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THE

FEUD OF THE FOURTH!

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New York Times, 68.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

August 20th, 1927.



Reggie Pitt waved his arm as he cycled desperately alongside the track. The juniors thought that he had come to meet them, and they cheered him wildly, but their cheering shouts died as they saw the expression on his face and half caught his words: "... careful!" he bawled, pedalling madly. "Station ... warn ..." The rest was lost in the roar of the train.

*Dramatic Opening Story!**Rousing New Series!*

THE FEUD OF THE FOURTH!



By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

The first yarn in an absorbing new series of stories of school life, introducing the Boys of St. Frank's and the mysterious Unknown.

CHAPTER 1.

Reggie Pitt's Warning!

"BY George! It's Reggie Pitt!" Edward Oswald Handforth, of the Ancient House at St. Frank's, leapt to his feet and leaned out of the carriage window; the other nine Remove fellows in the compartment crowded at the door and the windows.

"Yes, there he is!" said Nipper, nodding. "Good old Reggie!"

"Begad! Give him a hail, old boys!" said Sir Montie Tregellis-West enthusiastically.

They were in the local train from Bannington to Bellton, and, as this particular train was not noted for its excessive speed, there was some chance of keeping Reggie Pitt in

sight for quite a little while. The train, as a matter of fact, was trundling along at about twenty miles an hour, and had just emerged from the cutting, and was now travelling over level ground towards the picturesque little station of Bellton. At this particular part of the line a lane ran alongside the railway for about half a mile, separated only by a low fence.

And there was Reggie Pitt, the genial Junior skipper of the West House, riding for all he was worth on his bicycle, and actually keeping pace with the train itself. What was more to the point, he was waving wildly towards the crowded compartment, and the juniors were waving back.

"Good old Reggie!" roared Handforth. "So you've come along to give us a welcome,

eh? Good man! Let's give him a cheer, chaps!"

"Hurrah!"

They all cheered, for, in truth, they were glad enough to see their old rival of the West House. All the juniors in the train belonged to the Ancient House—with the single exception of Johnny Onions.

The occasion was an unusual one.

The new term had already started at St. Frank's—indeed, it was now four days old. But these ten fellows had only just returned from Africa, having been members of Lord Dorrimore's party to the Congo. They had arrived in England, after many adventures, a day after the new term had begun, and after a brief three days at home they were now travelling back to school.

They were all glad enough to be again in good old England, and were even looking forward keenly to the term at St. Frank's. Until Reggie Pitt had been sighted a moment earlier, they had been eagerly discussing football. This term, they felt, was going to be doubly interesting.

"By Jupiter, he's keeping pace with us all right!" grinned Church, as he pressed his nose against one of the windows. "But I'm blessed if I can understand why he's so jolly excited."

"That's easy," said Handforth. "We're four days late for term, and it's only natural that Pitt should be excited."

But Nipper was frowning a little.

"Well, we expected some of the chaps to give us a welcome, but I must confess I'm a bit puzzled at Reggie's behaviour now," he said. "It isn't like him to get into a condition of this sort."

He leaned out of the window and waved to the speeding cyclist, who was separated by only a few yards. Reggie Pitt turned a flushed and perspiring face towards the crowded compartment. He was riding absolutely alongside, and keeping pace splendidly.

"... out!" he bawled. "... careful ... station ..."

"What?" roared Nipper.

"... Formers!" bellowed Pitt. "... warn ... get there!"

Owing to the rattle and roar of the train it was utterly impossible for Nipper to catch the gist of Reggie Pitt's shouted remarks. He only got hold of a word here and there, and they meant nothing. And then, before Reggie could say anything further, the road veered off towards the right, and a high hedge intervened. The West House junior eased up, and gave a final wave before he disappeared.

"What was he shouting about?" asked Tommy Watson curiously.

"Goodness knows!" replied Nipper. "I could only catch a word or two. But I'm jolly certain that he wasn't just giving us a word of welcome. There was something behind it—something in the nature of a warning."

