

Mystery—Adventure—Thrills!

Rousing Complete Story Inside!

STUNNING NEW SERIES STARTS TO-DAY!

THE NELSON LEE

LIBRARY

2^d



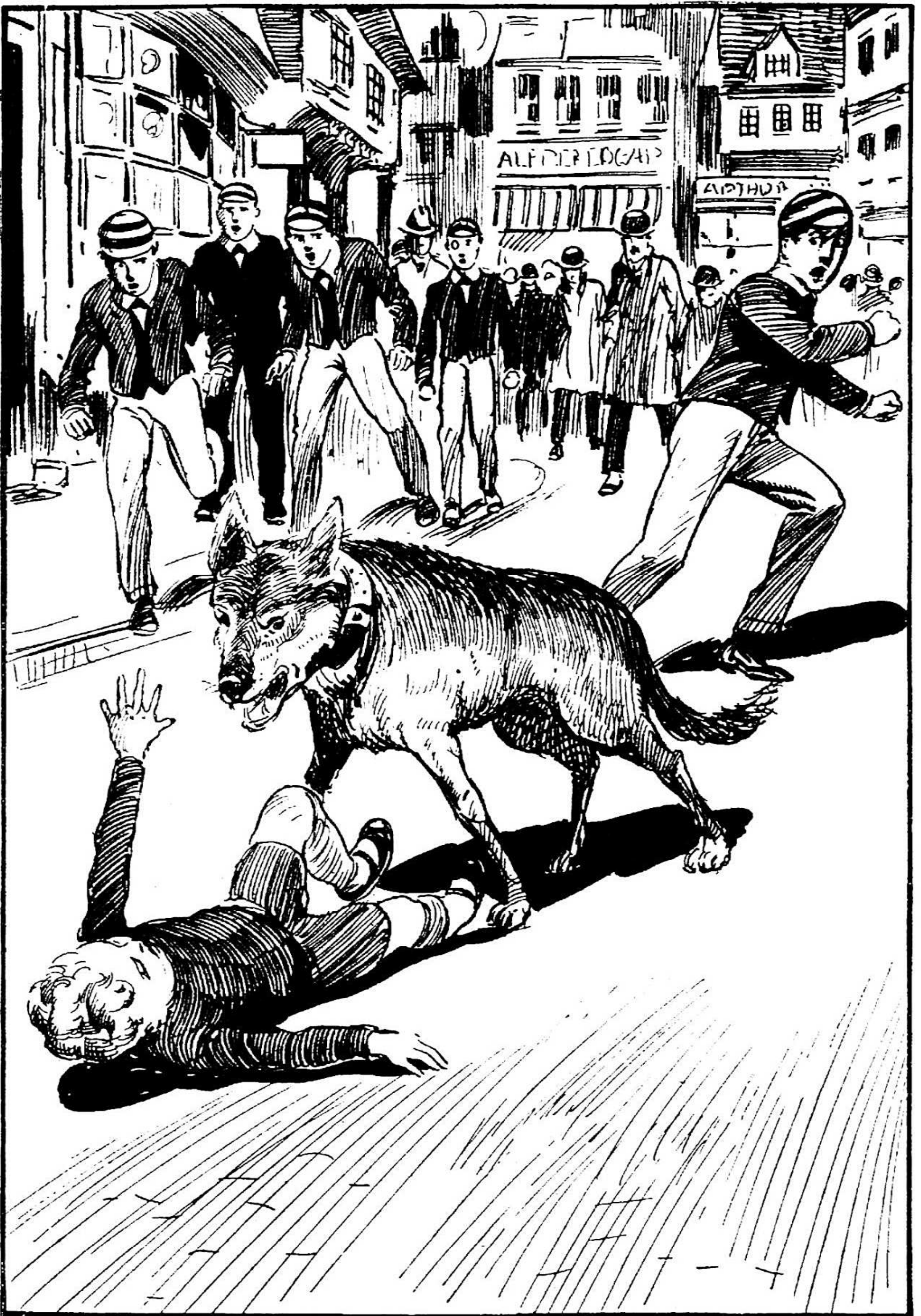
THE FUNK OF ST. FRANKS!

The first story of a powerful new series of school-life and mystery yarns.

New Series No. 51.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY!

April 23rd, 1927.



The snarling Alsatian bayed with triumph and pounced upon its victim. Gresham's face had turned as white as chalk and, instead of going to the helpless child's rescue, he ran wildly away. The other juniors gazed at his display of cowardice in amazement. They hadn't thought Harry Gresham was a funk!

*Afraid of the Fags!**New Series Starts To-day!*

THE FUNK OF ST FRANK'S



By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

*The opening story of a rattling new series of fun
mystery and adventure yarns, featuring the famous
Boys of St. Frank's.*

CHAPTER 1.

THE NEW BOY.

HARRY GRESHAM was looking worried.

His attention was attracted by a noisy group of St. Frank's juniors, who had just come through one of the big entrances, and were now larking about near the train-departure board. Victoria Station was fairly busy this morning, and there was an air of bustle and activity.

Harry Gresham edged a little nearer to the bookstall, in order to get out of sight, if possible. But he had easily recognised those blue-and-red caps. He did not know who the juniors were, having never seen them in his life before, but he was certain that they were St. Frank's fellows. It was equally certain that they were bent upon travelling down to the famous old school by the same train as himself.

And the worried look on Harry Gresham's face became more acute.

"This won't do, Harry, my boy," said a gruff, kindly voice. "You mustn't look so downhearted——"

"It's not that, pater," interrupted Harry.

He glanced up at the figure by his side—the tall, soldierly figure of Sir Stewart Gresham, his father. Sir Stewart was a fine man, but his face was lined and careworn.

"You're not downhearted, then?" he asked, smiling at Harry.

"Well, of course, I'm feeling a bit strange," said Harry. "I've never been to a big school like St. Frank's before, pater, and I expect it'll be a bit rummy at first."

"There's nothing to be afraid of——"

"Of course there isn't!" interrupted Harry quickly. "I'm as keen as mustard, pater! It's the very thing I've been longing for. As soon as I've settled down, I

shall be as right as anything. But—but——”

“But what?” smiled Sir Stewart. “And how much longer do you propose to hang about this bookstall? Didn’t you want to buy a magazine?”

Harry Gresham was looking at the group of St. Frank’s juniors. They were coming nearer. One of them—a brawny individual with a strikingly aggressive face—was apparently intent upon committing assault and battery on two of the others. Harry seemed more concerned than ever, and he turned his face towards the magazines which were piled up near his elbow.

Sir Stewart, noting these signs, gave his son a curious look. One would have felt that the baronet had every right to be proud of his boy. Harry was a fine, well-set-up youngster. His face was open and pleasant, with kindly brown eyes. Harry had one of those faces which seem to inspire confidence right away—not a particularly handsome face, but a frank, likeable one.

“Who are those boys?” asked Sir Stewart.

“St. Frank’s chaps, pater,” muttered Harry.

“How do you know?”

“Can’t you see their caps?” asked Harry, without turning. “Besides, this train is certain to be carrying crowds of them. Don’t keep looking at ’em, pater, or they might notice us.”

“Upon my soul!” ejaculated Sir Stewart. “And supposing they do? What’s the matter with you, Harry? You’re not ashamed of——”

“Of you, pater?” interrupted Harry, turning crimson. “Great Scott, no! It—it isn’t that!”

“Then let’s get to the platform——”

“Please, pater!” said the boy desperately. “I—I wish you’d say good-bye now, you know. I—I’d rather you didn’t come on to the platform with me, if you don’t mind. It’s nothing—— What I mean is—— Oh, dash it, I’m afraid you wouldn’t understand, pater.”

Sir Stewart Gresham nodded.

“I certainly don’t understand what on earth you are driving at,” he replied. “Why don’t you want me to see you on to the train?”

Harry looked at his father squarely.

“They’ll think I’m a—a kid, pater!” he said, flushing.

“And what are you, pray?”

“Oh, you know what I mean—a molly-coddle,” went on Harry earnestly. “After you’ve gone they’ll call me names—‘baby,’ or something of that sort. Can’t go to school without being brought to the train by a nurse! You know what these chaps are, pater.”

Sir Stewart laughed heartily.

“Why didn’t you tell me so at first?” he asked drily. “Perhaps there’s something in what you say. These big public schools teach the boys to be independent and

manly. Not quite the thing to have one’s father on the platform, saying the last good-byes, eh? All right, Harry—I’ll take the hint.”

“Thanks awfully, pater,” said Harry, looking relieved.

“You’d better come outside to the car,” went on Sir Stewart. “You’ll have to run the gauntlet on the way, though. These boys are getting more numerous than ever. This train seems to be a popular one. Perhaps you’d better hide me under your coat.”

“Oh, pater, I—I didn’t mean that!” stammered Harry awkwardly. “I don’t want you to think that I’d rather the fellows didn’t see you. I don’t care how many of them spot us now. As long as you’re not coming on to the platform, everything’s all right.”

“Then I can exhibit myself in public quite freely?” chuckled Sir Stewart.

“Cheese it, pater!” growled Harry.

They went through one of the exits, into the big station yard. A big limousine was waiting, with a chauffeur in attendance. Sir Stewart paused as he was about to open the door.

“Cheer up, young ’un!” he smiled. “I was only joking with you. You are quite right, and I admire your independent spirit. If I were in your place, I shouldn’t like to be taken on to the platform by a fond parent, holding hands. A scene like that would create a very bad impression.”

Harry looked at his father sharply, suspecting him of being sarcastic, but Sir Stewart was gravely opening his wallet.



CHAPTER 2.

COWARD!

TWENTY pounds should be sufficient to start with, Harry,” said Sir Stewart, as he separated four crisp fivers from a bulky sheaf in his wallet. “When you want some more, you must let me know.”

Harry’s eyes sparkled.

“Twenty pounds, pater!” he repeated. “Isn’t that an awful lot? Just for pocket money, I mean?”

Sir Stewart Gresham was looking serious.

“You’ll find that there are any amount of expenses at a big school like St. Frank’s, Harry,” he replied. “There will be an extra lot, indeed, during your first week or two. I know I can trust you with money, so I don’t hesitate to let you have it. I want you to be popular, Harry.”

“I’ll try to be, pater.”

“I want you to get on well—not merely at sport, but in your real work,” continued Sir Stewart. “And money is a very big factor in popularity at a school like St. Frank’s.

It is the boys with plenty of pocket money who are the popular boys."

"I don't want to be popular because of my money, pater," said Harry quietly. "That would be a sort of swindle."

"I have no fear of your own personal qualities, Harry—providing you keep yourself in hand," said his father, looking at the boy closely. "Do you think you'll be able to do that?"

"I'll try, pater," said Harry earnestly. "Oh, I'll try!"

Sir Stewart nodded.

"You can't do more than that, young 'un," he said. "I want you to get on well at cricket—I'm awfully keen to hear how you get on about the cricket. That's a little weakness of mine."

"A big strength, you mean, pater!" smiled Harry.

"Well, we mustn't be too optimistic," said his father. "I believe that the cricket captains of these public schools are rather apt to look askance at new boys. Well, you'll have to be going. There's plenty of time yet, but you'll probably want to get acquainted with some of your new companions. You are quite sure you'll be all right when the train comes in?"

It seemed a peculiar question to ask, and Harry coloured.

"Oh, pater!" he protested.

"Sorry, young 'un—sorry!" said Sir Stewart quickly. "Well, good-bye. Don't forget to write after a day or two."

"Good-bye, pater," said Harry huskily.

He held out his hand, but Sir Stewart bluffly pushed it away, bent down, and kissed his son. Harry went as red as a peony, and glanced round with self-conscious apprehension.

"Don't forget—when you want some more money, let me know," said his father, as he entered the limousine. "It's the boys with pocket money who are the popular boys. Remember that, Harry."

"Yes, pater," said Harry quietly.

Sir Stewart's repetition of the phrase seemed to indicate that he was extraordinarily anxious that his son should be popular. It was almost an obsession.

A moment later, the huge car glided off, and Harry found himself alone. He still felt very uncomfortable, particularly when he found the eyes of a group of porters on him. He walked away quickly, going across the yard, with the intention of making a detour, and entering the station by a different way. He didn't quite fancy passing those porters.

"I wish the pater wouldn't be so old-fashioned," he muttered uneasily. "I mean, kissing me like that! In front of everybody, too! Too jolly thick for words!"

He paused behind the motor-buses—those buses which come right into the station yard at Victoria. His face was still pink from the effects of that recent kiss. Anybody might think he was a beastly infant! It was dotty!

However, Harry's disposition was normally

sunny, and sulkiness was totally foreign to his nature. He was a youngster who loved to be happy. And within a minute or two he was quite himself again—he was even excusing his pater, and calling himself an ass for being resentful.

"Paters aren't like other people," he told himself cheerily. "They've got rummy ideas. They can't believe that we're ever going to grow up. Jolly decent of him to whack out twenty quid. I suppose I'd better get along, and meet the gang. Now, what's the formula? Stand 'em treat all round, and blow the exes! Nothing to beat it!"

He grinned as he started crossing the yard towards that entrance where the porters were congregated. Having recovered his shattered composure, Harry didn't care a toss about these gentry now.

And then one of those little everyday incidents of human life took place.

An old lady had just come out of the station, and was running across the yard, reckless of any traffic that might be on the move—and cars and taxis are constantly shooting up at Victoria. The old lady had evidently spotted her own particular bus, and she was bent upon catching it. Her foot struck a piece of stone, or perhaps an orange peel, or a banana skin. At all events, her foot slid from under her, and she fell.

All this happened in a second, and Harry Gresham was not three yards away at the crucial moment. He started instinctively forward to help the old lady to her feet. A shout of alarm went up from dozens of throats, and then Harry saw an oncoming taxi. The unfortunate lady was lying in its full path.

For a fraction of a second, Harry hesitated. He stared at the taxi with abject terror, his face turning pale. Then, with a gasping cry, he ran—ran blindly away.

It was an extraordinary exhibition of cowardice—or panic. The old lady was saved by a miracle, for the taxi swerved right round, avoiding her by inches. Two of the vehicle's wheels left the ground, and it seemed that there would be a serious accident. But again the driver displayed his skill by righting his taxi, and pulling it to a stop at the rear of the bus rank.

Dozens of people ran to the old lady's side, and at that moment Harry was running through into the station. A porter grasped him by the arm, and jerked him round.

"Let me go!" panted the boy.

"You young 'ound!" said the porter furiously.

"I—I—"

"I don't wonder you can't speak!" snapped the porter. "I never see'd such a white-livered young cur!" he went on with contemptuous scorn. "Why didn't you try to 'elp that poor old lady?"

Harry gulped convulsively.

"Why didn't *you*?" he muttered.

"Crikey!" exclaimed the porter. "Wasn't you within arm's length of 'er? What could I do over 'ere—twenty yards off? Go on—git inside! You may be a gent, but, by gum,

you ain't got no more pluck than a blinkin' mouse!"

Harry slunk through the station entrance. He was trembling like a leaf with fright, and his eyes were filled with a mingled light of terror and blank despair.



CHAPTER 3.

HARRY MEETS HANDY!

HAME had brought a flush of colour back to Harry Gresham's cheeks as he sat in the tea-room, idly stirring a cup of coffee. He didn't want the coffee, but he had entered the tea-room so that he could hide somewhere—so that he could efface himself until he got himself under control.

Five minutes had elapsed, and the train was due to start in a quarter of an hour. Harry was looking more himself, although an expression of misery was in his eyes.

"Why did I run?" he asked himself fiercely. "I tried to stop—I wanted to help her, but—but— Oh, I don't know! It's no good! I keep trying and trying, but it's always the same! I'm a cad—a cur—and every word that porter said was right!"

Indignation swept over him now. He was sitting against a wall, where there was a big mirror. He glanced at his reflection, and took full note of the strong shoulders and the fine set of the eyes. But to him it seemed that he was looking at something abhorrent.

"It would be different if I were a skinny little freak of a chap!" he muttered. "They'd expect it of me, then. Oh, what's the use! Haven't I fought against it until I'm sick of the whole business?"

He dragged himself to his feet, leaving the coffee untouched. He paid his bill and went out—but could not bring himself to seek the departure platform. A vivid picture was still in his mind's eye—a helpless old lady on the ground, with a taxi bearing down upon her! He couldn't rest until he had made some inquiries.

This time he selected one of the other exits, and tentatively approached an outside-porter who was lounging against a truck, filling his pipe.

"Wasn't there an accident a little while ago?" asked Harry nervously.

"A haccident?" repeated the outside-porter stolidly.

"Yes."

"Fust I 'eard of it," said the man, ramming home a final piece of shag. "A haccident? There was one yesterday, over by the——"

"No, I mean just now—in the yard," said Harry. "An old lady——"

"Oh, 'er?" said the outside-porter, looking up. "That wasn't no haccident. The old gal got up, an' toddled to 'er bus as right as you like. We don't take no notice o' them sort of things, young gent," he added, striking a match. "Allus 'appenin'."

"Then—then she wasn't hurt?"

"She would 'a' bin if that taxi 'adn't nearly turned over, steerin' clear of 'er," said the porter, between puffs. "A smart bit o' work, if you ask me. But there, we blokes see lots o' them things."

Harry went off, and his face had completely cleared. He was quite himself again. The knowledge that the old lady had come to no real harm completely restored his equanimity.

Passing the barrier, he found himself approaching a group of schoolboys who were wearing those distinctive red-and-blue caps. The junior with the aggressive face was holding forth in a loud voice.

"What's the good of me making arrangements for nothing?" he was asking warmly. "You young rotter! I distinctly told you to come by the next train! Do you think I want to be bothered with you all the way down?"

A smaller edition of himself was grinning.

"Cheese it, Ted!" said the smaller edition. "I can come by this train if I want to, I suppose?"

"No, you can't!" roared the aggressive one.

Edward Oswald Handforth, the famous leader of Study D in the Ancient House of St. Frank's, was fed up. Church and McClure, his faithful study mates, had been rebellious all the morning, and now his own minor was defying him to his face.

"If you try to get on this train, I'll chuck you off!" he said sternly.

"Dry up, Handy," put in Dick Hamilton, the popular skipper of the Remove. "You can't keep Willy off this train."

"Oh, can't I?" roared Handforth.

"Of course not. He's as much right——"

"Am I barging in?" said a cheery voice. "Don't hesitate to say so if you think it. I like hearing the truth."

The St. Frank's fellows looked round, and found Harry Gresham in their midst. His face wore an open, infectious smile, and his eyes were twinkling with expectancy.

"And who," said Handforth, "do you happen to be?"

"My name's Gresham—Harry Gresham," replied the new boy.

"I know as much as I did before," said Handforth tartly. "Who is this chap?" he added, appealing to the others. "Just when I'm ticking Willy off, he butts in and——"

"Don't take any notice," smiled Nipper, looking at Gresham. "I take it that you are booked for St. Frank's?"

"That's it," said Harry, nodding.

"Which House?" demanded a dozen voices.

"Mr. Lee's!" said Harry promptly.

"Good man!" exclaimed Nipper. "Ancient House—that's us! This fellow here—this chap with the loud-speaker voice—is Handforth, of Study D. You mustn't take any notice of his atmospherics. He's always causing these oscillations."

"Are you calling my voice an atmospheric?" roared Handforth.

You've heard of the famous trio: Jack, Sam and Pete, haven't you? But have you ever read a yarn about them? Pete is as strong as a lion and always ready to do a good turn. He's a great lad for a joke, too!



*If it's
Laughter you're after
—meet Pete!*

You'll find him in

"PETE'S CUP FINAL!"

—a rollicking long complete topical story appearing in the current issue of

THE BOYS' REALM

NOW ON SALE.

PRICE 2d.



"My name," continued Nipper, "is Dick Hamilton. I might as well tell you that I'm Junior skipper, so if I can give you any help—come to me. It's supposed to be one of my jobs to instruct new kids in the way they should go."

"Thanks awfully," said Gresham. "I'm glad to meet you fellows like this—it's better than I expected."

Handforth fumed.

"I'm not going to be called an atmospheric!" he said fiercely.

"Take this chap away, and put him in the guard's van, or something," said Reggie Pitt, of the West House. "Tie him up in a corner, and label him 'Dangerous—Do Not Touch!'"

"You—you funny ass!" said Handforth. "So we've got a new chap in the Remove, have we? Well, if they pile him into my study——"

"Don't worry," said Harry, "I'm going into Study J."

"Oh, you are?" said Handforth. "Study J?"

"Yes!"

"You've got it all off pretty pat, haven't you?" went on Handforth, in an aggrieved tone. "I don't know what new kids are coming to nowadays! They know their own studies, and everything, even before they get to the giddy school!"

Harry Gresham grinned.

"I'm awfully sorry," he said drily. "The fact is, my pater made all these arrangements a week or two ago, and even went down to St. Franks's, and saw the Head. It doesn't make any difference to me whether I'm going to Study A, or Study J, or Study Z. I've never been to St. Frank's, and——"

"It makes a difference to us, though," interrupted Handforth. "Study D's full up, and you're welcome to Jarrow, anyhow."

"Jarrow?" said Harry.

"That's the fellow you'll share Study J with," explained Nipper. "He's quite a decent sort, but he's a terrific talker."

"Nearly as bad as Handforth," said Pitt, nodding.

"You—you funny West House cuckoo!" roared Handforth.

"Only he's not so violent," went on Reggie. "That's a mercy, of course. If you see two chaps on the platform with black eyes and thick ears, you'll know them at once as Church and McClure. They're Handforth's chums—and that's his way of greeting them after the holidays. He's got some funny little habits."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Somebody else'll get a thick ear soon!" stormed Handforth.

"Take your seats, please!" said a stout inspector, as he bustled by.



CHAPTER 4.

DIGGING IN!

HARRY GRESHAM was feeling complete master of himself. He liked these St. Frank's juniors, and he had an instinctive feeling that they were disposed to be friendly towards him.

He was free and easy, smiling, and thoroughly at home. Even Edward Oswald's loud talk did not deceive him—he shrewdly valued it at its true worth. In fact, he rather liked Handforth's bluff, direct way.

