-



and all about him, looked up from the silent engine said Browne, "that you have enough petrol

. There was nothing wrong with the engine, in the middle of the moor—and every minute counted in his innings in the Schoolboy Test Match!

tor cap—the silver-plated metal figure of a cricketer, with bat and wicket complete.

"Great Scott!" gasped Handforth, jamming his brakes on.

He knew that mascot! It belonged to William Napoleon Browne—and had been made, in fact, to Browne's special order. It was such an unusual mascot that there couldn't possibly be another like it. It was inconceivable to think that, even if there were, it would rest upon the radiator cap of a Morris-Oxford saloon!

"Run to earth, by George!" gasped Handforth triumphantly.

He slowed down until he was nearly stopped, and then swung round in the road with suicidal recklessness. He nearly tipped himself over the breakwater down to the beach below. But a miss was as good as a mile—and this was no time for dallying.

Speeding back to the Morris, he pulled up and leapt out. The other car was quite empty, and there wasn't a soul in sight. The little cove appeared to be devoid of humanity. Handforth looked round desperately.

"Hi, Browne!" he roared. "Where the dickens are you, you ass?"

A hail came to him from an unexpected quarter. He stared out to sea, and then beheld a boat bobbing on the waves—a boat that was being rowed towards the shore. It contained the figures of a brawny fisherman, a young man in grey, and another young man in white. Even at that distance, Handforth recognised the latter. Fenton!

"Well, I'm dashed!" said Handforth blankly.

His surprise at seeing Fenton, when he had been expecting to find William Napoleon Browne, was completely overshadowed by his immense satisfaction. After all, Edgar Fenton was the most needed man. He was the captain of the Test Eleven, and his presence at St. Frank's was vital.

Handforth was amazed to find him in a boat. He couldn't even attempt to formulate any guess regarding Fenton's movements. He only knew that the skipper was here, and that the Austin Seven was waiting to whirl him back to the waiting Eleven.

As for Browne, Handforth never gave him another thought.

He leapt down from the breakwater, and landed at the water's edge, arriving just as the boat pushed its nose into the shingle.

"How's the game?" asked Fenton eagerly.

"By George!" said Handforth, staring.

"Where the dickens have you sprung from, Fenton? What's the idea of being away all night, and leaving the Eleven in the cart

"It wasn't my fault, but there's no time to go into explanations now," interrupted Fenton, springing ashore. "How's the game?"

"Goodness knows!" replied Handforth.

"I left at about ten o'clock, and I expect they're waiting. How can they start without me?"

Even Fenton's keen anxiety was interrupted.

"What a thought!" he said drily. "All the same, Handforth, with no disrespect to yourself, I rather fancy they are more concerned about me. Is that your car there? Good man! Let's break all records!"

"Hold on!" ejaculated Gerald Fenton, hurrying up. "What about me?"

The captain of St. Frank's had forgotten his elder brother in the sudden relief of seeing Handforth—and a means of rapid conveyance. He turned round, frowning slightly.

"Hang it, Gerald, your affairs have messed up this game long enough haven't they?" he asked in annoyance. "I've told you what to do, old man. There's absolutely no need for you to get the wind up. Follow my advice and go straight back—"

"But that fellow on the other island?" urged Gerald.

"Oh!" said Fenton. "H'm! I'm blessed if I know what to advise you. I don't believe he's a detec—"

"Come on!" roared Handforth impatiently.

Fenton's anxiety over the cricket was greater than his concern for his brother—for

he knew Gerald of old, and he had no fear that his elder brother was in any danger. But the Test Match was!

"All right, Handy—we'll scoot!" he said briskly. "Sorry, Gerald, but it's impossible to stay. Write to me from London, won't you? Come on, Handy! You're a friend in need!"

They scrambled up the breakwater, and fairly dived into the Austin Seven.

"What's the time?" asked Fenton.

"Goodness knows!" said Handforth, as he pushed the electric starter. "Getting on for twelve, I should think. We can't get back in less than forty minutes, and then it'll be lunch-time. Oh, corks! What a mix-up!"

Further conversation was difficult, even if they had felt inclined for talk. But all their thoughts were centred upon the waiting game, and neither of them had any desire for chatting.

Handforth, of course, was itching to know where Fenton had been all night, and why he had failed to communicate with St. Frank's. But he couldn't ask any questions now. He was bending over the steering-wheel, and his whole being was concentrated upon his task. He was driving the Austin Seven at a break-neck speed along the open, empty road.

Fenton, for his part, sat there clutching at his seat. He was by no means a nervous fellow, but Handforth's driving rather put the wind up him. Yet he had the sense to keep quiet. He knew how Handforth was liable to act if he was suddenly provoked! Besides, the sooner they got back to St. Frank's, the better. Fenton resigned himself to his fate.

But he felt easier after one or two villages had been passed through. Handforth wasn't such a road-hog, after all. He slowed down for all blind corners, and went through populated areas with sedate speed. It was only on the open road that he gave the Austin her head.

"Good man!" ejaculated Fenton, as they purred through Bellton. "Splendid, Handy! We're practically there—and it's not much after twelve-thirty. There'll only be just over an hour wasted."

"Good thing I fetched you!" grunted Handforth.

"How on earth did you know I was there?" asked Fenton. "That's the point that's been puzzling me——"

"Why, you ass; I wasn't looking for you at all," replied Edward Oswald. "I was chasing Browne."

"Browne!" yelled Fenton. "Isn't he——"

"Great jumping corks!" gasped Hand-

forth. "Now I come to think of it, I ought to have stopped—— Here we are! Hold tight!"

They roared through the gateway of St. Frank's, and found the Triangle utterly deserted. This was a bit of a surprise, since they had expected to see crowds of anxious fellows.

Handforth sped up the Triangle, and the Austin Seven nipped between the Modern House and the Senior Wing of the School House. He drove straight through the open gates across the private road, and came to a triumphant halt on the turf of Big Side.

"Well I'm hanged!" said Fenton, standing up in the car and staring.

The game was in full swing, and there were cheering crowds on every side. Willy Handforth and Dick Hamilton were batting—and Willy had just sent the leather speeding to the boundary for his sixth "four"!



CHAPTER 12.

YOUNG ENGLAND FIGHTS.

H

URRAH!"

"Good for you, Willy!"

"Splendid — splendid!"

yelled Mr. Suncleffe excitedly. "I am proud of

you, my boy! Keep it up!"

The enthusiasm was considerable, and Edgar Fenton and Edward Oswald Handforth looked at one another rather dazedly. So far, nobody had noticed their arrival, since all eyes were centred upon the field of play.

"My minor!" breathed Handforth. "The cheeky young beggar seems to be doing well, too! Look at the board! He's scored 33 already!"

"It's incredible!" muttered Fenton, amazed.

He had been anticipating complete confusion. He had expected to find the cricketers irritably waiting, with the Australians justly incensed at the long delay. He had expected to find the whole school in a state of suspense and worry.

And here was the game going on as though nothing unusual had happened! England was batting, and batting well. The Australians in the field were working at high pressure—fighting desperately to keep down Young England's total!

Naturally, Fenton was not merely pleased, but overjoyed. So his absence hadn't delayed the game, after all—and both he and Handforth would still be in time to take their own knock. Fenton's spirits, depressed shortly before, now rose with enthusiastic exuberation. "By Jove! Old Browne had been right when he had suggested the inclusion of Willy! Why, the valiant Third Former is doing magnificently!"

His performance, indeed, was a delight to all. Any big senior, batting as he was batting, would create enthusiasm in the crowd

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—but Willy was merely a fag, and thus his play was trebly attractive and surprising. About the coolest fellow within half a mile was Willy himself.

He possessed the true "big match" temperament. It didn't matter to him whether the occasion was important or otherwise. He kept his head under all conditions, and remained perfectly calm. And this morning he had made up his mind that he would put a stop to the criticisms which had been levelled against him, and justify his inclusion in the Test Eleven.

And having made up his mind, he was simply doing it.

The Australian bowlers were partly responsible for Willy's success. They had regarded him as easy game—a mere fag! And they had been careless with their first deliveries, only to find themselves hurtled to the boundary. And by the time they realised that Willy was really dangerous. Willy had fairly rooted himself in. And now he would take a lot of shifting! He was set, and he was splendidly partnered by Dick Hamilton. To the intense joy of St. Frank's, a spectacular stand was being made.

The morale of the Eleven was sent up even higher than usual, and the absence of Fenton and Browne was not now regarded as a tragedy. However, when Fenton himself was spotted a minute later, a cheer went up which almost caused Dick Hamilton to lose sight of the speeding ball.

Only one wicket had fallen, and these junior members of the Test Eleven were making history. And the arrival of Fenton, safe and sound, served to put more confidence into his colleagues.

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Fenton!"

"Where's Browne?"

"Yes, by Jove, where's Browne?" said Fenton, with a start. "You were saying something about Browne, weren't you, Handforth?"

By this time a number of excited seniors had hustled them into the pavilion, and there were all sorts of inquiries and congratulations. Everybody was caught in the toils of the growing excitement.

"Jolly glad you're back, Fenton," said Reggie Pitt, with great relief. "You can take the reins now. I didn't quite know what to do, but we started promptly on time—"

"Good man!" said Fenton. "You did the right thing."

"But I only made a rotten 12," grumbled Pitt, thoroughly dissatisfied with himself. "Still, Dick and young Willy are doing marvels out there. In your absence I thought it better to start off fairly quietly. I'd no idea Willy would spring a surprise like this. But where's Browne?"

"Yes, where's Browne?" demanded several others.

Handforth was scratching his head.

"Wait a minute!" he said tensely. "Let

me think! Browne! Of course, I was chasing his car when I spotted you, Fenton, wasn't I?"

"How on earth do I know?" said Fenton.

"But didn't you see Browne's car just off the beach in that cove?" asked Handforth excitedly. "My hat! Don't you remember? It was standing—"

"Browne's Morris-Oxford?" shouted Fenton.

"Yes!"

"In that cove?"

"Of course."

"Great Scott!" said Fenton, staring. "Then it was Browne who came! That doddering old idiot of a Bill Martin mistook him for a detective, and dumped him on a rock! The poor chap's marooned out there!"

This was double Dutch to those who listened.

"Detective?" repeated Handforth dazedly. "Bill Martin? Rock?"

"You wouldn't understand," said Fenton anxiously. "No time to explain now, anyhow. That wire I got yesterday was from my elder brother. He's a chump, and thought he was in trouble. I'll tell you when there's more time. But it's a dead cert. that Browne is marooned on one of those rocks just off the coast. He's got to be fetched."

