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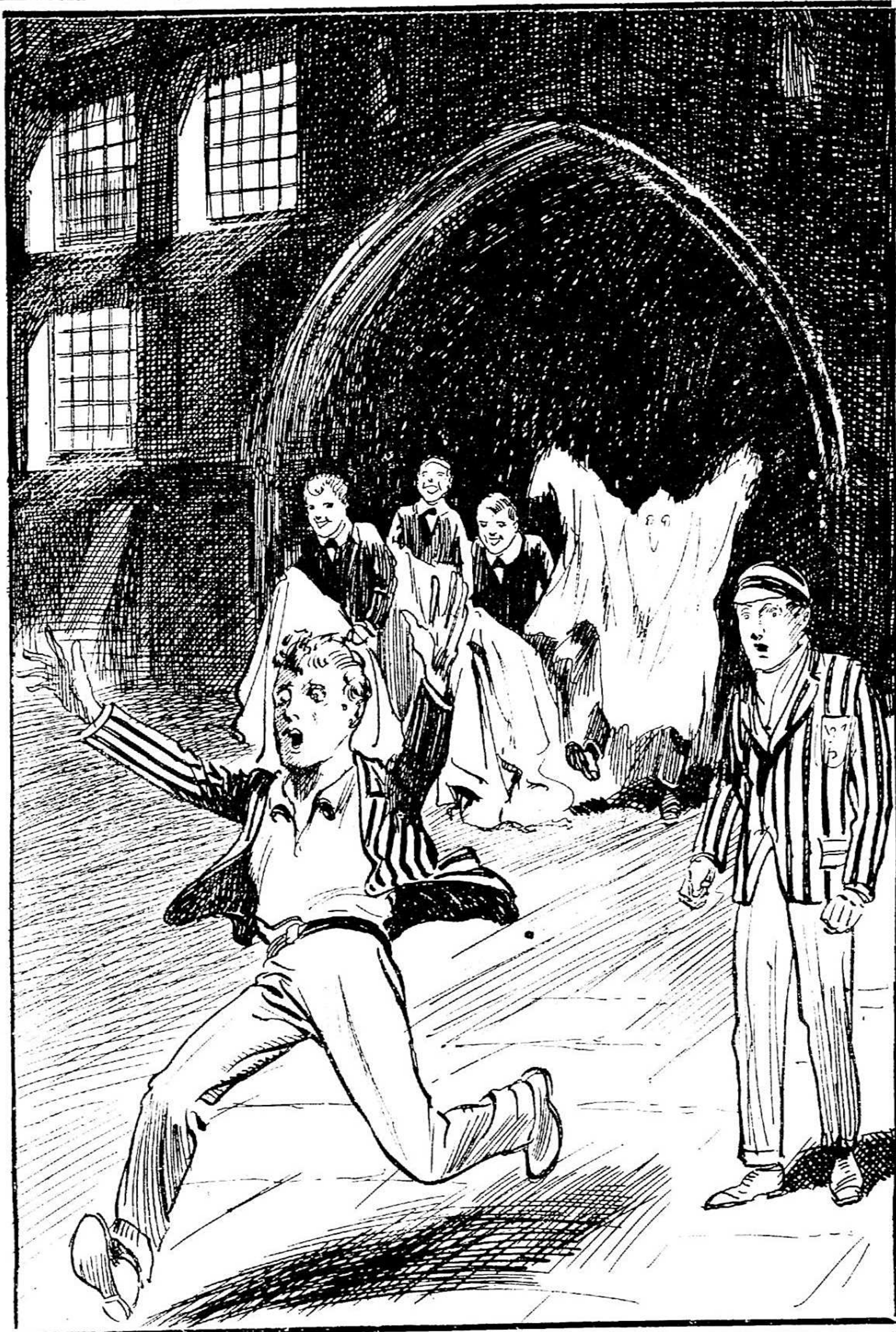
SHUNNED BY ST. FRANKS!

A powerful long complete story of school life and adventure.

New Series No. 52.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

April 30th, 1927.



As Harry Gresham saw the three whitish, spectral figures in the darkness, he gave a hoarse cry of fright, and tore away at full speed. Alec Duncan looked after him in amazement, for the ghostly figures were three grinning juniors enveloped in sheets ! Once again Harry Gresham had proved himself a coward !

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SHUNNED BY ST. FRANK'S!



By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

A powerful long complete story of school life and sport.

CHAPTER 1.

WILLY AT WORK!

WILLY HANDFORTH began to count in an ominous, relentless tone.

"One—two—three—"

"All right!" gasped Chubby Heath frantically. "I'm out!"

Considering that it was only just six o'clock in the morning, Chubby Heath leapt out of bed with truly commendable alacrity. The jug of water hovering over his head may have had something to do with this. Besides, Willy had distinctly said that he would only count six.

St. Frank's was basking in the early sunshine of an early May morning, and the Third Form dormitory in the Ancient House was quiet, except for this little ripple of disturbance in the north-east corner. Quiet, that is, but for the usual snores, grunts, and other noises which generally accompanied the youthful slumber of the Third-Formers.

"It's a sin to stay in bed on a morning like this," said Willy Handforth firmly.

"I don't mind being a sinner for once!" growled Chubby, glaring. "It's all rot! What are we getting up for, anyhow?"

"Because I've told you to!"

"That's no reason," complained Chubby bitterly.

"It's all the reason you'll get, until you're dressed," retorted the volcanic leader of the Third. "Now, then, Juicy! Have I got to empty this giddy jug over you?"

Master Christopher Lemon whirled the bed-clothes over the top of him, and vanished.

"If you empty that jug over me, I'll never speak to you again!" came a muffled roar from beneath the pile. "Rats! It's only just six o'clock! Rising bell won't go for an hour and a half—"

"We're not talking about rising bells," said Willy, striding towards the bed, and delivering a terrific thump on the largest projection. "My only hat! Anybody might think I was trying to lead you to the scaffold! I'm fed up with both of you!"

Chubby looked at him hopefully.

"So you're going without us, eh?" he asked.

"You can put that idea out of your mind," retorted Willy, giving him a pitying look. "I want you chaps to help me—and unless Juicy is out of that bed in ten seconds, I'll pour this water all over him, and then shove a cake of soap down his throat!"

"He didn't hear you!" said Chubby.

"One—two—three—four—five—"

Juicy Lemon apparently heard quite well, for he suddenly gave up all hope, and emerged from the bed. He came out like a snake, wriggling from the foot. This was a precautionary measure, in case Willy counted too quickly. Icy cold water, the first thing in the morning, is one of the most dreadful threats imaginable.

"That's better," said Willy briskly. "Now dress!"

"You rotter!" panted Juicy, picking himself up from the floor. "You—you hard, stony tyrant! I believe your heart's made of flint!"

"What are we getting up for, anyhow?" persisted Chubby Heath. "Cricket, I suppose? It doesn't matter if we don't start cricket practice until Saturday! We haven't got any games fixed. It's only the second day of term—"

"You fatheads remind me more and more of Church and McClure every day!" interrupted Willy. "You're always arguing. I try to drive sense into you, but I might as well try to drive a tack into the side of a battleship? Buck up! The last one dressed gets my boot as a present."

As a matter of fact, it was a dead heat, and Willy was foiled. However, he was compensated by the fact that his chums were completely attired, and ready for public inspection within the space of two minutes. The fags could perform wonders at dressing when they were urged.

"Good!" said Willy, eyeing them critically. "Your neck wants washing, Chubby, and I could sow grass in your ears, Juicy—but let that pass. The main thing is to get outside. There's nothing like fresh air on a sunny summer's morning."

"You ass, it's only spring yet!" said Chubby.

"You can't judge our weather by the calendar," replied Willy. "In July we shall be getting snow, I expect, but we shan't be able to call it summer. Come along—we're going straight out of doors."

They went down the deserted corridors, and when they reached the lobby, they found the big outer door still locked and bolted. Willy proceeded to unfasten it.

"Haden't we better get our bats?" suggested Chubby.

"Bats?" said Willy. "What for?"

"Cricket, of course."

"Cricket?"

"Aren't we going to play cricket?" asked Juicy Lemon.

"Of course we're not!" retorted Willy. "What put that dotty idea into your head? I didn't say anything about cricket!"

"Then why the dickens have you dragged us up?" roared Chubby.

"You mustn't blame me for dragging you up," said Willy tartly. "That's your parents' fault!"

"But—but—"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Willy. "We're going down to have a look at my pets, and to clean out their quarters, and to give them an airing."

His chums gaped at him.

"Your pets!" gurgled Juicy at last. "Do you mean to say you've lugged us out of bed to help you with your silly menagerie?"

"We won't do it!" snorted Chubby.

Willy flung the door open, and the sunlight poured in.

"Have I got to go through all that business again?" he asked ominously. "My pets are a lot more important than cricket. I'm not satisfied about their quarters. There were builders and people messing about here during the holidays, and I'm going to give the cages a thorough overhaul. And you fellows are going to help me!"

"Yes, but look here—"

"You've talked enough!" said Willy, with an air of finality.

There was something in his tone which warned the other two fags to make the best of a bad job. In some respects, they bitterly reflected, he resembled his major to a startling degree. Once he had made up his mind to a thing, he carried it through, irrespective of their protests. And he was always ready to use his fists.

So the trio passed out of the Ancient House, and went round through West Arch, and so across the square to the long bicycle shed. One end of this was devoted to pets. Willy Handforth was the most enthusiastic animal lover in the Junior School; his pets constituted a kind of miniature zoo.

"Old Cuttle's been looking after the poor beggars while I've been away," remarked Willy. "He's a good chap, but you can't expect too much from a porter."

"It's a pity he didn't lose 'em," muttered Chubby. "We're not going to clean out these beastly cages. Hang it all, Willy, there's a limit to friendship. You're keen on your beastly pets, but we're not."

"We hate the sight of 'em!" said Juicy Lemon frankly.

These latter remarks, it must be confessed, were uttered in such a low tone that Willy failed to hear them. He was already within the shed, answering a chorus of chattering, squeaks, and chirrups. His numerous pets knew his voice on the instant, and they answered joyously.

"What-ho!" said Priscilla, the parrot. "How goes it?"

"Fine, old girl," said Willy. "Hungry?"

"Rats!" said Priscilla. "Wash your neck!"

Willy grinned. He did not take this remark as a personal affront, for Priscilla had a habit of using it frequently, and when applied to any of the other juniors it generally went

home. Perhaps it went home with Willy, too, but he wouldn't admit it.

"Oh, my hat!" said Chubby Heath, as he and Juicy entered.

"Take your coats off!" ordered Willy. "This is where we start work!"



CHAPTER 2.

A LITTLE AMUSEMENT!

WILLY stood about ten minutes of it, and then he gave it up as a bad job.

Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon had been hindering him from the very first moment, and in despair he looked round for some task which would keep them busily engaged elsewhere. He was even regretting that he ever awakened them.

"We're doing our best!" complained Chubby.

"If this is your best, I never want to see your worst!" growled Willy. "What do you do when I ask you to get some sand out of the bag? You litter the whole floor with sand, you chuck about half a pound of it down my neck, and when I go to the bag, it's empty. I'd fed up with you! Take Marmaduke, and give him an airing!"

"Marmaduke?" repeated his chums, in dismay.

"Yes," said Willy. "Take him for a walk up and down the square—then there'll be three monkeys on view. You needn't think you're going to escape altogether, my lads! Marmy needs some exercise, and you'd better keep on the go all the time."

There was no help for it. Willy was quite emphatic, and three or four minutes later, his chums went off on their new job. They were leading Marmaduke the monkey, the latter being held in check by means of a length of string.

Marmaduke was only a little chap, but he could show the fags all sorts of tricks in agility, particularly in the early morning. This was, indeed, his friskiest hour. If there was any mischief going between the hours of six and seven a.m., Marmaduke was always in it. Unfortunately, he seldom got the chance.

This was all the more reason for him to make hay while the sun shone—to seize a golden opportunity when it came his way. His hopes were high this morning, particularly when he noticed that he was being taken out into the big world by Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon.

Marmaduke never tried to escape from his young master. Experience had taught him that such a project was futile. Besides, if Willy whistled, and Marmaduke was near, he was compelled to obey. Willy always exacted strict obedience from his pets.

But it was different with Chubby and Juicy.

Marmaduke cocked a hopeful eye at them

as they came to a halt near the ivy-clad wall of the West House. His hopes rose still higher when he observed that Chubby Heath was tying the other end of the string to an ivy root. This sort of thing was easy. Marmaduke turned a thoughtful eye on the string, and then watched his two guardians. He was looking quite docile and meek. He was far too wary to start anything yet.

"I've thought of an idea," said Chubby, grinning.

"For escaping?" asked Juicy hopefully.

"No, you ass—we don't want to escape," replied Chubby. "Willy will be busy for half an hour yet, what with his squirrel and his rat and his ferret, and all the rest of 'em. And Marmy's all right, tied here."

"Sure?" asked Juicy doubtfully.

They looked at the monkey; Marmaduke coiled himself up, and appeared to go to sleep.

"There you are!" said Chubby. "The poor beggar isn't awake yet."

"Well, what's the idea?" asked Juicy, without much enthusiasm.

The other fag pointed upwards.

"See those windows?" he said.

"I'm not blind!"

"They're the windows of the Third Form dormitory."

"Go hon!" said Juicy. "Tell me something I don't know!"

"Why shouldn't we fill our pockets with pebbles, shin up this ivy, and have a game at chucking pebbles at Dicky Jones, and young Hobbs, and those other West House chaps?" asked Chubby brilliantly. "Don't you call that a first-class wheeze?"

For a moment, Juicy Lemon was stunned by the prospect.

"It's a go!" he said at last.

Chuckling, they filled their pockets with gravel. To their twisted mentalities, it seemed a highly diverting idea to throw pebbles at their sleeping Form fellows of the West House. It was, indeed, a House jape of the first quality.

They felt quite safe. It was so early that there were not likely to be any masters about just yet. And the prefects, of course, were all sound asleep. After all, early rising had its compensations.

They climbed up the ivy with comparative ease, for the roots were thick and strong. Reaching the wide window-sills, they perched themselves there, and cautiously drew the windows open.

In the meantime, Marmaduke felt that it was time for him to act.

He knew something about these fags, and it wouldn't surprise him in the least to see one of them come swarming down within a minute—probably with a pillow on his head. So it was distinctly necessary to act swiftly.

The monkey glanced round, saw that the coast was quite clear, and then he took a look upwards. His faithless guardians were so busy throwing pebbles that they had forgotten all about him. It took Marmaduke about twenty-three seconds to unfasten a

knot in the string with his nimble little fingers. He showed his teeth with appreciation at his own dexterity, and gave three or four hops sideways to make sure that he was thoroughly free.

Then, with another glance in his rear, he made a bee-line for one of the nearest trees. There was a quick scamper, and Marmaduke had vanished.



CHAPTER 3.

MARMADUKE BUTTS IN!

MARMADUKE was greatly interested.

He had climbed the tree in a spirit of exuberance, just to celebrate his unexpected liberty. But after tearing a piece of loose bark off, and screwing up several leaves, he came to the conclusion that this sort of thing wasn't exciting enough.

In his own way, Marmaduke was fairly inventive, but he had no great prejudice against copying a good idea when he saw one. He had been known to perform some remarkable feats without any pattern at all, but his really master-strokes were generally founded on something he had previously seen.

And now Marmaduke was not only interested, but intrigued.

From his lofty viewpoint, he could watch the activities of Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon with the air of an impartial judge. They were squatting on the two window-sills, throwing stones at some unseen target within.

Marmaduke gave a low chatter of satisfaction, and decided that this was precisely what he had been looking for. After all, what could be easier than throwing pebbles? And who could climb up to windows better than he?

But, first of all, he had to find a window. In the first place, the window would have to be open, and the further it was from this spot, the better it would be. At any moment Willy might whistle, or give one of his chirrups, and if Marmaduke was within ear-shot, he would feel compelled to obey. It would be far safer to get well away from such possibilities.

Having come to a definite decision, the little monkey lost no time.

He descended from the tree like a kind of brown streak, slithering down the trunk so swiftly that his hands and feet seemed scarcely to touch the bark. Then he made a rush for West Arch, and bounded through.

Here he came upon an unexpected setback.

A strange-looking creature was walking in the Triangle, and Marmaduke came to a halt, and eyed the uncouth thing with a wary glance.

"Bless my soul!" said the strange-looking creature.

As a matter of fact, Marmaduke's impression was not far wrong. Mr. Horace Pycraft,

the master of the Fourth Form, could hardly be called handsome. He had a clean-shaven face, but this was no recommendation. Nearly everybody in the school declared that Mr. Pycraft would look much better if he wore a full moustache and beard. He would then be half hidden. His mouth was thin and unpleasant-looking. His eyes were rather watery, and accentuated by a pair of big glasses.

"Go away!" said Mr. Pycraft, gazing at the monkey with suspicion. "The wretched little animal must have escaped! I shall put my foot down strongly. Strongly! This sort of thing cannot be allowed! These—these confounded monkeys can be quite dangerous at times."

Mr. Pycraft walked away, and a pebble came shooting past his head. Marmaduke saw no reason why he should not put in a little preliminary practice at once. Mr. Pycraft was as good a target as anything else.

Biff!

A pebble struck Mr. Pycraft on the ear, and he spun round, just in time to see Marmaduke picking up a fresh supply of ammunition.

"Shoo!" hissed Mr. Pycraft. "Shoo!"

Marmaduke chattered gleefully, and made a complete circle round the alarmed master. He could easily see that Mr. Pycraft was afraid of him, so he made a rush, and scampered round Mr. Pycraft's feet, chattering loudly, and showing his teeth.

"Good heavens!" said Mr. Pycraft, horrified.

He really expected the monkey to fly at him any moment, but Marmaduke was still thinking about that other scheme. He had had a little diversion, and he was satisfied. So he bolted while he was still safe. His early morning spirits were just approaching their zenith. He was beginning to enjoy himself thoroughly. It was the best morning he had had since he had fought a chicken, and had half-plucked the unfortunate bird.

He noticed one or two open windows in the Modern House, but these did not appeal to him. For one thing, Mr. Pycraft was still in full sight, and he wasn't sufficiently far from his determined young master. So he scuttled through Big Arch, and then came to a sudden halt, looking about him cautiously. The wide expanse of Inner Court loomed before him.

He hadn't quite realised that the world was so big, but here was space. And just now Marmaduke needed space. He sat still for about a minute, and then gave three spasmodic leaps into the air.

After this he settled down again for another minute, and came to the conclusion that it wasn't good enough. It was all very well to have space, but throwing pebbles through a window was undoubtedly the best plan.

In the far distance, a house stood. It seemed a long way off to Marmaduke. Actually, it was the Headmaster's residence, on the other side of Inner Court. Marmaduke



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bounded up, feeling more satisfied with himself than ever. There had been no whistle of recall, and it seemed to him that he had the entire world to himself.

Skirting round the house, he noticed that one window was open, and there was plenty of ivy to help him. He forgot all about the pebbles—but this was not an important matter. Besides, a slight diversion occurred at this point.

The Headmaster's cat strolled round the corner, gave one look at Marmaduke, and then heaved itself up. The cat's back arose sharply, and he made a loud, hissing noise, which amused Marmaduke immensely. He gave a couple of bounds towards the cat, and that frightened creature twirled round and fled.

It was distinctly a victory, and Marmaduke felt bucked. This was one of those mornings that he had often dreamed about.

With a little chatter of delight, he scrambled up the ivy, alighted on the window-sill, and took a casual peep into the bed-room.

All was still.

But all was not exactly quiet. The bed was occupied, and something inside it was making loud, distasteful noises. They sounded regularly, and the bed heaved up and down in the middle to the same beat.

This, felt Marmaduke, needed a close investigation.

Obviously, there was no danger. In any case, there was the open window, so he could easily escape in case of a sudden emergency.

He slipped nimbly through, alighted on a chair, and then hopped on to the corner of the dressing-table.

One glance filled Marmaduke with satisfaction.

There was no need to bother about pebbles now. There was sufficient ammunition here to satisfy any enterprising monkey.

There were bottles, brushes, combs, silver things, and all manner of handy implements. Marmaduke picked up a bottle of brilliantine, uncorked it, and took a sniff.

He chattered. It didn't please him very much. Then he had a look at the thing in the bed. He could just see a face. A mouth was fully open, and it emitted raucous sounds. Strictly speaking, it was very rude of Marmaduke to intrude on the early morning privacy of Mr. Robert Addison in this way.

Mr. Addison was the Headmaster's secretary. The Head had been unwell following the ordeal imposed by the recent floods which had inundated the area around St. Frank's; Addison was to relieve him of some of his routine work.

But, unknown to anyone, the secretary had a hold over Harry Gresham—a new boy at the school—and already Addison was blackmailing the junior. Addison seemed to know just why Gresham was showing up an arrant coward; even though he was likeable enough in other ways, and was a corking good cricketer.

Addison was a rotter, and Marmaduke had never met him before. This was not very

surprising, for Mr. Addison was a newcomer to St. Frank's. He was a gentleman who believed in great privacy, and he had taken care to lock his bed-room door after retiring.

But how could he have suspected such an intrusion as this?

Marmaduke took another sniff at the brilliantine, and then he tipped the bottle up, and tasted a sample. One drop was sufficient. Spluttering and chattering, he hurled the bottle at Mr. Addison's head—unjustly assuming that this unfortunate gentleman was responsible for the brilliantine's unpalatable flavour.

Thud!

The bottle hit the pillow just above Mr. Addison's head, and the brilliantine came gurgling out in an oily flow, smothering Mr. Addison's hair in a manner that is strictly discouraged by all brilliantine manufacturers. Just a touch is the recognised formula. But Mr. Addison was getting swamped with the stuff.



CHAPTER 4.

MARMADUKE'S HECTIC HOUR!

STRANGELY enough, Mr. Addison did not awaken. He was a heavy sleeper, and Marmaduke had not scored a direct hit. This

was a mistake which Marmaduke made haste to rectify. There was no sense in doing the job, unless he did it thoroughly.

He still had the taste of the brilliantine in his mouth, and it did not please him. He picked up the next bottle, and this proved to be full of blue-black ink. It looked so ominous that Marmaduke did not venture to take a sample—although he removed the cork, and sniffed at it.

Here another idea occurred to him. Why risk another miss? He lowered himself from the dressing-table, reached the bed, and hopped up. Then he cautiously approached the sleeper, and finally sat down beside the pillow.

For a few minutes Marmaduke forgot his mission. He was fascinated by Mr. Addison's face. Mr. Addison was opening and closing his mouth as he slept, and it seemed to Marmaduke that this mouth was altogether too big to be decent.

Growing tired of watching the yawning cavern, Marmaduke's attention strayed to the ink-bottle again. He thoughtfully held it over Mr. Addison's face, and tipped it up. A stream of blue-black fluid splashed down, and spread itself impartially over Mr. Addison's features.

Marmaduke hopped aside, alarmed.