Then he remembered that slogan of his father's. "It's the boy with plenty of pocket money who is the popular boy." A youth in uniform was just passing, pushing an enormous three-decked wheeled wagon. The trays were full of boxes of chocolates, cakes, pastries, and numerous other delicacies of a similar order. A happy idea occurred to Harry.

"Just a minute!" he said, calling to the youth.

The wagon approached, and Gresham turned to the juniors.

"Help yourselves!" he said genially.

"Do which?" said Tommy Watson, staring.

"Have any old thing you like," continued Harry. "Don't worry about the bill—I'll settle that. My treat, you know."

"You mean we can have just what we like?" asked Church.

"Yes."

"And you'll pay the bill?"

"Of course!" smiled Harry. "Clear the whole wagon if you want to."

He produced one of his fivers, and the Removites were convinced.

"There are new boys," said Reggie Pitt, "and new boys. This chap is evidently one of those!"

"One of which?" asked Handforth.

"One of the 'and' new boys, of course," said Reggie cheerfully.

"That's not grammar!" said Handforth, staring. "In fact, it's not sense at all."

"If I stop to explain, there'll be nothing left on the wagon," said Pitt. "In fact, I shall miss the giddy train. Good egg! Just in time to bag one of these boxes of chocolates."

The wagon was raided so thoroughly, that there was practically nothing left on it at the end of thirty seconds. The startled youth in uniform was looking helpless. He was also looking alarmed.

"Ere!" he gasped. "What about payin' for all these things?"

"Here you are," said Harry, proffering the fiver. "How much?"

In settling up the bill, he nearly lost the train, for the youth found it necessary to seek the advice and aid of a second attendant, and Harry only just received his

change in time to scramble into an already filled compartment. But he was relieved when he found that he was with the same group.

"Come on—we were looking for you," said Nipper. "The Remove can do with lots of fellows like you."

"Hear, hear!" said the other occupants of the compartment.

Harry could see that he was digging himself in. It had been a wise move to treat everybody, and by the time the train had started, he was feeling more at home than ever.

"So you're going into Study J?" asked Nipper, as the train approached Clapham Junction. "You'll find Jarrow a bit tiresome. He's got a habit of jawing until further orders."

"I shan't grumble about a trifle like that," smiled Harry.

"Ever been to a public school before?" asked Handforth.

"Well, no!"

"By George!" said Handforth. "Did you hear that, you chaps? Never been to a public school before. Where the dickens did you come from, then?"

"Well, I had a private tutor for a couple of years," said Harry, rather uncomfortably. "Before that I was at a preparatory school."

"Oh, a preparatory school!" repeated Handforth. "Where?"

"Chuck it, Handy!" protested Nipper. "Gresham isn't in the witness-box. No need to cross-examine him like this."

"Rats!" said Handforth. "He's coming into the Remove, and he's got to give an account of himself."

"I don't mind," smiled Gresham. "I don't suppose you'll know the preparatory school, anyhow. It was down in Hampshire—at Basingstoke. Called the Osyth High School."

"Never heard of it," said Handforth suspiciously.

"Well, I warned you," said Harry. "It's not a bad place, as preparatory schools go, but nothing like St. Frank's, of course. I've always longed to be sent to a big public school."

"Is your home in Hampshire?" asked Pitt.

"Yes."

"Rummy thing you weren't sent to Winchester."

Harry Gresham looked slightly uncomfortable for a moment.

"My pater didn't want me to be too near," he replied. "Besides, he's always been keen on St. Frank's for me. He's awfully anxious that I should get on well at cricket."

"Well, you needn't expect to do much at St. Frank's in your first term," Handy said severely. "New kids aren't allowed to play cricket."

"Oh!" said Harry, in dismay.

"Rot!" said Nipper. "Don't take any

notice of Handy, he's kidding you. If you're any good at cricket, Gresham, you'll get your chance, although, of course, you can't expect to do much this season."

"No, I suppose not," said Harry slowly. "I'm awfully keen, though."

"Keeness is just what we want," said Pitt, nodding. "A chap who goes into cricket like a workman generally makes good. No good being half-hearted about cricket."

"Can you play?" asked Handforth.

"A bit," confessed Gresham.

"I'll bet it is a bit," retorted Edward Oswald. "You've only been to a preparatory school, and then you've had a tutor. I don't want to be personal, or anything like that, but it strikes me you'll be a bit of a dud!"

"Don't you call that personal?" asked Church indignantly.

"I'm not offended," smiled Harry. "After all, none of you know who I am, or what I am. And I've always held that a chap should be judged by his results. If your cricket skipper says I'm no good at the game, I'll swallow my disappointment and take to ping-pong!"

"And your name's Gresham," said Nipper thoughtfully. "Gresham! And you live in Hampshire?"

"Yes," confessed Harry.

"Any relation to Sir Stewart Gresham, the famous Hampshire amateur?"

"Well, I suppose you can call him a relation," smiled Harry. "As a matter of fact, he's my pater!"



CHAPTER 5.

WORTH KNOWING!

EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH looked at Harry Gresham wonderingly.

"By George!" he said, in a sort of awed voice.

"Your pater! Do you mean to say that your pater is Sir Stewart Gresham? Old Hat Trick Gresham, the marvellous Hampshire amateur all-rounder? The Test Match player?"

"Yes," admitted Harry, flushing.

"Your pater?" repeated the others, looking at him respectfully.

"Well, you see, I can't help it——"

"Can't help it!" roared Handforth. "My only hat! We've got a giddy celebrity in the train and didn't know it! The son of Hat Trick Gresham—as good to-day as he was ten years ago. By George, Gresham, give me your fist! Why the dickens didn't you tell me this at first?"

They were all over him now.

Harry was not only confused, but tremendously delighted. "Hat Trick" Gresham was a very famous figure in cricket, an amateur who had distinguished himself in many famous games. He was a fine batsman, but he made his reputation with his bowling, and was reputed to have more hat tricks to his credit than any other living cricketer.

And here was his son—coming to St. Frank's as just an ordinary new kid!

It was an occasion to be celebrated with much pomp and circumstance. The cricket season was just beginning, and at St. Frank's cricket was regarded as a kind of religion. Nothing in the whole world was so important as one's place in the Eleven. Such unpleasant matters as lessons had to be attended to, of course. But these were regarded as necessary evils. By many they were regarded as unnecessary evils.

"Of course, we shall have to do something about this," said Handforth firmly.

"Do something?" repeated Gresham.

"Rather! We can't let you arrive at the school as just an ordinary common or garden new kid," replied Handforth. "Not likely! How about getting up a tremendous feed in Gresham's honour, you chaps?"

"Good idea!" said all the others.

"Nothing like a feed!" agreed Pitt. "It'll fetch 'em all!"

"A banquet," continued Handforth enthusiastically. "We'll have all the First Eleven chaps there, and all the Second Eleven chaps. We'll introduce Gresham, and make the Fifth and Sixth go green with jealousy. They'll have a fit when they know who we've got in the Remove."

Harry's feelings were tumultuous. He had rather felt that the disclosure of his father's name would help him a bit, but he had never expected such an effect as this. His popularity was already established. The very fact that he was Sir Stewart Gresham's son was enough.

As the train progressed on its way, he was feeling happier than ever. He felt that life at St. Frank's was going to be very wonderful.

"I'll tell Fenton about you at once," declared Nipper. "Fenton's captain of the First Eleven, and he'll certainly want to give you a trial."

"For the First Eleven?" asked Harry breathlessly.

"Yes. You can play pretty decently, I suppose?"

"My pater says I'm——"

Harry hesitated.

"Says you're what?"

"Well, hot," admitted Harry modestly.

"Then if Hat Trick Gresham says you're hot, it's a dead cert!" declared Handforth.

"Why, you ass, we've got several of our chaps in the First. The teams are chosen on their merits at St. Frank's, and it doesn't matter a toss what Form they're in, or how old they are. Why, even my minor's played for the first!" he added indignantly. "And the young ass is only in the Third!"

"Then I might—I might have a chance?" asked Harry.

"Wait until Fenton's given you a trial," replied Nipper. "You're the kind of new fellow we like—the sort we welcome with open arms."

"Rather!"

Harry looked out of the window happily. He was already on the best of terms with his future Form fellows, and they seemed to like him. For his part, he liked them immensely.

As he watched the countryside as the train sped along his thoughts were bright. It was springtime—almost into May—and cricket was the biggest thing in the St. Frank's world.

Nipper and Pitt and the others were very pleased with Harry Gresham. His smile was so sunny, and his face was so thoroughly open and pleasant. There was something about him which attracted everybody. He breathed of good-nature and genuine decency. He looked a sportsman all over—in a word, a true son of a sportsman like Hat Trick Gresham.

"We're buzzing along now all right," remarked Handforth, as he watched the bright green landscape. "This is the kind of speed I like—something exciting about it."

"The fields and meadows look ripping," said Church. "And look how marvellously the leaves are all coming out!"

But Handforth had no eye for beauty.

"Strikes me the train's going a bit too fast," he said, as the carriage rocked to and fro. "Perhaps the driver's trying to make up a bit of lost time. You never know with these trains."

"Let's hope we don't run off the rails," said McClure. "It would be a fine thing if we rolled over this steep embankment, wouldn't it?"

Harry Gresham uttered a little gasp of dismay. He tried to hold on, but could not do so. Nipper looked at him a little curiously. The new boy had not only turned pale, but there was an expression of acute apprehension in his eyes. He was staring out of the window like a frightened child.

The difference in him was astonishing. It was a complete transformation. A minute earlier he had been smiling, calm, and cheery. Now he was fairly shivering with fright.

"My hat!" said Handforth, who was always tactless. "Anything wrong, Gresham?"

Harry gave a kind of gulp, and tried to smile.

"I—I'm all right!" he muttered. "You—you said something about the train having a smash——"

"Why, you ass, I was only joking," said Handforth, staring.

"I—I think the motion——"

Harry Gresham broke off, acutely conscious that many pairs of eyes were upon him. Nipper came to his rescue.

"Yes, we're rocking a bit," he said easily. "It makes you feel a bit sick sometimes. I think we were going round a curve just then. It's better now."

He turned to the others.

"Wonder how the old school'll look after the repairs?" he went on chattily, knowing that Harry was self-conscious. "I'll bet we shan't see any signs of the flood at all."

"Don't talk about the flood," said Pitt. "By jingo, I can hardly realise that it happened. Who wants a chocolate?"

It was noted rather significantly—that Harry Gresham seemed greatly relieved when the train reduced its speed to a moderate pace. It seemed incredible that he could have been scared, and the juniors felt rather uncomfortable.

However, they soon forgot it—mainly because Handforth had started one of his quarrels with Church and McClure, and was attempting to put Church under the seat. For some little time the compartment was a place of heaving legs, gasping shouts, and flying arms. In the end, Handforth was subdued, and he was held in check until the train began to slow down against the platform of a quaint little country station.

"Bellton!" announced Nipper briskly. "Here we are!"



CHAPTER 6.

A CHANGE IN STUDY MATES!

THE train practically emptied itself, for over ninety per cent. of the passengers were St. Frank's fellows. They poured out in a flood, and straggled away through the village in various groups.

The biggest group of all was collected round Harry Gresham.

If his father could have seen him now, he would probably have been overjoyed. For there was no question whatever about Harry's popularity! As soon as the Removites knew who he actually was, they fought amongst themselves to shake him by the hand, and thump him on the back.

"What-ho!" said Archie Glenthorne, the Genial Ass of the Ancient House. "Frightfully glad to shake the good old flipper, Gresham. Son of that dashed cricketer chappie, what? I mean to say, we never know who we're rubbing shoulders with, do we? Celebrities all over the blessed place, as it were."

"Archie's our pet chump," explained Nipper. "He can't help it, you know—but you needn't worry. He's quite harmless."

Archie jammed his monocle into his eye.

"Odds slurs and insinuations," he said, pained. "That's somewhat thick, if you follow me. I mean to say, absolutely unsolicited, and so forth. A dashed gratuitous stab at the old character."

"Well, let's be going," said Handforth crisply. "Perhaps we shall have a chance of seeing you at the nets to-day, Gresham."

"To-day?" repeated Harry, with delight.

"It has been done on the first day of term," smiled Nipper. "I don't suppose you'll be able to get hold of Fenton, but we'll take you over to Little Side this afternoon, if you like."

"My hat! If I like!" repeated Gresham. "It's what I've dreamed about—but what I never expected would come true!"

They went down the village street, and the St. Frank's juniors were relieved to see that everything was again normal. During their absence, life had been resumed, and the village was once more populated. During the flood, of course, all this part of the country had been completely under water.

The little shops were looking just the same



The indignant Removites swarmed round the tree. "Come down, you rotter!" snorted Handforth, as he glared at Gresham, who was clinging frantically to a branch. The new boy eyed the juniors apprehensively. He knew that he deserved all he was going to get.

as they had always looked, and the effects of the inundation had almost been effaced.

"Old Binks is going as strong as ever, I see," remarked Cecil De Valerie, as they approached. "The confectioner's, you know," he added casually, turning to Harry.

The new boy took the tip.

"How about everybody coming in for some cakes and things at my expense?" he asked. "It's almost warm enough for a ginger-pop, too. Is everybody game?"

"Rather!"

"Thanks, Gresham!"

"You're a sportsman!"

The whole crowd surged into the tuck-shop triumphantly. It wasn't every new boy who was so lavish with his pocket-money. Most of them, indeed, were too nervous even to suggest treating anybody. But Harry Gresham was cool and genial, and quite at his ease with these new companions of his. He had no trace of self-consciousness now.

"Well, this is lucky," said Nipper, after they had crowded into the shop. "Isn't that old Jarrow at the other end of the counter, talking with Boots, of the Modern House?"

"By George! So it is," said Handforth. "We can introduce you to your study mate, Gresham."

"That's fine," said Harry contentedly.

John Busterfield Boots, the go-ahead leader of the Fourth Form, heaved a sigh of relief.

"You've just come in time to save me," he said. "I just made a casual remark to Jarrow

about cricket, and he's been rambling for five solid minutes. He's a Remove chap, so you can take him, and keep him. You're welcome to him."

Hubert Jarrow, of Study J, nodded to the fresh arrivals. He was quite an ordinary looking fellow, and Harry Gresham rather liked him at once. He was certainly inoffensive.

"Pleased to see you all again," Jarrow said. "I was just talking to Boots——"

"Yes, so we've heard," put in Nipper hastily. "Let me introduce you to Harry Gresham. New fellow, you know. Son of Hat Trick Gresham, the Hampshire amateur. He's going into Study J to keep you company. It's about time you had somebody to share your solitude, Jarrow, old man."

Jarrow nodded.

"But that's all changed now," he said. "I've been having a talk with Duncan. He's the New Zealand chap," he added, as he shook hands with Harry. "Jolly pleased to meet you, Gresham. Well, about this change. It took me quite by surprise, but I'm not the sort of fellow to kick. Kicking isn't particularly nice. Of course, it all depends upon the type of kick. Now, a mule can land out a terrific swipe backwards and sideways and every other sort of way."

"We're not talking about mules!" interrupted Handforth gruffly. "We're telling you that Gresham is your new study mate. And we don't want to hear any of your ramblings."

"It's one of my favourite pastimes during the fine weather," said Jarrow. "I love to go rambling through the woods, looking at the ferns and watching the squirrels. And that reminds me of nuts. I've got some nuts in my pocket if anybody would like one. They're full of vitamins, I understand. Doctors say that vitamins are essential to the human system. In fact, we can't live without 'em."

"Yes, but we can live without you!" roared Handforth indignantly. "My only hat! We start talking about Study J, and I'm blessed if he isn't jabbering about vitamins? Who the dickens started talking about vitamins? And what *are* vitamins, anyhow?"

"Sort of second cousins to proteids," replied Reggie.

"We're not talking about proteids!" howled Handforth. "This chap Jarrow is too much of a handful for me! I can punch any other chap on the nose, but he's beyond me! You can't slaughter a fellow who only drivels at you. He can't help it—it's his curse."

"Well, if it comes to that, we have got a sort of family curse," admitted Jarrow, nodding.

"What?" gasped Handforth.

"It dates back for hundreds and hundreds of years," said Jarrow. "All rot, of course—our family hasn't taken any notice of the curse for lots of generations, and nothing has happened. I don't believe in these legends. Naturally, some legends are different. I've been reading the Ingoldsby Legends during the holidays, and they're jolly good."

"Help!" murmured his listeners. "Gag him!"

"I was awfully struck by the Jackdaw of Rheims, you know," continued Jarrow. "My uncle went to Rheims in March, right in the champagne country. Personally, I don't believe in champagne. It's jolly bad for the system. Ginger-pop is quite different—"

"Then give him a ginger-pop, for goodness' sake!" interrupted Nipper. "He'll jabber on like this for years unless we stop him. You can see what you're in for, Gresham!"

"I'll try to train him," smiled Harry.

"But you don't understand!" said Jarrow. "I'm not in Study J any more. I've changed into Study F. Duncan is in Study J now. I've been trying to tell you this for the last five minutes, only you wouldn't listen!"



CHAPTER 7.

INTRODUCTIONS!

UBERT JARROW was grasped, and held firmly against the counter.

"Now, my lad!" said Handforth aggressively.

"We've had enough of your silly rot! What the dickens do you mean by saying that Duncan is in Study J? You fathead, it's your study!"

"It was," agreed Jarrow. "I wish you wouldn't hold me like this. The edge of the

counter is digging into my back, and it might give me a sprain. I had a bad ankle last week, and—"

"Whoa!" interrupted Nipper. "Don't start on another journey! Keep to the one subject, my son. What's this about Duncan?"

"He had a row with Tom Burton and Jerry Dodd," said Jarrow mildly.

"Then Duncan's a fathead. They're two good chaps."

"Or perhaps they had a row with Duncan?" continued Jarrow. "I'm not sure which. Anyhow, Duncan asked me to go into Study F, and I said I didn't mind, and Duncan said he'd take Study J, so it's all fixed. I'm rather glad, really, because it's lonely being in a study all by yourself. Loneliness is a serious thing. I didn't know that a new fellow was coming into my room, or I'd have thought twice. It's always better to think—"

"Exactly," said Nipper soothingly. "As long as you'll only think, Jarrow, nobody will mind. It's your talking we object to."

Jarrow was not offended. He was always being told that he talked too much, and he nodded amiably to the crowd as he made his way out.

"Well, of course, this makes things a bit different," continued Nipper. "You'll have Duncan in your study, Gresham."

"Is he all right?" asked Harry.

"He's a New Zealand chap," explained Handforth, as if that was quite sufficient.

"That'll be interesting," smiled Harry.

"Not that he's any different from anybody else," continued Edward Oswald. "It's a mystery to me—I mean, coming from New Zealand, you'd expect a chap to be a bit outlandish."

"Handy thinks New Zealand is filled with freaks, or something," grinned Reggie Pitt. "He's always getting these rummy notions, Gresham. He believes that the Laplanders eat like cats, and lap up their food!"

"I don't!" roared Handforth indignantly.

"He thinks that all the people in Montenegro are blacks!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you silly idiot!" howled Handforth.

"And he's got an idea that Jamaica is full of Red Indians, because it's in the West Indies," said Reggie blandly. "You'd be surprised at the colossal ignorance of the chap."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—"

"He once told me that everybody's dotty in the Scilly Islands—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm fed-up with this!" hooted Handforth. "Look here, Gresham, don't you believe a word of all this rot."

"I don't," chuckled Harry. "They're only pulling your leg."

"Eh?"

"Well, here comes Duncan himself, so let's bring the subject back to New Zealand," interrupted Nipper. "Half a tick, Duncan—"

want to introduce you to your new study-mate. Harry Gresham—Alec Duncan. Shake hands. Alec Duncan—Harry Gresham."

Duncan was looking rather depressed.

"Jolly pleased to meet you, old man," he said moodily.

"You don't look very pleased!" remarked Handforth. "You don't know who you're talking to! This chap is the son of 'Hattrick' Gresham, the Test match player—the Hampshire amateur."

"Oh, I say! Really!" said Duncan, with interest. "That's fine! I rather thought I was going to have Study J to myself—"

"I'm awfully sorry—" began Harry.

"Rats!" said Alec Duncan. "I'm luckier than I first supposed. All the same, I wish I hadn't squabbled with those chaps. The Bo'sun and Jerry are decent sorts."

"The Bo'sun?" repeated Harry politely.

"That's what we call him," explained Duncan. "He's Burton, really. We got arguing about something or other—I don't even remember what it was now—and it led to a bust-up. Like an ass, I asked Jarrow if he'd mind changing studies with me."

"He doesn't seem to mind," said Nipper.

"No, but Burton and Dodd will!" grinned Pitt.

Duncan began to grin.

"After all, perhaps it'll teach the fatheads a lesson," he said. "I'll stay with you for a week at least, Gresham. The Bo'sun and Jerry will soon be fed-up with that human gramophone, and they'll probably go down on their bended knees, and beg me to come back."

Harry wasn't particularly pleased. It seemed a pity to him that he should get on friendly terms with his study-mate, only to lose him after a week or so. However, the ways of a big Public school were new to him, and he was quite prepared to fall in with anything that came along. Harry was a very amiable boy, and never liked to give any trouble.

"Well, let's be getting up to the school," said Nipper, at length. "You might as well come with us now, Duncan. You can escort Gresham to his lordly apartment."

"Lordly is right!" smiled Duncan. "As far as I can remember Study J, it's a pretty bare sort of room, with worn-out oilcloth and dud chairs. There's not even a couch in there!"

"You should have thought of those things before you changed your diggings," smiled Nipper. "It's the penalty for being hasty."

Harry was smiling quietly to himself, but he said nothing. His thoughts were apparently causing him some amusement.

He settled up the bill cheerfully—a fact which placed him on the best of all possible terms with the Remove. A new boy who would treat such a big crowd, and smile when he was handed the bill, was worth his weight in gold. Furthermore, he seemed to be well provided with banknotes.

"We're all keen to have a good look at St. Frank's," said Church, as they strolled along the village street. "They've been doing a lot of decorations and repairs, you know—putting things right after the flood. I wonder how Study D will be looking?"

"Fit to live in, I should think," replied McClure. "Of course, if Handy had had his way, we should have gone colour-blind within a week!"

"How's that?" asked Gresham.