"I'll go!" offered Handforth eagerly.

"I don't know," said Fenton, with a glance at the field. "You haven't had your knock yet, and you might be a long time—"

He was interrupted by a burst of cheering.

"What's that?" he added quickly.

"Young Willy's out," said Pitt. "By jingo, give him a cheer! Look at that! I'm hanged if he hasn't scored 41! Bravo, Willy!"

Handforth minor had certainly covered himself with glory. Fenton congratulated him heartily, and checked Wilson as the latter was about to go out to the wicket. Fenton had been doing some quick thinking.

"Not yet, Wilson, old man," he said. "Handforth is next man in."

"But, hang it—" began Wilson.

But he paused, and nodded. Fenton was such a good skipper that his men seldom questioned any of his decisions.

"Get on your pads, Handy," said Fenton sharply. "Get as many runs as you can, and don't take any big chances. Don't forget we're fighting hard."

"But what about Browne?"

"You can fetch Browne as soon as you're out," replied Fenton crisply. "If you hurry, you'll easily be able to get him back in time. It won't matter much if he doesn't go in until later—seventh or eighth man. But don't be flurried at the wicket. Bat as though there were heaps of time."

Fenton had good reason for his decision. He knew that Handforth was a slogger, and that he never lasted much longer than twenty minutes at the wicket—although he generally utilised those twenty minutes to the full. He was the best man to send for the missing

Browne—and it was far better for him to get his own innings over and done with before he went. And, furthermore, Handforth was just in the mood to do some big hitting now.

Fenton was the only fellow who knew the exact circumstances, and he realised the necessity of a swift decision. William Napoleon Browne had to be fetched, and Handforth was obviously the one fellow to fetch him. Telephoning was impossible, there were no available trains, and Handforth's Austin was the only car at hand. It would be foolish to send him off before he had had his innings, and with Willy just out, his major could go in without any loss of time. Fenton was grimly determined to carry this battle on and win the match. The odds were great, but the St. Frank's skipper was plucky.

"Come on, Handy! Let's see if you can beat your minor!"

"Good luck, old man!"

Handforth was given a great welcome, for the onlookers were in a state of high optimism. Crowds of "outside" spectators had gathered by now, for these Test Matches were causing widespread interest.

Handforth opened his innings in characteristic style. Instead of waiting for a bit

before hitting out, he slogged at the very first ball, and sent it soaring away for a boundary. He looked round aggressively, and glared his defiance at the grinning Australian fieldsmen.

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Handforth!"

It happened to be the last ball of the over, and Dick Hamilton now had the bowling. He was batting steadily and capably, and with the second ball of the over he scored a creditable 3, bringing the bowling to Handforth again.

In the same reckless spirit, Edward Oswald lashed out. His recklessness was more apparent than real, however, for he only slogged hard at the loose balls. All the tricky deliveries he treated with great respect. He was eliminating many of his faults as a batsman, but nothing could repress his characteristic exuberance.

If his minor had done well, Handforth did even better—from the crowd's point of view. His hitting was spectacular in the extreme, and everybody's spirits continued to soar. This was a different tale from yesterday! England was following-on, but England was making up her lost ground!

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CHAPTER 13.

MAROONED!

ONE must learn to bear these trials with fortitude and stoicism, Brother Crab," said William Napoleon Browne sadly. "Alas, for the duplicity of mankind! Never would I have believed that Brother Bill was such a cunning fox! Never would I have given him credit for this murky deed!"

Browne was sitting disconsolately on a rock, addressing his remarks to a miniature crab, which crawled lazily about in a pool, left by the receding tide. There was no other life within sight.

Browne was not the kind of fellow to accept any situation on its face value, no matter how impossible it seemed. Finding himself marooned on this rock, a full half mile from the shore, and nearly that distance from the nearest neighbouring rock, he had lost no time in making a survey.

Even before Bill Martin had got out of sight, Browne had climbed to the highest peak on his own particular rock—and had sadly come to the conclusion that there was no escape for him.

At all conditions of the tide his rock was safe, but it would be a very risky thing to attempt to swim. The sea looked treacherous, for the numerous islands hereabouts caused tricky currents and perilous eddies.

It was even impossible for Browne to see what took place on the other island—where Gerald Fenton had made his camp. A high mass of rock jutted up, and concealed the view. Browne, however, had caught a glimpse of the boat as it had made for the shore.

After it had gone, he felt more isolated than ever. Another rock, nearer the shore, completely concealed the cove. This had the added disadvantage of making him invisible to anybody ashore—so it was useless for him to make any signals.

He was completely marooned.

At last Browne reluctantly arrived at the conclusion that there was nothing he could do. It was well past the time for the start of play, and with his usual sang-froid, he accepted the situation, and made a few comments upon life to his new friend, the crab.

"We must always remember, Brother Algernon, that a true philosopher accepts these slams with equanimity," he observed firmly. "I can see that you agree with me by the waggle of your off-side flipper. One of these days, alas, it will probably be served up with parsley. Any suggestion which you care to make will be greatly welcomed. For I must confess that my massive brain reels at the problem."

The crab, with sheer indifference, turned its back upon Browne, and investigated the interior of a rocky hole. Browne sighed, and gazed pensively into the tide.

"At moments such as these we must consider all possibilities," he murmured, frowning. "Greatly as I admire my swimming powers, I am nevertheless fond of life. We have no wish to startle the world by the news of a shocking calamity. Imagine the sensation, Brother Algernon! Tragic death of rising young cricketer! A loss which will stagger the world for epochs! No, we cannot take that risk, brother," said Browne, shaking his head. "We must remember our responsibilities to mankind."

Browne's manner suddenly changed, and he gazed keenly at the foaming water as it swirled past with the tide. There were a few fragments of seaweed and other refuse on the surface, and this was floating lazily in one direction on a calm sea. Browne stood up, and stared harder.

"An idea!" he muttered. "Let us consider the possibilities. It is obvious that Brother Fenton has abandoned me callously to my fate. As I wish him well, I can only assume that he is in ignorance of my presence on this rock. But when shall I be rescued? When will the lifeboat come out? When will the countryside be aroused to action, and release me from this servitude? I fear that many hours might elapse. It therefore behoves me to act independently."

Browne had noticed one particular fact. Everything floating on the surface was drifting shorewards—an indication of two things. Firstly, the tide was coming in and, secondly, the coastal current was strongly inclined shorewards.

A swimmer might, therefore, receive great help in an attempt to reach the beach.

But this might not be sufficient. Excellent swimmer though Browne was, the most important cricket match on earth wasn't worth risking his life for. But he remembered having seen a heavy wooden spar jammed in the rocks further round the tiny islet. With that spar to assist him, there was a strong possibility of reaching the shore.

"This is no time for hesitation," he told himself. "To think with a Browne is to act. He who hesitates gets nowhere!"

Previously, Browne had dismissed the idea of floating off on the spar—for he had realised that he might possibly be carried out to sea. But now that he had definitely seen that the current was inclined shorewards, the proposition took on a different aspect.

To his intense satisfaction, he found a loose piece of wood in addition to the spar—a rough piece of planking with a wide base to it. It might serve well as a paddle.

Having made up his mind, he lost no further time.

Here was an excellent opportunity to escape from this position. With a heave he sent the spar out into the sea, and then waded out and managed to get astride. He cut an incongruous figure, fully dressed as he was, and soaked to the skin. But he was quite cheerful.

"We are now in the lap of the gods—to say nothing of being in the lap of the waves," he murmured. "Two points to starboard, and our course is set. Excellent! I have always prided myself upon my powers of navigation."

He plied the improvised paddle vigorously, and found that with a little care he could maintain his riding position fairly comfortably. And what with the current and the paddle, his progress was appreciable.

Not that he could accurately decide his direction.

He was progressing shorewards, but he could already see that he would miss the cove completely. The current was sweeping him past it, and it was not possible to steer his clumsy craft as accurately as he would have wished.

However, the main thing was to get ashore.

Just on the other side of the cove the rocks rose steep and ugly, with many fangs jutting out from the water, surf-surrounded and treacherous. Browne was drifting straight towards this sinister patch.

"There is but one chance left," he murmured calmly.

He slipped off the spar, and discarded his paddle. And then, striking out strongly, he attempted to avoid the crags, and hit the shore just at the end of the cove, where the beach was safe. The distance was not great, and although the current tugged at him, he won the battle.

Browne felt the sands under his feet at last, and he strode ashore in triumph—still fresh and in no way exhausted. He was less than half a mile from Bill Martin's cottage, round in the centre of the cove. He set off with a brisk stride, careless of his soaked condition.

He broke into a trot, and scrambled up upon the breakwater at the first opportunity. The highway was just beyond, and he felt a pang or two of anxiety when he failed to see his Morris-Oxford. He was unfamiliar with the local geography, but he was certain that he had made no mistake regarding the car's position. But there was no sign of it there now.

"Is Fate standing round the corner with another sledgehammer?" he murmured concernedly. "Still, fluttering heart—still! Although this appears to be one of our unlucky days, there is always a chance that—Ah! Brother Bill in the offing!"

Mr. Bill Martin had caught sight of Browne at the same moment, and he made a feeble attempt to escape into his cottage. But Browne was upon him before he could do so, and he gripped him firmly.

"No, Brother Bill, I cannot allow this modesty on your part," he said firmly. "It is your natural desire to efface yourself, but you may rest assured that I have no warlike intentions."

"Ow did you get ashore?" demanded Mr. Martin suspiciously.

"That is a matter which need not be discussed now," replied Browne. "I am here, and we will leave all our differences in abeyance. Give me news of my car. That is all I ask."

"Wot's that?"

"My Morris-Oxford."

"It's no good," said Mr. Martin. "You won't get no talk out o' me, anyway. Blowed if I can understand how you escaped from that there rock. It fair beats me, it do!"

Browne nodded.

"The main thing is to discover what has happened to my car," he said grimly. "Do not pretend that you are ignorant, Brother Bill. You may not be aware of the fact that a theft has been committed—"

"Tain't a theft!" denied Mr. Martin hotly. "Mr. Fenton only took the car 'cause he was in a hurry. 'E says 'e'll put it in the big garage at Caistowe—an' that's where you'll find it—"

"Enough!" interrupted Browne, with set teeth. "Where is the station?"

"You can't do no travellin' in them clothes—"

But Browne wasted no further time on this old fisherman. He wondered who had taken his car—whether it was Fenton of the Sixth, or some relative of the same name. For Browne was already shrewdly guessing something of the real truth.