The Head's secretary had shifted his position, turning over, and clawing the bed-clothes. But he didn't awaken. He calmly went off to sleep again, totally unconscious of the hideous work that Marmaduke was performing.

The monkey calmly tipped the rest of the bottle up, and poured the ink into Mr. Addison's hair, where it did its best to mingle with the brilliantine.

Chattering gaily, Marmaduke went back to the dressing-table, and hurled a hair-brush at the sleeper's head. And this time he scored a bull's-eye.

Mr. Addison gave a wild grunt, and sat up.

The brush had hit him edgewise, and he was hurt. He was bewildered, too, being only partially awake.

"What—what was that?" he muttered dazedly.

Whizz!

A tablet of soap struck him in the chest, and he stared down at it in bewilderment. But he was much more awake now. And when a tube of toothpaste struck him in the middle of the neck the last vestige of sleep vanished.

"Great glory!" ejaculated Mr. Addison, aghast.

He stared at Marmaduke, and Marmaduke stared at him. In fact, Marmaduke did more. He chattered angrily, showing his teeth, and prancing up and down on the dressing-table to the detriment of sundry other toilet articles, which went crashing to the floor.

Marmaduke didn't like Mr. Addison's appearance. This was rather rough on Mr. Addison, for Marmaduke was the direct cause of the unfortunate man's piebald aspect. His face was streaky with ink, and blobs of brilliantine were running down his cheeks. Altogether, Mr. Addison was in a nasty mess.

"A monkey!" gasped the secretary, leaping out of bed. "Good heavens! How on earth did this confounded thing get into my bedroom? Get out of here! Why, what the — What on earth—"

He had just caught sight of himself in the wardrobe mirror, and for a moment he didn't realise that he was looking at his own reflection.

Mr. Addison goggled.

He beheld a vile-looking object with greasy, oily, matted hair, with a streaky face, and a wild appearance. And in this grotesque caricature he recognised his own features.

"Good heavens!" he repeated.

Marmaduke chattered angrily, and nimbly hopped from the dressing-table to the top of the wardrobe. He disliked Mr. Addison's appearance more than ever.

The secretary hesitated. He didn't quite know what to do. If Marmaduke could perform all these destructive operations while his victim was asleep, what would he do if an attempt was made to catch him?

Mr. Addison knew the whole truth now. The monkey had obviously got in through the open window, and had then amused himself with the various objects on the dressing-table. Mr. Addison regretted that he was such a heavy sleeper. If he had only

awakened earlier, he might have prevented all this bother.

"You little demon!" he shouted, shaking his fist at Marmaduke.

The monkey gave a wild leap from the top of the wardrobe, and landed on the mantelpiece, knocking down several photographs. Mr. Addison advanced desperately. Something had to be done with this confounded animal, or the whole room would be wrecked.

An inspiration came to Mr. Addison, and he seized the pillow. He hurled it at Marmaduke. It was a perfectly futile thing to do, for by the time the pillow arrived, Marmaduke was elsewhere. Two vases went smashing to the floor, but their destruction could not be fairly added to Marmaduke's account.

In his rage, Mr. Addison was adopting the wrong tactics. A kindly word or two might have soothed Marmaduke, and rendered him tractable; but this is doubtful, for Marmaduke had taken a rooted prejudice to Mr. Addison. He now seized a hand-mirror, and threw it across the room at his tormentor. Mr. Addison found it necessary to dodge swiftly.

"By Heaven, I'll have you killed for this!" he snapped. "Must have escaped from some organ-grinder! Why such animals are allowed to live is more than I can comprehend!"

For a moment he thought of shouting for help, but he dismissed this idea. He wasn't going to be beaten by an insignificant little monkey. Besides, the whole school would get to hear of it if the servants came, and the whole school would giggle. Mr. Addison wanted no such ridicule.

"All right!" he panted. "I'll catch you!"

He made a dive at Marmaduke, and the monkey skipped under the bed, and was yards off before Mr. Addison could turn round. When it came to a question of dexterity, Mr. Addison was absolutely nowhere. Marmaduke could make rings round him, without even hurrying himself.

Ordinarily, Marmaduke would have escaped long before this. He was playful, and he was inclined to be mischievous—but it was very seldom that he really let himself go. He only did that sort of thing under provocation. Mr. Addison had asked for trouble, so Marmaduke was supplying it.

Besides, he detested the very sight of the man, and Marmaduke had an uncanny way of judging character. He would take to some people on the instant, and would be friendly and docile with them. But now and again he met one whom he instinctively disliked, and no amount of coaxing would win him over. Marmaduke seemed to know that Mr. Hubert Addison was not a sound proposition. He disliked him even more than he disliked Mr. Pycraft.

"This is appalling!" said Mr. Addison, appealing to the four walls, as he came to a halt, panting. "This is outrageous! What can I do? The infernal thing is quicker than

lightning! But I won't appeal for help!" he added grimly. "I won't have the whole school talking over this absurdity!"

And he prepared to continue the battle.



CHAPTER 5.

MORE EARLY RISERS.

DICK HAMILTON put his head into one of the Remove dormitories, and nodded with approval.

"Good men!" he said.

"Nearly ready, eh?"

"What did you expect us to be?" demanded Handforth.

"As I cannot tell a lie, I must confess that I expected you to be asleep," grinned Dick. "You're always full of surprises, Handy!"

Edward Oswald Handforth sniffed. He and his two chums of Study D, Church and McClure, were practically dressed, and the school clock had not yet chimed the strokes of six-thirty.

"When you've finished talking rot, Nipper, you'd better clear out!" said Handforth gruffly. "Cricket practice this morning, isn't it? Do you expect us to waste this sunshine?"

"It would be a bit of a sin, wouldn't it?" said Nipper.

Handforth seemed to imagine that he had needed no spur. He had apparently forgotten that Nipper had been in the dormitory ten minutes earlier, rousing the three juniors.

"Have you yanked Gresham out?" asked Handforth.

"No."

"Why not?" demanded Edward Oswald. "Didn't I tell you to?"

"I believe your lordship said something of the kind, but the same idea has occurred to me independently," said Nipper drily. "But Gresham didn't need any yanking. He was half dressed when I went into his bed-room."

"Half dressed?" said Handforth, staring.

"Yes."

"And nobody gave him a call?"

"Not that I know of."

"Funny!" said Handforth, shaking his head. "I mean, a new kid like that! There must be something rummy about that chap."

"He's the son of Hat Trick Gresham, that's all," smiled Nipper. "He knew he was booked for cricket practice this morning, and I expect his mind worked like an alarm clock. Cricket's his mania, you know. He's been practically soaked in it since he was a kid."

"I'm jolly curious to see how he'll shape," said Church.

"We mustn't expect too much," said Handforth wisely. "Cricket doesn't always run in families. My pater was never good at cricket, that I know of."

"Then your argument must be wrong," said Nipper. "If your pater had been a cricketer there might have been some hope for you."

"By George!" roared Handforth. "Are you trying to suggest—"

"Rats!" chuckled Nipper. "See you on Little Side!"

He went out, and came upon Harry Gresham in the corridor. The new boy of the Remove was attired in flannels, and Nipper gave him an approving glance. Gresham looked a cricketer all over; his excellent physique was shown off to advantage.

"Ready?" asked Nipper cheerfully.

"Yes, almost," replied Harry. "I've just got to fetch my bat, that's all."

"Right-ho," said Nipper. "You'd better stroll down to Little Side, and the rest of us will be with you in a few minutes. I've just got to rout out one or two laggards."

"It's jolly decent of you, Hamilton, to give me a chance like this," said Gresham awkwardly. "I mean, I'm only a new chap, and I've no right to expect—"

"That's enough!" growled the junior skipper. "Get those dotty ideas right out of your head, my lad! You're not receiving preferential treatment just because you're the son of Sir Stewart Gresham, if that's what you mean. Every new fellow is given his chance."

Nipper walked on, and Harry wandered downstairs, feeling very light-hearted. He had worries of his own, but for the hour they were dismissed. It was a sunny morning, and cricket was in the air. The previous day, some had all but called him "the funk of St. Frank's"; but now they appeared ready to forget all that in the new interest of cricket.

And cricket, to Harry Gresham, was the breath of life. As soon as he got into flannels, his whole being concentrated itself upon the cricket. There was no room in his mind for any other subject.

He was to be tested this morning—and he was a raw new fellow. Yet he felt very confident, and he had an idea that he would make a fairly good showing. Wasn't his father the famous England player? And hadn't his father often said that he, Harry, would do wonders when he grew up?

Even since Harry had been a mere child, he had been able to handle a bat. Sir Stewart had coached him summer after summer, and at his first school Harry had been miles and miles ahead of any of the other youthful players. But, of course, that had only been a preparatory school, and for two years he had lived quietly at home, under the care of a doting tutor. Life was very different at St. Frank's. And Harry knew, moreover, that St. Frank's was already celebrated for its junior cricketers. Even if he only passed with fair marks, he would feel satisfied.

Harry walked out into the Triangle, and found the place deserted, except for Mr. Pycraft, who was prowling about near the gymnasium. Mr. Pycraft was worried, having only just got over his encounter with Marmaduke.

Harry strolled through East Arch, intent upon having a look round the school while he was waiting. St. Frank's was looking very stately and pleasant in the bright sunshine of the spring morning.

At just about this time Willy Handforth was concluding his preliminaries in the bicycle house. The time had come for him to give Marmaduke his breakfast. He had a word with Priscilla, the parrot, stroked the nose of Septimus, the squirrel, and cheerily winked at Rupert, the rat. Then he went out to find his faithful chums. And he soon learnt that they were faithless.

In West Square he observed two figures on the adjoining windowsills of the upper storey. They were cackling hugely, and certain uproars from within told that much had been happening.

"Hi!" roared Willy.

Chubby Heath nearly fell off the windowsill, and Juicy Lemon was so startled that he nearly swallowed a pebble.

"Great Scott!" gasped Chubby Heath.

"What the dickens have you fatheads done with Marmaduke?" demanded Willy, staring up. "If you've sent him into that dormitory, I'll skin you—"

"You silly ass!" shouted Chubby. "Have you gone blind, or what? Marmaduke's down below, tied to the ivy!"

Willy stared round, and spotted a piece of loose string.

"You—you unreliable rotters!" he shouted angrily. "He's escaped!"

"What!" ejaculated Chubby: "Come on, Juicy—we'd better hop down. Marmy's escaped!"

Juicy said nothing, but they both slithered down the ivy, and faced the wrathful Willy.

"Didn't I tell you to take him for a walk?" he demanded. "What's the idea of leaving him—"

"We—we thought he was all right!" said Chubby. "He can't be far away. We tied him up, and—"

"I'm disgusted with both of you!" interrupted Willy curtly. "There's no telling where Marmy's got to now. I might have known!" he added bitterly. "Trusting to you chaps is like asking a tramp to mind a five-pound note! You haven't any sense of loyalty or responsibility!"

"Oh, I say!" protested Chubby.

"I told you to mind Marmaduke, and you've let me down!" went on Willy sternly. "I suppose you know what's going to happen? Put 'em up!"

"Look here!" roared Chubby, in alarm. "We didn't know—"

"Put 'em up!" repeated Willy grimly.

Crash! Biff!

Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon paid the penalty for their faithlessness. Willy Handforth sailed in, and the slaughter was swift.



CHAPTER 6.

WILLY ON THE TRAIL.

WILLY HANDFORTH ran through West Arch, and glanced keenly round the Triangle. Behind him, the battlefield was strewn with the slain. Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon



Suddenly Marmaduke, Willy Handforth's pet monkey, jumped on to Harry Gresham's chest, clutching at his blazer and chattering noisily. "Take him away!" panted Gresham, in a sudden frenzy. He was even afraid of a harmless monkey!

were sitting up, nursing various sections of their faces. They were feeling that the morning was not so bright, after all.

"Marmy!" shouted Willy. "Come on, boy!"

He whistled, crooned, and made various other sounds. But instead of attracting Marmaduke, Mr. Pycraft came upon the scene. He answered Willy's calls as though he had been trained.

"Oh!" he exclaimed. "Now I understand!"

Willy took no notice of him. He wasn't interested in Mr. Pycraft at all. He didn't even realise that Mr. Pycraft was bearing down upon him. His one anxiety was to recover Marmaduke. For Willy had a deep suspicion that his favourite pet was getting into mischief. Marmaduke had escaped once or twice before, and he had never failed to make hay while the sun shone. And Willy had been sternly warned that such a thing would only happen again at the expense of Marmaduke's banishment.

So he had every reason to be anxious.

"Handforth minor!" barked Mr. Pycraft, running up.

Willy turned, impatient.

"Can't stop, sir," he said briefly.

"What?" shouted the Form-master. "You young rascal! What do mean by allowing your monkey to run loose?"

Willy regarded Mr. Pycraft with more interest.

"Have you seen him, sir?" he asked eagerly.

"Seen him!" spluttered Mr. Pycraft. "The confounded animal jumped at me! Positively jumped at me!"

"I suppose he didn't like your looks, sir," said Willy. "Which way did he go? I'll soon get him back——"

"Didn't like my looks!" repeated Mr. Pycraft with a start. "Are you suggesting, boy, that your infernal monkey had any reason to object to me?"

Willy sighed.

"Marmy has his own way of looking at people, sir," he replied patiently. "He knows a lot more than you think! He takes one look at a man, and spots him in a tick. He must have had a bit of a scare when he saw your face, sir."

"A scare!" roared Mr. Pycraft. "Good gracious! Are you hinting——"

"I should say, he expected to find the Triangle empty, sir," said Willy hastily. "And when he saw you he naturally got the pip."

"The pip!" breathed Mr. Pycraft.

"Well, you know—he had a pain!" said Willy. "I expect he dodged off and hid somewhere. After seeing you, his one idea must have been to get away to recover. So

if you'll tell me which way he went——"
 "Upon my soul!" ejaculated the master of the Fourth.

He didn't know whether Willy was deliberately being impertinent or not. It was always so difficult to tell with Willy. He said things so smoothly that one was apt to miss their true meaning. And it was impossible to accuse him of deliberate impudence.

My Pycraft decided to hedge.

"I shall have that monkey destroyed!" he said grimly.

"Destroyed, sir?" repeated Willy staring.

"Either destroyed or sold," said Mr. Pycraft.

"Jolly good, sir!" said Willy. "I didn't know you were such a good one at jokes. You will have your bit of fun, sir."

Mr. Pycraft closed his mouth like a trap.

"You'll soon find out whether it's fun or not!" he snapped. "I've always maintained that it was utterly preposterous for you to keep a monkey on the premises, and this time I shall not rest until the animal is banished! Good gracious! It isn't safe to walk in the school grounds. Do you realise that your confounded creature nearly flew at me? Do you know that he was on the point of biting me?"

Willy breathed hard.

"You needn't worry about Marmaduke biting you, sir," he said tartly. "He hasn't had his breakfast, I know, but he's jolly particular about what he bites."

"I intend to report the whole matter to the headmaster——"

"Which way did he go, sir?" asked Willy desperately. "I'll have him back in two minutes if you'll only give me a hint!"

"When I saw the infernal animal last, it was capering through Big Arch," snapped Mr. Pycraft. "Heaven knows what the animal is doing now! He may fly at anybody! A dangerous brute——"

Willy didn't wait to hear any more. He pretended to be cool and collected, but he wasn't. He knew that Mr. Horace Pycraft had a very disagreeable nature, and it was a sheer tragedy that Mr. Pycraft should be out and about so early. His only possible chance was to get Marmaduke back into his possession, and then boldly face the consequences. Willy had confidence in his own powers to emerge victoriously from any possible interview with the "beaks." He also felt that he had been altogether too gentle with Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon.

Running into Inner Court, he looked round him, whistling urgently. But there was no sign of Marmaduke. And Willy knew well enough that the monkey would have answered if he had been within earshot.

There was only one possible explanation.

Marmaduke had made the Head's residence the scene of his operations. This was an appalling discovery. Willy remembered how imitative Marmaduke was, and the thought of Marmaduke sitting on the Head's window-

sill, throwing pebbles at the sleeping Dr. Stafford, caused Willy a moment of sheer horror. Nothing could possibly save his monkey if that had happened.

The Third Form leader raced across Inner Court, careless of the fact that this ground was strictly out of bounds. Nobody was allowed to pass through Big Arch unless they had definite business there. That was one of the strict rules.

But at six-thirty in the morning rules could be forgotten. And when it was a case of recovering Marmaduke, one could not bother about regulations. Willy approached the Head's house, whistling repeatedly.

To his mingled joy and alarm, Marmaduke suddenly appeared at one of the upper windows. He was chattering excitedly. He had heard the fatal signal, and he had answered—but Marmaduke was at the parting of the ways, as it were.

His kindly training urged him to obey the summons, but his instincts urged him with equal strength to finish his battle with Mr. Addison. So he hovered on the brink.

"Marmy, you young beggar!" roared Willy. "Come down!"

Marmaduke came down—but not as Willy had expected.

For Mr. Addison stole a march on the enemy. Seeing the monkey perched on the window-sill, Mr. Addison took swift action. He rushed up and gave the monkey a violent shove in the back.

Marmaduke went sailing into the void.



CHAPTER 7.

SCARED STIFF.

"H!" gasped Willy.

A great fury surged up within him, but he had no which rushed to his lips.

He ran forward like a streak of lightning.

If Marmaduke crashed to the ground, the concussion would probably kill him. Without question, he would be maimed. If there had been anything to clutch at, the monkey would have clutched. But Mr. Addison had taken him in the rear, and had pushed him out in a vicious swoop.

There was only one chance.

Willy ran forward, and arrived in the very nick of time. He caught Marmaduke as he came hurtling down, and clutched the monkey in his arms.

"Thank goodness!" muttered Willy.

Marmaduke was panting so hard that he could not even chatter. For once in his life he had been obviously scared. The expression in his eyes was eloquent, and he clung feverishly to Willy's shoulder. He crouched closer, and put his hairy little arm round Willy's neck.

"You cad!" shouted Willy, looking up.

Mr. Hubert Addison nearly had a fit. He was leaning out of the window, hot with

victory. And to hear this fag calling him a cad shook him all down the spine. He had never had such an experience before.

"Confound your impudence!" he barked. "Does that monkey belong to you?"

"Yes, it does!"

"I shall have it destroyed!" roared Mr. Addison. "Do you know who I am? I'm Mr. Addison, the headmaster's secretary——"

"I don't care who you are!" shouted Willy, as he stared at the secretary's strangely-decorated face. "You chucked Marmaduke out by a cowardly jab in the back, and if I hadn't run up, he would have been half-killed."

"Why, you—you young idiot!" gasped Mr. Addison. "That infernal beast has wrecked my bed-room."

"Jolly good job, too!" retorted Willy recklessly.

"He threw things at me!" stormed Mr. Addison.

"He knew what he was doing!" said Willy. "You must think yourself jolly lucky that I don't throw things at you!"

"You—you impertinent——"

"I don't think much of the Head's judgment," continued Willy, his anger fairly boiling over. "Instead of engaging a private secretary, he got hold of a chap who ought to be prosecuted. You're the sort of man who would kick a dog in the ribs!"

"I'll have you expelled for this!" yelled Mr. Addison.

"Rats! You've no authority over us!" retorted Willy. "We don't have to bow and scrape to secretaries! I don't care what Marmaduke did to your room, or how many things he chucked at you! If the Head gets to know about your cowardly action, he'll be advertising for a new secretary!"

"Bah!" snarled Mr. Addison.

He withdrew from the window, nearly speechless with rage—and with a feeling of defeat. In his heart he knew that Willy was right, and that bereft him of all his defences. He would have been perfectly justified in taking drastic action to rid himself of Marmaduke's attentions. But to hurl the animal cruelly out of the window had been a mistake.

Willy walked away, his heart thumping rapidly.

He knew well enough that there would be further developments during the day. He wasn't afraid of Mr. Addison, because Mr. Addison would probably hold his tongue. But Mr. Pycraft was a mean, vindictive man, and he was certain to make a fuss. Nothing pleased Mr. Pycraft's heart better than to make complaints about the boys. It was his one and only hobby.

"Never mind, Marmy, old son," said Willy thickly. "You're safe, anyway. You're a young rotter, but I'll forgive you under the circumstances. But we're going to be parted unless we rub our wits up a bit."

Marmaduke gave a weak little chatter of comfort.

"Scared, eh?" said Willy grimly. "I don't

wonder at it! Well, perhaps it'll teach you not to go about looking for trouble."

They went through Big Arch, and Willy paused to let Marmaduke down. There was no necessity to carry him now. Indeed, a little frisking about would do him good, and restore him to his usual cheeriness. Willy had no fear that Marmaduke would escape again. He was tricky enough when he got loose, but he would always obey his master's orders.

"That's right—gambol about, my lad," said Willy, as Marmaduke performed a couple of somersaults. "You're feeling better already, I see! Jolly good! Now try that double somersault. Up, Marmy! One—two—three—go!"

Marmaduke understood, and joyously executed a lightning double somersault. And just at that moment Harry Gresham came strolling through East Arch. Only a very few minutes had elapsed, and he was still waiting for the other cricketers to come piling out. The Triangle was otherwise deserted, Mr. Pycraft having gone indoors to recover from the effects of his encounter with Willy.

"Hallo!" said Willy. "Cheerio, Gresham! You're up early!"

"Cricket!" called Harry, walking up.

He had met Willy once before, and liked him. But this was the first time he knew that Willy had any pets. Marmaduke approached the new fellow rather cautiously, his eyes glinting. But a second later he pranced round, chattering with glee. Willy looked on, highly satisfied, regarding this an excellent indication of Harry's character. Marmaduke didn't make mistakes. His obvious delight was significant.

But Harry had never seen Marmaduke before, and he didn't know that the monkey's activity was actuated by friendliness. He couldn't guess that these overtures were cordial.

For Marmaduke certainly looked dangerous.

He was leaping round Harry, chattering with excitement, and showing his teeth in gleaming white rows. But all this was performed in the excess of his joy. For some reason he had taken an instantaneous liking to Harry Gresham. In Willy's mind, Harry could have no better credentials.

"Don't worry!" he grinned. "It's only his way."

"He's—he's going to fly at me!" muttered Gresham nervously.

Willy gave him a sharp look. Harry's whole attitude had changed. He was trembling, and he had turned pale. There was an expression of stark fear in his eyes. He backed away, breathing convulsively.

"Chuck it!" said Willy, staring. "There's nothing to be scared of! Marmy's only showing how much he likes you——"

Suddenly, Marmaduke decided that he would like to get on closer terms with the new fellow. He gave a great leap, and landed on Harry Gresham's chest. And he

clutched Harry's blazer lapels and chattered noisily into his face.

"Steady, Marmy!" grinned Willy.

"Take him away!" panted Gresham in a sudden frenzy. "Take him away!"

"He won't hurt you——"

But Harry Gresham seemed to lose his nerve completely. To Willy's utter amazement, he gave a loud scream of terror, and ran round in circles.

"Take him away!" he shrieked.

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Willy, dumb-founded.



CHAPTER 8.