"A warning?"

"That's what it sounded like," nodded Nipper.

"Good gad!" ejaculated Archie Glen-thorne, starting up out of a doze. "I mean to say, a warning, dear old cheeses! What for? That is to say, why should the dear chappie give us a warning?"

"There's no reason at all that I can see," said Nipper. "Perhaps I was mistaken. But you can't get away from the fact that Reggie's behaviour was jolly peculiar. He knew we were coming on this train—we wrote and told two or three fellows. And he knew that he would be able to spot us if he cycled alongside the track for that half-mile. He was waiting there deliberately—waiting to spot us and shout to us. Why?"

"Seems dotty!" said Handforth. "Why the dickens couldn't he have waited another minute or two, and spoken to us at the station? We're slowing up already. Pitt must be going off his rocker!"

It certainly did seem very strange. Why hadn't Reggie Pitt waited for the party at the station itself? Why had he attempted to shout to them under such difficult conditions? The more Nipper thought of it, the more convinced he was that Reggie had tried to warn them of some danger. But what danger could there be?

"Hallo!" said Handforth, who was leaning out of the window again. "The platform is fairly crowded with chaps. Swarms of 'em! By George! They mean to give us a topping welcome home!"

True enough, the little platform of Bellton was crowded with St. Frank's juniors, and they were all looking excited and eager. The returned travellers were gratified. It was rather nice to feel that they were thought so highly of. Half the Junior School, it seemed, had come down to the station to extend them a welcome!



CHAPTER 2.

A Warm Reception!

HERE we are!"

Nipper flung open the carriage door as the train clattered to a standstill. He was smiling cheerfully, and so were all the other Remove fellows. They were glad enough to be back among the old, familiar surroundings. They had had so many excitements in Central Africa that they were looking forward to the peace and quiet of St. Frank's.

"Hallo, you chaps!" sang out Nipper cheerily. "Jolly good to see you all again!"

"Begad, rather!"

"Good old St. Frank's!"

They tumbled out, and then observed, for the first time, that all the juniors on the platform belonged to the Fourth Form. There wasn't a single Removite there!

And this was rather peculiar under the circumstances.

They had at least expected Fullwood and De Valerie and Russell and a few other of their Form fellows to be on hand. But no; all these juniors belonged to the Fourth. There was John Busterfield Boots and Percy Bray—Bob Christine and Yorke and Talmadge—Len Clapson and Oldfield—— In fact, the Fourth appeared to be at full strength. Even Armstrong and his cronies of the East House were in full force.

And, strangely enough, every face was grim.

There were no welcoming smiles here—no cheery greetings. Nipper, during that first second, sensed that something was wrong. But Handforth wasn't aware of it yet.

"Well, I call this rather decent!" he said approvingly. "Evidently these Fourth-Formers have got up a special reception for us. Good men! A party in honour of the returned wanderers, eh?"

"I don't wish to be frightfully pessimistic, old onion; but, dash it, these chappies appear to be somewhat ferocious," murmured Archie Glenthorne, adjusting his eyeglass and examining the Fourth-Formers. "In fact, they are giving us a somewhat foul look!"

"Yes, I've noticed that, too," said Church, in surprise. "What's the matter with them? They haven't said a word yet—haven't given us a hand to shake!"

"What's the matter with them?" asked Harry Gresham.

"If you ask me," said Duncan, "there's some trouble here. These fellows aren't too friendly!"

"But why not?" asked Watson. "What the dickens have we done to them?"

It was more puzzling than ever. The Fourth-Formers took no action. They were crowding round the booking-office, much to the embarrassment of the ticket-collector. Buster Boots and his men were looking more relentless than ever. Undoubtedly, there was no friendly welcome here. But nothing was done until the train had pulled out of the station. As though by a pre-arranged plan, the Fourth-Formers just stood there, watching and waiting.