"He had a dotty idea to re-decorate our study," grinned Church. "That was just after the flood, you know. He bought miles of the most atrocious wallpaper you ever saw in your life, and—"

"What's that you're saying, Walter Church?" demanded Handforth, pushing through some of the others. "Are you talking about me?"

"Only just telling Gresham about your adventures with the wallpaper and paint," said Church. "It was the biggest scream you ever saw."

"Oh, was it?" said Handforth gruffly.

"My dear chap, you made a hopeless mess of the whole business," said Church in surprise. "You can't deny—"

"Another word from you, my lad, and I'll punch your face!" snorted Handforth aggressively. "I give you fair warning—In fact, I'll punch it now, and be on the safe side!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Church dodged nimbly through the crowd, the fellows conveniently opening their ranks to allow him passage. But when Handforth tried to get through, they barred his way.

Harry Gresham, not wishing to be involved in this dispute, strolled on alone. He was interested in the quaint little shops and the picturesque cottages.

As he drew opposite to a little side lane, he became aware of loud, snarling sounds. He turned, looked down the lane, and stood there, as though rooted to the road.



CHAPTER 8.

THE FUNK!

"HALLO!" said Nipper, with a start. "What's that?"

"Sounds like a dog of some kind," replied Pitt.

"And there's a kid screaming—By Jove! What the—"

"An Alsatian!" muttered Nipper.

They stared down the High Street. Harry Gresham was a hundred yards farther on, and nobody had noticed that he had walked ahead until now. And within the next few seconds the St. Frank's fellows were booked for a tremendous shock.

The new boy was transfixed, it seemed. He was staring fascinatedly into the entrance of a little side lane. And then a tiny child came running out—a little boy, no older than

five. He was screaming in such terror that his cries attracted general attention. There was something in the little mite's tone which made everybody jump round.

And then the cause of his fright became apparent.

At his heels was a savage-looking Alsatian wolfhound.

The dog was snarling alarmingly, and snapping at the child's clothing as he ran.

"Look out, there, Gresham!"

"Drive that savage brute off!"

A dozen urgent shouts went up, and the crowd started forward. But Harry Gresham stood just where he was, staring in dull horror. His face had gone as white as chalk, and his eyes were alight with acute fear. The child was only a few feet away from him, and the dog was showing his teeth, and snarling in the most ferocious way.

And then, with a screech of despair, the unfortunate child tripped and fell. The Alsatian gave a bay of triumph, and pounced grimly upon his victim.

And Harry Gresham ran——

Not towards the hapless child, but away from him!

He ran, uttering a shout of terror. Madly, with panic-stricken haste, he rushed off, leaving the child at the mercy of this great dog. But his panic was not so great that he failed to think of his own safety. He leapt up a tree like a monkey, and swarmed into the upper branches.

"Great Scott!" gasped Nipper.

"Oh, the funk!"

"Coward! Cad!"

"Yah! You rotten funk!"

The St. Frank's fellows had seen everything—they had seen this new boy fly for his life, leaving that poor little mite to the dog's vicious savagery. And he could have drawn off the danger had he chosen.

And this was the fellow they had welcomed so heartily!

"Come on!" yelled Nipper.

The great Alsatian was prancing round the poor little child, snapping at his clothes, and showing his teeth in a snarl of alarming ferocity.

"By George!" roared Handforth. "He's mauling him!"

They ran up with all speed, shouting and doing everything they could to frighten the dog away. But the foremost juniors were well aware that the brute might turn upon them and fly at their throats.

However, this peril did not arise, for the wolfhound retreated in obvious alarm, barking furiously. He backed away, leaping about, but he did not dare to attack. He could see that these juniors were his masters.

"Come here, you infernal brute!" roared out a savage voice. "To heel, Rufus! To heel, hang you!"

The dog cringed and cowered down as a big man came running breathlessly out of the lane. He was dressed in heavy gaiters and rough tweeds.

"Look out, Mr. Holt!" shouted two or three voices.

Slash! Slash! Slash!

Farmer Holt brought his heavy stick down again and again on the Alsatian, and the poor brute howled in its agony. There was nothing savage about him now. He cringed to the ground, so terrified that he made no attempt to escape.

In the meantime Nipper had seized the child, and was holding him in his arms. He was sobbing convulsively, and he clutched to the Junior skipper with desperate strength.

"It's all right, little 'un!" said Pitt. "You're safe now."

"Yes, I think he's all right," said Nipper.

They examined the frightened little mite. But there were no signs of gashes on his chubby little legs, and it became evident that he was far more scared than hurt. His knees were grazed a bit where he had fallen to the ground, but there was nothing alarming in this circumstance.

"We'd better find out who he is, and take him back to his mother," said Nipper. "Comes from one of those small cottages down the lane, I expect. By Jove, he's scared, if you like!"

Handforth turned to Farmer Holt with a glare.

"You're jolly lucky to get out of this so easily," he shouted. "The kid isn't hurt, as it happens——"

"Hurt!" roared the farmer. "The dog was only playing."

"Playing!" gasped Handforth.

"Of course," shouted the farmer furiously. "He's only a puppy, and that infernal little kid ran at him and started him off. If the dog isn't interfered with he won't hurt anybody."

"By Jove!"

"Then—then he wasn't really trying to bite?"

"This pup couldn't bite even if he tried to!" rapped out the farmer. "He's only high-spirited, like all these Alsatis. If that little brat hadn't interfered with him, there wouldn't have been any trouble."

The juniors began to look grim.

They knew Farmer Holt of old—and he knew them. They had always been enemies.

Mr. Jeremiah Holt was not a pleasant man. He had a heavy, brutal cast of countenance, and he was about as popular in the neighbourhood as the recent flood had been. He was an uncouth specimen, and he had always had his knife into the St. Frank's boys. And, because of his habitual unpleasantness, the fellows rather went out of their way to annoy him.

And they were just beginning to appreciate the real nature of this present situation. It was obviously the farmer's fault for allowing the dog to run loose. As his master, he naturally knew what to expect. And that recent beating would have been deserved if the Alsatian had really turned savage. But now they were learning that the dog had been only playing!

The child's unharmed condition, indeed, proved this.

"And you beat that dog just now because he was merely frisking about?" demanded Nipper ominously. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Mr. Holt!"

"Look here, my young shaver——"

"You—a farmer!" went on Nipper hotly. "A man in your position ought to know how to treat animals, I should think! It was a rotten thing to beat the dog as you did just now!"

"I'll beat the brute as I like!" snarled the farmer.

"Couldn't you have just called him off?" asked Pitt.

They looked at the cringing Alsatian with compassion now. The unfortunate beast was trembling with terror, crawling at the farmer's feet with every sign of fear.

"You'd better not touch him again, that's all!" snapped Handforth fiercely.

"By thunder!" said Farmer Holt, in a thick voice. "D'ye think I'm going to be ordered about by a crowd of school kids? Take that, you ugly brute! I'll learn ye!"

Crash!

And the infuriated farmer kicked the dog in the ribs.



CHAPTER 9.

SOMETHING FOR FARMER HOLT!

ROAR of anger went up from the crowd.

That kick had been entirely unnecessary—a mere act of savagery in order to relieve the farmer's feelings. The Alsatian gave a gasping yelp of agony, and continued to howl.

"By George! You—you brute!" roared Handforth fiercely.

He didn't wait to argue.

Crash!

Handforth was a fellow who hated to see animals ill-treated; he simply hurled himself at Farmer Holt, and delivered a smashing blow which took the big man full to the jaw. The farmer staggered back, tripped over the cringing Alsatian, and rolled over with a tremendous bellow of rage.

"Good man, Handy!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Give him another!"

The farmer was on his feet again in a moment, and the St. Frank's fellows were too excited to notice that many of the shopkeepers had come to their doors, up and down the High Street, and were watching. Furthermore, P.-c. Sparrow, the village constable, was just hurrying out of his cottage, buttoning up his tunic. This was evidently a riot, and it needed looking into!

"I'll have the law on ye for this!" snarled Jeremiah Holt. "By thunder, I'll complain to the police——"

"Yes, you'd better! Before we do!" thundered Handforth.

"He ought to be prosecuted!" shouted Willy. "Oh, my hat! The poor beggar is gasping with agony all the time!"

Handforth's minor had rushed up during the excitement, and his first thought had been for the dog, for Willy was passionately fond of animals. He was kneeling in the road now, fondling the unhappy Alsatian. Every scrap of the latter's excess of high spirits had gone, and he was licking Willy's hand, and half moaning at the same time.

"You cur!" shouted Willy, looking up. "You'd better not complain to the police, Mr. Holt, or you'll find yourself in trouble. A man like you oughtn't to be allowed to keep animals, you're too much of a brute!"

Farmer Holt nearly choked.

"Get away from that dog!" he said hoarsely.

"I won't!" snapped Willy.

"By thunder, I'll—I'll——"

"Just touch him, and I'll smash you again!" roared Handforth. "I don't care who you are, or what you are—I won't stand here and see——"

"Look out! Here comes old Dicky Bird!"

"That's good!" said Nipper. "He'll know where this child lives, and I expect he'll take charge of him. Rummy thing the mother hasn't come up."

"She deserves a talking to, whoever she is," said Tommy Watson bluntly. "She oughtn't to allow the kid to be out in the road like this! Asking for trouble!"

P.-c. Sparrow came pushing through the crowd.

"Wot's all this?" he demanded officiously.

"Nothing—nothing at all!" retorted the farmer. "If you'll mind your own business, Sparrow, I'll be obliged."

"My heye!" said the constable.

"There's nothing for you to do here," went on Farmer Holt roughly. "This dog o' mine got a bit frisky, that's all, and scared one o' the cottage brats. These blamed schoolboys must interfere in everything, of course. Come on, Rufus!"

It was evident that Farmer Holt was reluctant to make any complaint. In fact, he was very anxious to get away from the scene.

"'Old 'ard, sir—'old 'ard!" said the constable. "Just a minnit, afore you go!"

He had never liked Farmer Holt, and although the farmer bullied him frequently enough, he wasn't going to allow this sort of thing before a big audience of schoolboys.

"If that there dog o' yourn 'as bin causin' trouble, I shall 'ave to ask you to put him on a leash!" said the policeman firmly. "I've got my duty to attend to——"

"I won't put this dog on a leash for you, or anybody else!" interrupted Farmer Holt curtly. "He's as harmless as a kitten, and if these boys didn't make so much fuss, you wouldn't know anything about it."

"I've got a complaint to make to you, Sparrow," broke in Handforth. "Have a look at that dog, and you'll find that he's been badly ill-treated. It's your duty to arrest this man on a charge of cruelty to animals."

"Hear, hear!"

"Arrest him, Sparrow!"

"We'll help you, if he starts struggling!"

"You—you young fools!" shouted the farmer, white with anger.

He strode off without another word, calling the dog after him. And Rufus, after a last look of gratitude at Willy, slunk away in his master's rear, with his tail between his legs.

"We oughtn't to let him go!" muttered Willy anxiously. "That brute will beat the poor thing to death when he gets it alone."

"Well, we can't do anything," said Pitt. "Holt owns the dog, and he'll be answerable if he brutally ill-treats it."

"He's done it already!" grunted Handforth.

"I know, but I don't think he'll hurt the dog again," replied Reggie. "He knows we shall keep an eye on him, and he'll be pretty cautious."

"You'd better take this kiddie, Sparrow," said Nipper, giving the child into the constable's care. "He's all right — only frightened."

"That there dog ought to be on a leash!" said the constable firmly. "I ain't lettin' Farmer Holt defy me, nor nobody else! If that there dog 'as been hill-treated, I'll soon find out about it, an' I'll make things 'ot. That's wot I'll do," he added heavily. "I'll make things 'ot!"

"The 'otter you make them for Farmer Holt the better," agreed Reggie Pitt, nodding. "That's the way, Sparrow, old son! You make things 'ot!"

"That I will!" declared the constable. "Not that I ain't so sure about you boys!" he went on suspiciously. "A parcel o' mischief—that's wot you are! I allus gets anxious when the big school fills up agin arter the 'olidays. Are you sure you wasn't hinterferin' with Mr. 'Olt?"

"We only interfered with Mr. Holt when he kicked that dog," replied Nipper. "It's all over now, anyhow, so you'd better take that little boy back to his mother's cottage."

They left the constable with the child in his arms, and felt that Farmer Holt had been dealt with lightly. True, that punch of Handforth's had left its mark, but the fellows felt that a man like Jeremiah Holt could easily have done with much rougher treatment. But it was useless to prolong the affair. Besides, there was something else to be done.

Nipper was looking round him with a cold light in his eye.

"And now," he said grimly, "for Harry Gresham!"



CHAPTER 10.

UP A TREE!

"Y George!"

"Harry Gresham!"

"We'd forgotten all about the chap!"

"The cad!"

"Where the dickens is he?"

A number of shouts went up, and the St. Frank's juniors looked up and down the High Street for the new boy. In the excitement of their encounter with Farmer Holt, they had forgotten all about Harry Gresham.

But they remembered him now—and their expressions were as grim as Nipper's.

They remembered how he had been quite near the child at the first moment of the danger. And, instead of rescuing him from the dog, he had bolted like a rabbit, yelling with fear.

True, it had since been proved that the dog had not been dangerous; but at the time Rufus had looked very savage, indeed. And many of the juniors were still convinced that the dog was a public danger. He had been cowed by his thrashing, that was all.

Most of the fellows took a very serious view of Harry Gresham's conduct. If Teddy Long had acted in such a way, nothing would have been thought of it, for Long was acknowledged to be the most contemptible funk in the Lower School. But Teddy was an insignificant little worm, and such things were expected of him. Harry Gresham, on the other hand, was a fine, sturdy youngster, every bit as muscular as Nipper himself. Besides, he was the son of a cricketing celebrity, and this, alone, seemed to indicate that he was made of the right stuff.

It was a tremendous shock to the Removites when they remembered how Gresham had acted. It was about the last thing in the world they had expected of him. Hitherto, he had been sunny, companionable, and thoroughly decent.

But every face had hardened as the juniors searched for the new boy. If there was one unforgivable crime at St. Frank's, it was the crime of being a coward. Fellows could be a bit reckless in their conduct, they could break bounds, and smoke, and make themselves into cads of that type, and they would be bumped, or sent to Coventry for a few days. But a proven funk was simply beneath the contempt of all decent fellows.

"Where is he?" demanded Handforth gruffly. "By George! I'd forgotten until now. He bunked, didn't he?"

"Yes, he gave a yell of terror, and buzzed off," said Church hotly. "I've never seen such a case of downright funkiness."

"There he is!"

"My hat! So he is!"

Somebody had pointed to a tree, and the juniors were running up. Harry Gresham was in the lower branches of that tree, and his sensations were very similar to those he had experienced in Victoria Station, earlier in the day.

He was ashamed of himself.

Yet, at the same time, he was filled with a sort of hopeless despair. He had wanted to drive that dog away, and to save the child—oh, how he had wanted to act like that! But something had frozen his blood, and had put a panic into his heart. Almost without knowing it, he had fled. An obsession had swept over him—the desire to get to a place of safety.



Harry Gresham, strolling through West Arch, found himself surrounded by George Fullerton and a crowd of noisy fags. "Funk!" they called out jeeringly. Even the fags weren't afraid of him!

But by this time he had partially recovered himself—and he was able to see his action in all its stark hideousness. Before all these St. Frank's chaps, he had run from danger! And he had told his father that he would be quite all right!

Harry's thoughts were bitter. Fate had treated him badly to-day, for he had never anticipated any such untoward events. Another fellow might have come to St. Frank's, and might have lived on for months and months before any such crisis arose. But Harry Gresham was more unlucky.

Perhaps his father had had a very real motive in supplying him with plenty of pocket-money!

He had hoped, in a vague sort of way, that he would be forgotten—that the juniors would go off without remembering him. Yet he had known that this would only be a postponement of the coming ordeal—for they were bound to demand an explanation of his conduct.

And here they were, crowding round the tree, and strangely reminding him of a pack of hounds after a tree'd fox. He did not know if foxes ever ran into trees, but he felt very much like one.

"Come down, you funk!"

"Why the dickens did you bolt, Gresham?"

"Yah, cad!"

Somebody started hooting, and Harry's face burned more deeply than ever. He wished, with all his heart, that he was a thousand miles away. It wasn't as if he were a real rotter. Save in that one weakness,

Harry Gresham was one of the nicest chaps imaginable.

"Steady on!" said Nipper gruffly. "Give him a chance!"

"Why doesn't he come down?"

"It's only fair to let him explain," replied Nipper.

"He'll have a job to explain!" sneered Owen major.

"Rather!"

"Well, it's only fair that he should have the opportunity," replied Nipper. "All right, Gresham—come down! We're not going to eat you."

Harry knew that there was no possible way of evading this ordeal. If he didn't descend of his own accord, he would be dragged down. And his humiliation was bad enough already, without that added indignity.

He slithered down the trunk, and dropped to the ground.

Instantly, he was surrounded by the excited juniors. They regarded Harry's conduct as their business. He was in the Remora now—in the Ancient House, too—and it was just as well that he should know what to expect in the future. New boys were always treated drastically.

"Now, you rotter——"

"Answer for your beastly——"

"Look here, Gresham——"

About a dozen voices started at once, but Nipper checked them.

"Chuck it!" he protested. "You'll only confuse the chap by roaring at him like that. Leave him to me for a minute—you can have him later!"

"All right—go ahead!" said Handforth, glaring.

Nipper looked at Harry Gresham very straightly.

"You've got to do most of the talking, Gresham," he said. "You're in the Remove, and you belong to St. Frank's. We rather think you owe us an explanation. Why did you bolt and climb up this tree?"

Harry caught his breath in frantically.

"I—I thought the dog was mad!" he muttered.

"So you bunked?"

"I'm awfully sorry!" said Harry, his wretchedness so obvious that Nipper felt a little pang of sympathy for him. "I say, I—I didn't mean to do that! I was off before—before realised—"

"We thought you were a decent chap, Gresham," said Handforth bluntly. "What about that little boy?"

"Little boy?" said Harry, his face deeply flushed.

"Even if you did think that dog was mad, you had no excuse for bolting," said Handforth. "In fact, there was all the more reason for you to stop, and save that kiddie from the dog."

"I—I— Well, there's nothing I can say," replied Harry quietly. "I bolted, that's all. It was a rotten thing to do—a dirty, cowardly thing. What's the good of denying it?" he added huskily. "I know I acted like a funk, and I suppose you all despise me."

"Then you suppose right!" said De Valerie curtly. "We do!"

"By Jove, rather!"

"Why the rotter absolutely admits it!"

The majority of the juniors turned their backs, and walked off, their faces expressive of complete contempt.

What a shock! They had thought him a thoroughly decent sort—and at the first test he had proved himself to be an unutterable funk!



CHAPTER 11.

A SURPRISE FOR DUNCAN!

HANDFORTH scratched his head.

"Well, I can't understand it," he said. "That's all. I simply can't under-

stand it. Beats me hollow!"

Five minutes had elapsed, and Harry Gresham had been allowed to walk off, quite alone—to find his way to St. Frank's without an escort. His recent generosity had been forgotten. His lavish treating went for nothing in face of that which had followed.

Most of the fellows had gone, too, and

Handforth and Co. were slowly wending their way up Bellton Lane, accompanied by Nipper and Reggie Pitt and Alec Duncan.

"Yes, it's a bit of a facer," said Church, shaking his head.

"Pretty rotten, if you ask me," growled McClure.

"I mean, a chap like that!" went on Handforth indignantly. "Son of Sir Stewart Gresham, the famous English cricketer! Good old Hat Trick Gresham! Why, it's—it's unbelievable! It's worse than that—it's tragic! And we thought he was such a good chap, too!"

Nipper was looking very thoughtful.

"He acted like a funk, I'll admit, but he's not a cad," he said. "No fellow could be a cad with eyes like he's got—or with that firm jaw. And didn't you notice the way he looked straight at you? Nothing tricky or cunning about him at all. He's not a cad."

"Don't you call it caddish to leave a poor little child of five, at the mercy of a mad dog?" demanded Handforth.

"The dog wasn't mad," said Church.

"Gresham thought it was, he said so—so it comes to the same thing."

"Well, it all depends," said Nipper. "Personally, I don't think the fellow knew what he was doing. He just flew into a panic, and bunked. He was scared out of his wits, and didn't realise."

"Are you making excuses for him?" demanded Handforth.

"Well, yes, in a way—"

"Excuses for a rotten funk?" went on Handforth.

"It isn't fair to judge too hurriedly, old son," said Nipper. "Perhaps Gresham has been ill, or something—perhaps his nerves are a bit weak. We can't know for certain. For goodness' sake, let's be fair to the chap."

Handforth sniffed.

"You can't accuse me of being unfair," he retorted. "I've got eyes, and I can see. It was a case of pure cowardice. He thought there was danger, so he cleared out of it. I'm disgusted with him."

"We all are, if it comes to that," said Reggie Pitt.

Alec Duncan was looking rather distressed. He had taken no part in the conversation so far, but now he mentioned a fact which affected him far more deeply than the others.

"And I've got to dig with him!" he said gloomily.

"Oh, by George, yes!" said Handforth. "You howling ass! Fancy changing into Study J, to live with a funk!"

"I didn't know it!" retorted the New Zealand boy indignantly. "And now I'm in a proper hole!"

"A hole?" repeated Handforth.

"An absolute mess," nodded Duncan. "I've dug a pit, and I've fallen into the giddy thing myself."

"Dug a pit?" repeated Handforth in amazement. "Where?"

"Oh, you fathead, I'm only talking generally," growled Alec. "I've got Jarrow to change studies with me, and now it's impossible for me to ask him to go back. Nobody will want to share a study with this beastly coward! Don't you call that a nasty hole?"

"You have my sympathy, old man," said Pitt, nodding. "In fact, you all have my sympathy. Thank goodness he isn't booked for the West House. We bar that sort."

"Rats!" said Nipper. "It's just chance, that's all. We'd like to bar cads and cowards, but we can't lock the doors against them, can we? Let's hope that Gresham will show up in a better light later on."

"The chaps are cutting him already," said Duncan. "And if I speak to him, or go about with him, they'll probably cut me too!"