He was inwardly furious at finding his car gone, but it was no good revealing his emotions outwardly. He could only get to St. Frank's as quickly as possible, and straighten out the tangle after the match. The match was the most important thing in the world just now.

He succeeded in reaching the station—only to discover that there was no train of any kind for three hours! In despair, he left the booking-office, and then caught sight of a telephone-box.

"Joy!" he exclaimed fervently. "Then we are not actually in the wilderness! In our dire helplessness we may at least discover the state of the game!"



CHAPTER 14.

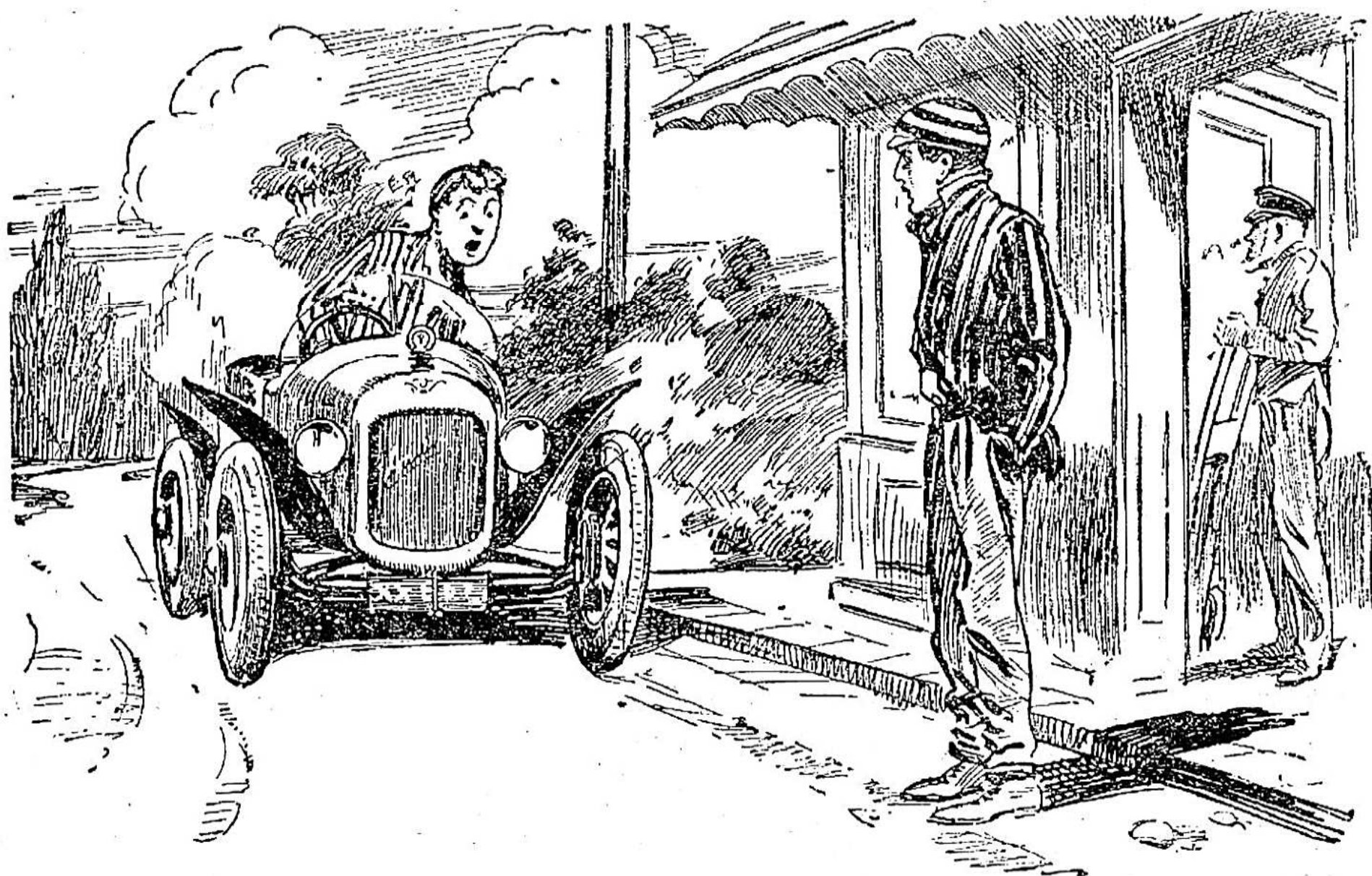
THE LAST STRAW.

ARTHUR MORROW'S eyes gleamed.

"By Jove, the game's looking a bit different now," he said. "Only ten minutes to the luncheon interval, and we're 125 for three. Those Handforth brothers are marvels! Hang it all, we've got to admit it!"

"Rather!" said Wilson, ungrudgingly. "I was inclined to be a bit critical at first, but those kids are worth their places! Young Willy is the Eighth Wonder of the World!"

A sudden burst of cheering went up.



Handforth stared over the windscreen at the usually immaculate figure of the Captain of the Fifth. Browne's flannels were shrunk and stained, horribly creased where they had dried on him; here and there Handy saw small fragments of seaweed. "What the dickens have you been up to?" he asked. "You look awful!"

"What's that?" asked Wilson, staring out.

"Handforth has just scored his 42nd run, and beaten his minor's total," replied De Valerie, grinning. "My hat! He's putting up a ripping performance to-day. Fenton's settling down well, too."

"Everything's going fine," said Morrow happily. "This wrist of mine doesn't hurt so much now—and I'm not so disappointed about losing my place."

The game was certainly promising well for England. Dick Hamilton had scored a very capable 23, and Fenton was now getting himself firmly set for a big innings. Fenton was in one of his most determined moods, and he had a feeling in his bones that he was going to do big things.

In the next over Handforth met his fate. He scored another boundary, bringing his individual total to 46, and then his recklessness met its due reward. A poor stroke resulted in the leather soaring skywards, and the catch was quite an easy one. But Handforth carried his bat in amid tumultuous applause. His score, for a junior player, was wonderfully good. And he had made his runs at an almost record speed.

"Jolly good, Handy, old man," said Dick Hamilton heartily.

"Topping!" shouted a dozen voices.

But Handforth was never satisfied.

"Rats!" he grunted, flushed, but inwardly happy. "I made a mess of that last ball. I was just set, you know—well on the way

to my century! And I didn't even get 50!"

Dick grinned.

"Never mind about centuries—if we can all continue as we're going now there'll be nothing to worry about," he said. "We've got a big deficit to make up, and we've got to win this match. Don't forget it's the third of the series—and the winners will have a huge advantage!"

Wilson was the next man in, and he went out confidently, his captain's example—to say nothing of the example of the juniors—giving him a feeling of serene certainty.

"What about Browne?" asked Handforth briskly, as soon as he had removed his pads. "Any news of the chap yet?"

"Not a word," said Pitt. "By the way, we haven't heard what happened to you, Handy. We don't even know where you found Fenton, or why you went off in such a hurry—"

"Sorry, can't explain now," said Handforth. "Fenton asked me to buzz off as soon as I left the field. I've got business to attend to. Browne's going to be here in time for his innings—by fair means or foul!" he added dramatically.

He strode off, intent upon speeding away in his Austin Seven.

"Hold on!" said Pitt. "What about your lunch?"

Handforth turned and glared.

"Lunch!" he snorted. "Haven't you got a soul above lunch—when Browne's innings

is in the balance? This is going to be a race against time—a stern fight with Fate!”

He snorted again, and vanished.

“This is what comes of having a taste for detective fiction!” grinned Dick Hamilton. “Handy’s mind always runs in melodramatic channels. He’s probably got an idea that Browne is held by smugglers, or is fast in the grip of a coiners’ gang!”

“He’s a good old scout, anyhow,” said Pitt cheerfully.

Everybody was feeling in high spirits now. Even Browne’s absence was not sufficient to disturb the general optimism. The game was going well! Young Australia was being given a gruelling fight, and, whatever the result of the match, it wouldn’t be a runaway victory for either side. It was the kind of game that cricket enthusiasts loved.

Just before Handforth reached his Austin Seven—which he had carelessly left lying about in the Triangle—Tubbs, the Ancient House page-boy, came running up.

“Just a minute, Master Handforth,” he said breathlessly.

“Sorry, kid—can’t stop,” said Handforth curtly.

“Mr. Browne’s on the telephone, sir, an’ he told me to hurry,” said Tubbs. “I’d better go an’ fetch one of the other young gents——”

“Not likely!” roared Handforth. “Browne on the ’phone? Where?”

“He didn’t say, sir.”

“Which telephone, you fathead?”

“In the Ancient House senior day-room, sir.”

Handforth rushed off at full speed, and when he arrived he grabbed the receiver and put it to his ear.

“Is that you, Browne?” he shouted.

“Ah, the voice of the brontosaurus!” came Browne’s even tones. “Or is it merely a thunderstorm somewhere down the line? But wait! Perchance it is merely the normal voice of our own Handy!”

“Don’t be an ass!” said Handforth. “Where are you?”

“Alas, at the ends of the earth!” replied Browne sadly. “Pity me, Brother Handforth, for I am stranded in a murky wilderness known as Deeping Cove. I have just heard, on the highest authority, that the next train will leave in the year 2000. Watchman, what of the night? In other words, how goes the great game? Break it gently, brother, for I am weak.”

“No need to break it gently, you chump!” said Handforth indignantly. “It’s like your rot to bury yourself in that dotty place, on the second day of a Test match! What’s the silly idea?”

“Let us delay this wrangling until a more opportune moment,” suggested Browne. “I am still torn with anxiety regarding the game——”

“Well, you needn’t worry about it any longer!” interrupted Handforth. “We’re doing fine. Our score’s well over 130, and

we’re only four wickets down. I made 45,” he added modestly.

A happy sigh came across the wires.

“Joy!” said Browne, with relief. “Rapture! Such words of courage make my old heart leap strenuously within me. Perhaps you can give me some news of my Morris-Oxford? A scurvy miscreant borrowed it without my permission——”

“My minor made 41,” said Handforth. “Not bad, eh?”

“Excellent! But I was speaking of my Morris——”

“That chap with Fenton must have taken it,” said Handforth. “One of his relatives, I believe. In fact, it was his elder brother—although we don’t know what the dickens it all means. Don’t worry, Browne—I am coming for you now in my Austin. Expect me in about an hour. I’ll have you back here in time for play after luncheon.”

“My cup of happiness is now filled to the brim,” said Browne joyfully. “Hurry, Brother Handforth! Hurry, but do not imagine the highway to be a young Brooklands. Much as I value your worthy life, I am still more anxious to have the benefit of your sturdy Austin. Remember that the game will crash unless I get back in time.”