GRESHAM'S FATAL WEAKNESS!

HE thing was extraordinary.

Teddy Long, of the Remove, or Enoch Snipe, of the Fourth, might possibly have acted in this

way, but Willy doubted it. In the first place, Marmaduke would not have made such friendly overtures, for he would have instinctively recognised them as what they are. And, although they were funks, they would have hardly descended to such depths of open fright.

For Harry Gresham to do so was staggering. He wasn't just alarmed—as any stranger to Marmaduke might justifiably have been. Any other fellow might have laughed, and looked uneasy, and possibly sheepish.

But Harry Gresham's terror was awful to witness.

He was simply wild with sheer panic, and Marmaduke, sensing that something was wrong, jumped down and ran back to Willy. And Harry Gresham came out of his terrified trance.

"Keep him away!" he muttered hoarsely.

Willy took Marmaduke in his arms, and approached.

"What on earth's the matter?" he asked, staring. "Marmy is as harmless as a kitten. He wouldn't hurt a fly. Don't be an ass, Gresham! My hat! You gave me a scare for a minute!"

"I—I'm sorry!" muttered Harry, gulping.

"What the dickens made you yell like that?" asked Willy.

"I—I thought—I mean——"

Harry broke off, words failing him. Truth to tell, he didn't exactly know what he did think, and what he did mean. His pallor had gone, and a deep flush of shame was overspreading his good-looking features. Realisation had come to him now that the danger—or what he had thought to be danger—was over.

And that realisation was stunning.

Once again he had acted like a pitiful coward! He was a funk—a nerveless, back-boneless funk! And Willy Handforth, of the Third, had seen it. Thank Heaven the others had not been present!

"Any trouble over here?" came a voice.

Harry spun round, and his heart gave a leap when he saw that Nipper, Handforth, and several others, were approaching, accompanied by Reggie Pitt, Jack Grey, and Singleton, of the West House. All of them were in flannels, and they were carrying bats, stumps, etc.

"Trouble?" said Willy. "Of course there isn't. What gave you that idea?"

"We thought we saw something rummy going on," said his major. "Of course, I'm not surprised. Almost anything could happen where you're concerned, my lad. What games have you been up to now?"

Harry Gresham waited, his heart in his mouth. He guessed that the Removites had witnessed the tail end of the incident. And Handforth, at least, was curious to know the details. Edward Oswald had always been a fellow of much bluntness.

"We thought that Gresham was scared," he said suspiciously.

"I—I——" began Harry, red and confused.

"Rats!" said Willy, laughing. "Scared? What put that idea into your head? Gresham hasn't met Marmaduke before, and he was naturally a bit startled. Didn't you see the way Marmy jumped on his giddy chest? Enough to put any chap off his stroke!"

Willy spoke carelessly, and he affected not to notice the grateful glance which Harry threw at him. He appreciated this act of decency on Willy's part.

"Sure that's all?" asked Handforth, looking from one to the other.

"Am I supposed to be in the witness box?" asked Willy sarcastically. "I'm not going to answer your dotty questions, Ted. I don't know Gresham, and he's a Remove chap, anyhow. But Marmaduke knows him."

"How the dickens can your silly monkey know him?" asked Edward Oswald. "Two minutes ago you said that Gresham hadn't met Marmaduke before. You're telling two yarns!"

"No, I'm not," grinned Willy. "Marmaduke knows a chap in ten seconds. And he's given Gresham a first-class recommendation. Well, so long—see you later, perhaps. I'm busy."

Willy strolled off, and Nipper discreetly changed the subject.

"Well, cricket," he said briefly.

"Yes, time's going," agreed Reggie Pitt.

They all went off towards Little Side, and Harry Gresham tacitly understood that the subject was closed. He knew that he had to thank Willy for saving his face.

For Willy had seen his stark cowardice—and Willy, like the young brick he was, had passed it off with a laugh. He had made the other fellows believe that nothing unusual had happened.

"By jove, what a young sportsman!" muttered Harry. "And I didn't deserve it, either! I thought he was going to show me up—jeer at me—but he didn't! I shall have to find him, and—— But what's the

use? I can't explain anything—I can't excuse a rotten, funky thing like that!"

Now that the incident was over, Harry could realise exactly how to value it. Of course, the monkey had been harmless—had just been making a friendly, if boisterous, overture.

And, as usual, his nerve had forsaken him!

It had always been the same—and it seemed to Harry that it always would be. How he had tried to conquer this fatal trait in his character! He was always making resolves—always swearing that it would be the last time. And then, when the very next crisis arrived, he was just as bad!

It was Harry Gresham's one marring fault.

He was a very likeable sort of a boy—generous, sunny-natured, and cool-headed. In all ordinary circumstances, nobody could have desired a better companion. There was something singularly attractive about Harry Gresham. People were drawn to him unconsciously, and he always made friends wherever he went.

And then, like a thundercloud, one of those trivial little episodes would happen, and his friends would turn away from him in disgust—particularly if they were boys. For if there is one thing that a true-blue boy detests more than another it is rank cowardice.

Harry could always remember now he had been afraid of dark places as a child, how he had lost every atom of his self-possession in a sudden emergency. His one hope in life was that he would outgrow this trait. But year after year had gone, and he was still the same.

"It's not my fault!" he told himself miserably. "It's born in me—I can't help it! What's the good of fighting against a thing that's in your very blood? I've tried and tried until I'm sick of it. In the end, I suppose, I shall be drummed out of the school. And I shall deserve it too! They can't stick funks at St. Frank's!"

And this was only his second day!

He had given the fellows a sample of his character within an hour of his arrival, and lots of the juniors were disposed to cut him. The really decent ones were ready to forgive and forget—charitably telling themselves that Harry had been nervous on his first day!

But Harry was not so certain about Alec Duncan. Duncan was the New Zealand boy, and he shared Study J with Gresham. And only the previous night Gresham had bolted indoors from the darkness of the Triangle. Right into Duncan's arms, too! Just like a frightened kid! It was humiliating and shameful.

There seemed to be some secret in Harry's life, too—some family skeleton that he wanted to forget. It was curious how he excused his weakness to himself by saying that it had been born in him. Almost invariably, however, he scrapped this theory when he had fully recovered his normal state, and then

he would start again, full of good intentions.

It seemed that Mr Addison knew of that family skeleton. At all events, Mr. Addison had taken five pounds from Harry during his very first hour in the school. And the Head's new secretary had promised to say nothing. There were many reasons why the new boy should be worried and troubled.

"The pitch looks fine," said a far-away voice.

Harry came to himself with a start. He saw that he was on Little Side. The morning sun was shining on the turf, and the cheerful "clack" of bat meeting ball came to Harry's ears.

It was as though some magical elixir had been administered. The troubled thoughts were swept out of his brain, and his mind cleared. He looked about him with sparkling eyes.

Cricket!

What better tonic in all the world could there be than cricket?



CHAPTER 9.

GOOD STUFF!

"ATCH!" sang out Handforth.

Harry reached out, and the ball slipped from his hand.

"Butter fingers!" cried Handforth, staring. "My hat! That was an easy one!"

It was hardly a good beginning. The other juniors didn't know that Harry Gresham had been caught napping. One or two of those troubled thoughts were lingering. At that very second in fact, he had been telling himself that his veins were only filled with water, and that he was the beastliest funk alive. It was hardly a propitious moment for the catching of a swiftly-hurled cricket ball.

"Sorry!" he said, flushing.

"You'll have to do better than that!" said Handforth sternly.

"I'll try!" muttered the new boy.

He shook himself, and now his whole mind was concentrated upon cricket. He thrust every other thought aside. Cricket was such a mania with him that he had the knack of throwing every other consideration overboard as soon as he got going.

Nipper and Pitt and the rest were just a shade disappointed. Knowing that Harry was the son of Sir Stewart Gresham, the famous amateur, they had rather assumed that the new fellow would shape well. Of course, it was pure assumption; they had no reason to take anything for granted. Plenty of sons failed to take after their fathers.

For the first ten minutes or so, Harry just looked on, for it was not to be expected that he would be given a trial at once. New boys had to await their turn, and feel themselves lucky to get even a minute at practice.

But Harry was satisfied. Even watching

the game was a sheer delight. And it was only just practice at the nets, too. Handforth was at the wicket, slogging away with all his usual force, and knocking Reggie Pitt's bowling into the nets with impartial recklessness. His wicket was inevitably shattered every now and again.

Twenty minutes had elapsed before Harry was invited to go to the wicket.

"You can have a knock now, if you like, Gresham," said Nipper casually.

"By Jove, really?" asked Harry, his eyes sparkling.

"Go ahead!"

Somehow, Nipper couldn't help liking the chap. He seemed such a thoroughly decent sort in every respect.

A few seniors had come out now—drawn from their beds before rising-bell possibly by the sunny morning. They were waiting for something to happen on Big Side, and filled in the time by condescending to watch the juniors. William Napoleon Browne, of the Fifth was the leader in this—for Browne, as everybody knew, had rather a fondness for mixing with the juniors. The famous skipper of the Fifth had no silly ideas about his dignity. And he was a cricketer of renown.

"Ah, brothers, the new man is about to be tried," he said. "Let us linger awhile, and watch the proceedings."

They lingered. Harry, his heart beating fast, walked to the wicket, and Nipper bowled to him. Even as the leather was coming down the pitch, Harry's coolness returned. He was always the same. No matter how excited he felt, his brain became acutely clear as soon as he felt the grip of his bat between his hands.

Snick!

It was only a touch, but the leather sped off, and banged into the side of the net.

"Play!" sang out Pitt.

Another ball arrived, and Harry swung his bat round neatly, and everybody stared. There was something singularly easy in Harry's movements. He appeared to be taking no trouble at all, and yet the ball was sent away with never-failing regularity. Nothing was allowed to get past his bat.

Jerry Dodd, the champion junior bowler, was joining in the practice, too. At first he had given Harry a few easy ones, but now he was utilising every trick that he knew of.

"This chap's dunkum!" he declared, glancing at Nipper.

"In English, that means splendid, doesn't it?" asked Nipper.

The Australian junior grinned.

"It means dinkum," he replied calmly. "Watch this one!"

It was a terror, but Harry dealt with it like a master. Nipper and one or two of the others had seen his father in play, particularly in Test Matches. And they instantly recognised the Gresham touch. Harry was revealing himself to be a true son of his father.

"You'll do!" sang out Nipper delightedly.

"By Jove, Gresham, I'd no idea you were so good!"

"An inadequate description, Brother Hamilton," said Browne, shaking his head. "I venture to opine that Brother Gresham is the hottest thing in new fellows that we have had for many a term." He turned to Stevens, his study mate. "Possibly I am wrong, but I shall be very surprised if this *rara avis* is not playing for the first before the end of the month. He is a discovery, Brother Horace. Without question, a discovery."

Harry was flushed with pleasure as Nipper approached him.

"Did I shape all right?" he asked anxiously.

"Modesty is one of your good points," smiled Nipper. "My dear chap, you're terrific! You can try your hand at bowling if you like, but I don't expect too much."

Harry shuffled his feet.

"The pater always said my bowling was my strong suit," he said diffidently.

"Ye gods and little fishes!" ejaculated Pitt. "If you can bowl better than you can bat we've found the marvel of the century! Nipper, take the bat! Let's see if Gresham can get your wicket!"

Nipper was one of the best bats in the Lower School, and he had no intention of letting this new fellow take his wicket. He was all the more surprised, therefore, when Gresham's very first ball took his off stump out of the ground.

"A fluke, of course," said Tommy Watson stoutly.

"I didn't even see the thing!" said Nipper, scratching his head.

Within ten minutes, Harry Gresham had created another sensation. If his batting had been good, his bowling was marvellous.

"Where is Brother Fenton?" asked Browne, looking round. "Brother Fenton must be fetched, and allowed to witness this thing. Here we have a First Eleven man——"

"In the making?" suggested Stevens.

"Brother Gresham is already made," replied Browne firmly. "We have a First Eleven man ready to step straight into the front rank. We must measure Brother Gresham's head in readiness for his cap."

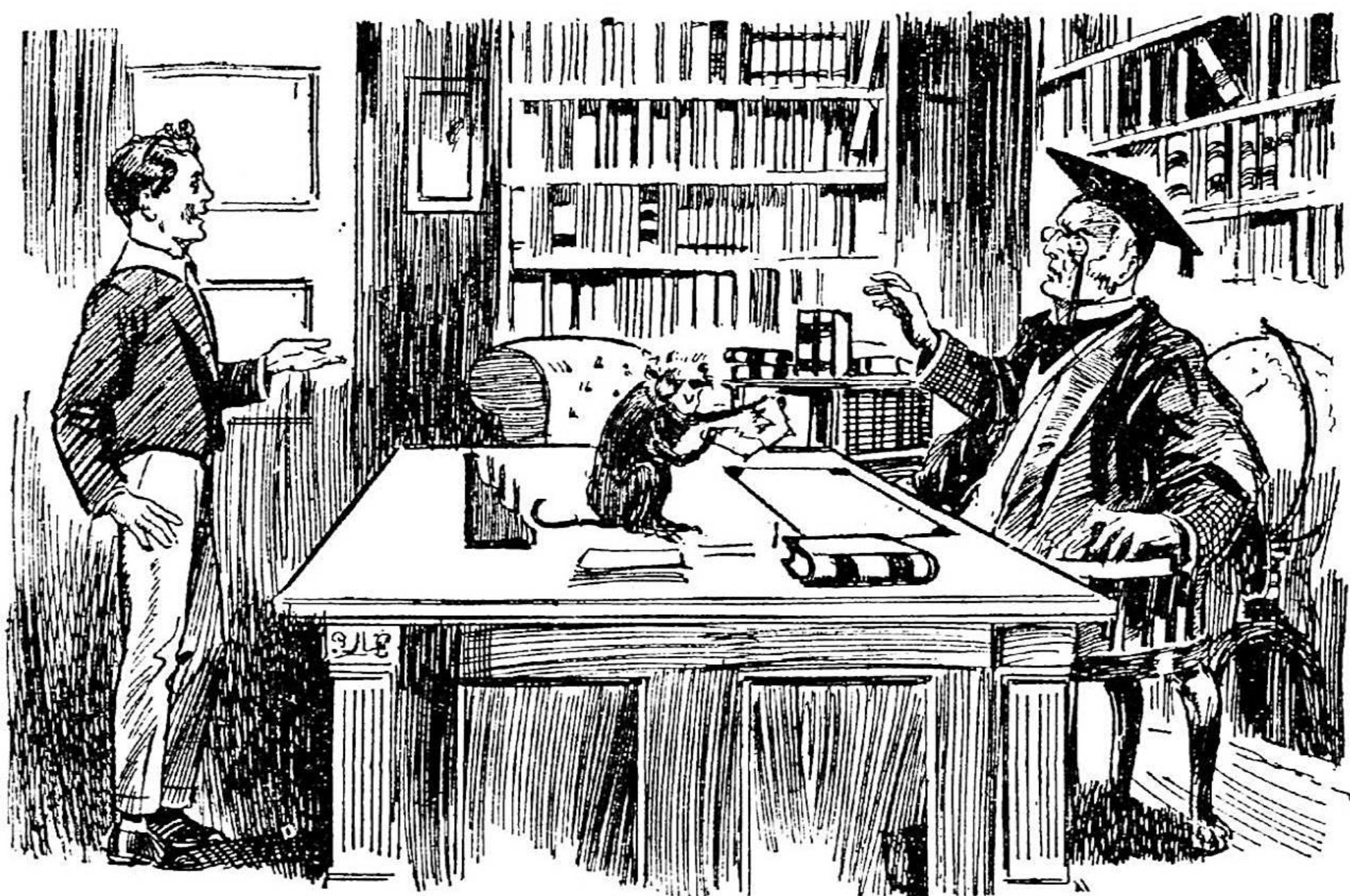
"He can't get his First Eleven cap this term!" protested another senior.

"If my influence is of any use with Brother Fenton, he will have that cap before the week is out!" declared Browne. "Can we allow such talent as this to run to seed in the crude allotment of the Junior cricket. Nay, brothers, this rare plant must be allowed to flourish in the cultivated garden of the First!"

"You're a bit flowery, aren't you?" asked Stevens, grinning.

"A weak attempt at humour, brother—and I am saddened," replied Browne, shaking his head. "I had thought better of you. Let us go forward, and congratulate this worthy son of a famous father."

Other fellows were congratulating Harry Gresham, too. His troubles had disappeared like magic, and he was supremely happy.



The Head looked up in astonishment as Willy entered and thrust the monkey on his desk. "There's Marmaduke. Is he savage, sir?" asked the fag. Doctor Stafford was forced to admit that the monkey was certainly quite tame—even if it was tearing one of his letters in half!



CHAPTER 10.

MR. PYCRAFT TAKES ACTION!

It all seemed like a dream to the new boy.

Only the previous day he had been scorned. Even now his ears burned when

he remembered the jeers that had been hurled at him.

But what a difference now!

Everybody was cordial—everybody shook his hand, clapped him on the back, and treated him as though he were the most popular fellow in the Junior School.

Quite apart from the fact that Harry was so likeable, his progress at cricket had given him a truly meteoric popularity. Even the old hands at cricket were popular heroes—but a raw new boy, who hadn't been in the school a week, was a different thing. He was talked of everywhere, and the Remove was boasting about him up and down the school.

"It's all rot!" protested Harry, as the fellows crowded round him, after practice. "I—I never hoped——"

"Never mind what you hoped," said Nipper. "It's Wednesday to-day, and it's a half-holiday. We've got an inter-House match on—just a trial sort of game."

"I shall love watching it," said Harry.

"You'll probably love playing in it better," smiled Nipper. "We shall want you in the

team, Gresham. If you've got any other arrangements you'll have to shelve them."

"You're going to play me?" asked Harry.

"Of course I am."

"But—but Duncan told me that I shouldn't have a chance for weeks," said Harry, his eyes sparkling. "He said that new fellows never had a chance—and that it was like their cheek to expect a look-in at all!"

"Duncan was referring to the average new fellow," said Nipper. "We're not like that at St. Frank's. If a chap shows that he's extra good at cricket, he gets a chance immediately. We don't believe in wasting talent, or letting it remain idle."

"Oh, thanks awfully, Hamilton," said Harry breathlessly.

"You needn't thank me, my son—thank yourself," chuckled Nipper. "I'm not doing you a favour. I'm doing that Eleven a favour. The Junior team isn't a philanthropic institution, and we don't give places away. The chaps are picked on merit—and you're worth your weight in gold."

"But mind you don't get swelled head!" said Handforth severely.

"He's not like you, Handy," replied Nipper, grinning.

"Why, you—you——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Gresham went back to the Ancient House as though he walked on air. Deep down in his heart, he had nursed a hope that his cricketing ability would earn him a place in the Junior Eleven, but he had always told

himself that such good fortune was out of the question.

And now it was an actual fact!

He met Willy Handforth in the lobby, and Willy nodded to him.

"Congrats, old man," said the cheery fag. "I've heard that you've been doing wonders. Surprising the natives, eh? I'll bet Ted's jealous!"

Harry looked at him awkwardly. Not a word about that other rotten business! Willy was treating him as though nothing had happened. Harry simply couldn't stand it.

"I say!" he muttered. "About—about your monkey——"

"He's all right," said Willy briskly. "He's had his breakfast, and he's not quite so frisky now. I fancy he's been over-eating. Anyhow, he's safe in his cage, and now we've got to await developments."

"I—I didn't mean that!" stammered Harry. "I acted like a coward——"

"I'm not certain about old Pycraft," said Willy, with a worried frown. "I spotted him going off to the Head's house five minutes ago, and I believe the old busybody is starting some trouble. Like his nerve! Why the dickens can't he keep himself to the Fourth Form, where he belongs?"

Willy walked off, having utterly ignored Harry's attempt to explain. The new boy seemed to swallow something, and then he went his way.

"That kid's a brick!" he muttered warmly.

Willy, for his part, was glad to escape. He hated anything in the nature of an explanation—particularly when he knew that no explanation was possible. He liked Harry, and wanted to forget the one blot on his character. If nobody took any notice of it, it might right itself. That was the generous view which Willy took.

Willy went out into the Triangle, and sauntered towards Big Arch. It was nearly breakfast-time now, and the whole school was awakening in earnest. Willy looked anxiously in the direction of the Head's house. He had a feeling that Mr. Pycraft was up to mischief!

And he was certainly right in this surmise, for the master of the Fourth Form was talking with the headmaster at that very moment.

"I can assure you, Dr. Stafford, that the whole thing was outrageous!" Mr. Pycraft was saying, in an indignant voice. "I have had cause to complain of this monkey before, and I have suppressed my annoyance upon hearing that no action has been taken. But I feel the time has come for a drastic step. The monkey must go, sir!"

Dr. Stafford looked worried.

"We must be just, Mr. Pycraft," he said. "Handforth minor is an excellent boy in many ways——"

"He is impudent, sir—grossly impudent!" declared Mr. Pycraft.

"High-spirited, I will agree," said the Head. "But would you have him otherwise, Mr. Pycraft? I like my boys to be high-spirited. These pets of his, I understand, are very dear to his heart. I do not wish

to take them away from him unless there is very ample cause."

"Then I can assure you that there is cause now!" said Mr. Pycraft. "This monkey threw pebbles at me, sir! Actually threw pebbles at me!"

"A distressing circumstance, no doubt, but I cannot quite see——"

"Furthermore, he attacked Gresham!" continued Mr. Pycraft quickly. "Gresham, I believe, is a new boy in the Ancient House. This monkey is dangerous. He attacked the boy in the most savage manner."

"Are you sure of this?" asked the Head.

"My dear sir, I saw it with my own eyes!" declared Mr. Pycraft. "I was watching from one of the windows of the East House. Gresham was so utterly startled that he screamed aloud. I thought, for a moment, that the boy was about to be bitten. I assure you, sir, that the monkey is a peril, and he should be removed from the school."

"I should like to hear what Gresham has to say about this," frowned the Head.

"Do you doubt me, sir?" asked the Form-master frigidly.

"No, of course not, Mr. Pycraft—but you were some distance away, as you have admitted. Possibly the incident was not so serious as you imagine. I shall have Gresham brought to me."

And ten minutes later, Harry Gresham was in the study.

"Gresham," said the Head, "Mr. Pycraft tells me that you were savagely attacked by Handforth minor's monkey this morning."

"You screamed aloud!" said Mr. Pycraft quickly. "Don't deny it, young man! I saw you—I heard you! Do not attempt to shield——"

"If you please, Mr. Pycraft," cut in the Head coldly.

Harry caught his breath. So Mr. Pycraft had seen him! And he had thought that Willy had been the only witness of that unhappy incident! And Willy had acted so decently that he was wholly on Willy's side. But in his confusion he gave support to Mr. Pycraft's story.

"I—I didn't know the monkey was friendly, sir," he stammered.

"Ah, so it was friendly, eh?" said the Head.

"The boy is saying this to excuse young Handforth!" broke in Mr. Pycraft desperately. "Gresham, did the monkey leap at your throat or not?"