But directly the train had gone there came a dramatic change.

The swarms of Fourth-Formers crowded round, and hemmed in the ten Remove fellows.

"I'm not usually inquisitive," said Nipper politely. "but what's the exact idea of this game, Boots?"

John Busterfield Boots ignored the query.

"Now, then!" he shouted. "Don't forget our plans. Three of you to each of them! Grab hard—and hold tight!"

"Here, chuck it!" roared Handforth, as he was seized. "What's the matter with you, Bob Christine? What the dickens——"

"Better not ask any questions, Handforth!" replied Bob Christine coldly. "And you'd better not offer any resistance, either. It'll only be painful if you do."

"Well, I'm jiggered!" said Handforth, staring.

Even he was beginning to realise now that this was no ordinary reception. There were no welcoming smiles on these Fourth-Formers' faces—nobody had offered a hearty handshake. The whole affair was mysterious in the extreme.

None of the Removites had been expecting a brass band to meet them at the station, but they had certainly believed that a few of their friends would be on hand to give them a cheery word of welcome. And they regarded such fellows as Buster Boots and Bob Christine as their friends. But the Fourth-Formers were all cold and grim. Friendliness seemed to be the last emotion they were capable of.

And to make a fight for it was out of the question.

They were outnumbered by about three to one, and, moreover, they had been taken completely by surprise. Even Handforth found it impossible to struggle, for he was seized and held by three of the biggest Fourth-Formers before he could even grasp the fact that he was a prisoner.

The others were equally helpless.

They did not want to fight, either. Fighting was the very last thing they had thought of. They had come back to St. Frank's full of enthusiasm and full of good cheer. So what was the meaning of this extraordinary reception?

"Look here, Boots, you're the Junior skipper of the Fourth," said Nipper steadily. "We've always been good friends, I believe. So you might, at least, explain——"

"We're explaining nothing!" interrupted Boots curtly.

"But, hang it, you might as well——"

"The less you say, the better!" interrupted Buster Boots. "But I think you'll understand that we are in no friendly mood."

"Yes, I gather that," said Nipper. "But we'd also like to know——"

"Furthermore, we regard you as enemies!" went on Boots gruffly. "Let that be enough!"

"Odds mysteries and puzzles!" complained Archie Glenthorne. "I mean to say, if we've done anything to offend you, old darlings, what about a word of regret? Kindly explain the situash, and we'll do our best to——"

"March!" shouted Boots abruptly. "Keep them together, you chaps. If anybody struggles, biff him!"

"Hurrah!"

"Down with the Remove!"

And the prisoners were marched roughly out, through the booking-office, and into the station yard.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" said Handforth, in amazement. "What's it all about? If you chaps won't explain, I'll smash you! I'll biff every one of you——"

"Silence!" ordered his captors.

"What?" gasped Handforth.

Reggie Pitt came tearing up on his bicycle, but he dismounted, and remained some little distance away.

"Sorry, you chaps!" he shouted breathlessly. "I tried to warn you, but——"

"You clear off, you beastly Removite!" shouted a dozen Fourth Form voices. "If you come any nearer we'll grab you!"

"We'll grab him, anyway!" said Buster Boots grimly. "Armstrong, see to it!"

Armstrong and four or five other Fourth-Formers rushed at Reggie Pitt, and reached him before he could mount his bicycle again. He was pulled off, and then hauled back into the crowd. It had been done so swiftly that Reggie had had no time to escape. In his anxiety to talk with the Remove fellows he had approached too closely, and now he was a prisoner, too.

But what could it all mean?



CHAPTER 3.

Very Mysterious!

JOHAN BUSTERFIELD BOOTS gave a sharp order, and the other Fourth-Formers obeyed with alacrity. The prisoners were

swung round, and their jackets and waistcoats were wrenched off. One or two of the captives resisted—Handforth in particular. But it was useless. They could do nothing against the overwhelming odds. Handforth, by reason of his aggressive nature, had four guards, but even his strength was powerless against such numbers.