"Well, I'll have a word with him as soon as we get to the school, and I'll bring him along to Study J," said Nipper. "I suppose it's my job, as Remove skipper, to show him the ropes. But I'm not keen on it."

They found St. Frank's it's old self again, without any sign of the recent disorganisation caused by the flood. All the downstairs rooms, of course, had been redecorated, and all sorts of other repairs had been effected.

Alec Duncan went along to Study J by himself, but he found Handforth and Co. standing in the doorway, examining the apartment. They had only just arrived, and they appeared to be very astonished.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" Handforth was saying. "This can't be Study J."

"It's got a 'J' on the door, anyhow," said McClure.

"Yes, but—but look at all this!" ejaculated Handforth.

"All what?" asked Duncan, pushing through.

He hardly knew what to expect, but he was certainly surprised at the actual vision. Study J was no longer a bare compartment, with worn lino on the floor, but a singularly cosy place.

There was a glorious lounge, covered with strong serviceable tapestry. The chairs were of mahogany, and covered in the same material, to match. A bookcase and a bureau—both brand new—were neatly placed against the walls, and there was a fine carpet on the floor.

One of the recess-cupboards stood open, revealing glistening crockery, knives, silver, a kettle, a tea-pot, and a truly ambitious spirit-stove. In that little study there was everything conducive to a schoolboy's comfort.

Alec Duncan's spirits rose wonderfully.

"Well, I must say the school has done the thing properly!" he said admiringly. "This is something like! I never dreamed they'd make our studies so ripping as this!"

Handforth looked at him coldly.

"You silly old!" he said. "Do you think all the studies are like this?"

"Aren't they?"

"Of course they're not, you slab of New Zealand mutton!" retorted Handforth. "Ours is just the same as ever, and so are all the others. Redecorated, of course, but they don't look like millionaires' palaces!"

"Then—then who did all this?" asked Duncan, staring.

"Blessed if I know!" said Handforth. "Jarrow's people aren't rolling in money, and they wouldn't give him all this luxury."

"Then it must be the work of Gresham's pater," said Duncan. "He knew he was coming into Study J, didn't he?"

"Why, yes," said Church. "And he told us that his father had fixed everything up with the Head. You lucky bounder! Fancy wallowing in all this comfort! You knew what you were doing when you changed studies with Jarrow."

"Jarrow will be tearing his hair about it," grinned McClure.

"Yes, but there's Gresham to think of!" growled Alec Duncan. "It's some consolation to have a nice study like this, but— Oh, well, we don't want to make a fuss. The less talk about that affair, the better."

Handforth & Co. went off, after a last envious look round. And Duncan was just examining the effects when Nipper arrived, escorting the new boy.



CHAPTER 12.

ANOTHER STRANGER!

NIPPER was very polite, but his manner was cold.

"Here you are, Gresham," he said. "This is your study." He looked round. "By Jove, who's been doing all this? Who's been converting the place into a fairy paradise?"

Harry looked uncomfortable.

"Isn't it usual?" he asked, and his manner was rather subdued.

"Usual?" replied Nipper. "Just have a look at the other studies, and you'll soon see if it's usual! Who did all this—your pater?"

"Yes. He had the furniture put in."

"Lucky bounders—both of you," said Nipper.

"But—but I thought that the fellows here were supposed to provide their own furniture?" asked Harry. "I say, I hope it isn't infra dig?"

"Of course not," replied Nipper. "Archie Glenthorne's study is even more impressive. There's no law against providing gold-encrusted furniture, if you can afford it. But the majority of the fellows have to put up with just plain tables and plain chairs. You see, most parents have rummy ideas about comfort for their sons."

Nipper went out, and there was an awkward silence for a moment or two.

"Is this study all right?" asked Harry, at last.

"I'm not grumbling," replied Duncan. "As I've got to share the study with you, I suppose I ought to think myself lucky. You didn't expect to have the room to yourself, did you?"

"No, the pater told me there would probably be another fellow with me," replied Harry. "I say——"

He paused, flushing awkwardly.

"About—about——"

He paused again, unable to form his words. For once his eyes avoided those of his companion, and he shuffled his feet uncomfortably. Alec Duncan had an idea what was coming, and he felt rather hot.

"About—about that dog!" blurted out Harry at last. "I don't deserve to be treated——"

"If it's all the same to you, Gresham, we'll say nothing about it," interrupted the New Zealand boy gruffly. "Are you any hand at making tea?"

"Yes, but——"

"Better open the window," went on Duncan briskly. "It's warm to-day, and the air's a bit stuffy in here."

He had no intention of speaking about that unfortunate incident in the village. Alec Duncan was a peaceful junior, and he had an intense disliking for rows. His late disagreement with his former study-mates had upset him, too, for the whole affair had been a storm in a teacup.

He felt that if he and Gresham fell to discussing the dog incident, it might lead to words. And Duncan did not want to quarrel with the fellow on his very first day.

Harry, for his part, appreciated the fact that he had gone down with a slump in the estimation of all the Remove fellows. They had treated him in very friendly fashion at first, but since he had arrived at the school, hardly anybody had looked at him. Bad news spreads fast, and there was hardly a junior in the Lower School who did not know that Gresham, the new boy, was a funk.

It was not exactly a pleasant beginning.

But Gresham was a boy of much common-sense, whatever his weaknesses. He blamed nobody for being down on him. He knew that he deserved their censure. Indeed, it was the fact that he knew his own failings so thoroughly that had warmed Nipper's heart somewhat. Somehow, one could never be very severe with a fellow who openly admitted his faults.

Duncan busied himself with his bag, and Harry examined the spirit stove, in order to see how it went—just for something to do.

They heard Handforth & Co. go down the passage, and they caught a few of the floating words.

"... chap's all right, in the main ... seemed decent enough when we first met him.

... I mean, though, an arrant funk ..."

"... can't stand those sort at any price ... chap who's a funk ... no good to anybody ... pity, of course ..."

The voices died away, and Harry Gresham caught a momentary glimpse of his reflection in the big mirror which adorned the mantelpiece; the expression on his face was despairing. Harry felt glad that Duncan was bending over his bag on the other side of the room.

In the meantime, Handforth & Co. had reached the Triangle. Handforth was tossing a brand new, red cricket ball from one hand to the other.

"It's early yet," he said briskly. "Hours too early for tea. Let's go over to Little Side, and have a bit of sport. Got the bat, Churchy?"

"Yes," said Church. "And Mac's brought the stumps."

"Good egg," said Handforth. "You buzz off in advance, old man," he added, waving his hand to a junior who had just come out of the Modern House. "Catch!"

Bob Christine prepared to catch, but there was evidently something wrong with Handforth's aim. Perhaps he wasn't in good form. After all, the season had hardly yet commenced.

At all events, the leather not only flew low, but it flew very wide, and whizzed across the Triangle in the direction of the fountain—a clear nine feet off its true course.

Crack!

The ball very neatly struck the straw hat of a gentleman who was strolling past the fountain, reading a book. If Handforth had attempted to do the thing deliberately, he would never have succeeded.

The stranger's straw hat was lifted clean off his head, and it sailed unerringly into the very centre of the wide fountain pool. It alighted upside down, and floated gaily along as a puff of the breeze caught it.

"That's done it!" said Church. "Better cut. Handy!"

"Not likely," said Handforth. "It was an accident!"

The stranger was glaring across at him.

"Who did that?" he shouted furiously.

"Sorry, sir," said Handforth, running up. "I tossed the ball to Christine, really, but the silly ass wasn't in the right place!"

"Well, my hat!" ejaculated Bob. "He's blaming me!"

The stranger was evidently a visitor of some kind. He was certainly not a master, although he possessed a scholarly air. He was a tallish man, thin and weedy, with a stamp, however, of aristocratic breeding. There was an indefinable air of what our ancestors would have called "quality" about him. He was evidently a man of good family.

Not that he sounded like it at the moment.

"You infernal young idiot!" he shouted, fishing his hat out of the pool, and glaring at Handforth. "What the deuce do you

mean by throwing cricket balls about in the quadrangle?"

"I didn't," replied Handforth.

"You didn't?" stormed the other. "Why, I saw you——"

"It was only one cricket ball," said Handforth stoutly.

The strange gentleman did not realise that Handforth had a fatal habit of being literal.

"You impudent young demon!" he snapped. "I'll report——"

Besides, it isn't a quadrangle," said Handforth.

"What?" barked the stranger.

"It's a Triangle. You ought to know that," said Edward Oswald coldly. "I don't see why you should make all this fuss over a trifle. You're only a visitor here, anyhow, and——"

"I am no visitor!" shouted the other. "That was a deliberate insult to me, and I won't allow it to go unpunished."

"Not—not a visitor?" asked Handforth blankly.

"Mr. Lee!" shouted the newcomer. "Just a minute, please. I wish to report this boy for gross impertinence and dangerous behaviour! It is only by sheer luck that I am not stunned, or even blinded!"

Handforth glanced round, and found that Mr. Nelson Lee was striding up.



CHAPTER 13.

THE HEAD'S NEW SECRETARY!

"Hi, crumbs!" said Handforth, with inward alarm.

After all, Nelson Lee was his own Housemaster, and Handforth had an uncomfortable thought that Lee would take a perfectly ridiculous view of the whole affair. Long experience with masters had taught Handforth that justice was not to be expected. Masters never appreciated the finer points of these little misunderstandings.

"I hope there's nothing wrong, Mr. Addison?" asked Nelson Lee, as he halted. "I should not like——"

"There's something very wrong," interrupted Mr. Addison. "This boy deliberately threw a cricket ball at me!"

"I didn't, sir!" protested Handforth hotly. "I threw it at Christine!"

"He only tossed it, sir," put in Church. "He sang out to Christine to catch, but his aim was so awful that the ball knocked this gentleman's hat into the fountain pool."

"Quite an accident, sir," said McClure.

Nelson Lee looked at Mr. Addison inquiringly.

"I hope you do not believe this ridiculous story?" asked Mr. Addison, with a glare. "The boy may have pretended to toss it to one of his mischievous companions, but he deliberately hurled it at my head."

"Really, Mr. Addison."

"I won't have it, sir! I won't put up with this sort of indignity!" snapped the stranger. "You are a responsible Housemaster, and I trust you will give the boy a sound thrashing. If not, I shall be obliged to report him to the headmaster."

Nelson Lee's manner became cold.

"As far as I can see, it is quite unnecessary to bother the headmaster with such a trifle!" he snapped.

"A trifle?"

"Yes, Mr. Addison, a trifle!" said Lee coldly. "It is neither your duty to report any of the boys to the headmaster, nor to assume that I shall inflict floggings for such insignificant offences."

"I tell you the boy might have blinded me——"

"It was an act of carelessness, Mr. Addison, and I shall punish Handforth for tossing a cricket ball about in the Triangle—where such activities are prohibited," said Nelson Lee quietly. "You are quite mistaken, Mr. Addison, I can assure you. I know Handforth well. He would not deliberately throw a cricket ball at your head."

Mr. Addison, somewhat recovered, bowed.

"I will say no more, then," he exclaimed bitingly. "Since you know so much, Mr. Lee, I will wait until I see Dr. Stafford, and will then report the incident to him in full."

Nelson Lee's eyes flashed.

"That, of course, is your own concern," he retorted. "Handforth, I dislike punishing you on the first day of the term, so you will come to me to-morrow for the purpose of receiving an imposition of fifty lines."

Nelson Lee walked off, and Mr. Addison glared at the juniors balefully as he strode on. He was, apparently, a most unpleasant person.

"Nerve!" said Church indignantly.

"Jolly decent of Mr. Lee, though, only to give me fifty," said Handforth. "Where's that cricket ball? I've a dashed good mind to throw it again, and make another mistake. Who is the beast, anyhow?"

"Can't place him at all," said McClure. "Must be a master, I suppose. Yet we haven't heard of any new masters."

Nipper, on the other side of the Triangle, was making an inquiry. He had been coming down the Ancient House steps while the altercation had been in progress, and now he buttonholed Nelson Lee on his way indoors.

"Who is that disagreeable fellow, sir?" he asked.

"You shouldn't call him a fellow, Nipper—he is Dr. Stafford's private secretary," said Nelson Lee drily.

"I didn't know the Head had a private secretary, guv'nor."

"This is his first essay in that direction. You must remember that Dr. Stafford was very ill owing to the flood, and he is not quite himself again even now," said Lee. "So, for this term at least, he thought it necessary to engage a private secretary."

Nipper nodded.



Gresham stared towards Sir Arch, his eyes almost starting out of his head. A terrible shape was dancing amid the blackness of the Arch—dancing and capering like some grotesque monstrosity from a nightmare. With a yell of fear, Harry whirled round and ran headlong towards the Modern House!

"He might have engaged a choicer specimen, sir," he said.

"Yes, I am afraid that Mr. Hubert Addison is a somewhat irascible gentleman," smiled the Housemaster. "I don't think he is accustomed to Public schools. However, he has no authority over you boys, so I don't think there'll be any friction."

"The Head ought to have engaged a lady secretary, sir," said Nipper firmly. "One of those nice, quiet pretty ones. Then there wouldn't have been any trouble at all. This chap looks like getting into hot water if he flies into a temper with the fellows for nothing."

"I think Mr. Addison is a connection of the celebrated Addisons of Hampshire," said Nelson Lee.

"Never heard of 'em, sir."

"Such is fame," smiled Lee. "The Hampshire Addisons, Nipper, are one of the oldest families in England. So far as pedigree goes, Addison has an unimpeachable testimonial. But I am afraid some of these 'poor' relations are so embittered by their lot that their tempers are apt to become shortened. Take my advice, young 'un, and steer clear of Mr. Addison. I don't quite like the looks of him."

"My hat!" said Nipper, staring. "You mean he's a wrong 'un?"

"I didn't say that."

"But you meant to imply it, sir."

Lee looked at Nipper keenly.

"We'll let it go at that, young 'un," he said. "I'm not often wrong in my estimation of a man, and Mr. Addison has not impressed me favourably. Still, I am trusting you to keep this little confidence to yourself."

"Oh, rather, sir!"

"By the way, have you met the new boy yet?" asked Lee.

"Harry Gresham, sir?"

"Yes."

"He came down in the train with us, sir."

"Like him?"

"Well, the fact is——" Nipper paused. "We liked him all right at first, sir—thought he was top-hole. But—but—— Well, it's nothing much, sir. Some of the fellows are rather inclined to cut him."

"Good gracious; What on earth for?"

"Well, I can't exactly—— You see, sir——"

"I understand," nodded Nelson Lee. "All right, Nipper, I won't press you. But I am very disappointed. Do you know that Gresham is the son of the famous Hampshire amateur?"

"Yes, he told us," replied Nipper uncomfortably. "He didn't say anything till we guessed it, though. I'm worried about the chap, sir. I rather like him. I took to him instantly. And yet—and yet——" He broke off, and Lee smiled and went his way. Here was obviously a little schoolboy secret which could not be disclosed to a master.

Just at that moment, too, Harry Gresham himself came out. He had made some sort



Gresham stared towards Big Arch, his eyes amid the blackness of the Arch—dancing a With a yell of fear, Harry whirled

of tentative arrangement with Nipper, for the latter had offered to show him round the school. As captain of Gresham's Form, Nipper regarded this as something of a duty.

"Ready?" Nipper asked.

"Oh, I don't want to bother you, Hamilton," said Harry awkwardly.

He could feel the chilliness in the air, and he wanted to be alone. He would much prefer to wander round the school without the embarrassment of an escort.

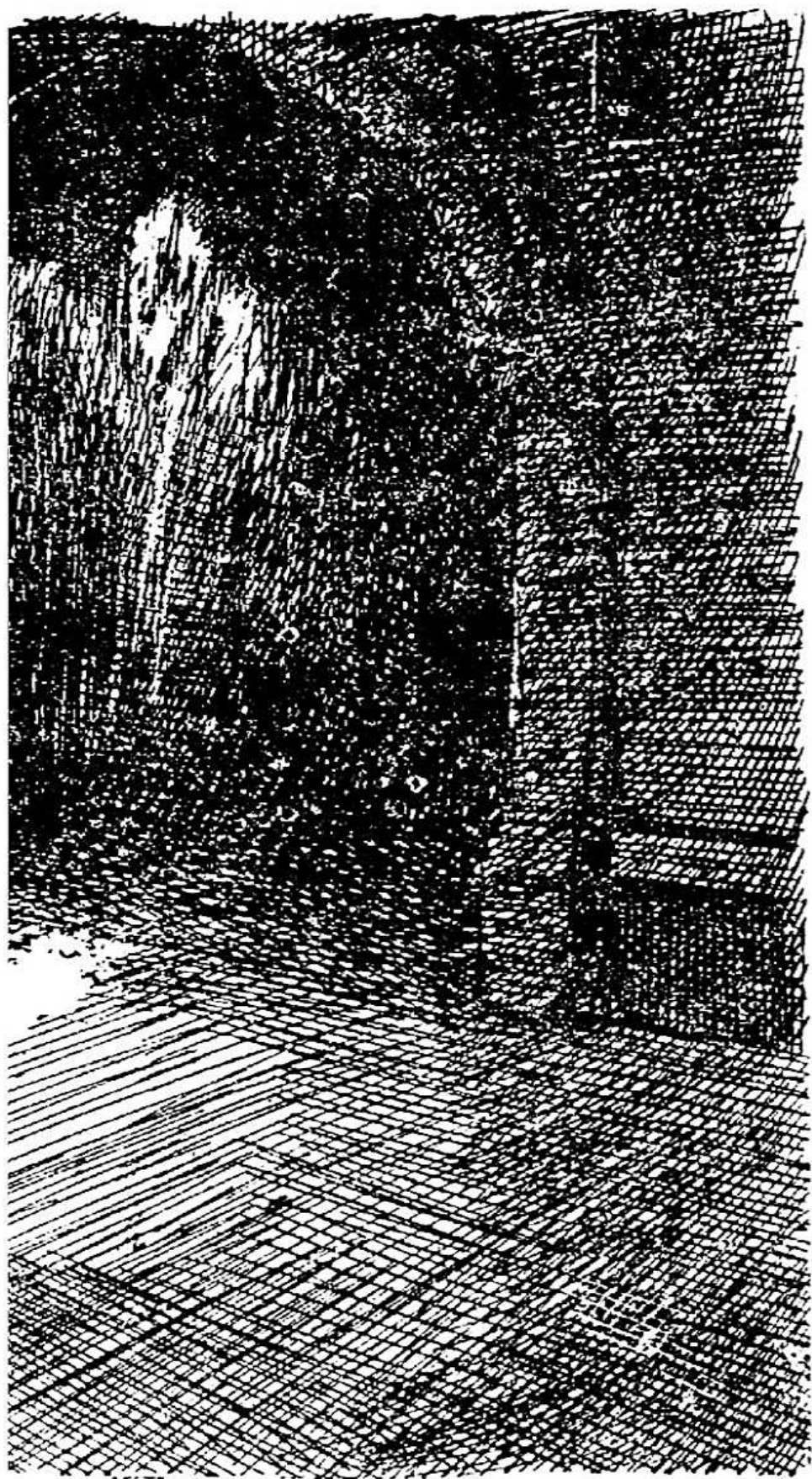
"Don't be silly," said Nipper. "Come along. We'll go through into Inner Court, and I'll show you——"

"Hi! Leave that funk alone, Hamilton!" "Great Scott! Look who Nipper's talking to!"

"Yah, coward!"

"Look at the chap who climbs trees!"

A groan went up, and Harry Gresham's face was flaming as he came down the Ancient House steps with Nipper by his side. Was there never to be an end to this ordeal?



t of his head. A terrible Shape was dancing
me grotesque monstrosity from a nightmare.
adlong towards the Modern House!



CHAPTER 14.

QUITE IMPOSSIBLE!

NIPPER frowned.

Much as he detested cowardice, and much as he regretted Harry Gresham's pitiful exhibition in the village, he regarded the present scene with rising anger. Why couldn't these idiots let the thing drop? After all, Gresham was a new boy, and perhaps he had been nervous in spite of his cool exterior. Nipper was ever ready to make allowances.

"Hadn't you better mind your own business?" he demanded hotly. "It's a pity you can't do something better than jeer at this new fellow."

"He's a funk!"

"And you're a cad, Nipper, for associating with him!"

Nipper wasted no time. He wasn't going to be called a cad by anybody, and it wasn't

his habit to lose his temper, either. He leapt down the Ancient House steps, singled out the offender—Marriott, of the East House—and speedily knocked him down.

"Here, I say!" gasped Marriott, scrambling up.

"You've said enough!" rapped out Nipper. "Does anybody else want a taste? Gresham's a new fellow, and he doesn't know the ropes yet."

"Hear, hear!" said Handforth, striding up. "Leave the kid alone!"

"Yah, he's a coward!"

"Give him three groans!"

The three groans were given with much gusto, and a number of Third Formers joined in the noise. These formed a group, headed by Fullerton, of the East House section. Fullerton's gang included such ragamuffins as Parry minor and Jimmy Hook and Billy Dale. They were not in Willy Handforth's set at all—although, when the occasion demanded, he could exact obedience from them. In the Third, Willy was an autocrat.

"You're a fine, contemptible lot!" said Nipper scathingly. "Don't take any notice of them, Gresham. You'll find that all the decent fellows will be willing to forget a slip or two. We're all liable to make mistakes."

Harry Gresham shot him a grateful glance.

"Thanks!" he muttered. "But—but I don't deserve it!"

"The fact that you say you don't deserve it is one reason why you do deserve it," replied Nipper drily. "These fellows are only a lot of nobodies. They didn't even see the affair, if it comes to that."

Armstrong, of the Fourth, pushed forward.

"Is that the funk who bolted in the village?" he asked roughly.

"This is Harry Gresham——"

"That's the rotter!" said Armstrong. "It's just as well to get these things clear, Hamilton. Are we to understand that you're associating with him openly?"

"Looks like it, doesn't it?" said Nipper.

He took Gresham's arm, and Handforth promptly took the other. They didn't actually want to do so, but this sort of injustice called for strong action. Gresham may have disgraced himself, but these Fourth Formers and these fags had no right to constitute themselves his judges.

"By Jove!" said Armstrong. "See that, you chaps?"

"We'll send them to Coventry!" roared Marriott.