"Why, no, sir——"

"No!" gasped the master.

"He only clawed at my chest, and showed his teeth," said Harry quickly. "I—I thought he was dangerous at first, but it was only his play——"

"You admit, then, that the monkey alarmed you?" said Mr. Pycraft. "The monkey not only alarmed you, but actually frightened you?"

Whatever Harry's weaknesses, he was no liar.

"Yes, sir," he muttered.
 "You were frightened, Gresham?" asked the Head sharply. "The monkey caused you to scream aloud in terror?"

"Yes, sir," said Harry miserably. "I—I was startled, I suppose. I oughtn't to have been so—so——"

"I think that will do, Gresham. You may go," said the Head quietly.

Harry went, feeling rather wretched.

"You see, sir?" said Mr. Pycraft triumphantly. "The boy has corroborated my story in every detail! If you will leave this matter in my hands, I will see that the monkey is dealt with humanely and kindly. But you will realise, I am sure, that he must go!"

The Head stroked his chin.

"Yes, I am certainly impressed," he said. "Obviously, the creature is a nuisance, even if it is not actually a menace. You can rely upon me, Mr. Pycraft, to take the necessary action."

"Will you allow me to deal with it, sir?"

"There is no acute hurry," said the Head. "No doubt the monkey is under control now, and probably chained."

"If you will let me handle the delicate little affair, I can assure you that everything will be quite all right," said Mr. Pycraft. "I have an excellent idea in mind, and with your permission I will put it into practice."

"Well, Mr. Pycraft——"

"Leave it to me, sir—leave it entirely to me," said the Fourth Form master. "There is no reason why you should be bothered with such trifles."

He bustled out before the Head could say anything further—and Mr. Hubert Addison, who had been listening throughout, put in a word.

"An excellent decision, sir," he said. "I entirely agree with Mr. Pycraft. The monkey is a menace. We have had eloquent proof of that."

The Head looked at his secretary doubtfully.

"I don't want to cause the boy any pain," he said. "I believe he is greatly attached to the little creature."

"But when that creature becomes a danger, there is only one way in which to act," said Mr. Addison. "Leave it to Mr. Pycraft, sir."

Mr. Addison had made no complaint on his own account—just as Willy had suspected. But it pleased him enormously to know that the ill-tempered Mr. Pycraft was hot on the track.



CHAPTER 11.

TROUBLE FOR MARMADUKE!

WILLY HANDFORTH sauntered into the Ancient House moodily.

He had an uneasy feeling of foreboding. He wondered if he would be able to cope with the Head when the summons came. For Willy

had just seen Mr. Pycraft on his way back from Dr. Stafford's house—and the expression on Mr. Pycraft's face had been so self-satisfied that Willy feared the worst. Shrewd though he was, it never occurred to him that the Fourth Form master might take action on his own account. He gave the Head credit for better sense than that. As a matter of fact, the Head was re-considering the matter, and he was already telling himself that he would see Mr. Pycraft again during the day. The Head did not know that—sometimes, at any rate—Mr. Pycraft was a man of swift action.

"Hallo! Anything wrong?" asked Alec Duncan, meeting Willy in the passage.

"My monkey," said Willy, nodding.

"Ill?" asked Alec.

"No, but I'm afraid there's going to be a bit of trouble about him," said the Third-former. "All Pycraft's fault, of course. He's a beast! He's just been to the Head, complaining about poor old Marmy. And the Head's going to take action of some sort."

"Were you in the Head's study, by any chance?"

"No, of course not."

"Then how do you know all this?"

"I'm not quite blind," replied Willy. "Pycraft told me he was going to complain to the Head. And when I saw him come back with a face like a smug-looking gargoyle, it's pretty easy to put two and two together."

"Well, it's your own fault, you shouldn't allow your monkey to get loose," said Duncan. "Harry was telling me that he met the beastly thing in the Triangle this morning."

"So it's 'Harry,' now?" said Willy. "You've soon got to Christian names, haven't you?"

"Oh, we don't believe in formalities in New Zealand," replied Duncan, smiling. "Where's the sense in calling him 'Gresham'? Sounds so formal. Besides, I like the chap. He's such a—well, I hardly know how to describe it. But, somehow, he's—he's— Well, you know!"

"Yes, I know!" said Willy, with a wise nod. "It's something you can't describe, but it's there. He affected me in the same way. Jolly decent sort, I should think."

"Yes," agreed Alec. "Only——"

"Oh, so you've noticed it, too?" asked Willy shrewdly. "Did he say much to you about what happened with Marmy?"

"He seemed a bit awkward—rambled on about losing his nerve, or something," replied Duncan. "I didn't want to hear it, of course, but I believe he wanted to get it off his mind. What really happened, anyhow?"

"Oh, nothing much!" replied Willy. "Marmy jumped on his chest, and he seemed to get a bit windy. About the last chap in the world I should expect it of. Is he all right, do you think?"

"It's only nervousness," replied Duncan. "I hope to goodness he soon gets out of it, though, because it's awkward. Lots of the other chaps might not understand."

"You've got to be patient with him," said Willy. "The man's true blue—you can be certain of that. I'm speaking on first-class authority."

"Whose?" asked Duncan.

"Marmaduke's."

"What the——"

"You can't spoof my monkey," said Willy firmly.

"Well, there goes the breakfast gong," said Duncan. "Jolly good, too; I'm hungry. I was just wondering if Harry——"

He paused, rather guiltily, and Willy glanced round. Harry Gresham himself had come into the passage at that moment, and Duncan felt, somehow, that he had been caught. It was purely self-consciousness, for Harry had heard nothing.

"I say, Handforth minor, I'm glad I've met you," said Harry quickly. "I've just come from the Head. He sent for me about your monkey, and I believe I've made things seem worse. That ugly-faced master had been complaining—I forget his beastly name——"

"Pycraft."

"Yes, Pycraft," said Harry. "He'd been complaining, and telling the Head a yarn about me. It seems that he saw that business with the monkey this morning, and he told the Head that Marmaduke flew at me savagely."

"My hat! I hope you called him a fibber!" said Willy.

"The Head asked me what had happened, so I just told him," replied Harry quietly. "I said the monkey had only done it in play, but I admitted that I was scared out of my wits, and that I acted like a coward——"

"Here, cheese it!"

"I did!" said Harry fiercely. "What's the good of trying to pretend? And as soon as I told the Head that I was scared, he seemed to think that Pycraft's yarn was true. It's all my fault. My rotten funkiness has probably got you into trouble."

Willy compressed his lips.

"If anybody's to blame, those two precious chums of mine are," he said quickly. "Or, if you get right down to rock-bottom, it was my own fault! I was a chump to trust those fatheads in the first place. Did the Head say what he was going to do?"

"No."

"Oh, well, we shall have to wait and see," replied Willy philosophically. "It's no good worrying until there's something to worry about."

And they went into breakfast.



CHAPTER 12.

BRIGGS GETS BUSY!

R. HORACE PYCRAFT produced five shillings.

"I am giving this to you, Briggs, merely as a token," he said. "You must not assume that it is payment for the

little task I have suggested to you. The headmaster has decreed that the monkey shall go, and it is plainly your duty to perform any service without remuneration. You are in Dr. Stafford's employ——"

"Very likely, sir, but it ain't no part o' my duties to take monkeys out o' their cages," said Briggs.

"Ahem! Perhaps not," admitted Mr. Pycraft. "At the same time, the job will be a very simple one, and you are doing it with my full sanction. There will, of course, be no necessity for you to mention the matter to Dr. Stafford himself. The Head has left it entirely to my own discretion."

The under-gardener was a burly youth of about nineteen—all brawn and muscle. He had taken his instructions, and he knew exactly what had to be done. Mr. Pycraft, however, had no great faith in the youth's intelligence. He thought it just as well to make doubly sure. They were standing in the circular lane which went completely round the school buildings. St. Frank's was at breakfast, and there was not much chance of this scene being spotted by anybody.

Mr. Pycraft had chosen his time well. He was allowing no grass to grow under his feet, but was taking swift action in order to satisfy his vindictive spirit.

"It will be quite simple, Briggs," he said. "Shortly after the boys have entered the School House for morning lessons, you will go quietly to the—to the—ah—pets' quarters and remove this wretched monkey from its cage. It will be quite simple. You will have no fear of any disturbance, since the boys will be all at work."

"Sounds easy, sir," said Briggs dubiously. "But what if 'e bites?"

"Bites!" snapped Mr. Pycraft. "It's not a dog!"

"But monkeys have teeth, haven't they, sir?"

"Upon my word, Briggs, you are a most irritating person!" said Mr. Pycraft testily. "The monkey won't bite you—it's as harmless as a kitten."

"Then what's the idea of 'avin' 'im took away, sir?"

Mr. Pycraft started. He hadn't given the man credit for such logic.

"Ahem! The—the monkey is a nuisance!" he said hastily. "But why should you make all these objections? I'm getting annoyed with you, Briggs. The headmaster, remember, is fully aware of this, and it has his full sanction. You will take the monkey, and go straight to Bannington."

"And then sell 'im, sir?"

"Well, I'm not quite sure," said Mr. Pycraft doubtfully. "I suggested that at first, Briggs, but perhaps you had better just take the monkey into the shop, and get the proprietor to cage him. We will make arrangements for the monkey's ultimate fate later on. That will be my affair—not yours. Just take the monkey to this shop—you cannot mistake the establishment—and leave it. I

am giving you five shillings as a mere—ah—earnest of my faith in your trustworthiness.”

“It’s easy, sir, an’ I don’t mind doin’ it,” he said. “I’m only worried about that monkey bitin’—”

“Nonsense!” said Mr. Pycraft. “He won’t bite!”

And a minute later they parted, Mr. Pycraft hurrying into the East House, hoping that he would still be in time for breakfast. He was feeling satisfied. The fate of Marmaduke was sealed.

True, Mr. Pycraft had one or two twinges now and again. The Head had not actually authorised him to adopt such underhand methods. But he had modified his first scheme, which had been to send Briggs to Bannington with the monkey, with instructions to sell it. With a start, Mr. Pycraft realised that this would be actually dishonest—and whatever Mr. Pycraft’s shortcomings, he was a scrupulously honest man. No, it would be quite sufficient if the monkey was kept at the fancier’s until Willy got over the blow, and then some arrangement could be made.

Thus Mr. Pycraft quieted his conscience.

Directly after breakfast, Willy took a casual walk round to the pets’ quarters, and he was satisfied to find that Marmaduke was still safe. It had occurred to him that it might be a good scheme to smuggle the monkey indoors—into his study, or into a box-room. But further consideration had caused him to dismiss this idea. It would only place him in the wrong if the headmaster took it into his head to go to the pets’ quarters, and have a look at the monkey for himself.

When morning lessons started, Willy had begun to hope that the affair had blown over. He hadn’t had any summons, and this looked promising. It was quite possible that Dr. Stafford had decided to wink at the incident.

But for a curious little coincidence Willy might have been parted from his Marmaduke exactly in accordance with Mr. Pycraft’s little plot. And once the monkey was well out of St. Frank’s, there would be little chance of tracing it.

As it happened, Willy’s famous major was the instrument.

The Remove had only been in its class-room for five minutes before Mr. Crowell, the Form-master, brought Edward Oswald Handforth sharply to attention. The whole Form had been rather difficult this morning—for the topic of cricket was on everybody’s lips, and there was much comment on Harry Gresham’s wonderful showing at the nets. Also, Mr. Crowell was irritable. It always made him short-tempered when his boys persisted in whispering.

“Handforth!” he said sharply.

Edward Oswald started up.

“Absolutely middle stump!” he said. “You never saw such— Eh? My hat! Speaking to me, sir?”

“When you have quite finished this dis-

cussion on middle stumps, Handforth, perhaps you will attend to me?” said Mr. Crowell tartly. “What do you mean by entering the Form-room wearing such a collar?”

“What’s wrong with it, sir?”

“Everything is wrong with it, Handforth!” retorted Mr. Crowell. “It is crumpled, it is dirty, and it is altogether disgraceful. Surely you have plenty of clean collars, Handforth? I dislike these slovenly habits—”

“Why, it was clean on this morning, sir!” said Handforth indignantly. “I fell over in the study—or, rather, Church and McClure tried to— Well, the fact is, there was a bit of a rumpus, sir—”

“I do not wish to hear these details, Handforth,” interrupted Mr. Crowell. “Your collar is dirty, and I am ashamed of you. Go to your House at once, and change it.”

Handforth made no objection. Any diversion was welcome.

“But if you are longer than ten minutes, Handforth, I shall sentence you to extra lessons this afternoon,” added Mr. Crowell, throwing cold water on Handforth’s vision of taking a stroll to Little Side to examine the pitch. “I have noted the time, and I mean what I say.”

“Can’t you trust me, sir?” asked Handforth, with dignity.

He went out, aggrieved, and skirted down the wing of the Ancient House, intending to enter by the rear door, in West Square.

But just as he was passing the gateway, he came to a halt. This particular gateway led into the private road, and Handforth caught a glimpse of a burly young man, clutching a monkey tightly to his coat.



CHAPTER 13.

WILLY CALLS ON THE HEAD!

HANDFORTH frowned. He remembered that his minor had been worrying about his monkey that morning, and the unexpected sight of a man hurrying off with the little creature aroused a dark suspicion in Handforth’s mind. The fellow was Briggs, the Head’s undergardener—and Briggs had no authority to interfere with any of the juniors’ pets.

“Here, half a tick!” shouted Handforth, running into the private road.

“Crikey!” said Briggs, startled.

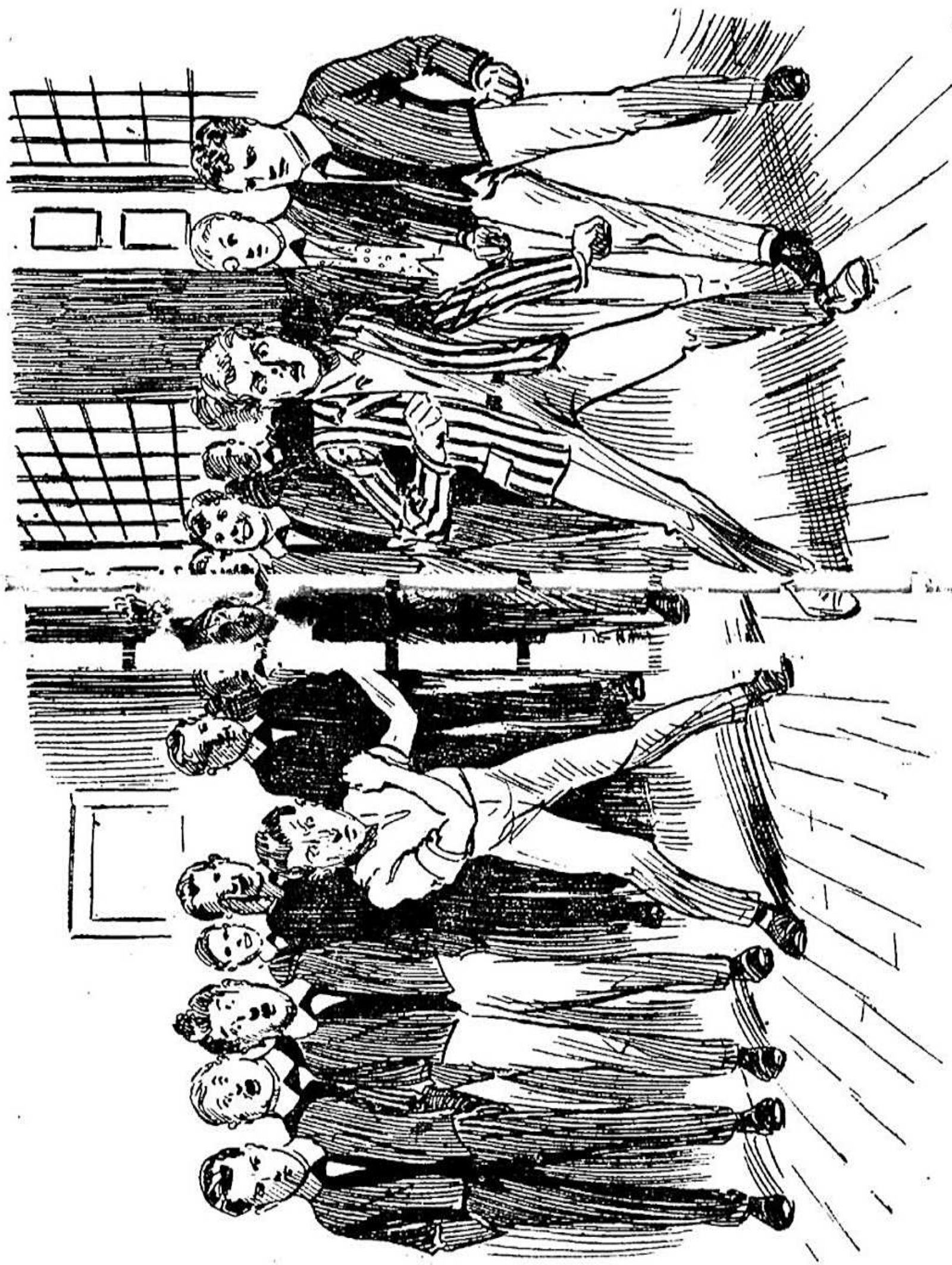
His brain was not a quick one. Mr. Pycraft had distinctly told him that there would be no chance of any interruption. And here was one already! Briggs didn’t run. He wasn’t doing anything wrong. He waited for the Removite to come up.

“What’s that you’ve got?” demanded Handforth, pointing.

“It’s a monkey, Mas’r Handforth.”

“You howling ass, do you think I can’t see it’s a monkey?” said Handforth. “Look here, is that my minor’s monkey?”

“Well, the fact is, sir, Mr. Pycraft told me



Teddy Long rushed in, his fists raised aggressively and
however, Harry Gresham backed away in alarm
to fight the biggest funk in the school—no wo

erbody expected the fight to commence. Instead,
i from the common-room. Gresham was afraid
body decided that he was beneath contempt!

to take him," said Briggs, in self-defence. "I've got orders to go to Bannington with him. Mr. Pycraft said——"

"Oh, so this is old Pycraft's doing, is it?" said Handforth darkly.

They looked at one another for a moment. Briggs was uncomfortable. He wasn't going to be blamed for anything, so he had lost no time in dragging Mr. Pycraft's name into the enterprise. Marmaduke had been very good, it is true, but Briggs wasn't feeling at all certain about him.

"Give that monkey to me?" went on Handforth.

"To you, sir?"

"Yes, to me!"

"But Mr. Pycraft said——"

"I don't care what Mr. Pycraft said," roared Handforth. "You're not going to pinch my minor's monkey like this! Not likely!"

This sentiment, from Handforth, was astonishing—for only that morning he had told Willy, quite frankly, that it would be a jolly good thing if Marmaduke ran off and lost himself. But Handforth didn't always mean what he said. He had a soft heart, and he wasn't going to see his minor tricked like this—by old Pycraft, too!

"I didn't ought to let you 'ave 'im, sir," said Briggs doubtfully.

"Rats!" said Handforth. "Does the Head know anything about this?"

"No, Master 'Andforth. Mr. Pycraft said not to tell 'im."

"Thought so!" grunted Edward Oswald. "All right—hand over that monkey."

Briggs was not a forceful young man. He made no objections. And a minute later Handforth was hurrying swiftly towards the School House with Marmaduke in his arms. It would have been simpler to put the monkey back on his chain, but Handforth felt that his minor ought to know about this business without delay.

So he burst into the Third Form-room, and startled Mr. Suncliffe just as the latter was in the middle of an exciting discussion regarding the First Eleven's chances in a forthcoming match against Helmford College. The master of the Third was just beginning to live again. For about seven months of the year he merely existed; when the cricket season came to an end he hibernated, so to speak. He was always roused to life again in the following May, when cricket came into its own once more. Lessons were almost a secondary consideration—they were at the moment.

"I am sure that Browne will be an excellent mainstay of the team," said Mr. Suncliffe, turning, as Handy opened the door. "Then there is this new boy, Gresham— Good gracious, Handforth! What are you doing here with that monkey?"

Mr. Suncliffe came to himself.

"Upon my word!" he murmured. "This won't do—this won't do! We should be at work— Ah, yes, Handforth!" he added, with a start. "That monkey! Why have you brought it here?"



Teddy Long rushed in, his fists raised aggressive, however, Harry Gresham backed away in a to fight the biggest funk in the school—

"It belongs to my minor, sir, and I just found a man trying to pinch him," said Handforth. "He was going to take the poor little beggar away, and I thought my minor ought to know."

Willy had run from his place, and was clutching at Marmaduke.

"I knew there was something afoot!" he said angrily. "So they tried to steal him, did they? Thanks, Ted, old man. You're a brick!"

"Rot! I don't approve of that monkey, really," said Handforth, frowning. "But I wasn't going to see my own flesh and blood dished by that old rotter of a Pycraft."

"Handforth!" exclaimed Mr. Suncliffe scandalised.

"Well—pinching chaps' monkeys!" said Handforth defensively. "I only spotted it by the sheerest accident."

"Just a minute," said Willy. "Did Mr. Pycraft authorise Briggs to take old Marmaduke away?"

"Yes—and he told Briggs not to mention



ly expected the fight to commence. Instead, from the common-room. Gresham was afraid and decided that he was beneath contempt!

anything about it to the Head," said Handforth warmly. "It looks like a put-up job to me."

"Boys—boys!" said Mr. Suncliffe, in distress. "This won't do! I can't allow you to take possession of my Form-room in this—Bless my soul!"

Handforth and his minor were walking out of the Form-room as though lessons formed no part of the morning's programme. Willy had already made up his mind, and he gave Edward Oswald an appreciative glance.

"Ted, old man, you're a good 'un," he said. "I'm going straight to the Head."

"Best thing you could do," said Handforth, nodding.

The leader of Study D went back to his Form-room, feeling that he had been of some service. Mr. Crowell glanced at the clock as he entered.

"Two minutes over time, Handforth," he said sternly. "However, I will overlook—Good gracious! You haven't changed your collar at all, Handforth!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Form.

"My—my collar, sir?" gasped Handforth. "Oh, corks!"

"Didn't I send you out to change your collar?" thundered Mr. Crowell.

"I—I forgot it, sir!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Form appreciated the joke. It was quite like Handforth to set out on a certain mission, and to forget all about it.

"You will stay in for extra lesson——"

"Hi! Wait a minute, sir!" said Handforth frantically. "I found somebody pinching my minor's monkey, and I rescued him. I came straight back without bothering about my collar——"

While Handforth was making his explanations Willy, filled with a great determination, was presenting himself to Dr. Stafford. Willy was looking very grim. An attempt had been made to spirit Marmaduke away, and he wasn't going to let anything like that happen again.

Phipps answered the door to him, and Phipps looked askance at the pair.

"I want to see the Head!" said Willy coolly.

"Unless you have an appointment, Master Willy——"

"Rats! Is the Head alone?"