"Just a minute, Boots!" said Nipper quietly. "We know we're pretty helpless, but isn't some sort of explanation due to us? What's the idea of this rag, anyhow?"

Boots came across to Nipper, and looked at him with a cold, steady eye.

"You're the captain of the Remove, and I'm the captain of the Fourth," he said aggressively. "That's enough!"

"What do you mean—enough?"

"We're enemies—that's all!" replied Boots curtly.

"But, my dear chap, why on earth should we be enemies?" said Nipper, in surprise. "I know there's a certain amount of rivalry between the Remove and the Fourth, but that's no reason why there should be enmity. If you'll only explain what's biting you—"

"That's enough!" interrupted Buster Boots. "Obey orders, or things will be generally uncomfortable for you."

He turned aside, and Nipper grinned. There was something rather comic about John Busterfield Boots in his present mood. When Boots had first come to St. Frank's he had been very warlike—very important. He had even attempted to seize the leadership of the Lower School, and had been put in his place after many tussles. It really seemed that Boots was attempting to become a masterful leader once again. True, of late the Fourth had been very quiet, and decidedly out of the picture. But the Remove fellows did not appreciate Boots' method of getting into the limelight again.

In spite of their protests, they were all compelled to wear their jackets and waistcoats inside out. Their topplers were secured to their heads by string—upside down. Altogether they looked ludicrous—a laughing-stock for all who happened to see them.

Boots, very much like a general in command of his army, gave fresh orders. Long ropes were produced and tied to the prisoners—until they were all strung together in a long double line, with Nipper at the head, and the other ten behind him.

"By George!" fumed Handforth. "We'll make these beastly Fourth-Formers pay for this when we get the chance! They're mad! This is a nice welcome to give us after we come back from Africa, isn't it?"

"Cheese it, Handy!" growled Church. "You'll only make things worse!"

"But what's the explanation?" asked Tommy Watson blankly.

"I tried to warn you, but you couldn't hear me," said Reggie Pitt, with regret. "I happened, quite by accident, to spot these Fourth-Formers collecting down at the station. I guessed what their game was, so I buzzed along that lane, hoping that I could warn you—"

"That's enough!" interrupted Bob Christine sternly, as he walked up.

"Have you caught the fever, too?" demanded Handforth, glaring. "I used to think you were a decent chap, Robert Christine, but I'm changing my mind. You're no better than Boots!"

Bob Christine glared.

"Anyhow, we're not going to let you Remove fellows rule the roost this term!" he said firmly. "The Fourth has been in the background for too long. This term it's coming to the front, and you Removites are going to be pushed back into obscurity!"

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

The whole thing had taken the Removites by surprise. They had been expecting no such demonstration. Coming back to St. Frank's, after their adventures in Africa, they had naturally expected that their school-fellows would welcome them cheerily. To find the Fourth in such a warlike mood, and so determined to assume power, had given them a shock. When Reggie Pitt attempted to explain, he was silenced.

Standing near by was the station hack—an ancient growler that had seen better days. The horse had already been removed, and the Remove prisoners were forced between the shafts, and the ropes were made secure. Nipper and Handforth and the others were hot with indignation. For it was now easy to see what the Fourth-Formers intended.

"Good gad!" ejaculated Archie Glen-thorne. "They're absolutely going to make us haul this blessed contraption through the village, what? I mean to say, it's a rag, and all that sort of rot!"

"Yes, Archie, it's a rag," said Nipper, with a nod. "And it's no good resisting,



Quick as a flash of lightning Nipper's fist shot in. Buster Boots staggered back, and then fell sprawling—knocked out! That fight between the rival captains was the first big clash in the feud of the two Forms.

either. We're absolutely outnumbered, and we shall have to make the best of it."

"Yes, but we'll make these Fourth-Formers pay for it afterwards!" roared Handforth fiercely.