“Well, we’re only delaying by jawing here,” said Handforth practically. “Where shall I find you? Outside the station? Good!”

He hung up, and dashed out again. In the lobby he ran into Church and McClure—who had been searching for their leader to congratulate him.

“Good man, Handy,” said Church heartily. “That innings of yours was masterly——”

“Never mind about my innings,” interrupted Handforth. “Where’s my Austin Seven? I’ve got to dash off——”

“Mac, where’s his Austin Seven?” said Church urgently.

“I haven’t got it,” said McClure, searching his pockets. “Sure you didn’t leave it in the study, Handy? Have you looked in the cupboard?”

“You funny ass!” said Handforth curtly. “This is no time for feeble jokes! I’ve got to rush off and bring Browne back.”

“You’ve located him?” asked Church eagerly. “Good! We’ll come with you——”

“No, you won’t,” replied Handforth sharply. “I haven’t got time to bother with you duffers. Besides, the lighter I go, the more speed I shall get.”

“That’s why we want to come,” said McClure. “We know what a reckless chap you are, and we don’t want you to kill yourself——”

But Handforth scorned the suggestion, and hurried out. A moment later he started off—just as a cheer from the playing fields announced the stoppage of play for the luncheon interval. Of course, Handforth’s assumption that he would get Browne back in time for the resumption of play was purely optimi-

NEXT WEDNESDAY

"HANDFORTH GETS THE SACK!"

Poor old Handy!

He's really in trouble next week!

Of course, he means well, but

He gets his own back—trust old Handy for that! And it's Willy who helps him out of the mess; the Handforths always stick together, you know!

But you can read all about it in next Wednesday's issue, and this new story is one that absolutely breaks all records.

The situation may be serious for Handy—but it's screamingly funny. You'll enjoy it.

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Handforth behind bars—waiting to be expelled! This is the cover to look out for next Wednesday.

ORDER IN ADVANCE

istic. Handforth never made careful calculations.

He couldn't possibly be back under two hours, and the luncheon interval was only three-quarters of an hour. So it would really be touch and go whether Browne could return in time to take his knock.

Although the Austin Seven rose valiantly to the task, a full hour had elapsed before Handforth arrived at Deeping Cove. And this was really excellent—for Handforth had been compelled to go at a much greater speed than thirty miles an hour to maintain that average. He found Browne waiting outside the station—a sorry-looking figure.

"You have broken all records, Brother Handforth," he said gratefully. "It will be a mere waste of breath if I attempt to thank you in adequate terms——"

Handforth stared at the Fifth Form skipper.

"What the dickens have you been up to?" he asked. "You look awful!"

"I can assure you, with all truth, that I feel awful," declared Browne. "Imagine my torture, Brother Handy. Imagine the pangs of an immaculate Browne, compelled to exhibit himself to the public gaze in this sad condition. Fortunately, the public gaze, so far, has merely consisted of two urchins and a cross-eyed tramp. We must be thankful for small mercies."

Browne's flannels had dried upon him, after his swim ashore, and the beautiful crease in his trousers was conspicuous by its absence. The original whiteness had gone, and the flannels were now stained and shrunk and creased in a thousand places. But Browne's cheerfulness was unimpaired.

"What have you been doing?" demanded Handforth.

"It will be time for explanations once we

are speeding upon the road," replied Browne. "The afternoon play is already well afoot, and I have a dreadful foreboding that I shall not feel a bat in my grasp this day. Have pity on my anxiety, Brother Handforth, and waste no time."

They were soon off, Handforth declining to allow his companion to drive. Browne had made the suggestion tentatively, and was not surprised at Handforth's refusal. And as the Austin roared along at top speed, Browne had nothing to complain of.

Conversation wasn't very easy, particularly as Handforth was one of those drivers who concentrated his full attention upon his work. Browne made no attempt to disturb him. He was swallowing his heart repeatedly, for the latter organ insisted upon jumping into his mouth continuously. An expert driver himself, Browne had the wind up with Handforth at the wheel. The best kind of passenger is a non-driver.

After about seven miles, when the Austin was cheerfully plugging up a long hill, and where there was no village for miles, the note of the engine changed. It spluttered once or twice, and ran erratically.

"I trust we are not about to meet with disaster?" murmured Browne anxiously. "I can imagine no sadder calamity in such a neighbourhood as this. The downs—the glorious downs. Nothing but the downs as far as the eye can see! A beautiful picture for a painter, but a vile spot for a stranded motorist."

"There's something wrong," said Handforth, with concern.

There certainly was. The Austin Seven was not merely spluttering, but the engine was now completely petering out. The little car came regretfully to a standstill, sighing deeply—as though she had given up the fight with great reluctance.

"Blessed if I can understand what's wrong," said Handforth, as he jumped out. "The plugs have oiled up, perhaps. I'll just have a look!"

Handforth did look—he looked with a vengeance. He took out all the plugs and looked at them, then he put them all back again.

"Nothing wrong with the plugs," he grunted. "P'r'aps it's the mag."

He had a look at the magneto. He took out the well-provided tool bag supplied with the machine, and he undid things in order to look at the magneto more closely. Finally, he decided that there was nothing wrong with the mag.

Browne, pacing impatiently up and down the road, stopped to offer assistance. It was resolutely refused.

"Leave things to me," said Handforth. "I understand this engine thoroughly. I'll soon have her going!"

Minutes passed, while Handy—labouring desperately under the engine cover—got more and more oily and begrimed. Once again, Browne paused in his restless pacing.

"If I may make the suggestion, Brother

Handforth, I would propose that you make quite certain that there is sufficient petrol in the——"

"Great jumping corks!" gasped Handforth. "Petrol! That's what's wrong—why didn't I think of it before. We've run out of juice! I meant to fill up at Caistowe, but I was in such a hurry that I forgot all about it," said Handforth blandly. "Oh, crumbs!"

William Napoleon Browne sighed.

"You had better put back your tools, Brother Handforth," he said, with a sort of desperate calmness.



CHAPTER 15.

EDGAR FENTON'S CENTURY.

URRAH!"

"Good old Fenton!"

"Give him another cheer, you chaps!"

The enthusiasm was at fever pitch round Big Side. The crowds chiefly consisted of boys from the River House School, from Helmford, from Bannington, and Redcliffe—boys who had come to support their Australian schoolfellows. For the headmasters of these schools had allowed the various Elevens to accompany their champions. The majority of the St. Frank's fellows, however, were kept in the class-rooms—the Head of St. Frank's being strict in his determination to keep the fellows at work. Feelings in the school were too deep for words. A few had managed to escape, using all manner of excuses for this great purpose.

"Good old Fenton!" said Pitt happily. "103—not out! By Jove, what a ripping century! And he's still set!"

"There aren't many wickets left," said Dick Hamilton anxiously. "Wilson only got 18, and Stephens was dismissed for 8. Phillips isn't doing so badly—Oh, help! There goes Phillip's wicket!"

Phillips, of the Fifth, was out for 21, and seven wickets were down. Edgar Fenton had played the innings of the season—cool, confident, and brilliant. His men were giving him noble assistance, and Young England was piling up a total which had already made it certain that Young Australia would have to bat again.

If only Browne were here!

He was the perfect partner for Fenton at a time like this. Between them, they were easily capable of making a stand which would settle the fate of the game. But Browne was not available—and the next man in was Cecil de Valerie.

At last Browne's absence was causing keen anxiety. And the other St. Frank's fellows were realising that William Napoleon's absence was tragic. Perhaps he would turn up before De Valerie was dismissed! Handforth was long overdue already, for he had been absent for nearly three hours.

Nobody knew that the two unfortunates were stranded on the coast road, far upon the downs, miles from anywhere. To walk to the nearest garage for petrol was out of the question. Their only policy had been to wait—on the chance of another car coming along.

Browne had generously said nothing to Handforth. Recriminations were useless, in any case, and it was only possible to accept the position with calm fortitude. In fact, Browne's feelings were really too deep for mere verbal expression.

As he pointed out—after a vain wait of twenty-five minutes—if they had had their car loaded with full petrol cans, they would have passed other tourists by the score—to say nothing of endless lorries, simply bubbling over with motor spirit. But as their own tank was empty, and there was no spare can, the road remained utterly deserted. Such was the caprice of Fate.

"I can't stand this!" said Handforth thickly, at last. "Aren't there any cars on this road? Anybody might think we were in the middle of the Sahara! I'm fed up to the neck——"

"Hush, brother—hush!" murmured Browne tensely. "Do my ears deceive me, or do I hear a cheering purr?"

"Sounds more like a lot of old tin cans," said Handforth starting.

"One must always be polite," said Browne gently. "Unless I am vastly mistaken, I detect the well-known cry of the Ford in full flight! We are saved, Brother Handforth! Observe the approach of Lizzie!"

He had made no mistake. A car was approaching—an ancient Ford, fitted with a commercial body. And to their great joy, the driver announced that he had a spare can of "juice"—which was in the market.

Five minutes later the contents of that spare can were in the Austin Seven's thirsty tank, and the adventurers once more sped on their way. Many precious minutes had been wasted, but the period of anxiety was over.

At least, they were once more speeding homewards.

But in the meantime the England innings had been relentlessly progressing. Fenton was still in—his masterly innings were as brilliant as ever. Now that his century was passed, his run-getting was slower—although everybody had expected him to open out rather boldly. But a century in cricket is no mean effort, and unless one is a hardened professional, the ordeal is calculated to tire one enormously.

Cecil de Valerie was out for 16, and Hussi Kahn had just scored his twelfth run. Everybody in the eleven had scored. There was no collapse during this innings, and the game was progressing far more satisfactorily than any of the St. Frank's fellows could have anticipated.

But when Kahn had scored 15 he was unfortunate enough to deliver the leather into the hands of third slip. And it was last man in!

And the last man in should have been William Napoleon Browne. With really great sportsmanship, Beaton—the Australian skipper—had suggested that a substitute should take the place of the missing Browne and bat in his stead; unless Browne turned up in time. All hope of him turning up had now died, and Fullwood was the substitute.

"Well, old man, you've got your chance now," said Hamilton, as Fullwood prepared to go out. "You've played in these big matches before, but if you can show Fenton some extra good form——"

"I've got a feeling that I'm going to make a hash of it," said Fullwood, shaking his head. "It's a rummy thing, but it's in my bones."

Yet he was cool and calm as he went to the wicket. And as just about this same moment the Austin Seven purred busily through the gateway of St. Frank's. Handforth made triumphantly for the playing fields.