"Hear, hear!"

"That'll suit us down to the ground," said Nipper coolly.

"What?"

"If we're sent to Coventry, it'll save us the trouble of acknowledging you," explained Handforth, with a sniff. "We're rather particular about our friends and we wouldn't have you fellows at four a penny!"

"We'd send you back as misfits!" added Nipper.

The hostile crowd felt rather crushed. Dick Hamilton and Edward Oswald Handforth were two of the big "noises" of the Lower School,

and it was a futile sort of policy to send them to Coventry.

"Well, anyway, you oughtn't to associate with that funk!" said Armstrong gruffly, seeking a line of retreat. "I'm going to wash my hands of the whole business!"

"Same here!" said Marriott.

"I'm glad to hear it," retorted Nipper. "It is fine to know that you fellows do wash your hands occasionally—although they don't look very much like it at the moment."

Unable to reply to this crushing remark, the Fourth Formers beat as dignified a retirement as possible. Fullerton and his gang of fags were not so wise. They hung about, glaring at Harry Gresham, and making all sorts of disparaging comments in loud whispers.

"It's jolly decent of you," said Harry uncomfortably. "But I don't see why you should stick up for me like this. I—I acted pretty rottenly in the village—"

"You did!" agreed Handforth bluntly. "But two wrongs don't make a right! Personally, I've no use for funks. Can't stick 'em! But I'm willing to give you another chance, my lad," he added generously. "As a matter of fact, I like you, and if you're any good at cricket, you'll be in my good books."

Handforth spoke in a fatherly way, as though he were Harry Gresham's sole guardian. Nipper was chuckling, and he disengaged his arm.

"Well, Gresham, we might as well be going round," he said. "Which way would you prefer to go? Shall we have a look at the other Houses, or would you like to sample the architectural joys of the chapel?"

Harry hesitated, remembering that Nipper had suggested a tour of the school grounds.

"If it's all the same to you, Hamilton, I think I'd rather just wander about alone," he said quietly. "I—I don't want you to think—I mean, it's jolly nice of you to offer— But if you'd let me, I think I'd prefer—"

"As you please, of course," said Nipper.

He shrewdly guessed that Harry's motive was a worthy one. The new boy was feeling that he had dragged Nipper into this affair, and that Nipper was too much of a sportsman to back out of it. So Harry backed out himself. He had already seen that a strong prejudice against him was in the air—and this, alone, had the effect of making him rather nervous.

He walked off before Nipper could say anything further, and the junior skipper and Handforth stood looking after him.

"Can't make the chap out," said Handforth, frowning. "He seems such a jolly decent sort. So—well, likeable, if you know what I mean. There are some chaps you can take to at once, and some you have to cultivate. And there are others whom you can't

even touch without feeling uncomfortable. Gresham's a sport, according to all my instincts. And yet he bunked like a baby when there was a bit of danger."

"Look over there!" said Nipper angrily.

"Eh?" said Handforth. "Oh!"

Harry Gresham, attempting to stroll through West Arch, had found himself surrounded by George Fullerton and the other noisy fags. They were all chanting in a jeering way, and the chant seemed to consist of one word only, "Funk."

Harry tried to ignore them, but it was impossible, for Fullerton, bolder than the rest, pushed himself in front of the new boy, and stood there, so that Harry's progress was barred.

"Yah!" said Fullerton, thrusting his face forward, and making a contemptuous grimace. "Coward! Hit me—if you dare!"



CHAPTER 15.

HARRY DOES IT AGAIN!

HANDFORTH caught his breath.

"By George!" he muttered thickly.

He was excited. If Fullerton had made that challenge to him, he would have sailed in on the spot, and Fullerton, to all intents and purposes, would have ceased to exist. And Handforth naturally expected Gresham to adopt the same tactics.

But Harry was standing perfectly still, his mind in a turmoil. He didn't know what to do. In the first place, that sudden "dare" had put him all in a fluster. Fullerton was an ugly, powerful, aggressive looking boy, and nobody would have guessed that he was in the Third. The unfortunate Harry was bereft of action for a moment.

On the top of this, he remembered that it was his first day in the school, and it would be an awful beginning if he got into a rough and tumble scrap with these fellows. Unable to decide, he hesitated—and his hesitation was misinterpreted by Fullerton.

"I knew it!" he said jeeringly. "Look at him! Funk! Daren't hit me! Oh, my hat! Look at baby-face! Look what they've found for the Remove! He must have crawled out from under a stone!"

Harry, his face scarlet, still remained inactive.

And Handforth gave a gasp of amazement, and rushed forward. He simply couldn't stand it any longer.

"Gresham!" he yelled. "Aren't you going to slaughter him?"

Gresham turned, nervous and shaky.

"I—I don't want to cause trouble—" he began.

"Smash him!" hooted Handforth. "You ass, he dared you!"

"Yah!" sneered Fullerton. "He's afraid to hit a worm!"

"We'll soon see about that!" bellowed

ANSWERS

Every Saturday. Price 3d.

Handforth. "Go it, Gresham! There's a worm in front of you now—slosh it!"

Fullerton coloured, and Harry, bewildered and confused, brought his fist round, and struck the hulking Third Former on the side of his head. Harry hardly knew what he was doing, for Handforth's sudden presence had thrown him into worse confusion than ever. Handforth had this effect on lots of people.

"Good man!" yelled Edward Oswald. "But it wasn't hard enough!"

"He—he hit me!" gasped Fullerton furiously.

"I thought you said he daren't?" grinned one of the other fags. "A fat lot you know, Georgie! The chap might eat you——"

"I'll knock his nose flat!" shouted Fullerton.

He knew that unless he did something drastic, he would lose every ounce of prestige with his precious cronies. He had dared Harry to strike him, and now it was up to him to carry on. He whipped off his jacket, turned up his sleeves, and pranced up to Harry in the most alarming way. He was roaring at the top of his voice, and he made a big show.

Harry gave a gulp, and for one moment he seemed about to face Fullerton's rush boldly. But that fatal hesitation of his persisted, and it proved his undoing.

As Fullerton lashed out, Gresham's nerve deserted him.

He backed away, turned, and ran.

A perfect howl of derision went up from everybody.

"Yah, funk!"

"Look! He's bolting!"

"My only Aunt Constance!" stuttered Handforth dazedly.

Harry Gresham was running hard now—bolting as fast as his legs could carry him. His ears, burning at the sound of contemptuous laughter, were as red as fire. In his panic, he only wanted to get away—to get beyond the sound of those derisive jeers—to get out of reach of those scornful eyes. He now regretted with all his heart that he had come to St. Frank's.

He had looked forward eagerly to his life at the great school, but now that it was beginning, he wished himself a thousand miles away. He didn't know where he was running, or whether the juniors were chasing him. But at last he was pulled up by running full tilt into a wall. His way was barred, and he came to a halt, panting like a hunted animal.

He swung round, his back against the wall, at bay.

But there were none to jeer at him now. Without knowing it, he had skirted round the rear of the gymnasium, and was in the thick little shrubbery which filled this corner of the Triangle. It was a secluded spot—only frequented, at rare intervals, by daring juniors who essayed a surreptitious cigarette in solitude.

Finding himself alone, Harry's panic dropped from him like a cloak. The screen of thick trees hid him completely, and he was grateful for this. He clutched at one of the stone buttresses of the wall, and tried to pull himself together.

He was horrified by the realisation of what he had done. And he knew—better than anybody else—that he had acted in an unforgivable manner.

"Coward—coward!" he muttered desperately. "Oh, you miserable funk! They're right—they're right all along the line!"

He reviled himself with a fierce intensity which rendered him breathless. And then, at last, he sagged against the wall, with despair in his eyes. He looked like a fellow who had lost every hope in life.

Would he never conquer himself? Would he never fight down this fatal weakness? Oh, how he had tried! He always told himself that he would stand firm at the next crisis—but he always caved in. What was the use? What was the good of fighting?

He crouched against the buttress, as if to seek protection. He knew how they were talking about him—he could almost see their contemptuous expressions. And the dreadful thing about it all was that he deserved their scorn! That was what hurt more than anything else.

Gradually his old manner returned, and he got a grip of himself. His jaw became stronger, his eyes grew grim. He remembered Fullerton's leering face, and he swore to himself that he would punch it. He would punch it—punch it—punch it—

Then he uttered a groan, and choked back a kind of sob.

"Haven't I said all this before?" he muttered miserably. "I'm always the same—I'm always as brave as a lion when I'm alone! But when I get face to face again, everything snaps. Oh, I am a funk! A rotten, caddish, miserable weakling! I've no more backbone than a—than a jellyfish! At least, a jellyfish can sting—and I'm as harmless as a clod!"

His self-condemnation was fierce and merciless. He wanted to be so different! He knew he had the strength—he knew he had the will to do strong things. But there was always that something—that inexplicable force—which surged up at the final moment and thwarted him.

This wasn't the first time he had gone through this pitiful experience. It had been the same at his other school, when he had been just a little boy. But for two years, under a kindly tutor, he had had no such occasion to assert himself. He had thought that he would be so different—so cool and calm. And now, on his very first day at St. Frank's, all his old weakness was showing itself as hideously as ever. He hadn't lived it down. It was in him—in his muscle—in his sinew—in his very fibre!

"It's no good; I can't alter how I'm born!" muttered Harry wretchedly. "I can't

fight—"But I can!" he added fiercely, one of his strong waves of resolution sweeping over him. "I'll prove that I'm not a fraud and a swindle!"

With his face set, he strode through the shrubbery.



CHAPTER 16.

IN THE HEAD'S STUDY!

FRAUD and a swindle!

How many times had Harry Gresham called himself those things? How many times had he felt that he actually was a hollow sham? He knew that his appearance was presentable. He knew, too, that he had a way with him, for he never failed to make friends, even when he went amongst perfect strangers. If he had been a girl, this phase of his personality would have been called charm.

But Harry was a boy, and there was nothing charming about him. He was just likeable—and he knew it. He couldn't help knowing it. People had so often responded to his sunny nature.

But he always spoilt everything—sooner or later, he acted in a cowardly way, and these friends turned from him. And he felt that he was a fraud and a swindle. He led people to believe that he was true blue, and all the time he was yellow.

That was the word—yellow! In America, people of cowardly nature are said to have a

"yellow streak." Harry felt that he was yellow from head to foot. And he couldn't help it—he wanted to be so different, too!

He strode out from the shrubbery, and emerged from behind the gymnasium.

The Triangle was still crowded with fellows. They were standing in groups, talking excitedly. Nipper and Handforth were on the Ancient House steps, talking to Church, McClure, and Archie Glenthorne.

"Here comes the funk!"

A jeer went up from the Third-Formers as soon as Harry Gresham appeared. He was making straight for the Ancient House. His face was set, and he tried to walk steadily. Not one of those fellows appreciated the sheer courage of this action of Harry's. Instead of skulking off, and waiting to get in by stealth, he was running the gauntlet. And he took a kind of bitter pleasure in doing so, for he felt that he deserved every jeering taunt which stung his ears.

Fullerton, emboldened by his previous experience, ran forward.

"I'm going to smash him up this time!" he roared.

"Oh, my hat!" muttered Nipper.

"We can't let this go on!" breathed Handforth. "Think of the disgrace for the Remove! This fellow isn't human at all—he's an insect! By George! He's got to do something—to redeem the Remove!"

Handforth felt strongly on the point, and he rushed off before the others could prevent him. He arrived just as Fullerton and his clique were crowding round Harry Gresham.

Stories of Sport, School, Mystery & Detective Adventure

ASK FOR THESE POPULAR VOLUMES!

PRICE **4^D** EACH

THE
BOYS' FRIEND
LIBRARY
(New Series)

THE
SEXTON BLAKE
LIBRARY
(New Series)

THE
SCHOOLBOYS' OWN
LIBRARY



"Knock him down, Gresham!" shouted Handforth fiercely. "You're in the Remove—you've got to uphold our honour! Don't let this beastly fag scare you! Hit him! Smash him!"

"You clear off, Handforth!" roared Fullerton.

"By George! I'll—I'll——"

"Gresham's afraid!" jeered Fullerton. "Yah! He's funky all through!"

Harry felt singularly cool. His recent fight with himself had left him as cold as a block of ice. This time he wasn't taken unawares—he had had time to think. His nerve always deserted him when he was taken by surprise.

"I don't fight with fags!" he said dangerously.

"Yah! You daren't hit me!" goaded Fullerton.

He lunged forward, and struck Harry on the mouth. It was a sudden blow, and it drew blood. The new boy acted like a flash of lightning. His right fist swung round, and crashed into Fullerton's face with terrific force. The burly fag staggered back, and tumbled over backwards.

"Good man!" roared Handforth delightedly.

He was a fellow who could appreciate a good punch, and that one had been a beauty. Fullerton leapt to his feet, his eyes goggling. He found Harry Gresham advancing with a deadly light in his eye.

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Fullerton.

He was very brave when he had to deal with anybody weaker than himself. After all he had heard about Gresham, he had been certain that the fellow would never dare to go for him. But, like most bullies, Fullerton had a habit of crumpling up if the odds turned against him.

And now he acted up to his reputation. He bolted precipitately. His fellow fags crowded round him, and they all came to a halt near the main gates. Harry Gresham had pulled up, too, and he was deathly pale. That unhealthy flush had left his cheeks altogether.

He had conquered.

That was all he could think of for the moment. For the first time in his life, he had gripped himself. He instinctively felt that it was only a flash in the pan. But perhaps it was a beginning—perhaps he would be able to cure himself, stage by stage.

"You ass!" said a voice. "Why didn't you do that at first?"

He looked at some misty object near him. When he could see more clearly he found that Handforth was beside him, and Handforth was looking very friendly.

"I—I—I'm sorry!" muttered Harry, huskily. "I—I didn't want to get into a mess on my first day. I—I promised the pater——"

"Oh, so that's it?" said Nipper, coming up. "We don't blame you, Gresham.

Under the cires., you couldn't possibly have kept your fists down."

"Rather not!" said Church. "He ought to have smashed Fullerton at first."

"Gresham's all right!" said Handforth contentedly. "That right of his is a beauty!"

Harry looked about him dazedly. He couldn't quite remember hitting Fullerton. It all seemed like an unpleasant dream. But just that one punch of his had served to restore a great deal of his prestige. The Remove fellows were ready to forget everything that had gone before, and to treat him decently.

They were generous enough to assume that Harry's inactivity had been caused by a desire to keep the peace on his first day at St. Frank's. And they did not go into any inquiries.

As though in a trance, he went off to his study. He was still in a turmoil. He didn't know how he had plucked up the courage to hit out, but he vaguely felt that Handforth's volcanic presence had been largely responsible. Alone, he might have acted very differently! Harry was always eager to give credit to others rather than to himself.

He found Alec Duncan sorting some books out.

"Jolly good!" said the New Zealand boy.

"Eh?" stammered Harry. "I don't understand."

"The way you sloshed Fullerton just now," said Duncan. "Oh, yes, I saw it, and you can bet that everybody in the Lower School is talking about it. They were all afraid that you were going to let the Remove down. I mean, the way you bunked when Fullerton—— Ahem! Perhaps we'd better not talk about it," he added carelessly. "You turned up trumps in the end, so we'll forget it. How about tea?"

"Is it time?" asked Harry.

"Well, we can be a bit early for once," went on Duncan. "You've got a ripping spirit-stove here, and I've been giving it a trial. Works like a charm. We'll soon have the kettle on."

"Oh, we have tea in the study, then?"

"My dear chap——" protested Alec.

"Yes, I—I remember now," muttered Harry. "I was thinking for a moment that we should have to go into the dining-room, or somewhere."

"Nobody goes into Hall for tea on the first day," said Duncan. "And nobody goes in on any other day, unless they're broke. I'm standing treat to-day—I've got the fodder in. You buzz off and see the Head, and you'll find everything well on the go when you get back."

"The Head?" said Harry, staring.

"Of course. You've got to report to the Head!"

"Have I?"

"Well, I think it's usual," smiled the other junior. "Of course, you can risk not showing up if you like—but I'd go, if I were you,

just to be on the safe side. I'll be making toast while you're gone. I've got some sardines and some eggs and all sorts of things. Hurry along, Gresham."

Harry was feeling much better now. He was beginning to like Alec Duncan more and more. There was something very breezy and friendly about the New Zealand junior.

"All right, then," said Harry. "If you say so, I'd better go. But don't we share the exes for tea?"

"Not to-day," said Duncan firmly. "We can come to some arrangement about tea later on. Things are always a bit muddled at first."

Harry went off, and when he got into the Triangle again, he noticed that lots of fellows looked at him, but nobody jeered. New-comers, as a rule, attracted no attention whatever. It wasn't good for their conceit to be even noticed during the first two or three days. After that, perhaps, a kindly spirit would condescend to have a word or two, and gradually the new arrival would obtain a sort of footing.

But Harry was different. He had caused such a lot of comment that most of the juniors gave him a second glance when he hove into view. But it was a great relief to him when he found that these glances were now curious—and not contemptuous.

"Can you tell me the way to the Head's study?" asked Harry, as he halted uncertainly.

He had accosted Archie Glenthorne, and the latter beamed.

"Absolutely!" he replied. "The jolly old Head's domain, what? I trust there is nothing murky in the offing, laddie?" he added, with concern. "I hope the good old summons does not imply a swishing of sorts?"

"I'm just going to report, that's all."

"Oh, rather!" said Archie, relieved. "Announce the good old arrival, as it were? Straight ahead, laddie—straight through Big Arch, and across Inner Court. In the middle distance you will perceive a fairish sort of domicile. Buzz straight to the front door, tickle the good old knocker, and sundry henchmen will escort you into the august presence."

"Thanks," said Harry, with a faint smile.

"Don't mensh, old tulin," beamed Archie. "As they say in that frightful place, New York—you're welcome!"

Harry went off, rather cheered by his brief encounter with Archie. He rather suspected that Glenthorne was pulling his leg. He didn't know that the elegant junior habitually spoke in that picturesque fashion.

Arriving at the Head's house, he was admitted by a neat maidservant, and ushered straight into Dr. Stafford's study. A thin man was seated at a desk—a rather weedy-looking individual with glasses.

"Master Gresham, sir," announced the maidservant.

"Ah, yes," said the man behind the desk.

"I've come to report, sir," said Harry.

Inwardly, he was rather disappointed at the headmaster's appearance. He had expected an older man—a more kindly gentleman.



CHAPTER 17.

BLACKMAILED!

"If you will sit down for five minutes, the Head will be with you," said the man behind the desk. "At the moment, I think he is having tea."

"Oh, then you're not Dr. Stafford?" asked Harry, relieved.

"No," said Mr. Hubert Addison. "I happen to be the doctor's private secretary."

"Oh!" said Harry. "I'll wait, then."

He sat down, and looked at the books on the table in front of him. He knew that Mr. Addison was eyeing him closely, but he pretended to take no notice. Somehow, he didn't quite like the man's scrutiny.

"I'm rather glad that I have you alone for a few minutes, Gresham," said Mr. Addison smoothly. "I welcome the opportunity for a little private chat. In fact, I was hoping for it—and should have sought you, in any case. Your arrival is most timely."

Harry looked up, puzzled.

"I—I don't quite understand, sir," he said.

Mr. Addison rose from his chair, came across the room, and sat down beside the new boy. He was rubbing his hands together in an unpleasant way, and there was a curious expression in his eyes. Somehow, Harry Gresham felt uncomfortable as the secretary sat down beside him. The man had that effect.

"Well, perhaps you and I know rather more than the others, eh?" said Mr. Addison pleasantly. "I feel that we can have a quiet little chat with benefit to us both. It is just as well to understand one another at the beginning."

Harry looked at him in wonder.

"But I don't know you!" he protested, mystified by the other's manner. "You've told me that you're the Head's secretary—"

"My name is Hubert Addison," interrupted the man softly.

Harry was more puzzled than ever.

"The main branch of my family owns a big seat in Hampshire," added Mr. Addison.

"Why, that's my county!" exclaimed Harry.

"Exactly," nodded Mr. Addison. "That explains, perhaps, what I am now going to say. Walls, I believe, are credited with having ears. So it may be a wise policy for me to lower my voice."

He bent close to Harry Gresham, and whispered something in the boy's ear.



Walking into Study D by mistake, Harry Gresham was amazed to find Handforth performing a very delicate operation—that of emptying the contents of a tin of condensed milk over McClure's head. "Get out!" hooted Handy. "I'm busy!"

The effect was startling.

Harry leapt to his feet as though he had been electrified, and his face was expressive of acute consternation. He stared at the private secretary with round, dilated pupils.

"You *know*!" he gasped, in horror.

"Hush—hush!" murmured Mr. Addison. "Upon my word! You needn't act as though a murder had been committed——"

"Oh, but—but——" Harry nearly choked. "You know!" he added dully. "And I thought—I thought——"

"You thought the skeleton was safely locked away in the family cupboard, eh?" murmured Mr. Addison, smiling in rather an evil way. "I'm sorry to give you this shock, but—well, I thought it only right that you should know."

"Have you told anybody?" asked Harry breathlessly.

"Good heavens, no!" said the other. "Why should I tell?"

"Oh, please keep the terrible secret!" whispered Harry pleadingly. "You won't tell anybody, will you? You won't let the boys know, so that they can——"

"Don't be a young fool!" interrupted Mr. Addison curtly. "The affair is the secret of your own family, and I happened to know the truth about it. That's all. You can rely upon me to keep it quiet. I shan't loosen my tongue on a matter of that sort."

"Why did you tell me?" asked Harry fiercely. "If you're not going to tell anybody, why did you say this to me? Couldn't you realise that it would upset me?"

"Pouf! Don't be childish!" said Mr. Addison. "I've told you, just so that you can realise that skeletons sometimes get out of the cupboard. If any of the boys find out the truth regarding your family—well, I don't want you to blame me. I give you my word that I shall say nothing. As far as I am concerned, you can go out of this room, and forget everything I've told you."

"Thanks!" muttered Harry. "You—you mean that?"

"Of course I mean it," said the Head's secretary. "Well, you won't have to wait long now—— Oh, yes, there was something else. Could you lend me a fiver?"

Harry Gresham stared.

"Lend you a fiver?" he repeated.