"Yes. Mr. Addison went out," said Phipps. "But I doubt if Dr. Stafford will grant——"

"Oh, well, we can do without Mr. Addison," said Willy. "Thanks, Phipps. Come on, Marmy!"

He marched straight to the Head's study, rapped on the door, and then walked in. Willy was nothing if not direct.



CHAPTER 14.

WILLY DOES IT!

R. MALCOLM STAFFORD looked up in astonishment as Willy strode in.

"Sorry to butt in like this, sir," said Willy, "but it had to be done. I know your time's valuable, and I know it's a bit of a nerve on my part to come here without being told. But it's urgent."

"Really, Handforth minor, I——"

"There you are, sir—there's Marmaduke!" said Willy, placing the monkey in the middle of a sheaf of the Head's private papers. "Is he savage, sir? I ask you, as man to man—is he savage?"

Marmaduke glanced at the Head, found that he was in friendly company, and revealed his teeth in a little chatter of pleasant enjoyment. He thoughtfully picked up one of the Head's letters and tore it in half.

"Bless my soul!" said the Head, sitting back in his chair. "What an extraordinary boy you are, Handforth minor!"

"I know that, sir," said Willy, nodding.

"Oh, you know it!"

"Well, I mean I've been told so, sir," said Willy cheerfully. "Of course, it's all rot. I

—I mean, I'm not extraordinary at all, sir, really. I'm just straightforward; I don't believe in any messing about. So I came to your study before you could send for me. There's nothing like nipping a thing in the bud, sir."

"Really, I hardly know what to say to you," said the Head, startled.

"That's all right, sir—I'll do the talking," said Willy cheerfully. "I was rather expecting you to come and see me, but it's just as well you didn't, because I've been busy."

"Upon my word!" breathed the Head, more helpless than ever.

Somehow he always felt astonishingly helpless when this volatile fag came into his presence. Willy wasn't like the other juniors—he was a force in himself. He exuded energy, and his presence had the effect of making the Head feel limp. Marmaduke was becoming interested in a fountain-pen, and was unscrewing the cap, and screwing it on again.

"Now, look at old Marmy, sir," said Willy. "There he is! Just cast your peepers over him. Do you call him dangerous, sir? Are you going to tell me that he's got to be banished?"

"Well, I—I— Certainly, I must confess that the creature seems perfectly harmless now," said the Head, adjusting his glasses, and inspecting Marmaduke closely. "Quite harmless—in fact docile."

He felt that the whole thing was wrong. He ought to have ordered this cheeky youngster out of his room in a thunderous voice. He ought to have reached for his cane. But the Head meekly listened to Willy, quite incapable of doing anything else. Willy always had that effect.

"There's been dirty work, sir," continued Willy.

"Good gracious!" said the Head. "Dirty work? Ahem! I—I don't quite follow—"

"A kidnapping job, sir," said Willy. "I found Bri—I found a man stealing Marmaduke, and taking him off to Bannington. Actually, my major found him—but that's only a detail. Did you give orders for Marmaduke to be taken away like that, sir?"

"Most decidedly not," said the Head, starting. "I had no idea that Marmaduke was being taken away in such a fashion. Who is responsible? I gave no such instructions. Bless my soul! Is it possible that Mr.— Really, I am amazed!"

"No need to mention names, sir," said Willy smoothly. "I don't know who told the chap to smuggle Marmaduke away—that's not my business, anyhow—but I thought I'd better come straight to you, sir, and show you how docile old Marmy is. Now, isn't he a nice little chap, sir?"

"Well, frankly, I must admit—"

"Then it's all right, sir?" said Willy brightly. "I can still keep him? Good egg!"

"Really, Handforth minor—"

"Thanks awfully, sir," said Willy, with a cheery nod. "Then I'll be trotting. I always said you were a brick, sir. Come on, Marmy!"

The Head found his voice just in time.

"One moment, young man!" he gasped. "One moment! I have neither given you permission to keep this monkey, nor to leave my presence! Good heavens! There is a limit to my forbearance. I am amazed that I have suffered your impertinence even to this extent."

"Impertinence, sir?" repeated Willy innocently.

The Head removed his glasses.

"I don't think you mean to be deliberately impertinent, my boy," he said. "But, really, you are a most exhausting youngster! Before you go, I want to know why this monkey was loose this morning. I have heard that he caused considerable disturbance before breakfast."

Willy felt relieved.

"That was an accident, sir," he said. "As a rule, I never let Marmy out of my sight, but I was cleaning the cages and things this morning, and I got two of my chums to mind him. Well, you know what these fags are, sir," he added, shrugging his shoulders. "Feather-brained, sir. They're too young to understand what responsibility means, and they let old Marmy go."

"Too young!" said the Head. "And how old do you think you are?"

"Of course, I'm reckoning in sense, sir—not in years!" replied Willy. "If I thought I had no more brains than those chaps, I should feel about eighteen months old. The whole thing was an accident, sir, and Marmaduke won't escape again. Is it a go, sir? Can I get back to lessons, sir? Mr. Suncliffe's taking the Third in geography, sir, and I shall miss everything!"

Dr. Stafford seemed to make a curious sound in his throat.

"You are very intent upon your lessons, Handforth minor, are you not?" he asked suspiciously.

"We're here to learn, sir, aren't we?"

"Ahem! Quite so—quite so!" said the Head, with haste. "Very well, my boy—you may go. I won't keep you from your geography!"

"And Marmy's reprieved, sir?"

"Well, under the circumstances—"

"Thanks awfully, sir," said Willy briskly.

He strolled out happy, and within five minutes he was back in the Third Form room, and Marmaduke was on his chain in the shed, making some intimate researches into the interior of a walnut.

The headmaster occupied the same five minutes in recovering. When he felt himself sufficiently strong, he telephoned to the School House, and requested Mr. Horace Pycraft to wait upon him at once. Mr.

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Pycraft came, uneasy and wondering. By this time, of course, Briggs had taken the monkey away, and it was impossible for the Head to know anything about it. Mr. Pycraft assumed that Dr. Stafford had sent for him on another matter.

"Mr. Pycraft," said the Head, "a rather remarkable thing has happened this morning. An attempt has been made to smuggle Handforth minor's monkey out of the school."

Mr. Pycraft went limp. He drooped on his chair like a piece of dead creeper.

"Indeed, sir?" he said feebly.

"I have decided that no action is necessary with regard to this monkey," continued the Head. "I have seen Handforth minor, and he has assured me that the creature escaped quite by accident."

"But—but you gave me your sanction——"

"I do not remember giving you sanction for anything, Mr. Pycraft," said the Head coldly. "I have seen this monkey, and I am satisfied that it is harmless. I regret that you should have made such an unnecessary complaint. I can only conclude that you mistook the monkey's natural exuberance for savagery. Who gave orders for this man to take the monkey away, I do not know, but if anything of the sort happens again, I shall make close investigations."

"Don't—don't you know who the man was, sir?" asked Mr. Pycraft, in a voice that contained a faint gleam of hope.

"I do not know, and I do not intend to pursue the matter," replied Dr. Stafford. "But, as I have said, I shall take strong action if such an outrage is attempted again. There is a right way of doing things, Mr. Pycraft, and a wrong way."

"Oh, yes, sir—quite so," stuttered Mr. Pycraft. "Exactly, sir!"

"Thank you, Mr. Pycraft."

The master of the Fourth went out, looking crushed. In his heart he knew that the Head guessed the truth, and the Head, for his part, was quite certain that there was no guesswork about it at all.



CHAPTER 15.

"HAT-TRICK'S" JUNIOR!

EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH was not sentenced to extra lesson, for Mr. Crowell accepted his statement regarding that un-

expected interlude.

Extra lesson, indeed, would have been an appalling blow to the prestige of the Ancient House—in Handforth's opinion. For he would thus have been barred from playing in the inter-House match, and that would have been a disaster of the first magnitude.

Strangely enough, Handforth was the only fellow who held this opinion. All the Ancient House juniors were convinced that they could wipe up the West House with complete ease, even if half their best men were dropped.

Undoubtedly, Reggie Pitt and his men were the weaker team.

Pitt himself was an excellent cricketer, and he was certain of first-class support from Jack Grey, Nicodemus Trotwood, and the Hon. Douglas Singleton. Dick Goodwin was good and Levi more than fair. But the rest of the team could make no great claims to perfection.

The Ancient House, on the other hand, bristled with talent. Such giants as Dick Hamilton, Ralph Leslie Fullwood, Jerry Dodd, and Handforth were in the Eleven. And there was Church, too. Church had done wonders during the previous season, and he was sure of his place.

On top of all these, came Harry Gresham.

"Well, of course, it'll be a walk-over," said Pitt cheerfully, as he and Nipper prepared to toss. "All the same, we're going to give you fellows a jolly good run for your money."

"It's only a trial game," smiled Nipper. "The best men of both Elevens will be picked to play against Bannington Grammar School on Saturday."

"What will Boots say?" grinned Pitt.

"Buster Boots can say what he likes," replied Nipper. "I might possibly find a place for him, and for Christine. But there aren't many other fellows in the Fourth worth playing. Junior cricket at St. Frank's relies on the Remove."

"Hear, hear!" said Reggie, with enthusiasm.

They tossed, and Pitt won.

"Well, we'll take first knock," he said. "I expect you'll have us out in less than half an hour, if you put Gresham and Dodd on to bowl. Wish we had some bowlers of that sort in our House!"

Reggie Pitt's prediction was not far from being on the mark. He and Singleton opened the West House innings, and Fullwood commenced the bowling from the pavilion end.

Pitt decided that this was no occasion for cautious work. He wanted to get the runs, and he hit out forcefully. In the first over the 10 went up, and then Jerry Dodd bowled from the other end.

The second over was equally interesting to watch, Reggie scoring two beautiful boundaries, and then a 3. Singleton held on until the end of the over, and increased the score by 4.

After that the first wicket fell—Singleton's. And within a couple of minutes, Reggie Pitt was out, too. It was a most unexpected dismissal.

He had cut a beauty, and it shot wide of the slips, in full flight to the boundary.

At least, Pitt felt that the ball had gone wide, and everybody else thought so, too. But Harry Gresham made a cat-like movement, and the leather was in his grasp. Just a smack as the ball struck his palm, and Reggie was out. It was a dramatic catch, as unexpected as it was wonderful.

"Out!"

"Oh, well caught, Gresham!"

"Good man!"

Harry flushed with pleasure as he heard these shouts. He would have flushed still more if he could have heard a confidential little chat between Fenton and Morrow of the Sixth, and Brown of the Fifth. These three giants of the First Eleven were watching from the pavilion. Edgar Fenton always believed in having a look at the juniors.

"That new youngster is pretty smart!" he said with satisfaction. "I've had my eye on him ever since the game started. Have you noticed how he's on his toes the whole time? He's got cricket in his blood, right enough!"

"Wait," said Brown, "until he bowls."

Fenton had the satisfaction of seeing Gresham bowl in the next over, for Nipper tossed him the ball as the field changed.

"Go ahead!" nodded Nipper.

The new boy went ahead. True, he was not opposed to master-batsmen, but it was a feat, nevertheless, to take three wickets in succession. Perhaps it was just coincidence—perhaps the batsmen were a bit nervous, after hearing of Gresham's reputation. And wasn't his father nicknamed "Hat Trick"?

Anyhow, Harry performed the hat trick with the first three balls in his first over in a match at St. Frank's! It was an achievement which stamped him as a popular hero.

The first two batsmen had utterly failed to see the leather at all. Harry was a fast bowler, and the amount of spin he contrived was something new to the Removites. And when he prepared to make his third delivery, the field watched in a kind of trance.

The unfortunate West House batsman—ner-

vous after the dismissal of his two predecessors—swiped wildly. He heard a crash behind him, and his middle stump was a yard away.

"Hurrah!"

"The hat trick!"

"Good old Gresham!"

"By jingo, he's just like his father!"

It was, indeed, an excellent omen for Harry. He could not have opened his cricketing career more auspiciously. It was the sort of thing he had dreamed of night after night, prior to his coming to St. Frank's. But he had always told himself that the age of miracles had passed.

"This fellow is almost too good to be true," said Fenton. "All the same, he's got the style. I'm hanged if he isn't every bit as good as young Dodd—in fact, better, because all the schools we play have met Dodd, and Gresham will be sprung on them as a surprise."

"A sound argument, Brother Fenton," Browne nodded.

The match, of course, was more or less a farce. After Gresham had come on to bowl, the West House fell to pieces. By the time the innings was over, Harry had taken six wickets for 5 runs—and the total West House score was a modest 27.

"Good man!" said Pitt, as he clapped Gresham on the back. "Your bowling's absolutely uncanny. We'll see if we can't get a bit of revenge on you when you go in to bat."

Nipper took a bold stroke.

"You'll soon have your chance," he said. "Gresham is opening the innings with me."

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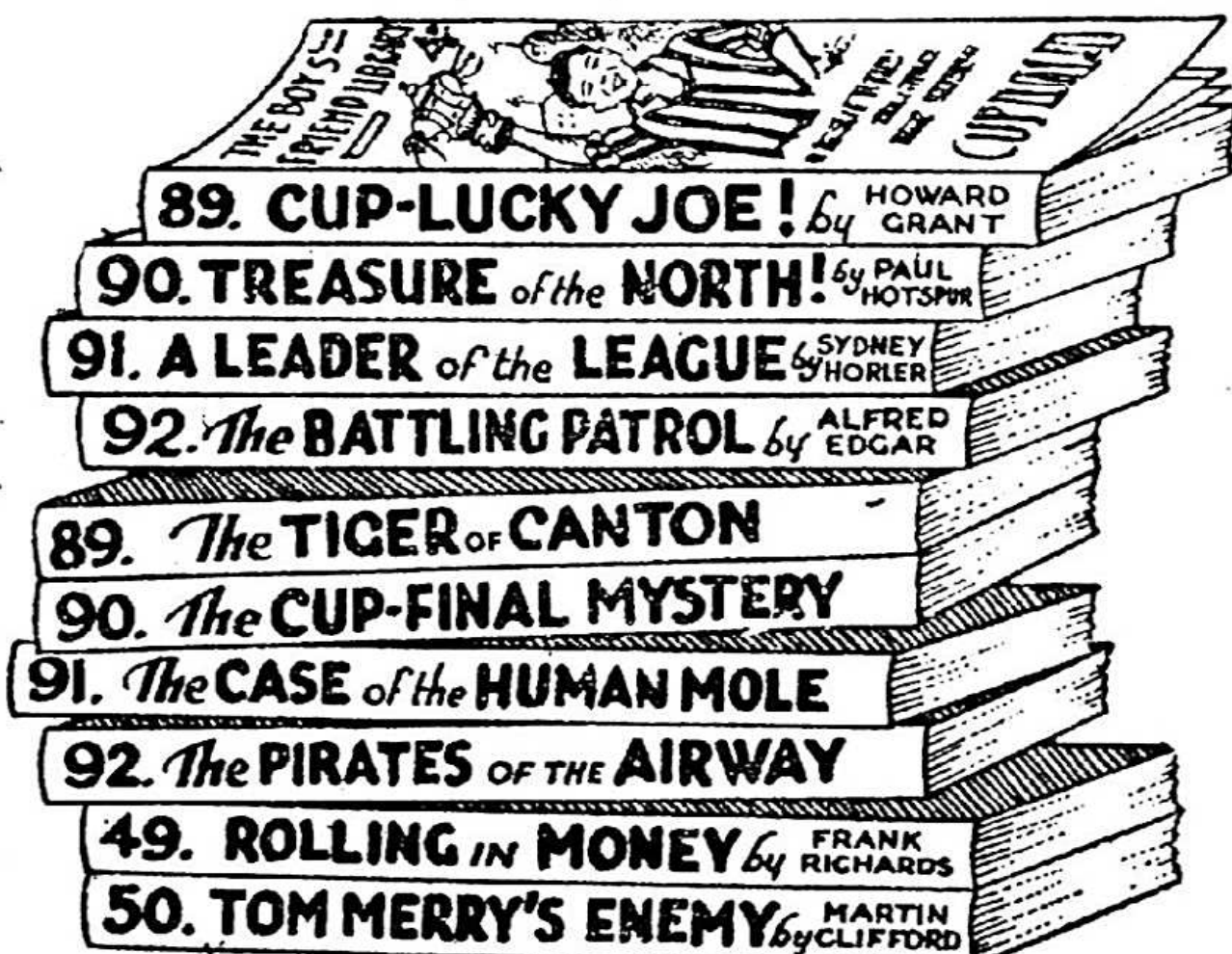
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This was an honour which Harry had not hoped for. Fenton was rather surprised, for the new man could not be expected to excel in every department of the game.

All the same, Nipper and Harry proceeded to knock up the necessary 28 runs for victory at lightning speed. The score was reached and passed in the second over. And the game went on just for the sport of it.

And Gresham's batting was masterly. It was not aggressive like Handforth's, but it was forceful—impressive. He made all the spectators realise that he was in his true element. This game, indeed, was child's play to him. He treated the bowling with an indifference which amounted to contempt. Nothing could touch his wicket.

"A find!" was Fenton's considered opinion. "In fact, the greatest discovery the Junior School has ever produced!"



CHAPTER 16.

THE SUMMONS FROM THE HEAD.

ALAN DUNCAN burst into Study J like a whirlwind.

"Oh, there you are!" he said excitedly. "Quick, Harry! Come and have a

look in the lobby!"

"What on earth——" began Harry.

"My dear chap, move yourself!" roared Duncan.

Harry Gresham was just finishing his prep.; and he had been working in a glow of almost unbelievable happiness. Ever since tea-time he had received nothing but congratulations from everybody. Those unfortunate little incidents of the immediate past were not only forgotten, but completely wiped out. He was Gresham, the wonder-cricketer! He was the son of the famous Sir Stewart—and as such he was a popular idol. Fellows crowded over from the East House and the West House on purpose to look at him. Contingents came from the Fifth and Sixth.

But at last Harry had escaped, and had done his prep. in silence. He was keen on cricket, but he was anxious to get good school reports, too. Harry was not a fellow who put sport first, and study nowhere.

"But what's the matter?" he asked, getting up from his chair.

"Nothing's the matter," said Duncan. "But you've got to come and look at this with your own eyes."

He seized Harry's arm, and dragged him away. A group of juniors were in the lobby, gathered round the notice-board.

"Look at this, Gresham!" shouted half a dozen voices.

Gresham found himself reading a list of names for the forthcoming junior match against Bannington Grammar School. His own was there, and he received a little thrill when he saw it. But he had known it

already. Nipper had told him that he would be wanted.

"It's fine!" he said. "I—I never expected——"

"Now, look at this!" grinned Alec.

There was another notice on the board—an impressive notice in typewriting, and Harry looked at it with his heart thumping wildly.

"FIRST ELEVEN PRACTICE. The following will be required for early-morning practice for the First Eleven every day next week——"

Then followed a list of twenty or more names, with Edgar Fenton's signature at the bottom. All those names except one were blurred to Harry. He only saw "HARRY GRESHAM" staring at him from that typewritten sheet.

"I say!" he muttered. "This—this is a joke, isn't it?"

"My dear ass, Fenton's signed it!"

"But—but it's for the First Eleven!" said Harry, in amazement. "I didn't think I should get a chance for my First cap until next season. I haven't been at St. Frank's a week!"

"You can't expect to escape, my lad," said Duncan cheerfully. "Fenton has spotted you already, and he means to pinch you from us. But we don't mind—it's all the more honour to the Remove."

"Besides, we shall have Gresham for our big matches, too," said Handforth warmly. "I must admit, my lad, that you've given us a surprise. I was going to offer to coach you, but I don't think you could pick up many tips."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You'd better get Gresham to coach you, Handy!" said Duncan. "He knows more about cricket now than you're ever likely to know!"

"Rats!" said Handforth. "He's good, I'll admit——"

They left him talking to the other juniors, and went back to Study J. Harry's face was glowing.

"I don't deserve all this, you know," he said soberly. "It isn't fair, either. I mean, a new kid like me barging in! Lots of fellows have been waiting for seasons to get their First Eleven colours——"

"At St. Frank's cricket is taken seriously," said Duncan. "It isn't run like a Government office—where a man is promoted automatically, whether he's got brains or not. The First Eleven is picked on merit. You'd have just as much chance, even if you were a fag. The only qualification a fellow requires to get into the First is to be a good cricketer."

"All the same, it's—— Well, it's knocked me all of a heap," confessed Harry. "But, of course, I mustn't take anything for granted. I shall probably fail to come up to the required standard. You can't judge by to-day's match," he added, after breaking off. "It was only a trial game, anyhow, and nobody has found his form yet."

Alec Duncan grinned.

"You'll do!" he said briefly.

Harry finished his prep., and then sat thinking while Duncan struggled with his own. After that they talked. They became more and more friendly with every minute that passed. Duncan was beginning to like his study mate immensely. Harry was such a thundering good sort.

It was nearly supper-time when Tubbs, the pageboy, looked in.

"Master Gresham wanted by the 'Ead," he announced. "You're to go across at once, sir."

"Oh, my hat!" said Harry.

"I 'ope it ain't nothing serious, sir," said Tubbs sympathetically.

"Don't be a young ass!" frowned Duncan. "There's only one reason why the Head should send for Gresham. He wants to congratulate him on his cricket."

Tubbs retired, and Harry rose to his feet.

"I hope you're right about that, Alec," he said doubtfully. "You were pulling Tubbs' leg, weren't you?"

"More or less," smiled Alec. "Head-masters don't usually send for Remove fellows to give them the glad hand. They rather specialise in the sore hand. But you needn't worry about that. Your ledger is perfectly clean, as far as I know. Not a single blot on it."

Harry went out, rather troubled. A suspicion was in his mind, but it was so vague that he could not quite formulate it. When he got outside he suddenly realised that the evening was late, and that complete darkness had closed down. He hesitated after he had taken a few steps across the Triangle—as he plunged into the gloom.

It was quite an instinctive slowing up, for his thoughts were far away. Somehow, the darkness affected his subconscious mind, and he found himself coming to a halt before he knew it.

And then he looked round him apprehensively. His fear of the darkness was something almost tangible. He didn't know why—he couldn't explain it. But when he found himself alone in the midst of gloom, he changed. The lights of the various Houses gleamed in a friendly way. But Big Arch—through which he was obliged to pass—yawned like some forbidding chasm.

With a great effort, Harry pulled himself together.

"I won't be weak!" he muttered fiercely. "I won't!"

He walked on, his teeth clenched. It was so silly—so babyish! A great fellow like him—the hero of the cricketing world at St. Frank's—afraid to walk through a perfectly harmless archway! It was so utterly childish—and yet it was so utterly true! And facts are facts, and cannot be made otherwise.

Harry Gresham was mortally afraid, and that was the plain truth.

He walked into Big Arch, and his bold footsteps became halting. Then, suddenly, he drew back, shrinking with terror. A gasp

left his trembling lips, and his eyes bulged. A shadow was there—a grotesque, fantastic shadow! It moved near him—eerily and horribly.



CHAPTER 17.

THE SHAPE IN THE GLOOM.