"Innings over?" he roared, as he passed his minor.

"No!" shouted Willy. "Buck up! Last man's just going in—you may just be in time!"

"Fate has withheld the blow," murmured Browne gladly.

He leapt out of the little car while she was still running, and raced for the pavilion. At the same moment Fullwood received his first ball. Just as it was being delivered he caught sight of Browne's lanky form—and the leather crashed into his wicket.

"How's that?"

"Out!" said the umpire firmly.



CHAPTER 16.

TOUCH AND GO!

UT!"

William Napoleon Browne came to a halt and smiled—a sad, pensive smile.

"The cry goes up—too late!" he said bravely. "We arrive just in time to see the last man dismissed."

It was a shocking piece of bad luck—not merely for Browne, not merely for Fullwood, but for Young England. Fullwood had got

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a duck—the only man in the side to fail. But there was an excuse for him. Browne's unexpected arrival at the crucial moment had put him off his stroke. There was no appeal; his dismissal had been perfectly legitimate.

"Hard lines, old man!" said Fenton, as he met Browne. "A minute earlier, and we might have done some big things. Not that it's any good crying over spilt milk. Let's be thankful that we've made such a good total."

Browne nodded.

"Regrets are indeed useless," he agreed. "And, to tell the truth, you have every reason to congratulate yourself, Brother Fenton. According to all reports, you have played brilliantly. One hundred and nineteen not out! Splendid! You deserve well of your fellow-men!"

"With luck we'll win this game yet," said Fenton grimly. "How do you feel, old man? We shall want you badly. You're all right for bowling, I suppose?"

"I shall do my little best," replied Browne modestly.

The game was certainly in an interesting state. With Australia scoring 223 in the first innings, and England only 93, the end had seemed a foregone conclusion. But England had scored 319 in the second innings—which put a totally different complexion on the match.

In order to win, Australia would have to get a minimum of 190 runs. It was not a particularly formidable total, and the time was ample. But what a chance for Young England to skittle out these red-hot Aussies, and win the match!

If Browne had only turned up earlier England's chance of success would have been even more rosy. But nobody grumbled. For there were high hopes of dismissing the Australians quickly. They had been in the field all day, and were far from fresh—and the wicket was poor after so much use.

But if the St. Frank's team could rise to great efforts when the occasion demanded, so could these wiry fellows from "Down Under"! The Australians commenced their innings with the determination to win, and they grappled their task fearlessly.

By this time, of course, the whole school was at liberty—and the whole school was watching with intense interest.

There was a sensation within the first five minutes. For Brown, bowling from the pavilion end, took the Australian captain's wicket in his very first over.

"By Jove, what price this for a good beginning?" said Pitt gleefully. "Browne's the boy! If he only keeps that up, we'll be as safe as houses."

"Rather!"

Australia's early loss had no effect upon the general morale of the team, however. The next man came in, and prepared to fight stubbornly. And Browne soon discovered that his cunning was not of a lasting nature.

After three or four overs his arm-muscles

pained considerably, and for a while he failed to do anything.

Fenton was obliged to put on another man.

So far as England was concerned, Browne's services were lost—although he was still capable of excellent fielding. Indeed, a little later on he distinguished himself by making a brilliant catch.

Seventy-five—four!

Four wickets down, and less than half the necessary total scored!

When the tea interval came the score stood at 97—5. The uncertain wicket was proving deadly, and if there was any advantage at all, it was with the St. Frank's bowlers. After the resumption, a sensational spell of cricket immediately occurred.

Three more wickets fell in quick succession!

Hussi Kahn was responsible for two of these, and Willy Handforth made one of his acrobatic catches. And the total was 103—3.

But if they imagined that Australia had lost her pluck, they were mistaken. The next man fought doggedly—with irritating slowness and persistence. His wicket was unconquerable, and he took twenty minutes to get one run.

In the meantime his partner was steadily sending up the score. The runs came now in singles, and an occasional 2 or 3.

"Are they going to win?" asked Pitt anxiously, giving Dick Hamilton a glance. "They've scored 139 already. And there's no sign of another wicket falling."

And still the fight continued. At last, when the score was 157, another wicket fell—and the last man went in to almost certain disaster.

It seemed incredible that the Australians could save the game. So near and yet so far!

But the miracle happened.

The last man was the Aussie wicket-keeper, a plump fellow, who was regarded as a mere cipher at batting. Yet he now proceeded to open the eyes of his own side! He not only batted well, but he hit out grimly and with tremendous effect.

One hundred and seventy-five! It was still creeping up. Only 15 runs needed now to wrest this hard-fought victory out of England's hands! And those two Australian batsmen, one of them a mere junior, proceeded to do the trick. There was something ironic in the fact that the Australian junior was none other than Jerry Dodd, of the St. Frank's Remove! But he was not thinking of his school now—he was fighting for the national honours.

And it was fateful, too, that Jerry should send the leather speeding to the boundary for the 192nd run—the stroke that won the game! But even St. Frank's was satisfied that the game had been a glorious one from first to last.

The position was now crucial. Australia had won two matches out of three. Another victory for her would mean England's loss of the Schoolboy Ashes!

But Young England was by no means dismayed.

THE END.

THE CASE OF THE HAUNTED HOTEL!

Mystery and startling adventure are packed tight in this thrilling detective yarn of Nelson Lee and Nipper.



CHAPTER 1.

A CREEPY ADVENTURE.

DID you say Cliff House was a holiday hotel?" Nipper gasped. "Or an asylum, guv'nor?"

Nipper might well ask the question, and even Nelson Lee looked surprised. An urgent summons at two o'clock in the morning had brought them rushing along to Eastbourne, to a lonely hotel that stood on the edge of the cliffs a mile beyond the town. At that hour the place should have been wrapped in sleep; instead, every light in the building was full on, the door stood wide open, and a crowd of people in all manner of dress were streaming down the drive!

As the car drew up at the door a plump old chap in pyjamas and pumps blundered into the headlights and turned a furious face on the occupants as they descended.

"Confound you, sir!" he yelled. "Why can't you look where you're going? D'you think I want to be run over at this time of the morning?"

Nipper grinned, and felt inclined to ask the old fellow which hour of the day he liked best for being run over. But the guv'nor's frowning glance wiped the grin from Nipper's face, and the great detective turned without a smile to the old gentleman.

"Sorry if I startled you, sir," he said soothingly. "I really want to see Manager Harley—"

"So do I, confound him!" the old chap exploded. "Getting people down here for a rest cure, then treating 'em like this. Bah! When I get hold of Mr. Harley— Ah, here he comes, now!" He glared at a big, worried-looking man who had appeared in the doorway. "Look here, Harley, this business has gone too far. I simply won't stand any more of it!"

"But you know I'm doing all I can to stop it, Colonel Pepper," Harley answered desperately. "If you'll only return quietly to your room, I'm sure things will soon settle down." He stepped to Nelson Lee's side and whispered quickly in his ear: "Please wait in my office, Mr. Lee, while I try and get these people into the house again."

Nelson Lee nodded to Nipper, and the pair slipped through the crowd, crossed the hotel

lounge and stepped into the manager's comfortably furnished room.

"Bit of a panic on, guv'nor," Nipper grinned, dropping contentedly into a padded armchair. "Old Pepper looked scared blue, and I heard one old lady saying she wouldn't pass another night in the place for all the money in England."

Nelson Lee's eyes twinkled.

"If you think you're in for a ghost hunt, young 'un, you're sadly mistaken," he answered. "Harley merely 'phoned me that someone was playing tricks in the place, and that he'd be left without a servant if we couldn't put a stop to the tricks pretty quickly."

Nipper looked disappointed; but before he could reply, Mr. Harley barged into the room, a black frown on his brow.

"This affair is becoming impossible, Mr. Lee," he said quickly, and there was a note of desperation in his voice. "It was bad enough when only the servants' quarters were being troubled, and I 'phoned you; but the ghastly business has spread all over the house during the last hour. By morning I'll have neither guests nor servants left!"

Nelson Lee was about to answer when Nipper suddenly clutched his wrist and pointed upwards. In a corner near the ceiling the tinkle, tinkle of bells had broken out, and they listened in amazement as the sound slowly passed overhead and faded away.

"Some smart beggar playing jokes up above, guv'nor?" Nipper whispered.

"That's been going on for nights past," Harley explained quickly. "I've torn up flooring boards all over the place, but I can't account for the bells, and I've a feeling I'm being laughed at all the time."

As if somebody had heard his complaint, a gurgling chuckle broke out just behind him. It grew to a hoarse bellow, and ended in a shrill snigger that made Harley turn purple with rage.

"You hear it, Mr. Lee?" he demanded. "That's going on all over the house—and this place is advertised as a cure for jaded nerves!"

"What's your opinion of it, young 'un?" Nelson Lee asked.

"Sounds like some silly ass trying to play the boggy-man game," Nipper grinned.

"That's what I told my guests, but I can't convince them!" Harley grunted. "If it was only in one room I might have kept the thing secret; but there's worse than this going on all over the house—things that have made me feel a bit shaky, and I'm not exactly a funk!"

Nelson Lee warned Harley to silence and began to examine the walls. At every few inches he tapped them for signs of a hollow place, and jabbed the blade of his knife into the plaster wherever he had any doubt. But the four walls seemed as solid and commonplace as in any other house—except that hoarse chuckles broke out here and there, as if laughing at his efforts.

"Um—I'd like to have a run over the place, or as much of it as we can at this hour," the detective said, a tiny frown between his eyes. "I suppose most of the bed-rooms are occupied——"

Harley laughed wryly. "There are ten guests and six servants in the house," he said. "I'll be very surprised if you don't find every one of them in the dining-room, waiting for daylight."

They were there all right, drinking coffee and listening to Colonel Pepper's creepy tales of Indian ghosts he said he'd seen. Except for that, everything was quiet and orderly in the dining-room; but the rest of the house seemed haunted by whispers and giggles—sometimes the creak of a rusty hinge, or a thud as if a load of clay had been dumped from a great height.

It was almost in the last room the house contained that Nipper heard a new sound.

"Wind's beginning to rise, guv'nor," he whispered. "D'you hear it whining? Yet there wasn't a breath all the way from town!"

Nelson Lee listened, frowned, and glanced at Mr. Harley. The hotel manager was rubbing his chin and darting uneasy glances into the corners of the room, though he worked up a smile when he saw the great detective looking at him.