"Foolish of me, of course," smiled Mr. Addison. "But I came to St. Frank's rather short of cash. If you will lend me a fiver, I'll pay you back when I get my next cash remittance from my bankers. You see, I'm quite modest—a fiver will see me through nicely."

Harry Gresham looked hard at the other—and understood. It had been a great shock to him that this man knew all, and that loan was significant.



CHAPTER 13.

THE SHADOW OF TROUBLE!

OBVIOUS as the position was, however, Harry was staggered.

This man—who had professed himself to be a branch of a fine old county family—was actually resorting to petty extortion! In order to ensure his silence, Harry must lend him money!

It was a startling realisation.

In a certain way, it brought a slight feeling of relief to the distracted boy. So long as he kept on pleasant terms with Mr. Hubert Addison—then just so long would the secret be safe. Harry felt like stringing forth a series of harsh words, but he held himself in check. This man *knew*! He had to be kept silent!

The thing was quite clear, of course. Being a Hampshire man, Mr. Addison probably knew Sir Stewart Gresham's very home. He was apparently a "poor relation." Harry vaguely remembered hearing people talk of such folks. While being connected with rich and influential families, they were themselves poverty-stricken. Some became curates, some schoolmasters, and it was a favourite scheme to become somebody's private secretary. These sort of people were generally discontented, feeling that they had a grudge against Fate.

No doubt Mr. Addison had been poor all his life, and to him a fiver was well worth the taking. For such a sum he readily fought back the scruples of honour which must have been instilled into him in earlier life. As a private secretary, his salary could not have been princely.

So the affair was logical, after all.

But Harry Gresham felt a great contempt for this man—a gentleman by birth, who could use his knowledge to such crooked ends. It was so paltry, too—so despicably dishonest. If the Head got to know of it, he would send the man away from St. Frank's at an hour's notice. But Mr. Addison knew well enough that Harry would not breathe a word. He was safe from that quarter.

Harry was no fool.

He had two five-pound notes left, but he also had the change from the other two fivers. So he pulled out a few ordinary currency notes, and counted out five of them. One was of ten-shilling value, and he made up the rest with silver.

"There you are, Mr. Addison," he said quietly.

"It's really very decent of you," said the secretary, averting his gaze. "Of course, I'll pay you back within a few days. I hope this doesn't make you short?"

"It's all right," said Harry briefly.

Perhaps Mr. Addison had the decency to feel ashamed of himself. But he took the money, and quickly transferred it to his own pocket. He had received the impression that Harry had scraped together practically all

his available resources. It was an impression which Harry had meant him to receive.

As it happened, Dr. Stafford himself came into the room a moment later, and the rather awkward situation was ended. Mr. Addison was now sitting at the desk again, and he waved a hand towards Harry.

"Gresham, sir," he said. "I think he has come to report."

The Head advanced towards Gresham, and warmly shook hands.

"I was expecting you to come to see me, Gresham," he said. "Your father told me all about you, and I hope you will get on well here. Sir Stewart took me into his confidence regarding your little ways and habits, and I think you are just the type of boy who will be welcomed."

"Thank you, sir," said Harry.

He wondered exactly how much his father had said, but there was nothing in the Head's manner to indicate that Sir Stewart had been giving him a bad name. Quite the contrary, in fact.

"A fine man, your father, Gresham," Dr. Stafford went on. "And, by what I can see of it, you are a chip of the old block! Let us hope that you will soon settle down, and make many friends."

He was very pleasant to Harry, and after a few remarks concerning his status in the school, and similar subjects, Harry was told that he could go.

It must be confessed that he had heard very little of Dr. Stafford's talk. He was thinking of that other matter—concerning which Mr. Addison had touched upon. In fact, Mr. Addison had touched in more senses than one. Harry went hot when he thought of that money.

"The rotter!" he muttered, as he went towards the school buildings. "Lucky thing I didn't show those two fivers—or he might have asked for more. This sort are never satisfied. So he's going to pay me back, is he? Yes, when the moon turns green!"

He was worried intensely. Not about the money, however. He dismissed that without another thought. Those few whispered words of Mr. Addison's had startled him to such an extent that he was filled with vague uneasiness and dread.

He was still very absent-minded when he wandered into the Remove passage of the Ancient House. He was so abstracted, in fact, that he walked into Study D by mistake.

He was soon brought to himself. Handforth was performing a very delicate operation. He had secured McClure's head in chancery, and was proceeding to empty the contents of a condensed milk can into Mac's hair.

"So I'm a blundering idiot, am I?" Handforth was saying. "I'll give you just one chance. Withdraw it, my son, or this milk tin will accidentally tip up!"

"You're not only a blundering idiot, but you're a mule and a fathead!" roared McClure defiantly. "Just when I'd made all the

NEXT WEDNESDAY!**"SHUNNED BY ST. FRANK'S!"**

Outcast!

Jeered at by his Form fellows ;
cheeked by the fags ; despised
by the seniors !

And yet Handy and Nipper and
a few others stand by Harry
Gresham and try to help him.

Alec Duncan, the sturdy New
Zealand junior, makes a friend
of the funk of St. Frank's.

Why ?

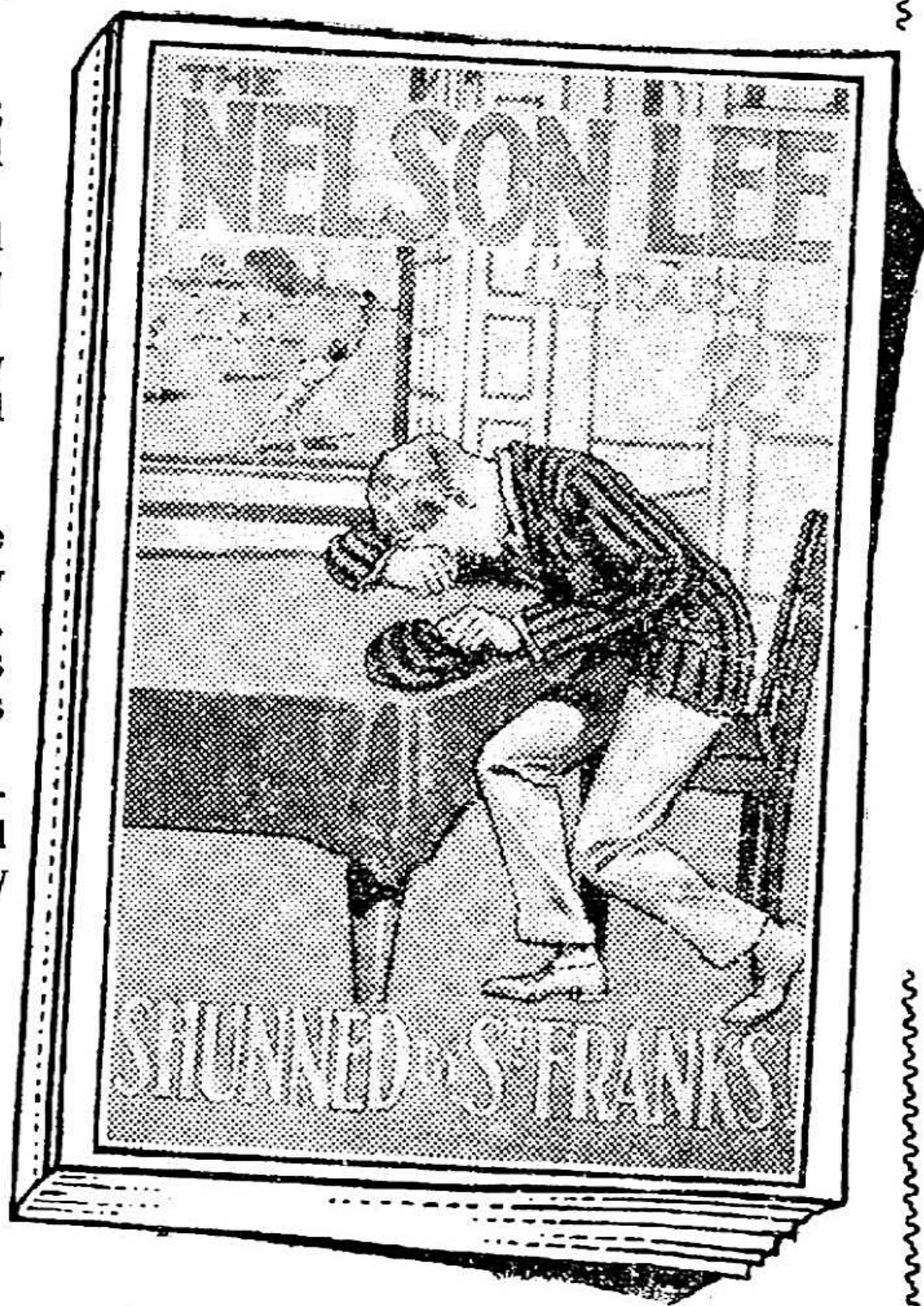
There is some secret—some
deep mystery—about the new
boy. He isn't so bad as he seems.
Some day he must win in his
desperate fight to conquer his
own cowardice.

The second story in this en-
thralling series will hold you all
the way through. There is only
one way of making certain that
you can read it, and that is to
ask your newsagent to reserve
your copy for you.

More amazing thrills in next
week's exciting instalment of—

"THE BURIED WORLD!"

Have you told your chum
about this great serial ?

**ORDER IN ADVANCE!**

toast, you come along and tip it into the
ashes! You—you rotter—"

"All right!" roared Handforth. "You've
asked for it!"

Harry Gresham withdrew from the painful
scene, and went off to find his own study.
He didn't know that his accidental visit had
done good, for Handforth had glanced up
as the door closed, leaving McClure an op-
portunity to wriggle free. The condensed
milk poured itself over Handforth's waist-
coat, instead of its intended goal.

"Oh, here you are!" said Alec Duncan, as
Harry walked into his own study. "Where
the dickens have you been all this time?"

"I had to wait ten minutes for the Head."

"That's the worst of these Heads," said
Duncan severely. "They're never there when
you want them. I sometimes believe they
keep us waiting on purpose—just to keep up
their dignity and importance. Well, tea's
ready. Sit down, old man, and pile in."

"It's really awfully decent of you," said
Harry, looking at the ample spread.

"Rot! It's the same in every study," said
Duncan cheerfully.

He noticed that the new fellow was looking
troubled.

"I hope everything's all right?" he added,
with concern.

"Oh, yes!" said Harry quickly. "The
Head, you mean? He was splendid." He
realised that he must say something to change
the subject. "You were talking about the
other studies being the same. I looked into
one just now, and there was an awful row
going on. One chap was pouring condensed
milk over another chap's head."

The New Zealand junior grinned.

"That's nothing!" he said lightly. "It
happens every day!"

**CHAPTER 19.****THE SPECTRE IN THE DARK!**

LEA proceeded very comfort-
ably.

"Handforth was the fel-
low with the condensed
milk, of course?" remarked

Duncan, after a while. "There's no mistaking
his touch."

"Yes, I think it was Handforth," agreed
Harry. "That big chap, with the aggres-
sive looking jaw."

"That's him," smiled Duncan.

"He seems to be an awfully noisy sort—and violent, too."

"Handy's one of the best," chuckled Alec. "Not one of my special pals, but you'll find him as straight as a die. Always barging in somewhere, but a thundering good chap, really. How do you think you'll like St. Frank's, once you've settled down?"

"I think it'll be fine," said Harry soberly.

But, somehow, his words lacked conviction. He was thinking of that affair of the dog, and he was thinking of the encounter with Fullerton & Co., too. He was wondering, instead, if he would ever be allowed to settle down in earnest. A few more incidents like that, and the rest of the fellows would make his life unbearable. And the thought of Mr. Addison crossed his mind, too. He had an uneasy feeling that Mr. Addison would have to be reckoned with in the future.

"About cricket——" began Duncan.

And that, of course, put a different complexion on things. Once the subject had changed to cricket, Harry Gresham soon forgot his troubles, and the way he opened out was a surprise to Duncan. Within five minutes, Harry was another fellow altogether—a keen-eyed, eager schoolboy without a care in the world, apparently. Harry could have discussed cricket for hours.

It was his favourite game. He was fond of football—could play well, too—but there was really no other game for him in the world but cricket. His father had coached him ever since he had been able to hold a bat. He was longing for the moment when he would be on Little Side, undergoing his trial, with the eyes of the St. Frank's experts upon him. He had no apprehensions regarding that coming ordeal.

"Do you think there'll be a chance for me to play?" he asked, at length.

"If you're any good at it—if you're really keen——"

"Keen!" ejaculated Harry.

"Well, you are keen, of course—I can see that," said Alec. "But if you can show some real form, you're certain to be chosen for a Junior House Match, and you might even be able to play for the school, in the second eleven. It may be terms before you get into the first, of course."

"But some juniors play in the first, don't they?"

"Rather!" said Duncan proudly. "Hamilton and Pitt and Dodd and chaps like that. But you're only a new chap. That rather puts you in a back row at once. It's considered cheek for a new chap to play at all!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Harry, in dismay.

"But cheer up—it'll depend on your form," smiled Alec. "Well, these things won't clear themselves away of their own accord. Feel like lending a hand?"

"Of course," said Harry promptly.

Half an hour later, the study was cleared up, and Duncan escorted the new boy to the Common-room. It was growing dark outside, and the electric lights were full on in the

Common-room. It was a cheery, big apartment, with many comfortable chairs and writing-tables. Most of the fellows were collected in groups, talking cricket. The season was just starting, and there was naturally no other subject but cricket worthy of discussion.

To Harry's relief, he was received on almost equal terms with the others. Those little slips of his had apparently been tacitly forgotten. Teddy Long and Hubbard and one or two other brainless idiots giggled and murmured "Funk!" but they were soon silenced.

The rest remembered that Harry Gresham was the son of a great cricketing idol, and that went a long way.

"Glad you've looked in, Gresham," said Nipper, smiling at him. "I wanted a word with you. How about cricket practice to-morrow morning?"

"Really?" asked Harry eagerly.

"If it's fine, I'm going to lug you out before six" warned Nipper.

"That's one of the penalties of being a cricketer," explained Fullwood.

"Six!" said Harry. "I don't care if you call me at four!"

"By Jove, you seem to be an enthusiast," chuckled Nipper. "No, I shan't call you at four—there might be a bit too much dew, to say nothing of not enough daylight. I'd like to see what you're capable of to-morrow, Gresham. We're rather expecting big things, you know, considering who your father is."

"I'll—I'll do my best!" said Harry earnestly.

Nipper looked at him curiously after he had turned away. Like many of the other juniors, Nipper found himself irresistibly drawn towards the new fellow. There was something so engaging about him. He was so obviously a thoroughly decent chap. It was labelled all over him, so to speak. His frank eyes, his cheery face, his curly hair, his fine, strong frame—everything was in his favour.

And yet——Rummy, the way he had behaved in the village, and with Fullerton!

"Feel like taking a walk across the Triangle?" asked Duncan, later on. "I'll take you to the Modern House, and introduce you to Boots."

"Boots!" said Harry, in surprise.

"I don't mean the pageboy!" grinned Duncan. "He's called 'Boots' sometimes, of course. No, Buster Boots is the skipper of the Fourth. A thoroughly decent sort. You'll like him."

"Rummy name!" said Harry.

They went over to the Modern House, and John Busterfield Boots, the go-ahead captain of the Fourth Form, was very cordial. He, too, was conveniently forgetting the rumours he had heard concerning Gresham. Cricket was the main topic of conversation.

It was practically supper-time before Alec Duncan and Harry rose from their chairs in Study No. 6, and prepared to leave. Boots offered to escort his guests to the door.

"By Jove, it's thundering dark," he said, when they arrived at the exit.

"Close, too," said Duncan. "The sky's all cloudy, and I shouldn't be surprised if we get a thunderstorm."

Boots looked at him in disgust.

"That's right!" he growled. "What about cricket practice to-morrow?"

"We shall have to hope for the best," smiled Duncan. "So long!"

They bade each other good-night, and Boots stood watching while the two Ancient House juniors passed into the darkness of the Triangle. Then Buster suddenly remembered something.

"Just a minute, Duncan!" he sang out.

Alec paused.

"What is it?" he shouted, turning.

"I forgot to show you my new bat!" said Boots. "Shan't keep you a tick. Gresham saw it, but——"

"All right!" called the New Zealand junior. "I've got to pander to him, I suppose," he grinned, turning to Harry. "Shan't be a minute. Amuse yourself by trying to locate the fountain, and falling into it!"

He ran off, leaving Harry Gresham alone in the middle of the Triangle. Harry stood there, and was aware that his heart had suddenly begun to beat faster. Duncan's receding footsteps became silent, and Harry looked round him apprehensively.

Utter darkness! He could see the lights from the windows of all the Houses, but where he stood, in the middle of that big, open space, the blackness was thick.

He clenched his fists.

It wasn't necessary for him to wait. He could have gone back to the Modern House lobby, where there was light. But he didn't like to. Duncan had asked him to wait here, and Duncan might think that he was afraid of——

Harry caught his breath sharply. He was afraid! In his heart, he knew it. Of course, Duncan wouldn't ever dream of such a thing, but—— Yes, he was afraid! He set his jaw, and fought madly against a desire to look over his shoulder.

It was childish—it was idiotic—it was too utterly silly for words. A big chap like him afraid of the dark! It wasn't reasonable! And yet it was true! Harry Gresham almost groaned as he realised that his cowardice had yet another phase. He had a horror of being left alone in the dark.

"What am I?" he asked himself fiercely. "A little kid of four? A frightened girl from a nursery? My only hat! I'm not going to give in this time—I won't——"

But even as he was coming to this resolution, he glanced over his shoulder. Something impelled him to do so—some force that he could not control. It was Fear that had him in its grip—unreasoning, and without any logical cause.

He was practically in the centre of the Triangle, and the heavy clouds which overcast the sky made the darkness intense. He could see a faint, ghostly outline which indicated the fountain. Beyond, there was Big Arch—a blacker blob against the sur-

rounding blackness. He stared, his eyes almost starting out of his head.

What was that?

He shivered as he stood. There was a terrible Shape dancing about amid that blackness of the Arch—dancing and capering like some grotesque monstrosity from a nightmare!

Harry Gresham felt his nerve snap like a thread. With a loud scream, he twirled round, and ran headlong towards the Modern House!



CHAPTER 20.

THE END OF AN IMPERFECT DAY!

IGHTING for breath, Harry reached the steps, and stumbled blindly up them. He reeled against the stonework of the doorway, and clung there, panting.

"Fool!" he muttered. "Fool!"

Deep down in his inner consciousness, he knew that he had seen nothing but a creature of his own imagination. Thank Heaven, nobody had seen him! It was the one merciful feature of this final tragedy of the day.

Once within range of that comforting light, Harry Gresham felt better. The lobby was just behind him, brilliant and friendly. The darkness lay beyond. And Big Arch was round the corner, out of sight.

Harry tried to recall what he had seen. He shuddered. He couldn't exactly remember what form it had taken. Something like the fantastic figures he had seen round his bed when the light had accidentally blown out at home. But he had been a child then. He knew that he had seen nothing at all a few moments before. It was his fatal cowardice again!

Reason told him that there could have been nothing actually there. The very idea of it was preposterous. If he had been in a haunted house, there might have been some excuse for him. But here there was none. There were hundreds of boys within earshot of him. He could hear an echo of laughter even now. And somewhere a deep-toned gong was booming. Yes, of course, supper! Duncan had said something about supper——

And yet that Thing had been visible. Harry could recall its grotesque dancing. Like a capering imp—— Great Scott! Had he really seen something? Was it possible that a phantom had appeared before him? At such times his imagination was vivid, but—— He was uncertain. He gazed out into the Triangle apprehensively again.

"Oh, hallo! Here you are!" said Duncan's cheery voice. "Sorry to keep you waiting, Gresham. That ass Boots wanted to make me admit that his bat was better than mine! Likely!"

"I—I——"

Harry gulped, his voice sounding strained to his own ears.

"By jingo, you're looking pretty shaky," said Duncan, staring at him. "Anything happened?"

"No! No, I—I—— I thought I'd come back to meet you, you know," said Harry desperately. "It's—it was dark——"

He bit his lip, regretting those words, for they had been unnecessary, and Alec Duncan was looking at him with astonished eyes.

"Come on!" said the New Zealand junior. "Didn't you hear the supper gong? That was the Modern House one, of course—but I expect cubs has gone, too. They all sound at the same time."

They went down the steps, and plunged into the darkness. Duncan was full of wonder. He had only left Gresham for a few minutes, and it was obvious that nobody else had accosted the new boy in the meantime.

Duncan noticed that Harry was keeping close to him—so close, indeed, that he pressed against him while they went through the darkest patch. And, with a sudden shock, Alec jumped to the truth.

"Ye gods and little fishes!" he gasped.

"Eh?" said Harry huskily.

"Oh, nothing!" said Duncan hastily.

Harry Gresham was afraid of the dark! Great Scott! That was the explanation of this sudden change in his looks. Duncan jumped at it. He had left the chap in the middle of the Triangle, where it was pitch black, and he had found him leaning against the doorway, jolly white about the gills! Phew! Afraid of the dark! It knocked Duncan all of a heap.

Was Gresham such a beastly funk that he couldn't be left alone in the night for two minutes? Generously enough, Duncan decided to keep this thing to himself. No need to spread a yarn like that! After all, the fellow was his own study-mate! It was a big shock for the New Zealand boy.

Why, the smallest kid in the Third wasn't afraid to cross the Triangle after dark—or, if he was afraid—and this was quite possible—he possessed enough pluck to hide the fact from everybody else. But this new fellow had literally been shaking all over with sheer terror.

"Beats me!" muttered Duncan, at last.

He dismissed the incident until after supper.

Going up to bed, he thought of it again, and he rather wondered if Gresham would be ragged. It was the usual form of amusement to play japes on a new boy, on the first night of term. And sometimes these japes took the form of imitation ghosts. If Gresham was so scared of the dark—— Alec shrugged his shoulders, and realised that Harry would have to take his chance.

As it happened, there was no ragging.

Perhaps Gresham's standing as a cricketer saved him—for everybody took it for granted that he would be pretty good at the game. Perhaps his strange actions during the day let him off, too. At all events, the little dormitory which Duncan and Gresham shared was not disturbed.