HARRY GRESHAM was on the point of bolting.

His terror was pitiful.

And then, with a shock that was akin to a blow, he knew the truth. A wave of shame swept over him like a hot blast. He stood there, gulping.

That grotesque thing was merely his own shadow!

His own shadow! And he had been ready to run away from it as though it had been some monstrous thing from the pit! Now that his mind was cleared of its terror, he could see. There was a bare light in one of the Ancient House windows, and Harry's elongated shadow, caused by this light, had struck the inner wall of the arch.

"Oh, thank Heaven there's nobody else here!" muttered Harry. "What a fool—what a scared funk! My own giddy shadow! And I was going to run from it like a baby!"

For a moment he leaned against the wall, trying to recover himself. The whole thing was so preposterous that it almost seemed funny. Indeed, it would have been funny had it not been so tragic.

For Harry knew well enough that his fear was only momentarily allayed. That was the worst of it. He *knew*! He had no illusions about himself. He knew that he was a totally different being under such circumstances as these, and he felt that he was in the grip of some influence which was beyond his power to control.

But would others believe it?

He gazed through the archway, and saw the black expanse of Inner Court beyond. Why didn't they have lights here? In a big school like St. Frank's they ought to have provided illuminations for these archways! It wasn't fair to expect the fellows—

He took a deep breath and walked on. Just for a flash he had thought about returning to Study J, and making a casual suggestion that Duncan should accompany him. Then he remembered that he had surprised Duncan the previous night by running in from the Triangle. Duncan wasn't a fool, and he would immediately guess the truth. No, Harry couldn't stand that!

He walked on, and found himself in the deep gloom of Inner Court. The lights of the Head's house gleamed ahead. They were really comparatively close, but to Harry—in his present condition—the walk seemed terribly long.

But he wasn't going to run! No, he'd hold himself in hand, he swore. If he started looking over his shoulder, and then running, he

would be in a panic, and if anybody else saw—

"Oh!" gasped Harry, starting round fearfully.

He fancied that something had touched him on the shoulder—something from behind. He twirled round, his face as white as a sheet. He was alone. He knew he was alone, but he had distinctly felt—

What was that?

Was it imagination, or was there really something skulking about within a few yards of him? A shape—a dull, black thing, of grotesque aspect— Yes! And there was a mouth, too—a great, wide gap, and a pair of flat, staring eyes.

Harry choked back a sob of terror.

Reason told him that this monstrous thing

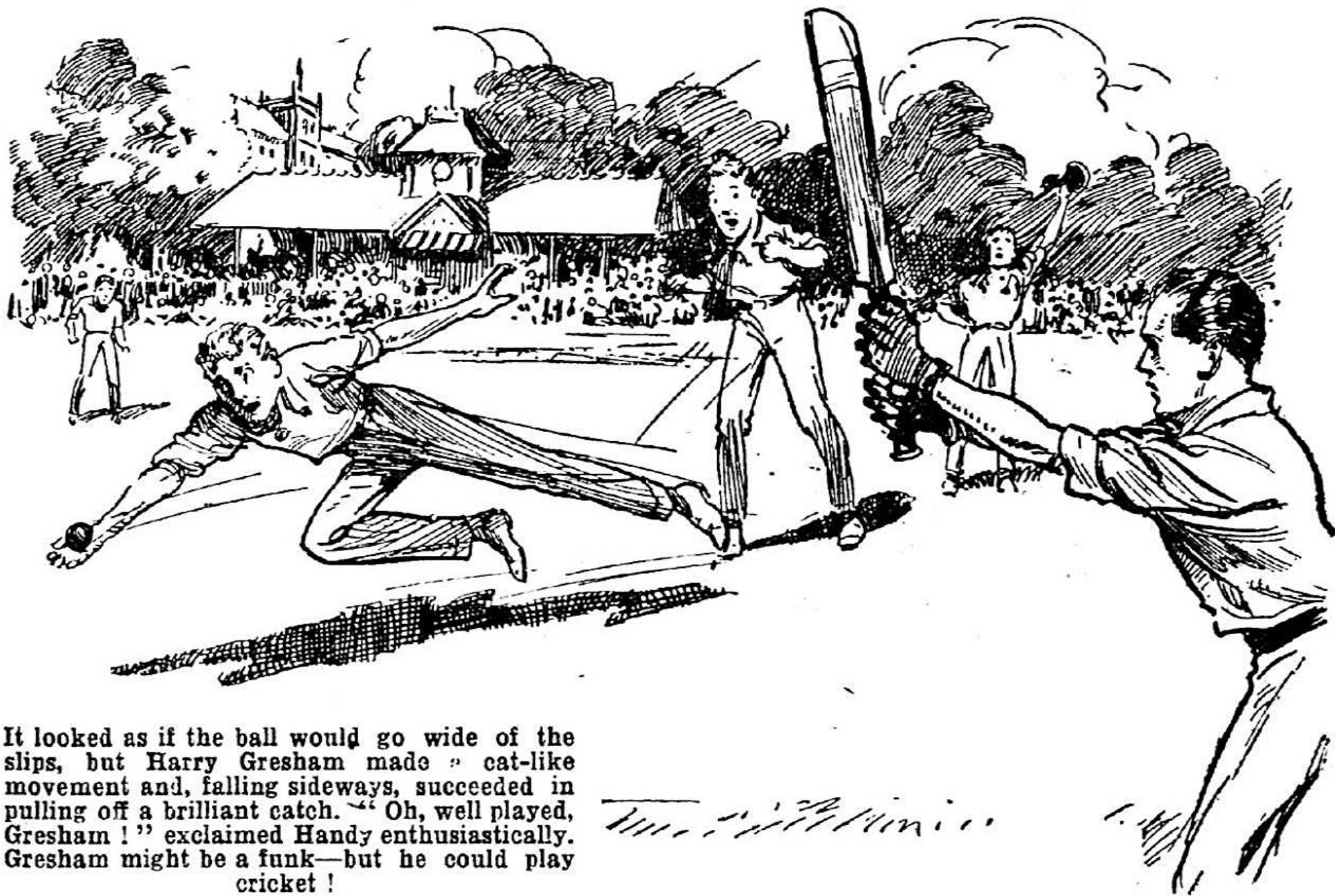
he could hear a ghastly sort of pattering behind him. Footsteps—ghostly, phantom footsteps!

He screamed again, and came hurtling through Big Arch with every ounce of speed that he could gather.

"Great Scott!" shouted somebody. "Who's that?"

"That yell!" muttered one of the other juniors. "Oh, crumbs! I've never heard such awful— Look out!"

A figure came tearing up, and before the juniors could get out of the way, the figure collided with them, and crashed over. Doyle and Scott, of the Remove, were the juniors involved. Hubbard, Owen major, De Valerie, and Canham were the others. And, to make matters worse, Forrest and Gulliver and Bell,



It looked as if the ball would go wide of the slips, but Harry Gresham made a cat-like movement and, falling sideways, succeeded in pulling off a brilliant catch. "Oh, well played, Gresham!" exclaimed Handy enthusiastically. Gresham might be a funk—but he could play cricket!

was a figment of his own fevered brain. And yet there it was—swaying about, and eerily getting nearer and nearer. A kind of hand reached out, and it seemed to Harry that he felt a touch on his arm.

He shrieked then—shrieked in the most awful way. It was a wild, unearthly cry, and Harry ran madly and blindly. His terror was so shocking that he had no sense of direction. It was only by sheer luck that he saved himself from crashing headlong into the stonework of Big Arch. Instead of running forward, he had twirled round, and was going back on his tracks—the worst possible thing he could have done, for a number of juniors were crossing the Triangle from the Modern House to the Ancient House.

Harry didn't know anything about this. He ran—and as his feet flew over the gravel

of Study A came up, too. All the chaps who were most likely to draw hasty conclusions!

"Why, it's Gresham!" said Hubbard, in amazement.

"That—that Thing!" sobbed Harry. "It's—it's after me! I saw it there—it followed—"

He crouched on the ground, in the last grip of terror.

"The chap's mad!" said De Valerie, in alarm. "There's nothing after him! What on earth—"

They stared at Big Arch, and just then a cyclist came through—the vicar, as a matter of fact, returning home after a quiet game of chess with the Head. Nothing could have been more peaceful. Harry could not have been alarmed by the vicar's bicycle lamp, that was certain. And if anything had been

there—anything alarming—the reverend gentleman would have seen it, too.

The vicar cycled by, calling a cheery "Good-night." And this little pause enabled Harry to realise the full nature of the disaster. It had always been the same. As soon as he found himself in human company, his terrors left him.

"Pull yourself together, Gresham!" said Owen major. "There's nothing here. What the dickens is the matter with you?"

Bernard Forrest flashed an electric torch on Harry's face, and the others were startled by the pallor of it, and by the hunted fear in his eyes.

"Thought so!" sneered Forrest. "The chap's scared, that's all. Saw his own shadow, I expect, and got the wind up!"

Harry winced at the appalling truth of this chance shot. He hadn't flown into a panic over that particular incident, but, all the same, Forrest's words caused a wave of guilt to sweep over him.

He was himself again now—trembling and weak, but his fears had flown. And reason returned.

Had he really seen anything? He could remember that fearsome Shape—the mouth—the flat eyes! He could see it all now, in his mind's eye. Good heavens! Had it only been in his mind's eye all the time? He simply didn't know. He couldn't tell whether he had really seen something, or whether his fevered brain had played him false.

Yet, even allowing for Harry's curious weakness, there seemed to be some uncanny mystery behind this. He had often peopled the darkness with eerie shadows, but he had never seen anything so definitely tangible before. Besides, it had touched him! Or had that been imagination, too?

"Great Scott!" said a voice, miles away.

Harry tried to get a fresh grip on himself.

"I—I saw something," he muttered. "I—I mean, I thought— That is to say, I was going along Inner Court, and—and—"

"You needn't trouble," interrupted De Valerie coldly. "There's no explanation, Gresham. Wouldn't it be better to say nothing?"



CHAPTER 18.

MR. ADDISON MAKES HAY!

BERNARD FORREST uttered a contemptuous laugh.

"You've hit it, De Valerie," he said sneeringly.

"There's no explanation. The man's as funky as a rabbit."

"Why insult rabbits?" said Gulliver, with a cackle.

"Afraid of his own shadow!" said Doyle, with a whistle. "Oh, I say, how—how beastly disgusting! The chap isn't human at all—he's a worm!"

"A crawlin' insect!" agreed Bell jeeringly.

Harry made no attempt to refute these statements—for the very simple reason that he agreed with every single word that was being said. What right had he to flare up and refute the insults?

Insults? They weren't insults at all! These fellows were simply telling him the truth. He was a worm. He was an insect! And, with a sickening feeling of loathing for himself, he turned away from them without a word. They watched him go towards Big Arch again.

"Great Scott!" said De Valerie. "Who'd have thought it?"

"Well, we all knew he was a funk, didn't we?" said Forrest. "Have you forgotten what happened when he bunked from a playful dog? The chap's yellow all through!"

"Let's go in and tell the others!" said Hubbard eagerly.

"Steady—steady!" growled De Valerie uneasily. "No need to spread a rotten yarn like this. The poor chap ought to be pitied. Ye gods, what an awful thing! After what he did at cricket this afternoon, too! I could understand a chap like Snipe being funky, or a cad like Long. But Gresham, you know! Why, it's—it's too awful for words!"

Harry, in the meantime, was crossing Inner Court again. He swore to himself that he wouldn't lose control now. The Head had ordered him to go to his study, and he had to obey. But this time he would prove—to himself, at least—that he could keep himself in hand.

For half the distance he won the battle. Never once did he hasten his footsteps; never once did he glance over his shoulder. But he knew that the terror of Darkness and the Unknown was overwhelming him again. He could feel it coming over him like a ghastly cloak.

He didn't see that terrible Thing again, but something moved near the ground—something black and shapeless—A cat, perhaps. But Harry lost grip, and broke into a run. Panic held him again, and he did not stop until he reached the Head's porch, where there was a friendly light. He clung to one of the pillars, breathing convulsively.

Again! In spite of all his resolves, he had failed again!

"I'm not fit to be in a place where there are decent chaps!" he muttered wretchedly. "Oh, what's the matter with me? Why can't I be like other fellows?"

He touched the bell mechanically, and he was quite startled when the door opened, and Phipps stood before him. Phipps was really Archie Glenthorne's valet, but as he was not permitted to stay in the school in that capacity, he performed duties as the Head's butler—devoting certain hours a day to his elegant young master.

"The—the Head sent for me," said Gresham nervously.

Phipps gave him a curious look, but made no comment. He led Gresham straight to Dr. Stafford's study, and ushered him in. Harry heard the door close behind him, and

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he found himself alone with Mr. Hubert Addison.

"You have been a long time, Gresham," said the Head's secretary, laying his paper aside.

"I—I was delayed," stammered Harry.

"But didn't the Head send for—"

"Dr. Stafford has retired," interrupted Mr. Addison. "He has been entertaining the vicar in his library, I believe, and is officially out. It was I who sent for you, Gresham."

"You?" said Harry. "I thought so!" he added bitterly. "I had an idea that you were—"

"The fact of the matter is, I wanted to have another little friendly chat with you," said Mr. Addison smoothly. "By the way, you're not looking well this evening, Gresham. You are pale—"

"Never mind about that," interrupted Harry roughly. "What do you want?"

"That is no way to speak to me!" said Mr. Addison.

"Get it over!" snapped Harry. "What do you want me for?"

If he could be contemptuous of himself, he could be contemptuous of others, too.

This man was in an honourable position. He was distantly related to one of the most famous county families in England. In a way, he had blue blood in his veins. And yet he was descending to the despicable practice of extorting money from a schoolboy!

"It will pay you, young man, to be civil to me," said Mr. Addison, with an evil glint in his watery eyes. "I do not intend to put up with any impudence. This attitude on your part has grieved me," he went on, in a more conciliatory manner. "I really wanted you to do me a little favour. I am rather short of cash, and I thought you would oblige me with the loan of a five-pound note."

Harry almost laughed at the farcical situation. Then he went hot, and he returned Mr. Addison's gaze with a blaze of scorn.

"What about the other fiver I lent you?" he asked fiercely.

"My dear boy, I have not yet been to the bank," said Mr. Addison. "I will pay you the ten pounds—"

"Why pretend?" interrupted Harry curtly. "You can go to the dickens for your fiver! It's blackmail—nothing else. Blackmail!"

Mr. Addison started, and his lips became thin.

"You may be thankful that I can control my temper," he said tensely. "Am I to understand that you refuse?"

"Yes!"

"It is a pity," said Mr. Addison, stroking his chin. "A great pity. That skeleton in your family cupboard is not a very handsome specimen, Gresham. I fear the majority of the boys will be rather shocked when they hear about it. It is quite possible that an incautious word might escape me. And then what of your career? What of your cricket? I hear you have been doing rather well at cricket——"

"All right!" breathed Harry thickly.

He dragged a five-pound note out of his pocket, and flung it on the table. He only had one left now. His father had given him twenty pounds to start with—but Mr. Addison had had ten, and a lot of the rest had been spent.

"That's better," said Mr. Addison mockingly. "As long as we have this little understanding, there'll be no unfortunate developments. Your little family secret will remain perfectly secure."

"You—you——"

"Better not say it," interrupted Mr. Addison. "What you think of me is a matter of no importance. I know that you dare not betray our little arrangement, and so there is harmony between us. Good-night, Gresham! I hope we shall soon meet again!"

Harry went out without saying another word. He felt helpless. This man had him in his clutches, and he could do nothing!



CHAPTER 19.

PUT TO THE TEST.

OUTSIDE, just beyond the Head's porch, a figure loomed up out of the gloom. The door had closed behind Harry, and he came to a halt, his heart jumping.

"It's all right—only me!" said a soft voice.

"Alec!" muttered Harry.

Duncan came up, and eyed his study mate grimly.

"Startled you, eh?" he said.

"Well, no—— I—I——"

"It's no good denying it!" interrupted Alec bluntly. "I heard what happened ten minutes ago. A crowd of fellows came in, talking of nothing else. The whole school's got the yarn by now."

Harry was dumb.

"So I came along to escort you back," added Duncan simply.

"Oh!"

Harry Gresham started as though he had been stung. A wave of utter humiliation came over him. Alec Duncan had come here to escort him back—just as though he were

a frightened little girl of five straight from the nursery!

This humiliation was even worse than any of Harry's previous experiences. It shook him to the very marrow. A fellow of his own age had to come and take him across a hundred yards of dark space! He nearly choked as he tried to think of something to say.

"Harry, old man, what does it mean?" asked Alec Duncan earnestly. "I only came because I thought—— Well, I didn't want anything like that to happen again! Everybody's talking, and—and—— Oh, I don't know! But, hang it, I rather like you!"

"You shouldn't!" choked Harry. "I'm not worth it!"

"After this afternoon, you know, everything was so fine," went on Alec. "Everybody came and gave you the glad hand, and your cricket is——"

"Cricket!" broke in Harry fiercely. "What's the good of my being good at cricket if I spoil it all by these awful exhibitions of funk? I'm a coward, Alec—a miserable, rotten coward! You oughtn't to speak to me!"

Duncan was distressed.

"But can't you pull yourself together?" he asked. "I mean, it's awful! Everybody talking! What's wrong, Harry? Why the dickens do you go off the deep end like that?"

"I don't know!" muttered Harry. "I can't tell you! I'm—I'm born that way, I suppose. I'm all right ordinarily, but—— Oh, what's the good of talking? I shall only make things worse! I know I'm a worm, and you know I'm a worm. There's nothing to say, is there?"

Duncan felt rather helpless. What *could* he say? The fellow was so staggeringly frank about his fatal trait. He didn't try to excuse himself, or—or anything! His very self-condemnation was enough to make Duncan lose his contempt. He rather pitied his companion.

"Shall we get back?" asked Harry, in a subdued voice.

"You want me to come with you—really?"

"Yes!" muttered Harry, his very fibres rebelling against this admission of rank cowardice.

"My hat!" whispered Alec under his breath.

He simply couldn't understand the thing at all. They walked across Inner Court in silence. Duncan's presence was a great comfort to Harry in his present shaky condition. Why attempt to bluff, and say that he was all right? There was something very naive about Harry Gresham's personality.

Duncan pondered as they walked. He had never met anybody like this before. Such a jolly decent sort, in the main——

"What—what's that?" gasped Harry, clutching at his companion.

"Ow!" yelled Alec, as Harry's fingers agonisingly nipped his flesh. "What the

dickens— You silly idiot! Pull yourself together— Oh, my goodness!"

For a second even Duncan was nearly startled out of his wits. They were just near Big Arch, and three dim, whitish figures had appeared against the background of blackness—spectral presences which floated eerily in mid-air. They were horrifying in aspect.

"Look—look!" screamed Harry.

He broke away and ran, tearing off at full speed.

"Wait a minute!" roared Duncan. "It's only——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yah, funk!"

"Frightened baby!"

The ghostly figures yelled with laughter. Alec Duncan, rushing up, saw that they were nothing but harmless sheets, held by such fellows as Owen major, Doyle, and Hubbard. A number of others had been lurking behind the cover of the archway, eager to watch the result.

A jape!

A weak, contemptible rag, and Harry Gresham had fallen into the trap at the very first sight of the preposterous apparitions. After Alec's first glance he had guessed the truth.

"You rotters!" he shouted. "You dirty, contemptible cads!"

"Steady!" said Hubbard. "We were only testing——"

"Testing be hanged!" shouted Duncan hotly. "You know the fellow's nervous, so why play a filthy trick like this?"

"Go and eat coke!" said Owen major. "We wanted to prove the thing. These sheets wouldn't deceive a kid in the Third, and some of the fellows were arguing that Gresham would laugh at them. So we tried it on!"

"Look at him—nearly fainting with fright!" jeered Gulliver.

Harry Gresham had sunk down near the stonework of the arch, and he was, indeed, half-hysterical with the shock. For this one, coming so soon after the other, had rendered him helpless.

"Clear off, you worm!" said Forrest contemptuously. "We know what you are now! By gad! Afraid of his own shadow—afraid of a blessed sheet! I wouldn't speak to the funk at any price! It's a wonder he's got pluck enough to go up to bed!"

Alec Duncan was filled with a sense of shame as he watched Harry rise unsteadily to his feet, and walk away. Why didn't the fellow round on these jeering cads? Why didn't he smash them? He was Alec's study mate, and Alec felt an echo of the humiliation.

A cricketer like that, too—a man who had drawn the school captain's attention on his very first day on the field! It wasn't merely unbelievable—it was just ghastly.

"If I were you, Duncan, I'd change out of that study," said Doyle. "You can't go on living with a fellow of that sort. He'll only

drag you into disgrace with him. Let him wallow in his own cowardice!"

Alec went indoors with clenched fists and grim eyes. He went straight to Study J, and found Harry there. Harry was crouching in the armchair, and he averted his face.

"Don't come near me!" he muttered. "I'll clear out of this study to-morrow, Alec. I won't let the fellows jeer at you, too!"

Duncan was startled. Just what Doyle had said! And Harry was agreeing! He made no attempt to explain his unreasoning terror.

"It's rotten!" said Alec firmly. "Great Scott, Harry! You can't go on like this! You're due to play in the match against Bannington on Saturday. You've got to tell the fellows something! Isn't there any explanation that you can give?"

"There's nothing—nothing!" choked Harry. "I'm just a funk, that's all!"

"I don't believe it!" snapped the New Zealand boy. "There's something wrong with you somewhere—some kink, or something! Did you have a scare when you were a kid, or——"

Harry started violently.

"Don't ask me!" he muttered. "Oh, please, Alec!"

"Then I'm right?" asked Alec quickly.

"No, you're not!" panted Harry. "You're wrong—you're absolutely wrong! I tell you I'm just a funk——"

The door opened, and Edward Oswald Handforth strode in. He was accompanied by Church, McClure, Fullwood and one or two others.

"Oh, here you are!" said Handforth grimly. "Grab him!"

Harry Gresham was grabbed and held.

"What's this?" asked Duncan, his eyes blazing.

"Gresham's coming to the Common-room with us—that's what it is!" replied Handforth aggressively. "We've heard all about his rotten behaviour, and he's got to give an account of himself!"



CHAPTER 20.

WORSE THAN EVER!

HARRY GRESHAM looked at Handforth with sober eyes.

"I can't give an account of myself," he said quietly. "If you've heard everything, there's nothing more to say."

Handforth stared.

"By George!" he ejaculated. "You—you admit——"

"Yes, of course," said Harry. "What else can I do? Those fellows all saw me, so if I deny that I was scared, I shall only be a liar. I'm a coward, I know, but I'm not a liar!"

Handforth was taken aback by this unusual attitude. But he wasn't going to be balked of his object.

"The whole thing is a slur on the Remove!" he declared. "And you're a cricketer, too—you're a corker at the cleanest and healthiest game under the sun! Why dash it, the two things don't mix!"