"That's the sound which caused the panic earlier on," he muttered. "You can hear how it's deepening; the wind's getting stronger——"

Nelson Lee interrupted him by flinging a window wide open. Inside the room the rise and fall of the gale sounded eerily loud; but outside the moon shone down from a cloudless sky, and there wasn't enough wind to stir the leaves on the trees.

Without a word the alert investigator hurried from room to room, and everywhere heard the whine of the rising wind. Excited voices called for Mr. Harley from the dining-room, and scared sounds showed that another stampede was not far off.

"Come quickly, Harley," Nelson Lee ordered. "I've an idea your dining-room is going to hum in a minute—and I want to be there."

"So do I, guv'nor," Nipper said softly. "It's a creepy job, but it's too good to miss!"

They rushed into the room by one door, to find the crowd standing nervously near the lounge and in a straight line for the open. As they entered, old Colonel Pepper—now dressed, and armed with a heavy Army gun—beckoned them to his side with a grim frown.

"I'm scared stiff, and I'm not ashamed to own it!" he said, glaring at Nipper as if daring the youngster to laugh at him. "There's queer little whispers going on in this corner, if only those rabbits in the doorway 'd give us a chance to listen properly."

"Colonel Pepper's right, Harley," Nelson Lee said quietly. "Get your people out to the hall, and close the door that divides us from it."

But Harley was saved the trouble. Quite suddenly every light in the place went dead, the whine of the wind deepened to an angry roar, and the crowd streamed out of the house like Marathon runners! Then, when their cries had faded in the distance, the four who were left began to wonder if they were awake or dreaming.

"Joe, you're a rogue, an' a bigger one than your master," a voice rasped loudly. "I've kept you a lifetime, an' I've trusted you, but I ought to have shot you long ago."

Both Nelson Lee and Nipper had electric torches flashing about the room, but there was no sign of the speaker, nor of the one who now answered him.

"You've no reason to mistrust me, Ebby," the second voice whined. "I've sarved yer faithful, though it's little I gotten to show for it."

"And who's taken the risks, you dog?" the unseen Ebby snarled. "You've brought the flimsies up from the cave—yes, but who's passed 'em an' taken the risk of a twenty-year stretch f' it? Anyway, the Froggie's due again to-night. Open that window, an' see if you can sight the three red signal lights."

"E'll not come to-night, Ebby; can't yer 'ear the gale that's howlin' outside?" Joe grumbled. "Leave th' winder alone——"

"Open it, I tell you!" Ebby yelled.

Grumbling and muttering, Joe seemed to obey, for the creak of an opening window was followed by the louder roar of the storm and the crash of waves on the beach below. The effect was amazingly real—but every window in the room remained shut, and the bewildered listeners knew that the sea was as calm as a pond.

"You're right, Joe, there'll be no dud notes landed to-night—no ship dare stand in-shore with this sea running," Ebby bawled. "But what's this, Joe? Why, someone's climbing the cliff! There's lights on the road! You've sold me, you dog, you've sold me, after all!"

Then came the sound of a furious struggle, the crash of breaking glass and the shatter-



But Nipper hadn't taken ten strides when a lump of rock hit him between the shoulders, and he went down as if he had been shot!

ing roar of a gun! They heard the mumble of Ebby's voice, the creak and click of a closed window, and—silence!

"Gosh, guv'nor—" Nipper began, but a hand closed over his mouth.

"Quiet, Nipper," Nelson Lee whispered. "Listen! Pepper's trying to get Harley to abandon the house. Play up to him—pretend you're frightened out of your wits—and don't follow me when I sneak out!"

CHAPTER 2.

THE GRINDSTONE CLUE.

WHEN Nelson Lee stepped into the room again, dawn was breaking and he had been away a full hour. His face was as inscrutable as ever, but he admitted right away that his dash from the room had ended in failure.

His first question was to ask where Pepper had got to, and he smiled when told that the colonel was warning guests and servants to leave the place before something really terrible happened.

"You've guessed, of course, that all this spook trickery is being worked to chase everyone away from the house," Nelson Lee said. "I've searched the place inside and out, but I'm no wiser than when I started."

"But why should anyone want to frighten us away?" Harley protested. "This house is just an ordinary holiday hotel, and has been for years past."

"Yes, but I want to know what it was

before you took it," Nelson Lee answered. "It's an old house, Mr. Harley; d'you know anything of the people who lived here before you?"

Harley glanced nervously about the room before answering.

"That's the strange part about it," he said at last. "A queer old chap named Ebby Ennion and his servant, Joe Ottey, vanished from this house nearly six years ago, on the night when a great gale was blowing."

"Gosh, Mr. Harley!" Nipper gasped. "Why, it was Ebby and Joe we heard killing each other to-night!"

"I know, and it was an uncanny answer to a mystery that once puzzled Eastbourne," Harley muttered, with a shiver. "Ennion and Ottey lived a strange, lonely life in this house for many years, and the place gradually got an evil name. Ennion and his servant were a morose pair, and one night, when a regular tornado was blowing, they disappeared. It was whispered that sounds of a terrible quarrel were heard from the house, but the only thing known for certain is that Ennion and Ottey were never seen again, and that they left a houseful of furniture unclaimed!"

"And then—you came?" Nelson Lee asked.

"Yes, a year afterwards," Harley answered. "The owner couldn't let the place, but we bought it for half its value and turned it into the Cliff Hotel."

"Can you remember the exact date that

Ennion and his man vanished?" Nelson Lee demanded.

Harley hesitated.

"I only know it was early in January, 1920," he said at last.

"That'll do; the storm records will fix the date," the great detective replied. "Well, Harley, things will be quiet enough until night, so I'm returning to London—because I think the answer to your mystery is there." He glanced at Nipper and shook his head. "No, young 'un, you'll stay here; and please be on the spot when I 'phone you."

Nipper was disappointed, but he knew better than to kick against orders.

"Right-ho, guv'nor!" he yawned. "I'm pretty tired, so I'll chance the spooks if Mr. Harley'll loan me a bed-room."

"And don't forget to tell Colonel Pepper how jolly glad you'll be when this job's over," Nelson Lee said as he cleared off.

It was nearly three o'clock the next afternoon when the guv'nor's telephone call came, and his instructions made Nipper open his eyes with surprise.

"I want you to visit the ironmongers in Eastbourne," Nelson Lee said quickly. "Find out if anyone has lately bought a grindstone, a roll of canvas, and a sheet of corrugated zinc."

"Gosh, what a list!" Nipper gasped.

"When you've found the right shop, young 'un," the guv'nor continued calmly, "you'll try and get the name and address of the fellow who bought the things, and you'll have it waiting for me when I arrive back at Cliff House to-night."

"That's a queer——" Nipper began, but the guv'nor had rung off and evidently had no time for gossip.

Nipper trudged wearily up and down the streets of Eastbourne for nearly two hours before dropping on a chap who admitted selling a grindstone the day before. That was in Firth Street, and the shop assistant began to laugh the moment Nipper asked the question.

"I should just think I do remember selling a grindstone," he said. "The thing was ordered a week ago, and there's been an old chap worrying me about it ever since. It only came up from London yesterday, and the old fellow didn't take long to claim it, take my word for it."

"And did he happen to want anything else?" Nipper asked casually.

"Ay, he bought six yards of the cheapest canvas we'd got, an' he had us make a sort of box with a zinc base for him," the shopman answered. "You seem mighty interested in grindstones, youngster—or is it in the chap who bought it?"

Nipper winked and put a finger to his lips.

"I'm going to surprise you to-morrow," he whispered mysteriously. "You just tell me where the things were sent to, and I'll see you're not forgotten."

"They weren't sent anywhere," the assistant replied. "The old fellow took 'em away in

a handcart—wouldn't hear of us delivering them for him."

"Um! That's hard luck," Nipper sighed. "But what sort of a chap was he? Can you describe him?"

"Little, podgy fellow, walrus moustache, an' a face the colour of a walnut," the shopman said promptly. "Gave his orders like a sergeant-major, an' looked at you as if you were mud."

"Colonel Pepper to the life!" Nipper muttered to himself. "Well, thanks," he said aloud. "I'll let you know if I find the chap."

"Oh, the cart had a tyre sprung off one wheel; I tied it up with wire for him," the assistant called out as Nipper left the shop. "An' the chap took it down towards the end of the prom."

It was all very puzzling, and Nipper strolled along the parade, trying to guess where Pepper came into the affair, and how the guv'nor had been able to phone an exact list of the things he bought.

"It's very plain that all Pepper's funk last night was just bunkum," the youngster muttered. "He got the rest of 'em on the jump with his rotten yarns of Indian ghosts, an' he doesn't mean 'em to come back. Seems a silly game, though, because— My hat, that cart's been down here!"

Nipper had reached the end of the promenade, and was now staring at a little sand-drift deeply scored by narrow wheel-tracks. At every few feet he saw that one track was cross-marked by thin lines, and that could only mean the wire mentioned by the shop assistant!

"The cart's been dragged along the beach!" he muttered. "It may not have been carrying Pepper's goods, but it's worth while trying to find out, anyway."

The cart had been wheeled down below high-water mark, and often the trail vanished for sixty or seventy yards at a stretch. But every now and then Nipper picked up a trace of the thin wheel-ruts—and the trail led straight towards the "Devil's Chimney" and Cliff House!

At a point where the cliffs towered four hundred feet high he found the tracks leading towards the broken rocks, and now he crept close to the cliff's base and presently came to a series of breaks that formed into tiny caves. Another fifty yards he crept, then the whiff of tobacco smoke drifted to his nostrils, and he heard a hoarse, rasping laugh.

"Ay, your little games had given 'em the jumps, an' my yarns scared 'em stiff," came in Pepper's voice. "When the second storm started they were in the mood to run, an' I took good care to help 'em on their way. There's only Harley left, and we'll deal with him to-night—if he has the pluck to stay there."

"You're forgetting the fellows he brought down from London," someone growled.

"No, I'm not, Ebby," Pepper chuckled.

"That chap Lee's gone back again; there's only the kid left, an' he doesn't count for anything. No, we'll start early to-night, an' there'll be no one to mind the noise we make, once we've put Harley to sleep. Well, boys, I'll get back and——"

Nipper began to creep hurriedly away, but in his haste he kicked a pebble, and the sharp click brought Pepper's voice to an abrupt break. In the same second the three men sprang from the cave, and, as Pepper recognised the lad, he uttered a loud yell and sprang away in pursuit.

Nipper grinned, for the beach was dotted with holiday-makers near the promenade, and he was certain the fellows would not dare to man-handle him in the open. But he hadn't taken ten strides when a lump of rock hit him between the shoulders, and he went down as if he had been shot!