At St. Frank's, the occupants of a junior study generally had a bed-room to themselves. Strictly speaking, each study and each dormitory was made to accommodate three, but they weren't all full. There was a spare bed in this dormitory, for example.

So Harry Gresham's first day at St. Frank's came to an end.

Duncan was soon asleep after lights out. He and Harry had kept up a desultory conversation for a bit, but after a yawn or two on Alec's part, it had petered out.

And now Harry was practically alone. He lay in bed, his eyes wide open, looking into the darkness around him. He was comforted by Duncan's proximity, and by the sound of his breathing.

But the darkness haunted him. It was peopled with strange figures and shapes. Hitherto, he had always had a light in his bed-room.

He buried his head in the pillow, and pulled the bedclothes over him. And Nature asserted itself at last. Harry Gresham slept. At first his sleep was fitful and disturbed, his mind full of his worries. But soon it became restful, and he slumbered healthily.

What manner of new boy was this?

(What's the matter with Harry Gresham—what is the secret of his cowardice? After all, he isn't a bad sort of chap, and he's found a friend in good old Handy! Look out for the next enthralling yarn in this stunning series.)

*Have You
Read—*

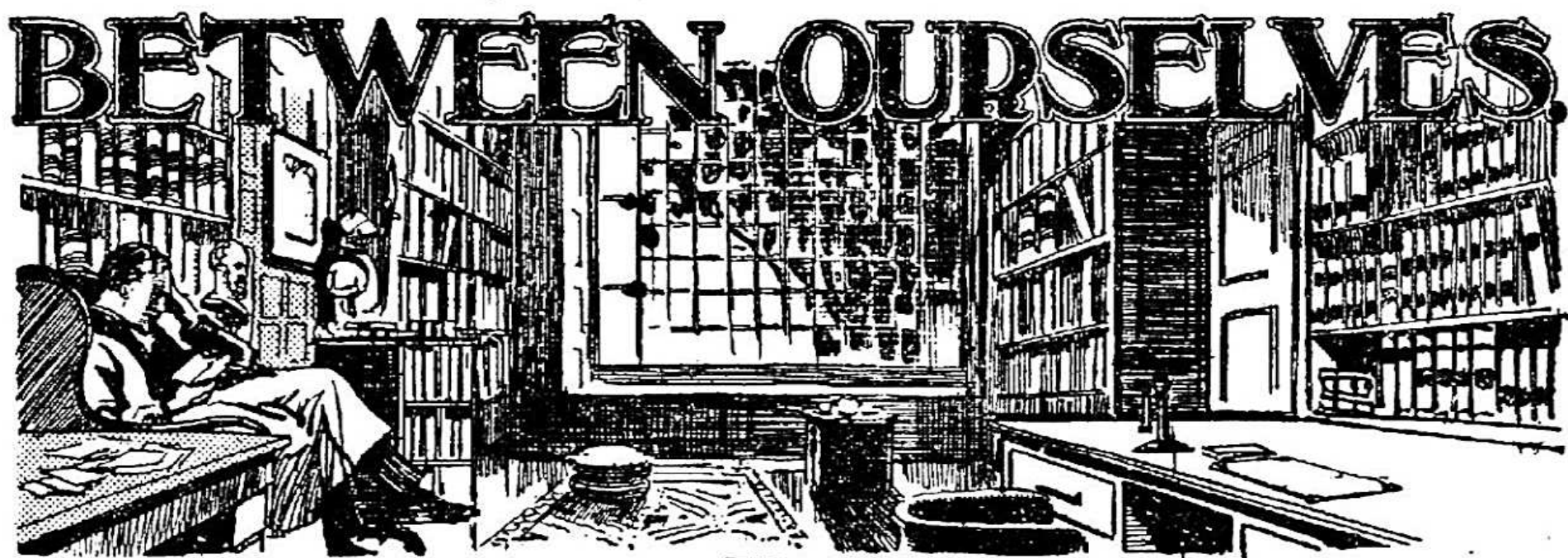
"THE REMOVE IN THE WILD WEST!"

A Splendid Long Complete Yarn of the St. Frank's Juniors on a Trip Abroad. It is now on sale in

THE MONSTER LIBRARY No. 18.

Price One Shilling.

Get a Copy TO-DAY!



Edwy Searles Brooks chats with his readers.

NOTE.—If any reader writes to me, I shall be pleased to comment upon such remarks as are likely to interest the majority. All letters should be addressed to EDWY SEARLES BROOKS, c/o The Editor, THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, LONDON, E.C.4. Every letter will have my personal attention, and all will be acknowledged in these columns. Letters of very special merit will be distinguished by a star, thus*, against the sender's name. Communications which indicate writer's age are naturally easier for me to answer.—E.S.B.

THIS week I want to commence by dealing with the letters from Julius N. Harris, E. C. Palmer, and Edward A. Humberstone before starting on the new shoal. And "shoal" is right! It's no good you growling and grumbling, but I believe I'm going to fill up two pages again this week. Thanks, everybody, for your welcome expressions of goodwill regarding that Marlow, Tibby, etc., letter; I'll have more to say on this matter soon. Just a minute while I look up those letters.

* * *

Here we are. Edward A. Humberstone, of Highbury, says this: "They (the five) allude to your stories as fantastic fairy-tales, and your stories really are, as everybody with a grain of sense would know, the most original and popular schoolboy stories written. I have been a reader of the 'NELSON LEE' for considerably over seven years, so naturally I am out of the puerile stage, and I think I can say quite safely that you have not a more loyal reader of 'The Boys' Best Book.'"

* * *

Julius Harris, and his friend, Eddie Palmer, writes me as follows: "The five series Marlow & Co. mentioned were not only justly popular, but quite within the bounds of possibility, although we will admit the Northestrian stories were slightly far-fetched. But the theme was so admirably carried out that it easily redeemed any trivial faults. They implied that it was agony to read your tales, as they were too long, but we definitely assert that it is agony when they end!"

* * *

Well, although I am blushing furiously at these undeserved encomiums, I would like to justify myself, as far as possible, regarding that Northestrian series, by quoting from

the "Popular Science Monthly" for December, 1923. The cutting was sent to me by Mr. L. Starley, of Maidenhead, and in his letter he says: "I expect some readers will say 'impossible stories' about the Northestrians, but if you will look at the cuttings I enclose you will see it is not as impossible as you would think." I received this letter in January, by the way. The article in question is headed "WILL THE ZR-1 DISCOVER A POLAR PARADISE?" I can not quote all the article, of course, but there is a big picture, showing a vast circle of volcanoes and ice on one side, and a fair land within the circle. These are the words which appear under this sketch: "Our artist's conception of the discovery of a possible Polar paradise by the ZR-1, based on Commander Green's imaginative article. This land, the explorer believes, may be about the size of the State of Pennsylvania, and may be encircled by a lofty, volcanic range of mountains, buried in eternal ice and snow. Behind a veil of fog may lie a fertile plateau where heat from hot springs, geysers, and boiling pools defies the cold. The illustration shows the possible habitations of the modern descendants of a vanished race of Norsemen."

* * *

And the rummy thing is, I didn't see this article until all the Northestrian stories had been written, for the "Popular Science Monthly" is an American publication, and until Mr. Starley sent me the cutting I knew nothing of the article. It is by Lieutenant-Commander Fitzhugh Green, U.S.N. The final words in this interesting article are: "Does a Polar paradise exist? And if so, are the vanished Norsemen there?" Well, there you are. I mean, what about it? Perhaps some of you sceptics will consider that this scientific magazine is fantastic and

(Continued on next page.)

ridiculous, too? But the fact remains that the possibility of a Polar "heat-basin" is seriously considered by scientific men. Many thanks to Mr. Starley for sending me the extract.

* * *

And now to get on with some fresh acknowledgements. About time, too, eh? All right, here goes: Sydney Smith (Grimsby), L. S. Elliott (East Ham), F. M. Gerard (Leeds), R. C. Beacham (Redditch), Betty Bridger (Swansea), C. A. Rundle (Blackheath), Stanley G. Edwards (Walsall), Reginald Ruthworth (Gateshead), Frank L. Bubb (Southsea), W. J. Philipps (Leyton), W. B. Davies (Birmingham), J. A. Titcomb and A. Robinson (Finchley), C. J. W. Muller (Cape Town), H. Claud Whiteman (Colwyn Bay), George Rudge (Plymouth), Albert Arbury (Chertsey), S. E. Bate (Warrington), R. P. (Dover), Ivan Kimber (Bristol), "Author's Admirer," (Transvaal), W. G. M. (Islington), Ivy Q. (Douglas, I.O.M.), Margaret Laidlaw (Dumfries), Rene Martin (Balham), H. Barlow (Bromley), G. Hinton (Leamington Spa), W. B. Armitage (Palmer's Green), Phyllis Wood (Macclesfield), B. Weavers (Leytonstone), Reg Morris (Beeston), Chas. Cruickshank (Aberdeen), S. Thompson (Bradford), F. W. Peach (Chiswick).

* * *

Although it's about time we dropped the subject of that Northestrian series, I feel that I must quote a few words of Frank M. Gerard's letter, as it may be of general interest. He says this: "Honestly speaking, do you not think that you sometimes let your imagination run away with you? When you come to think of it, are not these St. Frank's boys getting too much adventure? They no sooner get back from China than they are pitched headlong into that silly place, Northestria, and now, to crown all, when we are just anticipating a good school yarn, what do we get but an enormous flood which smacks too much of idiocy to credit. Barring-out series appear to be very popular, and I am of the opinion that in these yarns you excel, and I am sure that such a series in the near future would be appreciated." Now, really, I think a comment on that letter is called for. Very much so.

* * *

Frank M. Gerard considers that a flood at St. Frank's is too idiotic to credit. But he appears to be all in favour of a barring-out series. Surely a flood is no more unreal than a barring-out at a big public school? If one is idiotic, so is the other. As a matter of fact, at the *very* time those flood stories were appearing many parts of the country were positively inundated. I rather thought that the flood series was topical, and quite within reasonable bounds. I wonder what the dickens Frank M. Gerard will say (providing he is still a reader of these silly and idiotic stories of mine) when the summer series comes along? No, I'm not going to give you any advance information, so you

needn't think so! But I'll tell Frank straight away that they contain plenty of adventure. I can only hope that the majority of you will join me in politely telling Frank that he can go and eat coke. Ye gods and little fishes! Too much adventure! The more the merrier—that's what I say! And you'll never stop me at it, either. I'm a hardened case when it comes to adventure.

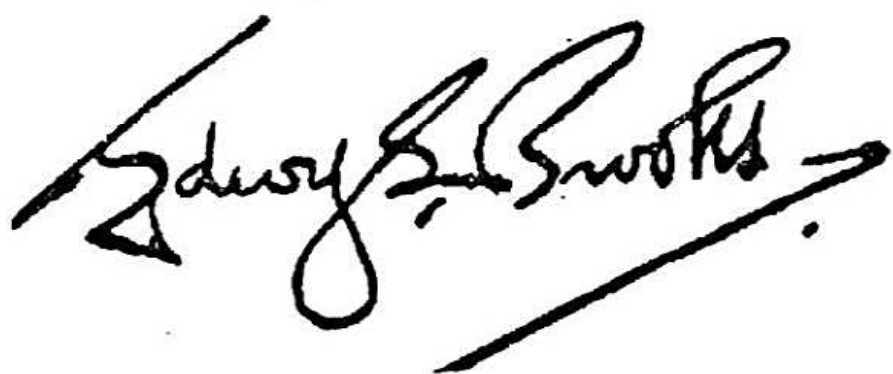
Just before we finish this subject, here's a word to you, Marlow & Co. You challenged me to publish that letter of yours, and I did so. Don't you think it's about time you dropped me another line? I don't even know if you have seen your letter in print; if you have, you've been as quiet as mice ever since.

* * *

Look here, you chaps—I'm now addressing a few readers who have asked me to send them my photograph as a gift—nothing doing! Some weeks ago I offered to send my autographed portrait to every reader who sent me a photograph of himself or herself. My wheeze is to make an exchange of it, and I've already had heaps of photos and snapshots, and I'm getting quite a big collection in my album. You've only got to send me your photo (any old snap will do, as long as I can see it's *you*) and I'll keep my part of the bargain and scare you with a reproduction of my dial, and a specimen of my spidery scrawl. By the way, "you chaps" includes girls.

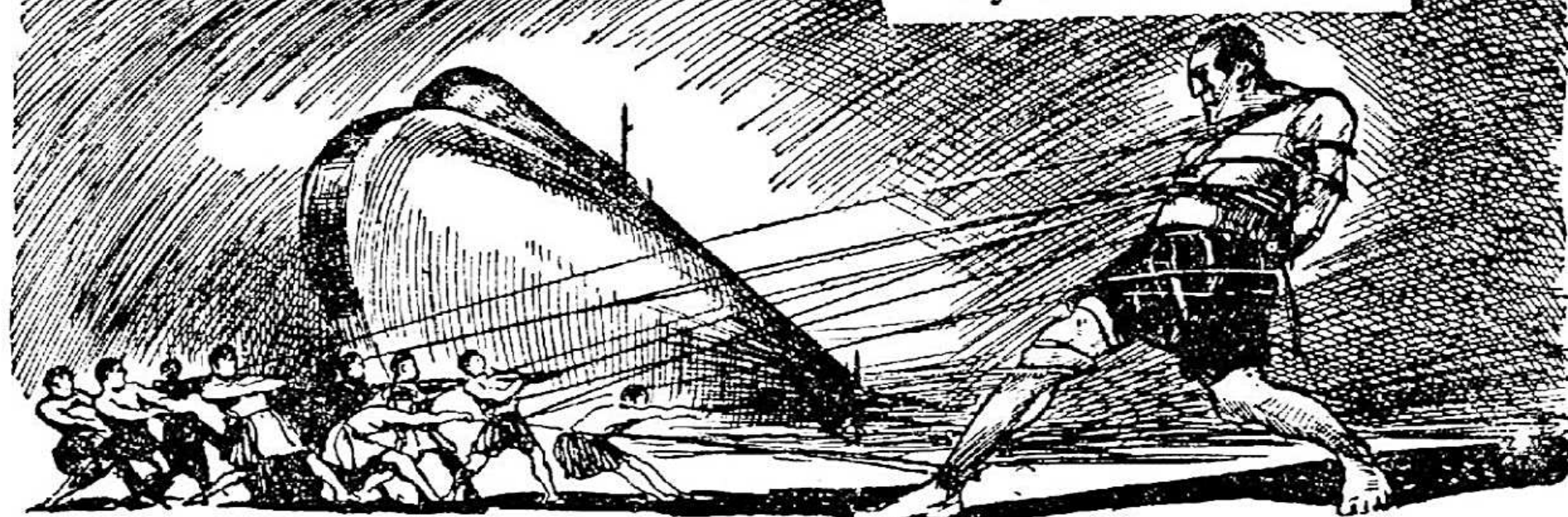
* * *

Now for some more acknowledgments before I use up all the space. R. E. Langley (Wokingham), Terence Sullivan (Liverpool) You do get about, don't you, Terence, old man? I suppose you write to me last thing at night, and so to bed? William A. Lester (Walsall), A. E. Prowse (Islington), John A. Franklin (Manchester), "A True Bananaland" (Brisbane), Reginald Quarrell (Yeovil), G. Desmond-Richardson (Burton-on-Trent), Bertram Reynell (Caterham), Fred. C. Clark (Manchester), Sinclair R. Dobie (Eastbourne), R. S. Nugent (Aldershot), Winifred Minchin (Lower Edmonton), Eric Davis (Chesterfield), Frank L. Bubb (Southsea), R. Pritchard (Norbury), R. Fitzpatrick (Strabane), J. Panter and F. Barnes (Balham), H. Whitehead (Ilkley), Leslie Richards (Margate), R. N. Davis and R. W. Jordan (Ponders End), W. Gordon Clark (Bridlington), Margaret Collins (Harpenden), "Daddy Longlegs" (Harlesden), Tom Hanney (Manor Park), Miss M. Howe (Luton), George Dodd (Sheffield), Bernard Cooke (W.1), "The Music Fiend" (Northampton), J. Bond (Manchester), L. W. (Weymouth).



*The Man of Mystery!**Thrills In An Unknown Land!***The BURIED WORLD!**

By LIONEL DAY



INTRODUCTION.

Jim Maitland lives in a small shop in Stagmore. A mysterious man named Stanislaus Cripps owes money to the shop, and Jim determines to collect it. He climbs over the wall of Widgery Dene—Cripps' estate—and drops into the grounds. There he finds an amazing machine which is something between a submarine and an airship. Mr. Cripps is on board and Jim asks him for the money. The man refuses to pay, and before Jim realises it he finds the machine in the air! It travels half over the world, then dives into the ocean. It reaches the bottom, and then instead of resting on the bed continues going downwards! It is then floating on the surface of an underground river, and Mr. Cripps explains that there must be a sort of leak in the ocean bed and they are being sucked down to the centre of the earth. They

stop the machine and come on deck. But as they appear they are captured by several amazing giants who fall on them from the shore. Jim escapes and later saves the life of a little man called Masra. In return Masra and his daughter Tinta let him live with them. Jim finds himself among a colony of dwarf men who are called the Kru people. They live in a vast cavern and are at enmity with the Giants—a race that is dying out. Jim, accompanied by Masra and Tinta, rescue Mr. Cripps. To do this Masra has to desert from the Kru people. The four set out on a journey to the Cave of Fire, where dwells He-Whose-Name-May-Not-Be-Spoken, the mysterious personage who rules the Kru. Suddenly they see coming towards them a whirling pillar of flame!

(Now read on.)

The Pillar of Flame!

SINCE his coming to the Buried World, Jim had passed through a series of experiences, terrifying enough, but the scene at which he now looked seemed the very last word in nightmare horrors.

The sense of the enormous distance they had descended, the remembrance of that rocky door which had closed behind them with such an ominous clang, their long journey down that spiral slope, the strange red illumination of the vast rocky vault along which they had passed—all these things had unconsciously affected the boy's mind, so that this climax came upon him when his nerves were already strained beyond endurance. With white cheeks and staring eyes he stood spellbound.

A dull roar was in his ears like the tumbling of many waters. In that cave, upon the threshold of which they stood, he saw the great pillar of flame gyrating on its axis as it moved in an ellipse across the floor.

Jim felt a flush of enormous heat just as if he had been standing near a furnace when the doors were open.

Now that moving column of living flame had reached the apex of the ellipse and was moving backwards, leaving a little trail of fine dust in its wake. He saw it pass beyond him to those cavernous depths. Out of the darkness beyond a great pillar of stone leapt into view, like an object picked up by the headlights of a motor-car on a dark night.

He saw a great archway down which the column of fire passed, and then the Cave of the Fires was no longer lit by that blazing light. Only now and again, from some unseen fissures in the floor, those little spurts of flame shot upwards.

Tinta had sunk to the ground with her face buried in her hands. Masra was on his knees lying there with his head bowed. Jim felt an almost uncontrollable desire to follow his example.

It seemed to him that he was in the presence of some strange, all-powerful vital

force, before which the insignificant personality of Jim Maitland was but as a grain of dust. And then, as he stood there shuddering, robbed of all pride and self-consciousness—a very weak, immature creature in the presence of these mysterious forces, feeling literally like a worm—he heard a familiar voice.

"An amazing phenomenon. This is, indeed, an experience. It was well worth our journey, boy, even if we never get back!"

Something seemed to snap in Jim's brain. In the immensity of his terror, that booming unruffled voice had very much the same effect on him as if a bucket of ice cold water had been poured over him.

In spite of this latest nightmare, Stanislaus Cripps' courage was still undimmed, his immense greedy scientific curiosity still unblunted. There was no fear in that voice. Jim heard himself laugh, and somehow the laughter, though it was hysterical, braced his nerves and calmed his brain.

"As a precaution, boy, we will put on our diving dresses again. I remember reading somewhere a statement—purely frivolous, of course, but it's curious, boy, how these vain trifles remain in one's mind—made by an American paper. It said that when the final catastrophe of the world arrived, and the earth was ready to be devoured again by the sun, its reporter would be there in an asbestos suit collecting the very latest news. My metal is a great improvement on asbestos suitings, boy!"

On the first day of their journey to the Cave of the Fires they had removed their diving suits. Now, following Stanislaus Cripps' example, Jim began to don his armour. It was a difficult matter to rouse Masra, who had sunk into a very apathy of terror, but by dint of pulling him to his feet and dragging his legs into their metal casings the business was accomplished.

"Tinta," Stanislaus Cripps exclaimed, speaking in the Kru language, which he had picked up with extraordinary facility during their trek from the Inner Cavern, "you'd better stay here, my dear. In the circumstances, over which we had no control, we omitted to provide you with one of these costumes, and it might not be safe for you to enter the Cave of Fires without one."

With a little moan Tinta raised her hand and clutched at Jim's metal-clad arm.

"Oh, Krim, don't leave me alone!" she sobbed. "Death is here!"

With a stride Stanislaus Cripps was by her side, and he patted her dark head with his gauntleted hand.

"There's nothing to be frightened of, Little One! Fear is an absurd thing, unworthy of a human creature. We won't leave you alone. Your father shall stay with you, while Jim and I carry out our investigations."

His voice was very gentle and tender as he spoke to Tinta, but it took on quite a different tone when he turned to Masra.

"Masra, you will stay here," he exclaimed imperiously. "I don't apprehend any

danger, but should any approach, you have weapons which you can use effectively. There is the sleeping gas which I recommend in the first instance; in the last resort you can use your revolver. Those oxygen bullets, as you have seen, are very effective."

Masra, who seemed under the spell of that dominant courage, bowed his head submissively.

"Come on, boy!" Stanislaus Cripps exclaimed with the eagerness of a schoolboy. "This certainly promises to be one of the most interesting experiences of my life!"

Cripps Pays His Debt!

WITHOUT more ado Cripps strode across the threshold of the cave. Jim, hesitating, saw him set his metal-clad foot on one of those fissures from which the flames leapt. Those subterranean fires sprayed about his leg like water projected from a tap over which someone has placed his finger.