"Silence, there!" ordered Boots.

"Are you talking to me?" demanded Handforth, with a gasp.

"Yes, I am!" thundered Boots. "No talking in the ranks!"

"Oh, my goodness!"

"These chaps means business!"

And the Fourth-Formers did! But it was all very mysterious—unaccountable. The new arrivals could think of no reason for the aggressive attitude of Buster Boots & Co.

But they could not fail to understand the humiliating nature of the situation. The Fourth-Formers proceeded to fill the hack. They climbed on the roof, on the box, inside, and on the rear axle. They were all over it, clinging by the dozen. It was rather a wonder that the ancient vehicle withstood the strain.

Boots was sitting on the box, whip in hand. He cracked it ominously.

"Now, then, geo up!" he commanded.

"Off you go, my sons!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Fourth-Formers at last relaxed sufficiently to laugh. They roared with merriment—a kind of jeering merriment. There was nothing ill-natured about it; but, at the same time, it was an expression of gloating victory.

The Remove fellows, much against their will, were compelled to pull—to haul with all their strength. And so the cavalcade started—with a third of the Fourth Formers on the hack, and the others running alongside in a double line, urging on the unwilling steeds.

And the village of Bellton received a big surprise.

Down the High Street came the procession—the rumbling hack, with its strange company. Nipper & Co. had certainly expected a warm reception—but scarcely as warm as this! They came down the High Street with their jackets reversed, with their toppers on upside down, and generally looking grotesque and ridiculous. As they progressed, the Fourth Formers shouted with ridicule, and the village folk looked on with broad grins.

Most of the Remove fellows were boiling with indignation, but Nipper kept his head. Sooner or later, there would be a reckoning for this! If John Busterfield Boots was asking for trouble—well, he would find plenty of it!

CHAPTER 4.

The Fourth Means Business!



A, ha, ha!"

A swarm of yelling fags surrounded the procession as it neared St. Frank's. The Third-Formers had got wind of the approaching cavalcade, and many of them had come down to meet it. Now they were running alongside, shouting with laughter. Most of these Third-Formers consisted of the Modern House and East House sections—such fags as Fullerton, Parry Minor, Tommy Tripp, Jimmy Hook, and others of their own particular stamp. Willy Handforth and Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon and the other prominent fags were not there. They took no part in this demonstration.

It was a great humiliation for the Remove fellows.

They were no longer in a position to protest, or to utter threats against their tormentors. Hauling that laden hack was hard work—particularly up the slope towards the school. All of them were breathless, and their muscles were aching tremendously. There had been no relief—no rest. Their captors had kept them at it ceaselessly.

At last the procession trundled into the old Triangle of St. Frank's. The yells from the fags, running on in advance, had attracted many Fifth-Formers, and there were further shouts of laughter. For the Remove it was, indeed, an hour of trial.

Ralph Leslie Fullwood happened to be on the Ancient House steps, chatting with Cecil de Valerie and Clive Russell and Tom Burton. They stared blankly at the fresh arrivals.

"Great Scott!" shouted Fullwood. "It's Nipper and the other chaps! They've been collared by the Fourth!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Are we going to stand it?" roared Tom Burton excitedly. "Come along, mess-mates! Down with these lubbers! Full steam ahead for the enemy! Down with the Fourth!"

"Hurrah!"

Other Remove fellows were coming out now, including a number from the West House, led by the Hon. Douglas Singleton and Solomon Levi.

"By my life!" shouted the Jewish boy. "Those Fourth Form loafers have got hold of Nipper and Handy and the others! Up, the Remove!"

"You said it, kiddo!" shouted Ulysses Spencer Adams, the American junior. "Oh, boy! We'll make hash of these Fourth Form gorillas!"

From all quarters the Removites came rushing to the rescue. The very sight of the Fourth Form fellows seemed to enrage the Removites. Nipper and the other new arrivals couldn't understand it—for there had never been any real antagonism between the two Forms. But now they seemed to get furious at the very sight of one another.