The yell he let out was smothered as someone piled on his back and dug his face into the sand. Then, before he could even attempt to wriggle free, he was lifted by the arms and legs and rushed into the shelter of the cave!

"So you've saved us the trouble of outing you to-night, my lad," Pepper sneered, as the other pair held him down. "That's splendid, and I'll take care Harley thinks you've funked another night in the haunted house, and sneaked back to London."

"An' he's likely to believe you," Nipper snapped, furious that he had been trapped so easily. "Before to-night comes——"

But Joe's grubby hand closed over his mouth and Pepper quickly brought a length of rope from the dark depths of the cave. In the hands of three strong and determined men Nipper's struggles were useless, and in another couple of minutes he was trussed like a chicken, gagged, and lifted to a ledge well above high-water mark.

"Nobody'll come here at this hour, so you can settle down for the night, my lad," Pepper scowled at him. "We'll give Harley the tip when we clear off——"

"Oh, cut it out, Pepper!" Ebby Ennion growled. "Look here, you young spy, the tide's risin', an' you'll be drowned like a rat if you slip off that ledge! Now, you fellers, come along; we've plenty to do 'fore mornin'."

Until the three crooks had cleared off, Nipper kept as still as a mouse, though keeping still was an agony. A sharp needle of broken rock was cutting into his thigh; but not for worlds would he have complained, for he had an idea that Pepper & Co. hadn't quite finished with him yet.

CHAPTER 3.

THE WAY THE SPOOKS WORKED.

THE spur of rock felt as sharp as a razor whilst Nipper lay on it, but it proved but a blunt knife when he began to saw at the rope that tied his wrists. He did manage to wear the rope away in the end, but that was hours

later, and the job was finished in semi-darkness.

And by that time the sea was lapping on the floor of the cave, and waves were beating against the cliffs for hundreds of yards on either side of him. He took one glance outside, then whistled dolefully.

"Gosh, this is nice!" he muttered. "If I wait for the tide to drop, those three beauties will have done their work and cleared off. I'm the only one who knows that Pepper's one of the gang, and if Harley isn't warned, they'll put him out of action before he knows what is happening." He glanced up at the rocky heights that towered overhead. "Um! Me no likee, but allee same must do," and he chuckled a little to himself.

Had it been daylight, it is doubtful if he would have dared the risk of climbing that almost perpendicular rock. It was cracked and broken enough to give foot and hand hold, but in places Nipper was actually hanging on by inches. Often he had to side-step along the face of the rock for yards, searching for a break that would take him upwards; and once he glanced down, slipped, recovered—and turned dizzy with the horror of his position!

After that he kept his glance fixed on the rock immediately above his head, and tested every step before trusting his weight on it. He grew utterly weary and began to despair of ever reaching the cliff-head—when two strong hands suddenly gripped his wrists, and the gov'nor's voice whispered encouragingly in his ear.

"Steady, young 'un," Nelson Lee whispered. "I've watched you since you were half-way up, but I daren't call down for fear of startling you. Steady now; you've only this last spur to get over—good! Now lie down a minute; then tell me why you've risked your neck in this mad way?"

For a moment Nipper was incapable of answering. He felt that the ground was rocking beneath him, but something from the gov'nor's flask made him sit up with a cough and a splutter, and then he remembered Harley's danger.

"Pepper's up to his neck in this game, gov'nor," he said quickly. "There's other fellows with him, and they're out to do Harley down—so as to get the house to themselves for a few hours."

"And I've a pretty good idea what they're after," Nelson Lee answered dryly. "But my news will keep, my lad, and we must get back to Harley as quickly as we can."

Ten minutes' brisk walk along the cliff road brought them close to the hotel, and from the outside everything looked quiet and orderly. But Nelson Lee mistrusted appearances, so they climbed the low wall of the back garden and crept up to the kitchen window.

The place was in darkness, and not a sound came from it—except the tiny click that the detective made as he did something to the window catch. He soon had the window

open, then the two crept inside like shadows and made straight for the big front dining-room.

They were still some distance away when a terrific thud made the floor vibrate beneath their feet, and the crash of breaking crockery was followed by a loud yell from Pepper himself.

"Are you tryin' to rouse the world, you clumsy idiot?" he spluttered.

"The thing toppled itself over," Ottey growled in reply. "Anyway, there's nobody to hear us. You hop out o' th' road, an' let Ebby an' me get busy on this woodwork!"

Covered by the sound of splintering wood that followed, Nelson Lee placed a firm grip on the handle of the door, turned it without a sound and pushed it open an inch. They were only able to see about a third of the room through that narrow peep-hole, but in that third they saw an amazing scene of activity.

An enormous sideboard of solid oak had been dragged away from the wall and toppled ruthlessly over. Behind that piece of wreckage Ennion and Ottey were attacking, with mallet and crowbar, the wooden paneling that lined the walls, and in less than a minute they had ripped a huge section away and exposed the papered wall beneath!

"Good job we bricked the place up and repapered this wall," Ennion grunted. "Always had the idea one of your rotten schemes 'd get us landed, Pepper. But come on, let's have these bricks out and see if the goods are still there."

Nelson Lee seemed in no hurry to disturb the gang. He drew Nipper back from the door and placed his lips to the youngster's ear.

"Be ready when I jump in, young 'un," he whispered. "If they have Harley a prisoner in there, you make for him while I try and keep 'em quiet."

Nipper nodded.

"We can see now why they had to have the place to themselves, guv'nor," he whispered back. "They've something hidden behind that panelling, and they've had to smash the place to bits to get it."

The detective turned again to the door, and now he had a gleaming automatic in his hand. For another two minutes he allowed the gang to work in peace—and in that short time they made a great hole in the wall and hauled out an amazing assortment of valuables.

Pearl necklaces, diamond rings, gold watches—it seemed as if the entire stock of some unfortunate jeweller had been hidden in that seaside hotel! Only when the secret safe was empty and the three crooks were grinning with joy over their good fortune did Nelson Lee take a hand in the game.

"There's five thousand quidlets in this little lot," Ennion was saying. "Old Isaacs, the fence, can't offer us less than that—"

"He'll have no chance to offer you anything for it," Nelson Lee said, flinging the

door wide open. "Put your hands up—and keep them there!"

There was a moment's silence, during which the three men stood as if petrified. Then the fireworks began—by Ottey slinging a chisel straight at the face of Nelson Lee and charging in like a raging bull!

Nipper had discovered Harley tied to a chair and gagged with a towel. Mindful of the guv'nor's order, the lad jumped to the manager's side, slashed through the bonds that fastened his wrists, then pushed the knife into Harley's hands and whirled round to the guv'nor's aid.

For once in his life the great detective had hesitated, and looked like paying dearly for it. He dodged the chisel that Ottey threw easily enough, but he simply would not use the gun on a fellow who charged in with bare fists—and in the fraction of a second the whole three were at him like hungry tigers!

He ducked the vicious sweep of Ennion's crowbar, and, as he bent, he slammed upwards at Ottey's jaw! That brought the fellow hard up against the fallen sideboard. Then Nelson Lee sprang in like a lightning flash and lashed in another plug that sent Ottey crashing backwards over the furniture with a force that shook the room.

From the tail of his eye Nelson Lee saw Ennion lift the iron bar for another skull-breaking blow, and Pepper was sneaking round with the mallet to take him in the rear. He twisted away from the downward sweep of the bar, and, catching it as it went past his head, he tore it from Ennion's hands and whirled it round at the fellow's legs!

Ennion toppled over with a scream, and Nelson Lee smiled grimly when he saw Nipper and Harley piling in on the chap. Then he turned his attention to Pepper.

Click! That was the wooden mallet smacking into Lee's open palm. Before the self-styled colonel knew what was happening, the mallet was torn from his fist, and he was lifted from his feet and pitched half across the room!

And that really ended the fight. Ottey was

(Continued on page 43.)

"THE VANISHED MUMMY!"

*is the title of next
Wednesday's stir-
ring detective yarn.
It is full of*

REAL THRILLS.

HURRICANE HITTING!

An interesting chat about quick-scoring feats.

QUICK scoring isn't necessarily the best cricket, but it is the kind everybody loves to see—unless you're looking at it from the bowler's point of view, of course. The seasoned cricket lover, saturated with lore of the game, following with keenest attention every movement of the bowler and the batsmen, and analysing the motive of every ball and every stroke, may find the greatest happiness in an afternoon of cricket that, to the average spectator, would seem rather dull and slow; but hitting of the hurricane kind makes everybody's heart beat a little later. A G. L. Jessop or a Charlie McCartney, or a Ranjitsinhji knocking up runs at lightning speed is the man who thrills anybody!

A Memorable Match.

Possibly some of you who live in London may have seen what was probably the most memorable example of quick scoring in recent years. It was in the match at the Oval in 1919, when Surrey were playing Kent. To begin with, the match against Kent is always the titbit of the Surrey programme, and probably in all the encounters between these two great neighbours never has there been a keener finish than to the 1919 match.

Kent seemed certain of either a draw or a win when they declared, setting Surrey the task of making 95 runs in forty-five minutes to win. With the Kent bowlers in good form it looked impossible, and yet Surrey won without the loss of a wicket, and with ten minutes to spare. In thirty-two minutes Jack Hobbs and Mr. J. N. Crawford hit up 95 runs, Mr. Crawford making 48 and Hobbs 47. The game was a near thing in more ways than one, for it finished in rain.

Perhaps the greatest hurricane hitter there has ever been is G. L. Jessop, the man whom a United States newspaper described as "the human catapult who wrecks the roofs of distant towns when set in his assault."

He has made some wonderful scores with his magnificent drives into the long field, and pulls to square leg, whilst in the stroke for which he was most famous—the cut at a short-pitched ball—he had no equal. He is one of the few batsmen who have achieved greatness with unorthodox methods, but Gilbert Jessop was a law unto himself. He had a wonderful eye, without which no one can afford to attempt unorthodoxy.

One of his greatest efforts was when he made 104 against the Australians at the Oval. It was the first time he had met the much-dreaded googlie bowlers, and no one could have complained if he had played with great caution; yet, although he only received sixty-three balls in an hour and a quarter, he managed to score 93 runs out of the full total of 145.

157 in an Hour!

When Gloucester were playing the West Indians at Bristol, in 1900, the English side made 200, and of those Gilbert Jessop scored 157 in an hour.