"That's what I've been thinking," said Duncan nodding. "If Harry was a contemptible rotter—like Forrest, or any of those young blackguards—I shouldn't take any notice, but it seems all wrong with Harry."

"It is all wrong!" retorted Handforth curtly. "Come on, Gresham, you can't fool us! Somebody must have bashed you on the head with a poker when you were a kid, or something. As long as there's a logical explanation we'll forgive you, but not otherwise. You'll tell us all about it in the common-room—where the crowd is."

Handforth had made up his mind to carry the thing through. In his own forceful way he was bluntly executing something from which most of the other fellows delicately shrunk. Handforth had no such scruples; he believed in direct action.

Everybody, to tell the truth, was anxious to find some excuse for Harry Gresham, for he was a fellow who mattered—the greatest asset the Junior Eleven had ever had. And if there was any loophole for him, the Remove was anxious to see him slip through it. While the others hesitated to act, Handforth got right on with the job.

Harry was dragged to the common-room, and there was a grim silence as he was placed at the far end of the room. The apartment was crowded.

"Now, Gresham, out with it!" said Handforth firmly.

Gresham looked at the expectant faces, awkward and nervous.

"I'm sorry," he said huskily. "There's nothing to say."

"Of course there isn't!" jeered Forrest. "I told you all along——"

"You dry up!" roared Handforth. "Gresham's a good sort, and as soon as he's explained——"

"I tell you there's nothing to explain," interrupted Harry desperately. "I haven't been knocked on the head: I haven't had brain fever, or I wasn't frightened by anything when I was a kid. There you are—I've told you the truth. Some fellows are naturally plucky, and some are just funks. It was born in me, I suppose, and I've got to face the music."

"Better chuck it up, Handy," said Nipper quietly.

"But—but it's awful!" snorted Handforth. "I can't believe it!"

"Smack him in the face, Teddy!" said Bernard Forrest, giving Teddy Long a push. "Smack him in the face and see what he does!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Handforth went red with anger. He didn't believe in adding to a fellow's humiliation in this caddish way. He felt pity for Gresham, and he was scornful, too, but he wasn't going to allow——

However, Teddy Long was acting.

Teddy was the biggest funk in the Remove—or had been until Harry Gresham's arrival. Everybody knew it. Long was a tubby, unpleasant-looking boy, and his reputation was of the worst. He was a sneak, a liar, and an unscrupulous little cur all round. Normally, he wouldn't have challenged a fag to a fight. But at present he was feeling very bold. He had had proof of Gresham's character, and he felt that he was on safe ground. Furthermore, he was backed up by Forrest. And as Forrest was a rotter, Teddy held a great admiration for him.

"Yah, you daren't hit me!" he jeered.

He wriggled forward and thumped Harry in the chest. Then he brought up his other hand, and jabbed the new boy in the arm.

"A fight—a fight!" went up an excited chorus.

"You can't get out of it, Gresham—you've been challenged!" said De Valerie. "Come on, off with your coat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"A fight!"

"A scrap between the two biggest funks!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Handforth, Nipper and all the other fellows with finer feelings, drew back. Handforth had wanted to barge in and put a stop to it all, but Nipper checked him. What was the use? The majority wanted it. They were utterly callous and thoughtless. Decent fellows enough ordinarily, but——

"Make a ring, you chaps, buck up!"

"Good egg! A fight!"

Teddy Long looked round, dismayed.

"You—you don't mean it?" he gasped.

"Yes, we jolly well do!" said Hubbard.

"You're my study-mate, worse luck, and I'm not going to let you disgrace Study B! You've challenged Gresham to a fight, and you're going through with it, my lad!"

"Oh crumbs!" said Teddy Long fearfully.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The thing had become a joke—a proper scream. Only a very few fellows in that room appreciated the tragic side. Harry Gresham was standing quite still, his face pale, his lips trembling.

"You young ass!" laughed Forrest, clapping Teddy Long on the back. "It'll be a walkover for you!"

"All right!" panted Teddy Long. "I—I'm game!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

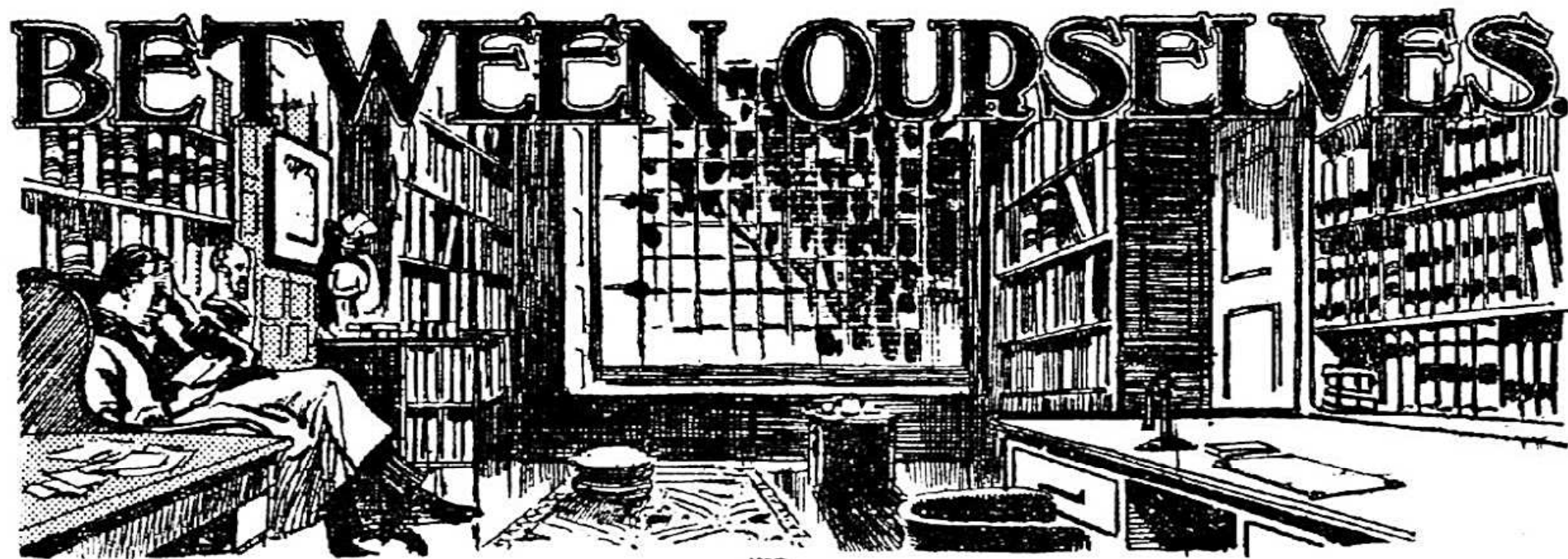
A bright idea had suddenly occurred to him. His reputation wasn't good—in fact, he had none at all—so if he was knocked out, it wouldn't matter. Teddy was afraid of getting hurt, and he had mentally decided to drop down, completely "out" at Harry's first blow. That would be a get-out for him!

"Off with your coat, Gresham!"

"Yes, buck up, my lad!"

Harry looked round him, a strange, feverish light in his eyes.

(Continued on page 35.)



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

FIRST of all, there's a confession I want to make. Last week, and the week before that, I was so tremendously busy that I completely forgot to put stars against quite a number of my correspondents' names. There were many letters that should have been starred, but, owing to rush of work, I quite overlooked this point. So will you readers who should have had stars against your names please forgive me? Of course, you don't know who you are, but that doesn't matter, does it? If you all forgive me, I shall be on the safe side. Now, to acknowledge this week's dose—in which I shan't forget to show my appreciation of the extra special letters.

Alfred Williamson (Mackay, Queensland), Ernie Carter* (Sydney), Roy Freeman (Cheltenham), Miss K. Lill (Grimsby), Henry L. Rouvray (Stoke Newington), Harold Buckley (Halifax), Violet H. Hutchinson* (Nottingham), Colin R. Boorer (Storrington), Spero Poolos (Cape Town), Ben Verwey* (Wellington, S.A.), F. Harrington Harling* (Lancaster), M. Thomas* (Southport), B. and C. Butcher and P. Watson* (Southport), A. B. Makofski (Brighton), H. Vernon-Plumley (Bristol), Terence Sullivan* (Hastings), Henry Geoffrey Hills (Melbourne), W. G. Drew (Halton), Paddy Roche (Melbourne), Sinclair R. Dobie* (Eastbourne), Geoff Johnson (Market Harboro'), Alick Simpson (Fulham), Jack Ollerston (Manchester), Misses A. and N. Wignall* (Preston), Miss N. Appleby* (Newcastle-on-Tyne), H. Kelk (Worksop), W. Blore (Nottingham), "True Blue & Co."* (Chatham), S. W. Le Roux (King William's Town, S.A.), "A Most Pleased Reader"* (Birmingham), "A Reader" (Dublin), Harry Mullen (Dublin), Winnie Moore (Watford), William Lister (Blackpool), Hilda Schofield (Manchester), W. H. B. (Birmingham), J. Lister (Halifax), "An Old N.L.-ite" (Walthamstow), Captain Starke (Newcastle-on-Tyne), Leslie Richards* (Margate), S. A. Dunn (Cardiff), "R. S. V. P." (Reading), J. H. Sinclair (Scarborough), Charles L. Saunders (Leicester).

Yes, Violet H. Hutchinson, that snapshot of yourself was quite O.K. As I have said before, any reader who wants to get my autographed photograph has only to send me a snapshot, or

a photo of any sort, and I'll send mine in exchange. By the way, I'm getting quite a collection of reader's photographs—and the more I get, the better I shall like it. It makes me quite cheerful when I look through my albums and see all your handsome dials. Now, with regard to your query—"Is Mr. Brooks my real name?"—I should say it is! Yes, it is absolutely mine, and I defy anybody else to pinch it. I suppose you thought it was such a rummy name—especially the "Edwy" part of it—that you took it for granted that it must be a *nom de plume*? But I'd like you to remember that "Edwy" is a good old Anglo-Saxon name. In fact, I believe there was a King of England who had that name. My history's a bit rusty, but I think I'm right in this case.

I don't quite see your point, Spero Poolos. You say: "It's not much use joining the League if I'm the only member in the suburb, is it?" Yes, but you seem to have forgotten a very important point, old man. *Somebody* must be the first to start, mustn't he (or she)? So why don't you make a start yourself, and after you are a League member, I have no doubt that others will join up. Then you'll be able to form a club, and get together. And it seems to me that unless you join the League yourself, to begin with, you might still have the same difficulty. Why don't you make up your mind and join straight away? It's as easy as A B C. Get next week's League form, and read the directions, and I know that you'll agree with me.

Hallo, Terence, old son of a gun! Still trotting about, I see. The title of No. 118 is "The Verdict of the School." Please don't ever think of dropping your weekly letters. I look forward to them, and enjoy them immensely.

You are quite right, W. G. Drew. The water-mill that appears in the Flood Series wasn't mentioned before, so you naturally saw nothing about it. The same applies to the Pine Hill Reservoir. Of course, I can't give every detail of all the surrounding country at St. Frank's, including every single building and hill. These points are mentioned in the stories as they are needed. There are all sorts of queer places

round about St. Frank's that I haven't even brought into the yarns yet. Mysterious old houses, dark spinneys, ruins, and things like that. They're all there—ready to be brought into the yarns when I need them. But what's the good of me mentioning them in the stories if they don't come into the plot? There's that old house near Bellton, for example, called Moat Hollow. If ever I need Moat Hollow again, you'll see it in the stories—but not before. You see the point, don't you?

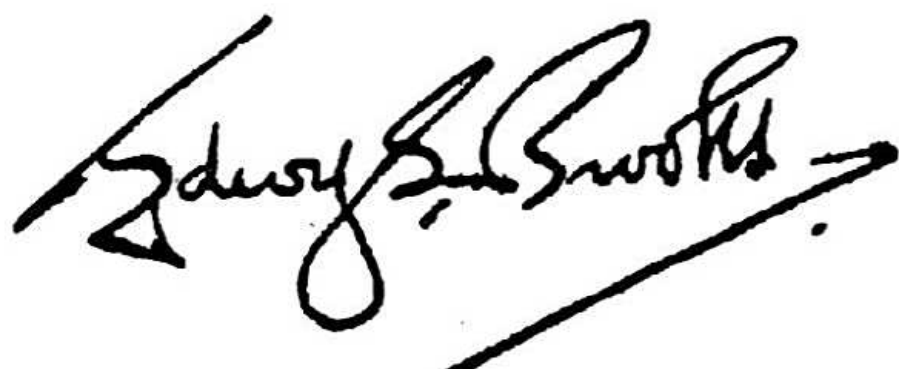
Thanks for your invitation, "True Blue & Co.," to publish any portion of your letter, if I want to. There is certainly one paragraph that I should like to repeat—especially for the benefit of those people who believe that my stories are only suitable for shallow minds. And I can give you my word that there are quite a lot of people about who think that! This is the bit I mean: "Your stories are clean, wholesome, and in every way beneficial to youth. Fit for anyone to read, from paper boys to princes, from dustmen to dukes." With regard to that story you are writing—yes, go ahead. Do just as you like.

The titles you want, W. H. B., are: No. 507, "The Hooded Unknown"; No. 520, "The Three Substitutes." Your desire that I should have two pages for "BETWEEN OURSELVES" is gratified now, isn't it? I only hope that other readers are of the same opinion as yourself. I have half an idea that quite a number will consider that still another page of the Old Paper is being wantonly wasted.

All right, Leslie Richards, send those lists along to me if you like. Then I will let you

know if they are correct. I don't quite agree with the latter part of your letter. You say that some people look upon the Old Paper with a jaundiced eye, and that when you argue with them you give it up as a bad job, as they are not amenable to reason. I'll tell you a good way to make these people understand that my yarns are not bloodthirsty or poisonous. Give them a copy to read, and make them promise that they will read it. Whatever their opinion of the story is, after they have perused it, they can never, with truth, say it is of the "penny blood" type. And perhaps—who knows?—you may get another reader. It is surprising how many people have commenced reading the St. Frank's yarns merely by picking up an accidental odd copy. So don't tell them to go and eat coke—tell them to read one of the yarns before judging it.

Well, I don't think there's any more space left for me this week—and I expect you are all heartily thankful. So now I'll ring off, and toddle up to bed. I am writing this in the small hours of the morning, but I'm blowed if I'm going to sit up all night.



SHUNNED BY ST. FRANK'S!



(Continued from page 34.)

"I won't fight!" he muttered chokingly. "I tell you I won't!"

"Yes, you will!" yelled Teddy suddenly, very brave.

He pranced up, and assumed a fighting attitude. The ring of juniors yelled with laughter.

"I don't see why I should fight!" shouted Harry hoarsely. "I'm not going to have this thing forced on me like this! I've no quarrel with Long. Haven't I told you there's no explanation? You know everything, so why torment me like this? Aren't you satisfied? Haven't you jeered enough?"

"Yes, chuck it!" shouted Nipper angrily. "By George!" roared Handforth. "I'll—I'll—"

"Rats!" yelled a dozen voices. "The fight's going on!"

"Time!" sang out Forrest.

Teddy Long rushed in aggressively. He whirled up to Harry, and everybody expected the fight to commence. But at that moment the common-room received a fresh shock.

Harry Gresham backed away with a cry of desperation. Madly, he fought his way through the surrounding ring. He was like a fellow demented. Gasping, fighting, he forced his way to the door and tore it open.

Slam!

In the dead silence which followed, Harry's footsteps could be heard as he bolted.

"Well, I'm hanged!" ejaculated De Valerie blankly.

And then followed pandemonium. Harry Gresham's flight was the most staggering thing that had ever happened in the history of the St. Frank's Junior School.

Afraid of the dark! Afraid to fight the biggest funk in the school! Harry Gresham was the son of a famous cricketer, but the Remove decided that he was beneath contempt.

And Harry, behind the locked door of Study J, was hunched up in the armchair, sobbing convulsively.

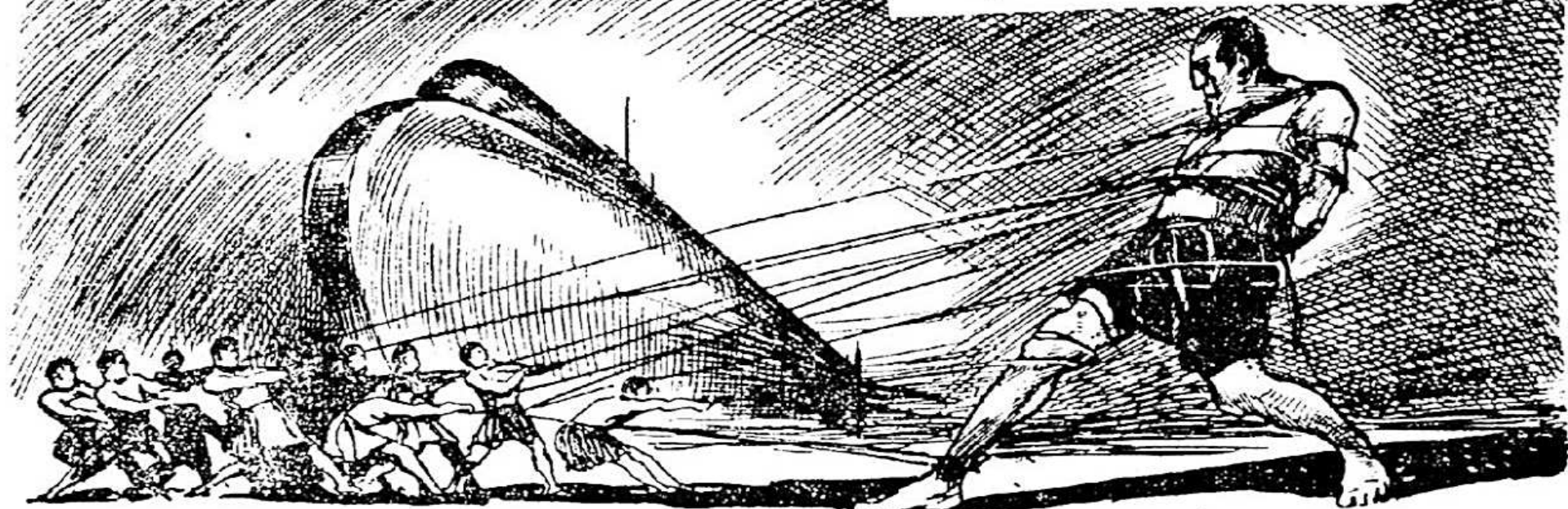
THE END.

(Harry isn't the rotter everybody thinks—he can't be! Handy and Willy and Alec Duncan all like him; they don't make mistakes. There's some very good reason for Harry's behaviour—can he conquer his cowardice? Look out for another enthralling long complete story next week!)

*The Flames of Life!**Weird and Wonderful Adventure!*

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, who are at enmity with the Giants. 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. After completing part of the journey, Cripps and Jim go on alone and eventually find themselves in the presence of He-Whose-Name-May-Not-Be-Spoken. The latter lays his hand on Cripps, who is wearing a suit of special armour.

(Now read on.)

"He" Tries Hypnotism!

SUDDENLY those strange, shining eyes of He-Whose-Name-May-Not-Be-Spoken were dimmed as if a curtain had been drawn across them. A look of frank astonishment crept into that wonderful face. And then he spoke, and his voice was as clear and resonant as a silver bell.

"How come you to oppose my power," he exclaimed, "you who have descended in the Flying thing from the world of the Sun?"

"It would be a long story, O He-Whose-Name-May-Not-Be-Spoken," Stanislaus Cripps retorted, "and the terms I would have to use are of a technical kind such as your language does not contain."

"I am not trammelled by language. Speak to me in whatever tongue you please, and I will follow the passing of your thoughts as one follows a thread in a woven fabric!"

"A very interesting development of the

still obscure science of telepathy, boy," Stanislaus Cripps exclaimed. "I will test the exactness of his statement."

He had spoken in English. Instantly He-Whose-Name-May-Not-Be-Spoken made a gesture of indignation.

"Who are you who dare to say that I speak the thing that is not?"

"I apologise," Stanislaus Cripps retorted. "You wanted to know how it came about that the electrical force you can apparently generate, did not have the effect you expected when you touched my head just now. This is not my head. It is an outer covering that I have assumed. My head is inside, and just like yours."

Seeing that Stanislaus Cripps was quite the ugliest man that Jim had ever seen, while this being had a radiant beauty that was unearthly, the statement sounded a little incongruous.

"The metal which you touched is one of my own invention," went on Cripps.

"Among its other qualities, it is a non-conductor—that is to say, no current can pass through it. Hence your experiment was a failure. As I intend to continue wearing this costume during the remainder of the interview—which I am confident is going to prove of the greatest interest to both of us—it will remain a failure, if repeated."

He cocked his head on one side and, though his face was hidden by the helmet of his diving dress, the gesture somehow suggested the grave mockery of his features.

"I hope I make myself clear?" he added.

HE—somehow Jim was beginning to think of him by that shortened term—stared down into the lenses that covered Stanislaus Cripps' eyes.

"All that is in your mind, I can see, like the reflection of a mirror. You are very proud—very self-satisfied—very sure that your puny knowledge has raised you far above the heads of your fellow men. Even towards ME your attitude is one of condescension."

His gaze became more concentrated as he spoke. He leaned a little towards Stanislaus Cripps, his beautifully shaped hands making weaving passes in the air.

"We have both a very proper appreciation of our own value," Stanislaus Cripps retorted. "I may have limitations, but I am not aware of them. I am aware, however, that the sort of fool tricks you're trying to play won't cut any ice. I'm proof against hypnotism. Let's cut out the parlour magic and talk like sensible beings."

Cripp Questions "He!"

JIM saw HE wince when Stanislaus Cripps, as if to set their relations on a proper footing, moved coolly across to the couch and seated himself on the edge.

"How long have you been here?" he inquired, as if he were a newspaper reporter interviewing some man of the moment.

Again that look of uncertainty and surprise crossed HE's face, marring somehow the cold beauty of it. Though Jim had recovered his nerve from the example of coolness Stanislaus Cripps had set, he was filled with a curious uneasiness.

It seemed to him that HE, though he masked his feelings, regarded Stanislaus Cripps with intense dislike. How he got the idea, he could not conceive, but it seemed to him that HE was fiercely jealous, as of some rival power that had obtruded itself upon his world.

Jim felt danger, though he could not see from what source it was to come. And even as these thoughts flashed through his mind, HE pointed to him, addressing Stanislaus Cripps.

"This one is young—a mere child. He knows fear. Just now he was trembling when he looked at me. Has he the art of reading the thoughts in a man's mind without the aid of words?"

What was behind that question suddenly dawned upon Jim. By some means or another—for some reason he was utterly at a loss to understand—he was getting vague impressions of what was passing through HE's mind.

"No, I have to talk to him," replied Cripps. "He's a reasonably intelligent boy for his age. But let us get on to serious matters. As you will realise, there is much that I wish to learn and understand. How long have you been here?"

HE seated himself on that strangely shaped chair. Somehow it formed a suitable frame to the magic wonder of his presence.