For a moment Jim wanted to cry out warningly, and then, as he saw Stanislaus Cripps walk on calmly he realised that this mysterious metal was literally immune to heat. Plucking up his courage he followed his companion.

"Somewhere here, boy, must be the being, or the intelligence, or whatever it is, that directs the domestic affairs of the Kru," Stanislaus Cripps exclaimed as he drew level with him. "We must certainly find out who, or what, he is. As he sent for us he must be expecting us. It would have been more courteous, to one of my scientific attainments, had he been here to greet us with proper formality."

He flung back his head as he spoke, and Jim was instantly reminded by the gesture of that evening when he had first met Stanislaus Cripps, and demanded the payment of his mother's account. It was with the very same haughtiness that he had refused to pay his debts, that he now criticised, what he was pleased to call, the lack of courtesy displayed by Him-Whose-Name-May-Not-Be-Spoken.

"What do you think that column of fire was?" Jim stammered, talking, if the truth were known, for the sake of talking, feeling that anything was better than silence in these nightmare surroundings.

"As yet I have formed no theory, boy. Possibly some internal fire acting under immense pressure. It may be an emanation from the atmosphere. Let's keep our minds open, boy, and make use of our observation. That is the only true scientific attitude."

The roof of the cave was so high that, despite the flames which leapt from the floor, it was lost in obscurity. Unlike the caverns of the Kru world, it was covered with a fine dust which sparkled curiously. Presently Stanislaus Cripps' attention must have been attracted by this dust, for, stooping down, he picked up a handful of it. Jim heard him laugh.

"Do you know, boy, that we are treading on wealth which, if we could transport it to our own world, would upset the delicate balance of the money market? These are diamonds—diamonds of the finest water! With an ordinary broom and a pail we could collect enough to reduce the price of diamonds to that of pebbles!"

He thrust some of the glittering stones into the metal pouch that hung suspended from the belt about his waist.

"Boy, it is a curious reflection that I am now in a position, for the first time in my life, to pay my debts! And yet, what a foolish business is this system of tokens by which we exchange the commodities of life!"

He stooped down again as he spoke and picked up a diamond, about the size of a pigeon's egg. In imagination Jim could almost see his mocking grin as he turned to him.

"Boy, you inform me that I owe your mother a sum of sixteen and fivepence half-penny. Herewith I settle the account with interest, I imagine, at ten thousand per cent. Put it in your pouch, boy, and ask your mother to be good enough to let me have a receipt in due course!"

As he took the diamond and slipped it into the pouch at his waist, Jim felt the tears rise to his eyes. It was all very well for Stanislaus Cripps to give and mock and laugh; he had no being in the Outer World whom he loved and wanted.

Jim saw again the little general shop with its bottle-glass windows in Stagmore, and his mother's slim figure as she stood at the counter talking to customers. Almost, it seemed to him, he could hear her voice. Was he never going to see her again?

The Apparition!

WITH that desolating feeling of home sickness heavy on his heart, Jim tramped in silence by Stanislaus Cripps' side for the better part of half an hour. Then at last, out of the gloom ahead of them, rose up that great pillar and the arched entrance of the tunnel down which he had seen the pillar of fire disappear.

"This is obviously our way, boy," Stanislaus Cripps exclaimed, as they stood for a moment on the threshold of that tunnel.

He examined the pillar of rock, chipping at it with the sharp-bladed dagger that he carried at his side. Apparently he discovered nothing to excite his curiosity, for abruptly he turned his attention to the floor. An exclamation of astonishment escaped from his lips.

"Boy, look at this!" he exclaimed. "Talk about footsteps on the sands of time. These footsteps on the living rock have got them beaten to a frazzle!"

Following the direction of his gaze, Jim saw the course of Cripps' astonishment. There, clearly impressed on the stone, were the marks of a human naked foot—a well-shaped foot, with an instep so high that the joining

between the heel and the base of the toes was hardly more than an inch wide. At first the full meaning of this discovery did not dawn upon him. It was not until Stanislaus Cripps explained that he really understood.

"These footprints might have been made upon the rock when it was in a liquid state, but we must reject that theory, boy, because the foot is unshod, and no human being could walk on the temperature of molten rock. We are forced, therefore, to the almost impossible deduction that these imprints have been made by human feet passing backwards and forwards over a period of countless years—a conclusion from which the mind naturally recoils, but which we must not reject on that account."

"Could there be no other explanation, sir?" Jim exclaimed.

"Not that I can think of, boy. The floor is constructed of the hardest basalt. Though I scratch it with this knife, I can make no impression."

Jim was utterly dumbfounded.

"But how could any one human being walk backwards and forwards here, sir, for the time necessary to make those footprints?"

"That, boy, is a problem—one of the very interesting problems which we shall have to solve. Let us continue."

He spoke with the air of a guide who was taking a party of tourists round a public museum.

"One thing is perfectly obvious, boy. We cannot do better than follow the track of these footsteps. They will lead us, presumably, to the person who made them, or to his remains. Perhaps they will bring us to the Being or the Intelligence who controls the domestic affairs of the Kru. Remember, boy, that we heard his voice in the Hall of the People, and we were certainly informed that he resided in the Cave of the Fires. Let's go and dig him out!"

One of the amazing things about Stanislaus Cripps was the way in which his conversation passed abruptly from the didactic language of a science lecturer to the slang of the ordinary schoolboy. Jim, recalling how Him-Whose-Name-May-Not-Be-Spoken had demanded the sacrifice of Tinta, was quite unable to feel the same enthusiasm as his companion's. He had no burning desire to meet Him-Whose-Name-May-Not-Be-Spoken.

"But he may kill us!" he exclaimed.

"Possibly, boy. One has always to face that prospect. But I take some killing. I'm not a submissive mole, living in a hole, to be bossed about like the Kru. I may have my weaknesses, I may have my failings—though I doubt it—but of one thing I'm very certain, boy—that I am armed with knowledge, and if He-Whose-Name-May-Not-Be-Spoken catches me bending he'll be mighty smart!"

With a raucous chuckle he led the way into the tunnel, following the strange track of those footsteps in the rock. Now darkness closed upon them. From somewhere far away Jim could hear the rushing and rumbling of the pillar of fire.

Stanislaus Cripps switched on his electric torch and, holding it so that it cast a light on the ground, trudged on calmly. The tunnel followed a sweeping elliptical curve to which there seemed no end.

They had been walking for the best part of an hour when, ahead of them, they saw a faint light. This grew brighter and brighter as they pressed on. Now they could see what looked like a room raised some ten feet above the floor, and brilliantly lit.

Stanislaus Cripps' excitement so increased at the sight that he broke into a run. Ten minutes more and the details of that strange rocky chamber became clearer.

It was, Jim saw, about thirty feet square. A flight of steps led up to it from the floor of the tunnel. And it was furnished—actually furnished!

Jim could see what looked like a couch and a high-backed fantastic chair made of some metal that glittered yellow in the brilliant light. For once, even Stanislaus Cripps appeared staggered.

"Bless my soul, boy, what's the meaning of all this?" he exclaimed.

A few minutes more and they had reached the foot of the steps that led to the rocky chamber. Without hesitation Stanislaus Cripps began to climb upwards. Now he had gained the floor of that curious apartment. As he did so, a curtain that covered the wall facing him was drawn aside, and the most awe-inspiring figure that Jim had ever seen appeared!

In the Unknown's Presence!

JIM was quite unable to stifle the cry of alarm that rose to his lips. The apparition stood there, naked, save for a loin cloth of rich purple. He was six feet in height and his body was the most beautifully proportioned figure that Jim had ever seen. The white, perfectly moulded flesh, with its suggestion of great strength and agility, gave him the appearance of a Greek statue come to life.

And then Jim's stupefied gaze wandered to his face. It was that of a young man, hardly twenty, with an aquiline nose and straight, firm lips. And yet, somehow, that look of youth seemed to be a mask behind which there was untold age.

And the eyes—Jim was never to forget those eyes!

They had an unearthly quality. They were not the windows of this strange being's soul.

There were no windows. The spirit of the man seemed to look clear and direct through those eyes. Jim felt a strange trance-like feeling come over him as those magnetic orbs were flashed for a moment in his direction.

Those were only his first, almost casual, impressions, and then he made another terrifying discovery. Beautiful as the man's figure was—perfect in shape and symmetry—it was as if the flesh were a mere transparency—a flimsy covering to some flaming, vital force. What the glass bulb is to the electric light, so the man's body was to the spirit behind it—a mere transparent covering!

Slowly, silently, with the tread of a panther and the grace of an athlete, this being moved away from the curtains towards the head of the stone stairs. Jim stood spellbound two steps below the level of the floor.

And then suddenly his attention was attracted by his companion. He had forgotten Stanislaus Cripps in the almost hypnotic trance in which this being had held him. Now that booming voice rang through the vaulted cavern.

"Greeting, Him-Whose-Name-May-Not-Be-Spoken!" Cripps exclaimed in the Kru tongue, and then added in English for Jim's benefit: "Always assuming that he is that gentleman, boy!"

With perfect sangfroid, unmoved, as calm and casual in his behaviour as usual, Stanislaus Cripps moved towards this strange being. Jim saw those eyes suddenly blaze up like flames under the influence of a draught, and then a long, graceful arm was stretched out and his fingers touched the glistening helmet of Stanislaus Cripps' diving costume.

Whatever the intention of this being was, it was not a friendly one. Jim realised that in an instant, though how he arrived at the conclusion he was utterly unable to say. It was an act of hostility. It was as if this being had struck at Stanislaus Cripps with his fist. But its effect upon Stanislaus Cripps was just nothing at all.

Calmly he reached up his gauntleted hand and, seizing those beautifully fashioned fingers, gave them a quite prosaic handshake.

"Greetings!" he said again, still speaking in Kru.

(Doesn't this yarn get thrilling, lads? Next week's instalment is still more exciting, however, and you'll read what happens to Jim and his companion while in the presence of Him-Whose-Name-May-Not-Be-Spoken!)

THE BOYS' FRIEND LIBRARY

contains stories of School, Sport and Adventure.

Long Complete Novels of Detective Work and Adventure appear in

THE SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY

PRICE FOURPENCE EACH.

(Full details of the numbers now on sale are given on page 26.)

Our Magazine Corner.**SWORDS***An Interesting History of Their Origin
and Uses throughout the Ages.***A Very Old Weapon.**

The origin of swords is very obscure, dating back to the earliest days of mankind. Some authorities are of the opinion that the sword is a development of the wooden or stone club. But this is uncertain.

There is certainly a resemblance between the sword and the dagger, but whether one is a direct development of the other is also unknown.

Flint daggers were made in the Neolithic age. After these came ones made of copper. Bronze daggers were known in 2000 B.C. And a thousand years later they were followed by weapons of iron.

The two main types of sword are the straight-edged and the leaf-edged. They are to be found all over Europe. The Greeks in historical times used leaf-edged blades.

All Sorts of Swords.

When the Romans invaded England they used a short infantry sword against the Britons. The inhabitants of our island at that time had nothing but very primitive weapons, scarcely superior to clubs.

In uncivilised times the sword was used to hack and cut enemies with its edges. As the world progressed, it has come to be used at the point.

The earlier form of the sword was often double-edged. These were common in Europe till the seventeenth century. After that preference was given to the single-edged weapon.

Swords were found from the earliest times nearly all over the world. In essentials they are similar, though they have many superficial differences. Thus we get the Asiatic sabre, the Persian scimitar, the Indian tulwar, and the curved knife of the Ghurka, called the kukri.

In the case of these Eastern weapons, one finds great beauty of workmanship. And, in addition to this, the Damascus sword-blades were famous for their strength and durability.

Duels.

While speaking of swords, one naturally thinks of duels. Many people imagine they are nearly as old as swords. But this is not the case. They are of comparatively modern date.

It is true that there are several historic incidents of two men fighting in classical times. Notably the well-known contest between Hector and Achilles. But this was not really a duel. It was simply one man being chosen from one army against one from another.

The real duel is the settling of personal differences between two opponents.

Duelling seems to have started in Germany. Thence it spread to France about the tenth or twelfth centuries. It was originally allowed by both the law and the Church. It was considered quite right that a man accused by another of some crime should be challenged by him to mortal combat.

The objections to this idea soon became very obvious, for the wrong man often won.

In England.

After some exceptionally ridiculous cases of this kind the Church stepped in and forbade duelling. But it was not till a good while after that it became illegal.

Duelling was introduced into England at the time of the Norman Conquest. It did not become so popular over here as it had been in France and Germany. Nevertheless, there were innumerable combats up to the time of Cromwell.

The Puritans banned duels, but with the Restoration they became once more popular.

With the introduction of firearms the sword duel naturally became less common. But even to this day it still exists. And there are cases where the opponents, after firing at each other unsuccessfully, have resorted to swords.

Amongst a number of famous men who have fought duels are Lord Byron, who engaged in a combat in 1765. And it was not till more than a hundred years later that duelling entirely vanished from this country.

Famous Combats.

Many of the combats one reads about are very tame affairs. German students are notoriously fond of duelling, but they are usually satisfied when they have scratched or wounded their man. This is true of most combats of comparatively modern date.

Honour is generally satisfied when blood is drawn. And in the case of pistols being used, if both men miss, the fight is often considered over.

But in older days this was not so. In France especially, duels were much more deadly affairs. It is recorded that the Dukes of Beaufort and Nemours fought a duel, each attended by four men. It finished with Nemours and two others being killed and all the rest being wounded!

Amongst famous duellists must be considered the Count de Botteville. He fought twenty-one successful combats, and arranged a twenty-second. Unfortunately, a law had been passed making duelling illegal. His last fight never came off. Instead, he and his second were arrested, and both beheaded!

HOW TO JOIN THE LEAGUE

ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE APPLICATION FORM No. 71.

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, and Membership Badge
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 f.d., 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 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, Farringdon St., London, E.C.4. Enquiries which need an immediate answer should be accompanied by a stamped and addressed envelope.

Going Ahead.

WE are well on the road to the ten thousand figure, and I can assure a Headingley supporter that it will not be long before this magnificent total is reached.

Silver Medals.

Best thanks to the numerous recipients of the Silver Medals who have written praising the new award.

Footballers' Autographs.

A. J. Southway, of South Farnborough, tells me he has captured a rare collection of signatures of well-known footballers. I give his address in another column so that fellow collectors can exchange.

A Flourishing Club.

John L. A. Rodgers, "Birch Lea," Hollins Road, Oldham, tells me he has established a club in his town, and that it is going great guns. Members in the district should take advantage of this chance.

A Fine Dust-up.

F. A. Coker, 2, Somervell Avenue, Gisborne, New Zealand, is backing up the League in fine style. In this country we think of Gisborne as the happy land for plums. This correspondent says it is a very nice place for dust, and he thinks it is the dustiest place on earth. But these progressive places always do kick up a dust. The pace is so hot!

Care Wanted.

An ambitious chum in Clerkenwell wants to buy a typewriter cheap, and he has my best wishes. I hope he will find a machine at his price which is a real trier, and not a hopeless dud which refuses to spell the English language, and has an unhappy knack of tossing the letters about the page. All letters, even capitals, ought to dress from the right, as it were, and keep smartly in the line.

CORRESPONDENTS WANTED.

H. G. McClory, 6, Colwyn Street, Birkenhead, wishes to correspond with readers in Australia; keen on cricket and other sports; also those at home who are interested in football, and who would exchange back numbers of the "Monster Library" and the "N.L.L."

U. R. Williams, "Kenilworth," Middle Road, Cwmbwrla, Swansea, wishes to cor-

respond with readers abroad; postcards only; French understood.

J. Sopp, 127, Cranbury Road, Reading, wishes to correspond with readers anywhere.

H. G. Dell, Parsonage Road, Ringwood, Hampshire, desires to hear from readers who would like to join his hobbies club.

W. S. Warner, 10, Westbourne Road, Walsall, Staffordshire, wishes to correspond with readers on subjects in general and sport specially.

Rae MacFarlane, Wullumulla Street, Glen Innes, New South Wales, Australia, wishes to hear from readers in the United States, Canada, South America, and Western Australia. Keen amateur telescope maker.

P. Howe, Oak Dene, Botley, Oxford, wishes to obtain back numbers of the "N.L.L." with Portrait Gallery.

Norman Stevenson, 6, Daisy Street, Leeds, desires to correspond with members interested in stamps, postcards, and photography; also wants to hear from A. Niekerk (South Africa) urgently.

Albert Watts, 9, Clifton Road, Kingston-on-Thames, wishes to hear from readers who are interested in the formation of a club.

John W. S. Luckarift, 2, St. Salcut Villas, Winchester Street, St. Heliers, Jersey, Channel Islands, wants to hear from stamp collectors.

A. J. Southway, Beaulieu, Queen's Road, Farnborough, Hants, wishes to correspond about autographs. He has a fine collection of autographs of famous footballers.

J. W. Birley, 35, Station Road, Whittington Moore, Chesterfield, wishes to correspond with Leagueites.

W. Webb, 67, Monmouth Road, East Ham, E.6, wishes to hear from readers—ages 15, 16—in his district.

F. Slann, The Poplars, 15, Holmer Road, Hereford, wishes to hear from readers in his district.

HOW TO GET YOUR SILVER MEDAL.

All holders of **BRONZE MEDALS** who have qualified for **SILVER MEDALS** (see instructions on Application Form opposite) and wish to exchange their medals for the higher award, should send their bronze medals, accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope, to the Chief Officer, the St. Frank's League, c/o the NELSON LEE LIBRARY, Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C.4. The **SILVER MEDALS** will then be sent to them.

The UNION JACK

is the weekly paper—2d., on Thursdays—
that publishes the stories of the world-
famous detective, **SEXTON BLAKE.**

2/6 is all you pay Down



Send for full details of our All-British 400A "Marvel"—the finest cycle ever offered on such exceptionally easy terms. Every up-to-date improvement. Richly enamelled, brilliantly plated. Fully warranted. Packed free, carriage paid. Money refunded if dissatisfied. Big bargains in factory-soiled mounts. Tyres and other accessories CHEAP. Write for reduced factory prices and catalogue of 28 new Three-Speed Roadsters, Road-Racers, All Weather Oil-Bath mounts and Tradesmen's Carrier Cycles.—**Mead Cycle Co., Inc. (Dept. K601), Birmingham.**

MODEL 400
£4.19.6
CASH

1/6 THE BULLY BOY 1/6

20-Shot Rapid Repeater Action Pea Pistol. Fires a pea 25 feet at the rate of 100 a minute. A regular Pocket Lewis Gun! Bright nickel finish, each in box with ammunition. A better shooter than you have ever had before!

Send 1/6 and don't miss our latest quick firer! Colonial postage 9d. extra.

J. BISHOP & CO., 41, Finsbury Sq., London, E.C.



25 DANZIG FREE! This magnificent unused collection absolutely free to genuine applicants for approval sheets.—**R. Wilkinson, Colwyn Bay.**

CUT THIS OUT

"NELSON LEE" PEN COUPON. VALUE 3d.

Send 5 of these coupons with only 2/9 (and 2d. stamp) direct to the **FLEET PEN CO., 119, Fleet Street, E.C.4.** By return you will receive a handsome lever self-filling **FLEET FOUNTAIN PEN** with solid gold nib (fine, medium, or broad), usually 10/6. Fleet price 4/-, or with 5 coupons only 2/9.



JOIN THE ROYAL NAVY AND SEE THE WORLD.

Boys are wanted for the Seaman Class (from which selections are made for the Wireless Telegraphy and Signalling Branches). Age 15½ to 16½ years.

MEN also are required for

SEAMEN (SPECIAL SERVICE) ... Age 18 to 25.
STOKERS ... Age 18 to 25.
ROYAL MARINE FORCES ... Age 17 to 23.

**GOOD PAY. ALL FOUND
EXCELLENT CHANCES FOR PROMOTION**

Apply by letter to the Recruiting Staff Officer, R.N. and R.M., 5, Suffolk Street, Birmingham; 121, Victoria Street, Bristol; 13, Crown Terrace, Downhill, Glasgow; 30, Canning Place, Liverpool; 55, Whitehall, London, S.W.1; 289, Deansgate, Manchester; 116, Rye Hill, Newcastle-on-Tyne; or 6, Washington Terrace, Queen's Park, Southampton.

300 STAMPS FOR 6d. (Abroad 1/-) including Airpost, Triangular, Old India, Nigeria, New South Wales, Gold Coast, etc. **W. A. WHITE, Engine Lane, LYE, Stourbridge.**

Height Increased **5/-** Complete Course. In 30 Days.

No Appliances. No Drugs. No Dieting. The Melvin Strong System NEVER FAILS. Send stamp for particulars and testimonials. —**MELVIN STRONG, LTD. (Dept. S), 10, Ludgate Hill, London, England.**



DON'T BE BULLIED



Send 4d. Stamps for Two Splendid Illus. Lessons in Jujitsu; the Wonderful Japanese art of Self-Defence without weapons. Better than boxing or any science invented. Learn to take care of yourself under all circumstances; and fear no man. Monster large Illus.

Portion for P.O. 3/9. Send Now to "**YAWARA**" (Dept. A.P.), 10, Queensway, Hanworth, Feltham, Middlesex.

Stop Stammering! Cure yourself as I did. Particulars FREE. — **FRANK B. HUGHES, 7, Southampton Row, London, W.C.1.**



2/- NOW AND THE BIKE IS YOURS

I supply the finest Coventry built cycles on 14 days' approval, packed free and carr. paid, on receipt of small deposit. Lowest cash prices, or easy payment terms. Write for Free Bargain List NOW.

A LOW MONTHLY INSTALLMENT TO SUIT YOUR POCKET

O'Brien THE WORLD'S LARGEST CYCLE DEALER, 181, COVENTRY

Be sure and mention "**The Nelson Lee Library**" when communicating with Advertisers.

Printed and Published every Wednesday by the Proprietors, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Advertisement Offices: The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Registered for transmission by Canadian magazine post. Subscription Rates: Inland and Abroad, 11/- per annum; 5/6 for six months. Sole Agents for South Africa: Central News Agency, Limited. Sole Agents for Australia and New Zealand: Messrs. Gordon & Gotch, Limited; and for Canada: The Imperial News Co. (Canada), Limited.

New Series No. 51.

D/R

April 23rd, 1927.