But his most record-breaking game was in a "Gentlemen of the South" versus "Players of the South" match. Out of 234 runs scored by the Gentlemen, Jessop made 191, and made them in an hour and a half. It is interesting to dissect this score and take it fifty by fifty. The first fifty he reached in twenty-four minutes, he was 100 up in forty-two minutes, and twenty-one minutes later he had reached his 150. One usually imagines that a batsman who has made nearly 200 runs must be nearly run to death, but out of the whole 191 that he made 150 were hit in fours and sixes—five "sixes" and thirty "fours"—so he hadn't a great deal of running to do. That must have been a stirring innings to watch, and one can imagine that the spectators must have been almost dancing with excitement during the fourth and fifth wickets, for in the fourth, which added 108 runs, of the 103 scored from the bat, Jessop made 80 in thirty-five minutes, and for the next wicket he made 77 in thirty-five minutes.

Six "Sixes"!

A more staggering feat than this was once accomplished against Dr. E. M. Grace—a brother of the great W. G.—but the match was not first class. The Bath Association were playing Thornbury, at Thornbury, in Gloucestershire, in 1902, and out of 466 runs that the Bath side scored for the loss of six wickets, one player, W. Hyman, made 359 in one hundred minutes. In this amazing innings the batsman hit 62 in two overs—32 in one, and 30 in the next—off Dr. Grace. Altogether he hit the doctor for 32 "sixes"—surely a record number of "sixes" for any innings.

For real hurricane hitting the palm must be awarded to E. Alletson, of Notts, for his feat against Sussex, at Brighton, in 1911. The "hurricane" worked itself up gradually from a gentle breeze before lunch into a perfect tornado towards the end of the innings. Out of 227 runs scored by Notts, Alletson made 189 in an hour and a half. Before lunch he made 47 out of 75 in fifty minutes. After lunch 152 were added for the last wicket, and of these all except ten were Alletson's—made in forty minutes. Of this quickly-put-up score eight were "sixes" and twenty-three "fours." It took him an hour to make the first fifty, but the second came in a quarter of the time, and the last 89 in fifteen minutes, making 139 runs in thirty minutes. After the interval he made 115 out of 120 in seven overs, twenty-two of them being hit off Killick in one over, and 34 in another, which contained two "no balls."

HOW TO JOIN THE LEAGUE

ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE APPLICATION

FORM No. 39.
SECTION
A
READER'S APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP.

I desire to become enrolled as a Member of THE ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE, and to qualify for all such benefits and privileges as are offered to Members of the League. I hereby declare that I have introduced "THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY" and THE ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE to one new reader, whose signature to certify this appears on second form attached hereto. Will you, therefore, kindly forward me Certificate of Enrolment with the Membership Number assigned to me.

SECTION
B
MEMBER'S APPLICATION FOR MEDAL AWARDS.

I, Member No..... (give Membership No.) hereby declare that I have introduced one more new reader, whose signature to certify this appears on second form attached hereto. This makes me..... (state number of introductions up to date) introductions to my credit.

SECTION
C
NEW READER'S DECLARATION.

I hereby declare that I have been introduced by (give name of introducer) to this issue of "THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY."

(FULL NAME)

(ADDRESS)

INSTRUCTIONS.

INSTRUCTIONS.—Reader Applying for Membership. Cut out TWO complete Application Forms from Two copies of this week's issue of THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY. On one of the forms fill in Section A, crossing out Sections B and C. Then write clearly your full name and address at bottom of form. The second form is for your new reader, who fills in Section C, crosses out Sections A and B, and writes his name and address at bottom of form. Both forms are then pinned together and sent to the Chief Officer, The St. Frank's League, c/o THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY, Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C.4. **Member Applying for Bronze Medal:** It will be necessary for you to obtain six new readers for this award. For each new reader TWO complete forms, bearing the same number, are needed. On one of the forms fill in Section B, crossing out Sections A and C, and write your name and address at bottom of form. The other form is for your new reader, who fills in Section C, crosses out Sections A and B, and writes his name and address at the bottom of the

form. Now pin both forms together and send them to the Chief Officer, as above. One new reader will then be registered against your name, and when six new readers have been registered, you will be sent the St. Frank's League bronze medal. There is nothing to prevent you from sending in forms for two or more new readers at once, provided that each pair of forms bears the same date and number.

Bronze medallists wishing to qualify for the silver or gold medals can apply in the same way as for the bronze medal, filling in Section B. Every introduction they make will be credited to them, so that when the League reaches the required number of members, they can exchange their bronze medal for a silver or gold one, according to the number of introductions with which they are credited.

These Application Forms can be posted for 1d., providing the envelope is not sealed and no letter is enclosed.

A FEW OF THE ADVANTAGES OF JOINING THE LEAGUE.

You can write to fellow members living at home or in the most distant outposts of the Empire.

You are offered free advice on choosing a trade or calling, and on emigration to the colonies and dependencies.

If you want to form a sports or social club, you can do so amongst local members of the League.

You are offered free hints on holidays, whether walking, biking, or camping.

You can qualify for the various awards by promoting the growth of the League.

If you want help or information on any subject, you will find the Chief Officer ever ready to assist you.

THE ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE

THE CHIEF OFFICER'S CHAT

(All LETTERS in reference to the League should be addressed to the Chief Officer, The St. Frank's League, c/o THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY, The Fleetway House, London, E.C.4.)

My dear Leagueites,—New members are rolling in to swell the present grand total, and, as I knew would be the case, the present boom numbers of the NELSON LEE LIBRARY have given a really big push to the League.

As noted elsewhere, one member says he did not think the Bronze Medal would prove such a "stunner." He had pitched his ideas rather low! Our Medal is a most handsomely designed and well-turned-out insignia, a regular "nulli secundus."

St. Frank's to the rescue! A Leicestershire member shows how the League can come in, and what it can do. A charity fête for a splendid purpose was under weigh, but threatened to hang fire for want of helpers. Luckily, there was a St. Frank's League Club in the district, and all the members rallied to assist. The result was a booming success. It was the little knot of Leaguers who did the trick. They sold tickets, put up flags, ran the publicity department, and set up the houp-la.

CORRESPONDENTS WANTED.

I should be glad if members in the Poplar district would communicate with "J. O. H. (3775), 179, Grundy Street, Poplar, London, E. 14," as he is full of enthusiasm. As he points out, the great thing is to get to know fellow-members—and he would like to correspond with some of you.

Will Leytonstone members communicate with Cyril Pescud, 90, Selby Road, Leytonstone, London, E. 11?

Will any reader in S.W. Africa write to I. Loon, 38, Gordon Road, Bertrams, Johannesburg, South Africa? That correspondent would be extra glad to hear from a stamp collector in that part of the world. Perhaps a philatelist will step up and oblige.

Give them socks! A reader on the Gold Coast has written to a friend of mine asking for socks, suspenders, and shorts. Somehow giving away socks to strangers does not seem to be quite in the programme—not at the first start, anyway!

THE CASE OF THE HAUNTED HOTEL!

(Continued from page 40.)

lying blissfully unconscious behind the sideboard, Nelson Lee was kneeling on Pepper's chest, and Harley was tapping Ennion's head with the iron bar as a hint for him to keep still.

"Looks as if they'll be good now, guv'nor," Nipper panted. "Here's the rope they used on Mr. Harley—but it'll only do for one."

"Link them together, back to back," Mr. Harley suggested, and Nipper's grin spread as he jumped for the rope.

Five minutes later the Eastbourne police-station had been 'phoned the news of the night's doings, and Harley was telling how completely "Colonel" Pepper had fooled him.

"He was actually offering to go out and look for you, Nipper, when these other fellows crept up and fastened me in the chair," Harley complained. "But even now, Mr. Lee, I'm completely in the dark as to how this load of jewellery came to be hidden in the house—or how Pepper came to know about it."

"It was very plain that someone wanted this house empty," Nelson Lee answered. "Fantastic means were used, and when you told me that previous tenants had suddenly vanished, I began to get on the track of things."

"Crikey, guv'nor!" Nipper gasped. "You guessed that Ennion and Ottey were alive,

and that they'd been kept away from this place by force?"

"The force I thought of was—prison!" Nelson Lee said calmly. "The way this house was equipped for frightening people meant that the fellows who'd once lived in it had a very important reason for keeping everyone at a distance. The way they vanished in a night was a hint that they were night-birds who had been caged. I went to Scotland Yard, and the records of January, 1920, told me that three cracksmen had been caught red-handed on a big Mayfair job, and that two of them gave a London lodging-house address, which was thought to be an address only, and not a place where they really lived."

"Then Ennion and Ottey were really London burglars who used this house as a blind?" Harley exclaimed.

"No, they used this house as a snug hiding-place for their booty, until they could conveniently dispose of it," Nelson Lee smiled. "Pepper was the third partner in the gang, though he seldom stayed down here."

"But what about last night's spook doings?" Nipper asked. "How was that worked, guv'nor? And how did you find out, in London, just what Pepper had been buying in Eastbourne?"

Nelson Lee's eyes twinkled.

"After visiting Scotland Yard, young 'un," he said, "I went to a place in Savoy Hill."

For a moment Nipper looked utterly puzzled. Then his mouth opened and he laughed aloud.

"Great snakes!" he yelled. "You mean

(Continued on next page.)

THE CASE OF THE HAUNTED HOTEL!

(Continued from previous page.)

you went to the B.B.C.—the broadcasting home where all kinds of weird sounds come from?"

"You've got it, my lad," Nelson Lee smiled. "They told me that a howling wind can be produced with a grindstone and a length of canvas stretched over it. They also mentioned the angry sea—made by dried peas rolling about on a slab of zinc. Pepper bought the things, and the other fellows used them."

"Gosh!" Nipper gasped. "Then every wall in the house must be tubed."

"It is. And the broadcasting station is a

cunningly hidden cellar beneath the garage," Nelson Lee said. "It was once used by Emion and Ottey to frighten people away, so that their night trips would not be seen and talked about."

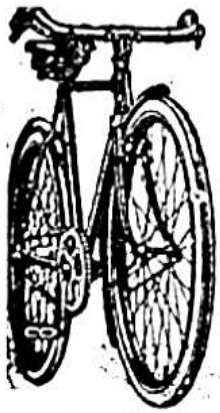
"But the cart-tracks led me along the beach," Nipper protested.

"Of course; they couldn't bring the things up here in daylight," Nelson Lee smiled. "They were hidden in the cave where you found Emion and Ottey already in hiding, and they were brought here late at night. Now, no more questions, young 'un—"

"Just one, guv'nor," Nipper pleaded. "Those invisible bells we heard on the ceiling—"

"Mice, of course!" the guv'nor snorted. "Bells tied to the tails of mice; and the mice let through the ventilators of every floor in the house!"

THE END.



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