"You have seen my footsteps on the rock. I heard you discussing them with him you call Boy. How long do you think it would take these unshod feet of mine to make those impressions?"

"Anything over four thousand years," Stanislaus Cripps replied coolly. "But how have you lived for such a length of time? You seem to me a young man. In the world of the sun, three score years and ten are supposed to be the span of a man's life. I am ready to believe that it could be lengthened. Perhaps you have discovered the secret?"

HE threw out his graceful hands. A wintry smile played about his lips.

"I, too, was born under the sun. I have seen the blue sky and the green grass, the flowers growing, and heard the murmur of the blue sea!"

"You must find these surroundings something of a change," Stanislaus Cripps remarked dryly. "If you would like to go up there again and renew your acquaintance with the life of the sun, I shall be delighted to take you on my Flying Submarine. But just when did you decide to take up your abode here, sir?"

HE stretched out his arms with his hands open. His figure became rigid. Jim, watching him, saw sparks fly from one hand to the other. Gradually there formed between his palms a little ball of flame that grew bigger and bigger.

"Look, O Shining One," came HE's voice. "You will see without the need of words."

The Mystery Explained!

JIM was crouched on the floor by Stanislaus Cripps' side now, with a vague intention of defending him against any threatened treachery. He looked into that strange ball of flame that hung suspended in the air.

Gradually into the heart of it there crept a dark shadow that grew and spread. Then it took form and colour. A picture appeared—a living picture like the projected shadow that gathers on a cinema screen.

He saw a luxuriant tropical world, all vivid greens and blues, the palm trees stirred by a gentle breeze. And, out of this sea of green, there rose great pyramids and vast buildings of strange architecture.

Swiftly the scene changed, and he knew he was looking into one of those great buildings. A vast crowd was collected there, lying with their faces on the ground as if in adoration. In the background was a dais on which a golden throne was set, and on that golden throne was HE!

Now again the scene changed with the swiftness of a film. The sky had grown dark. From the hills behind the pyramids and buildings, flames and smoke were being vomited. He saw the population rushing about panic-stricken. From the sea came a great wave that swept over the land. The earth seemed to open. Jim was hard put to it not to cry out as he saw that pleasant world sink and disappear.

"And that, boy, if I am not mistaken," Stanislaus Cripps' voice boomed in a tone of congratulation, "is the Lost Continent which originally we set out to find."

"Look, O Shining One," came HE's voice. "You are hungry for knowledge. Look and see and speak not!"

And now within that ball of fire a strange scene of chaos and confusion was depicted. That pleasant tropical world of green and blue was sinking—sinking down into the bowels of the earth! Jim could see the temples and pyramids crumble and fall. He could see the people, prone upon the ground, trembling in their terror!

And then again the picture changed, and there appeared the Outer Cavern, with its blue atmosphere. HE was walking there. About him gathered the people, looking up at him with hands stretched out in entreaty.

"That is how the Kru came to this world," HE exclaimed. "Does anything yet remain of our great empire, O Shining One?"

"I'm afraid not," replied Cripps. "There are some statues on Easter Island which have greatly troubled a number of poor archaeologists. For the rest, the sea got the lot. But please continue this very interesting entertainment. How came you to find this place?"

Even as he asked the question, the ball of fire quivered and changed. There again was the great temple. HE—a very youthful figure—was shown raising a slab in the floor. Bound about his back was a bundle that presumably contained food. He passed into the darkness beneath. Now he was descending a tunnel.

It was a long descent, and he seemed very much as if he were going into the heart of a volcano, for now and again flames leapt up about him, and the picture was blurred by clouds of smoke.

Then suddenly they saw before them the very cave in which they were seated, and the strange column of fire moving across the floor. HE, stripped of all his clothes, was standing in the very path of that column of fire!

Now it lapped about his figure, and he raised his arms above his head and drew in the flames, as if beating his face with them. The column of fire moved on, leaving him

there, with a strange, radiant glow emanating from his body.

"Humph!" said Stanislaus Cripps. "Extremely interesting, my dear sir. And I take it that when the catastrophe took place and you and your people sunk like a lift down a shaft into the interior of the earth, you found yourself on more or less familiar ground? You made your way to this cave, and you have lived here—exactly how long?"

"Years that cannot be counted, O Shining One. You have seen the Outer and the Inner Caves. How long, think you, did it take the Falta—who, in our kingdom under the sun, were slaves—to develop into their present state? How long, think you, it took for the milch cows that fell with us from the sunlight to adapt themselves to their surroundings, and lose their accustomed shape and form? How long, think you, it took the Kru to frame and fashion the chambers and corridors of the Inner Cavern?"

"Anything up to ten thousand years!"

"You have spoken, O Shining One."

Stanislaus Cripps stroked the back of his helmet as if he wanted to ruffle his hair—an action he had when puzzled or annoyed.

"It is certainly within the realms of possibility that life might be prolonged for a very lengthy period—but, ten thousand years, my dear sir! Still granting your thesis, may I be informed exactly how you have accomplished the remarkable feat?"

"Look and you shall see! Even now, it comes—the life-giving fire—the flames that are food and drink for me!"

The Life-Giving Fire!

HE rose from his chair and stood for a moment in an attitude of attention. Now from afar off they could hear that rushing and rumbling that heralded the approach of the column of fire.

"If you would conquer death, O Shining One, and share with me the world's greatest secret, come—you shall be also in the fire. But first you must take off that metal dress you wear!"

Stanislaus Cripps jumped to his feet eagerly.

"I should be delighted to indulge in such an experience," he exclaimed. "It won't take a moment to take off this diving suit."

Even as he uttered the words, Jim was conscious of a sinister feeling of impending evil. He saw HE watching Stanislaus Cripps, his wonderful eyes glowing mysteriously. Jim jumped to his feet and laid his hand on Stanislaus Cripps' shoulder, just as the scientist was beginning to unscrew the head-piece of his diving suit.

"Mr. Cripps you mustn't!" Jim exclaimed. "He intends treachery—I know it! Don't you see that once you've taken off the diving suit you will have no protection against this electrical force he is able to exercise? Oh, please, Mr. Cripps!"

A shadow crept across the beauty of HE's face. He stared fixedly at Jim, but spoke no word. Stanislaus Cripps, with his hands still raised above his head, twisted back the headpiece.

"Thanks, boy. On more mature consideration, I believe your advice to be sound. There's no use running unnecessary risks."

"The Shining One is afraid?" HE remarked, with a wintry smile upon his lips.

"Between the exercise of reasonable precautions and that demoralising emotion known as Fear, there is, my dear sir, a great gulf, though you may not be aware of it. I have visited you here at some inconvenience. Your greeting of me was hardly such as should have been extended to a man of my scientific eminence. You unquestionably tried to electrocute me by causing to pass through my body some of the current with which you are so highly charged. Such behaviour, in my view, justifies a reasonable doubt of your bona fides. I have no intention of taking off this diving suit until I'm very much better acquainted with you. In short, there's nothing doing!"

HE strode swiftly towards Cripps and laid his finely moulded hands upon the other's shoulders. Jim, watching the scene, reflected that, supposing HE had lived for that enormous period to which he laid claim, this must be the first occasion on which he had been thwarted since his childhood—ten thousand years ago! There was no anger in his face—indeed, it was hard to trace any human emotion in those radiant features—only that shadow came again like a blind pulled down before a lighted window.

"But, O Shining One, your secret is known to me. I have but to turn this!"

As he spoke, he twisted the headpiece of the diving suit. The headpiece was kept in its place by a system of intermittent screws. One sharp turn to the right and it would come away in his hand. With amazing agility, as if foreseeing what was about to happen, Stanislaus Cripps twisted his body in the same direction, and, as he spun round and faced HE again, ducked, and slipped from his hold.

"If you dare to attempt such a thing again," the scientist exclaimed, his voice booming with passion, "I'll prove to you that the longest life can have an end!"

He drew the revolver from his belt as he spoke.

"Come a step further, and I'll blow you to smithereens! Understand me—I'm a man of peace; I never act hastily. I never lose my temper, but if you try any of your darned tricks, you're for it, my son!"

If the description of himself was hardly accurate—for a more violent, hasty-tempered man it would be hard to find—his pugnacity and indomitable courage had their effect even upon HE.

"Do you think, O Shining One, that with that toy you could bring death to one who has bathed in the living flames?" he inquired, with that wintry smile on his lips.

"As there are a great number of matters

on which I desire to get information, I shouldn't put the question to the test if I were you," Stanislaus Cripps replied grimly. "When you lived up in the sunlight, the barbarous science of armaments was in a very primitive state of development. Since then we have improved matters considerably. In a recent little scrap, in which a trifle of ten million human beings were engaged, they were able to kill at seventy miles, and this weapon of mine is the last word in destructiveness. You say that you can see what is passing in the world with your mind? Recollect a little scrap about two days ago outside the Inner Cavern, when the Kru drove back the Falta with their liquid fire?"

"I saw it, O Shining One. There was a slave who disobeyed my word—a girl whom you rescued from the place of execution. She was seized by the Kru."

"And you may recollect that we intervened in that scrap," Stanislaus Cripps remarked quietly. "The boy there fired the first of my cartridges that has ever been used against a human being. It didn't leave much of the poor fellow it hit, did it?"

HE's body became rigid.

"I saw that, O Shining One. He was there, and he was not. I could not make out what had become of him. You say that it was that toy you hold in your hand that caused him to break up and vanish before my eyes?"

"You've got it. This is the very identical weapon that did the trick. I've no wish to fire it again, but in the event of your trying any of your tricks with me, it will have to be done!"

Stanislaus Cripps thrust the revolver back into his belt.

"Let us converse, my dear sir, like intelligent human beings, not like barbarians. I see this very extraordinary column of fire is approaching. You were about to give us an illustration of the purpose to which you put it. Perhaps you will have the goodness to continue?"

With a roar like thunder the great whirling column of fire was approaching. HE turned swiftly and, descending the stone stairs, gained the floor of the tunnel below. There he waited, straight in the path of that moving fiery column. It drew near swiftly. As its outer edge touched him, HE thrust his hands into the very heart of it. The next instant he stood there, encased in that veil of flame!

(This magnificent serial takes some beating for thrilling reading, doesn't it? Amazing things happen in next week's fine long instalment, too. You'll read of how HE condemns Jim and Stanislaus Cripps to die, and of how he attempts to kill Tinta. Next Wednesday's stirring chapters are the best yet, so make sure of securing your copy of the NELSON LEE LIBRARY by ordering NOW!)



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.

Still They Come!

THOSE Silver Medals! Letters full of compliments reach me by every post. The general opinion is that the new award is top notch, and that its appearance marks still another stage in the triumphal progress of the St. Frank's League.

That there will be no relaxing of efforts to help on the League, I am convinced. There is plenty of enthusiasm evidenced in the friendly missives to hand—for which, best thanks!

The Old, Old Question.

Here is a query which has often been asked. "T. L." of Wolverhampton, wishes to know which are the Seven Wonders of the World. They are the Hanging Gardens of Babylon; the Pyramids of Egypt; the Temple of Diana at Ephesus; the Colossos of Rhodes; the Mausoleum erected by Artemisia at Halicarnassus; the statue of Zeus by Phidias; the Pharos, or Light-house at Alexandria. E. O. Handforth comes No. 8!

Catering for Cyclists.

Thos G. Mercer, 1, Sweden Grove, Waterloo, Liverpool, is planning a big biking trip for his summer holiday. As he is coming "via Luton," he evidently means to see a good part of England, and if he can get his jigger down south he will see splendid country in Kent, Sussex, and Hants. The Weald of Sussex is well worth seeing; here are the old Saxon forests. As for accommodation, catering, etc., there will be no difficulty in that respect. There are more bikes on the road now than ever, and good, cheap meals, and comfortable beds are to be found in every country inn.

"Sparks" Again.

My old travelling chum, "Sparks," of Liverpool, sends me, through his sister, an interesting account of a visit he recently paid to Pitcairn Island, where the Bounty mutineers established themselves in the remote bygone. There is only one camera on the island—but it does its job well—and only one smoker, so the tobacconists can't make a living. All the male population came aboard the steamer to sell fruit and curios. The one and only photographer is a direct descendant of Fletcher Christian, who was master mate of the Bounty.

A Chum from France.

"F. S." of Willesden, sends me an interesting note. He is French, but is rapidly acquiring English, and he has been helped a lot by the

stories in the NELSON LEE LIBRARY. He apologises for his "Anglais," but it is really excellent.

Going Abroad.

"A. R. W.," of Chesterfield, wants advice about going to the colonies. He will get valuable help if he writes to the Overseas Settlement Office, Caxton House, Tothill Street, London, S.W.

CORRESPONDENTS WANTED.

R. R. Potkin, 80, Haydons Road, Wimbledon, Surrey, would like to hear from members interested in poultry and rabbits. Hints exchanged.

W. J. Philipps, 18, Leyton Park Road, Leyton, London, E.10, wishes to hear from club members in his district.

C. J. Rawlings, 23, Market Place, Wokingham, Berkshire, wishes to hear from readers in his district.

James L. Priestley, 110, Bay Road, Sandringham, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, wishes to hear from readers in his district.

C. A. Rundle, 22, Meadow Court Road, Blackheath, London, S.E.3, wishes to hear from members who are running clubs in his district.

Colin Elwis, 134, Woodside Lane, Pitsmoor, Sheffield, wishes to hear from readers with a view to forming a club.

Tommy Thornhill (O.O.), 77, Southcroft Road, Tooting, London, S.W.17, wishes to draw attention to his change of address, and he asks members interested in club work to write to him. His own club is prospering, and boasts a library.

Allen Neilson (O.O.), Hassall Street, Harris Park, N.S.W., Australia, wishes to hear from all Australian O.O.'s, also a Public School member in England or Canada.

H. G. McClory, 6, Colwyn Street, Birkenhead, wishes to correspond with readers overseas, especially U.S.A. Keen on stamps. Also with readers in Birkenhead district who would help

(Continued on next page.)

THE ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE.

The Application Form for membership of the St. Frank's League appeared in last week's issue; it will be published again next Wednesday. All holders of **BRONZE MEDALS** who have qualified for **SILVER MEDALS**, and wish to exchange their medals for the higher award, should send their medals, together with 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 ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE CHAT

(Continued from previous page.)

form a club, or play matches. All letters answered.

R. G. Freeman, 12, Bell Lane, **London, E.1**, wishes to correspond with readers in any part of the British Empire, especially those interested in stamps.

J. N. Harris, "Luctonia," The Walk, Merthyr Tydvil, **South Wales**, wishes to buy Nos. 1-3 of the "N.L.L." (old series).

Thomas G. Mercer, 1, Sweden Grove, Waterloo, **Liverpool**, wishes to hear from stamp collectors; also from readers who received his circular letter.

P. Young, 45, Marmaduke Street, Edge Hill, **Liverpool**, wishes to hear from readers.

Gerald Feinauer, 29, Webber Street, Port Elizabeth, **South Africa**, wishes to correspond with readers anywhere; also with stamp collectors. All letters promptly answered. Age 18.

— Clifford, 24, Lady Somerset Road, Highgate Road, Tufnell Park, **London, N.**, wishes to hear from readers in his district who would be willing to form a camping expedition in May.

Thomas Alfred Blackman, Aldingbourne House, nr. Chichester, **Sussex**, wishes to correspond with readers; age 13.

J. Fowler, 260 Deepdale Road, Preston, **Lancashire**, wishes to sell copies of "Magnet" and "Schoolboys' Own Library."

W. Jones, 291b, Oxford Street, **London, W.1**, wishes to form a sports club, and would like to hear from readers in his district who are interested.

G. Reeve, Manor Drive, P.O. Manor Gardens, Durban, Natal, **South Africa**, wishes to hear from readers in his district.

N. D. McLean, c/o Mrs. G. T. McLean, 16, 8th Avenue, Bez Valley, Johannesburg, Transvaal, **South Africa**, wishes to hear from members in his district and stamp collectors in any part of the world. All letters answered.

Laurence A. Blair Wickman, 4, Ventnor Villas, First Tower, Jersey, **Channel Islands**, wants to hear from readers keen on getting back numbers.

John McKay, 50, Brunton Street, Percy Main, **North Shields**, wants to hear from readers.

Walter Robinson, 15, Sherborne Road, Highfield, Southampton, **Hants**, wishes to hear from readers who have the stories of Dr. Karnak and Ezra Quirke, and would exchange views on sports.

M. A. Tooke, 46, South Market Road, Great Yarmouth, **Norfolk**, wishes to correspond with readers at home and overseas; interested in photography.

M. Ashby, 84, Dallow Road, Luton, **Bedfordshire**, wishes to correspond with readers.

M. D. Pease, 84, Dallow Road, Luton, **Bedfordshire**, wishes to correspond with readers.

C. J. Rawlings, 23, Market Place, Wokingham, **Berkshire**, wishes to hear from readers in his district.

L. G. Bradbury (15), 57, Holly Street, Stapenhill, **Burton-on-Trent**, wishes to hear from readers interested in cricket.

Patrick Heffernan, 49, Portland Row, **Dublin**, wishes to hear from readers interested in acting and the pictures.

Charles N. Smart, 7, Copeley Hill, Erdington,

Birmingham, wishes to hear from members who will join his sports and hobbies club.

M. L. Martin, 4, Calvert Street, **Swansea**, wishes to obtain Nos. 3 and 4 of the "Monster Library."

Joseph Kerr, Georges Street, Dungannon, Co. Tyrone, **Ulster**, wishes to hear from readers anywhere; he has a club and publishes a magazine.

C. R. Terry, 24, Ryland Street, Ladywood, **Birmingham**, wishes to hear from members in that city.

Robert William Pearce, 6, Mount Durand, St. Peter Port, Guernsey, **Channel Islands**, wishes to hear from readers.

John Reginald Blades, Hand & Shears, Cloth Fair, West Smithfield, **London, E.C.1**, wishes to correspond with readers who know something about the Isle of Sheppey.

C. Temple Browne, 74, Victoria Road, Lower Edmonton, **London, N.9**, wishes to purchase in brand new condition for binding Nos. 1, 2, and 3 of the "Monster Library."

G. Gasken, 77, Ley Street, Ilford, **London, E.**, wishes to hear from readers who understand fretwork.

John Atkinson, 21, Monney Street, Hendon, **Sunderland**, wishes to hear from members in his district willing to form a club.

G. Edwards, Pleckville, Eketahuna, **New Zealand**, wishes to hear from any reader who will sell him the first four numbers of the "Monster Library."

F. Jones, 35, Prittlewell Street, **Southend**, wishes to hear from readers in the district to form a club.

Jack Greaves, 3, Row 103, **Great Yarmouth**, wishes to exchange books for back numbers of the "N.L.L."

B. Simper, "Illoura," Appila, Yanowrie, **South Australia**, wishes to correspond with readers in any part of the British Empire.

Phil Coles, c/o Bank of Adelaide, **Port Adelaide, South Australia**, wishes to correspond with readers anywhere about stamps and photography.

"Staunch Reader," 5, Norfolk Street, **Reading**, wishes to correspond with Reading readers so as to form a club; also with readers in Jersey and the U.S.A.—preferably Texas.

C. Chamberlain, 43, Gateford Road, **Workshop, Notts**, wishes to hear from readers in his district; he wishes to form a social club.

Maurice Baum, 59, Faraday Avenue, Cheetham, **Manchester**, wants to hear from Leagueites in his city.

G. Lake, 25, Selhurst New Road, South Norwood, **London, S.E.25**, wishes to hear from readers in district to form a club.

H. Biggins, 28, Liverpool Street, The Avenue, **Southampton**, wishes to correspond with readers in South Africa and Sheffield who are interested in cricket and stamp collecting.

James D. Brooks, 6, Park Terrace, School Road, Knowle, nr. **Bristol**, wishes to correspond with readers in the North of England who are interested in games, etc.

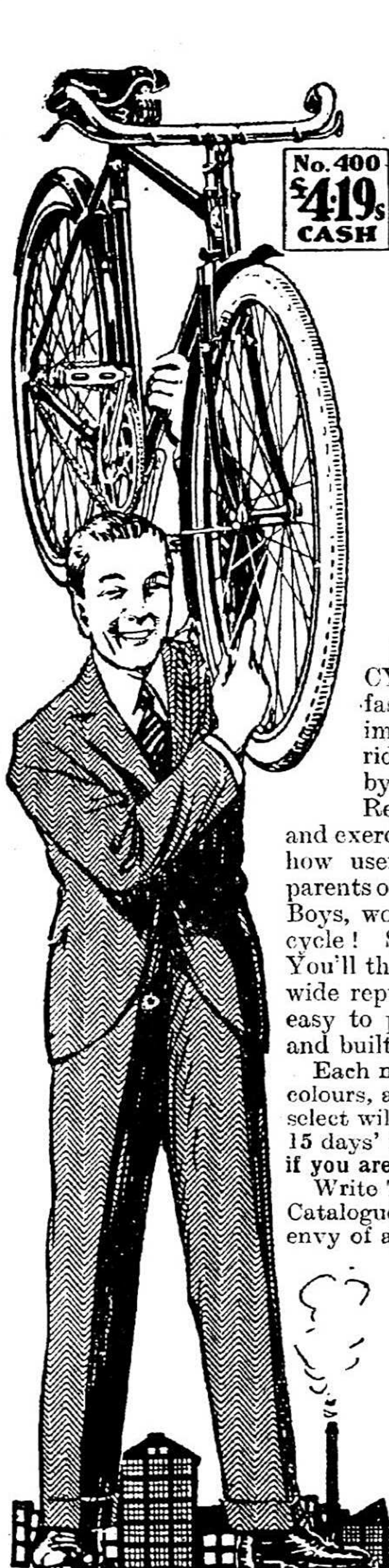
George Roscoe, 52, Tunnel Road, Edge Hill, **Liverpool**, wishes to hear from readers who would like to form a sports and social club in his district.

L. Clifford, 24, Lady Somerset Road, Highgate, **London, N.W.5**, wishes to hear from readers who would help form a cricket club.

Lawrence Thompson, 117, Melrose Street, **Leicester**, wants to join a club in his district.

K. Meek, 9, Fitzhamcon Embankment, Riverside, **Cardiff**, wishes to hear from readers in the district.

M. Abrams, 88, Grandison Road, Clapham Common, **London, S.W.11**, wishes to hear from readers.



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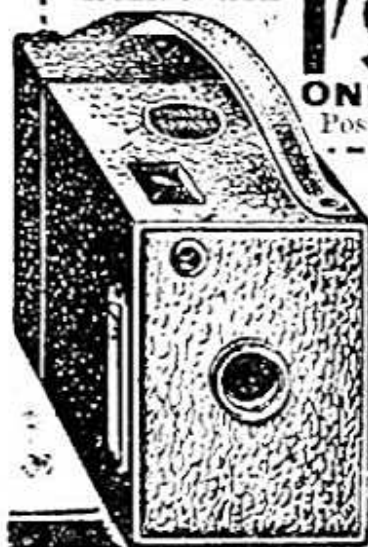


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