"Rescue, Remove!" Handforth was roaring. "By George! We'll make these rotters pay for this!"

"Steady!" gasped Pitt. "We can't have a scrap here, in the Triangle——"

"Can't we?" thundered Handforth. "You wait until I'm free!"

The excitement spread like wildfire. More Remove juniors were coming out, and they did not wait to ask any questions. They simply ran to the attack—blindly, aggressively. They did not want to know the whys and wherefores of the case. The Fourth Formers were on the warpath; the Remove was ready, and willing, to accept the challenge.

In less than a minute a terrific battle was in progress. It wasn't exactly a fight, but a rough-and-tumble. The Fourth-Formers, led by Boots, feeling that they had achieved their end, speedily retired. They ran into their own Houses—the Modern House and the East house. Yelling with derision, and roaring with laughter, they disappeared indoors, and the Remove was left in sole command of the field.

"My only hat!" gasped Handforth. "What's it all about?"

"Can't explain now!" said Fullwood briskly. "The best thing we can do is to get you fellows out of these ropes—before any of these people—before any of the prefects come along. There'll be all sorts of inquiries unless we look sharp!"

"That's true enough!" said Nipper. "We don't want to get into trouble during the very first minute we're back at school! Who's got a pocket-knife handy?"

A dozen pocket-knives were quickly produced; the prisoners were cut free from their ropes, and they made all haste to remove their ridiculous headgear, and to reverse their jackets and waistcoats. Within the space of two or three minutes they became themselves again. But they were all hot and flustered and angry. Never before had they been so humiliated by the Fourth.

The yells of derision continued to come from the East House and the Modern House. But so far no prefects had appeared. It was a half-holiday, and the school was rather quiet, except for the shouts of the juniors. Most of the seniors had gone off to watch a First Eleven match, and it was just possible that this noisy incident would pass unnoticed.

There were five Houses at St. Frank's—the School House, which contained only the classrooms and lecture halls and laboratories—and the four boarding-Houses. The Remove was accommodated exclusively in the Ancient House and the West House. Buster Boots and his Fourth Form supporters all lived in the Modern House and the East House. Most of the other Forms at St. Frank's were equally divided among the four boarding-houses.

"I tried to give you a warning, Nipper," said Reggie Pitt regretfully. "That beastly train was making too much noise, though—you couldn't hear me."

"It wouldn't have been much good, even if we had heard you, old man," replied Nipper.

"The whole platform was filled with Fourth Formers, and there was no escape for us."

"Yes, but you could have jumped out on to the line—by the other door of the carriage," explained Reggie. "That was my idea. In that way, you could have given those idiots the slip. Well, how are you, Nipper?"

"Fine!" grinned Nipper. "We'd forgotten to shake hands, hadn't we?"

It was many weeks since they had met—for Reggie Pitt had not been able to go on that African trip with the other fellows. And now the Removites crowded round, welcoming the returned wanderers. For the moment, the Fourth was forgotten.

The cabman from the station had appeared, with his horse. He lost no time in harnessing it to the old hack, and clearing off. Evidently, he had been well tipped by the Fourth-Formers, for he seemed in no way aggrieved by what had happened. His only anxiety was to get out of the school grounds as quickly as possible—fearing, no doubt, that some of the masters would come, and censure him.

At all events, he soon went, and the old Triangle of St. Frank's began to look normal. The Fourth-Formers kept to their own Houses—crowding in the doorways, shouting with laughter, and uttering all kinds of catcalls. Nipper was struck by the fact that there was no friendliness in the attitude of the Fourth. From first to last there had been no good-natured fun in the affair. Boots had apparently made up his mind to be unpleasant—and he had succeeded.

"Now," said Nipper, turning to the crowd of Removites. "We want to know what it's all about."

"Yes, rather!" said Handforth. "What's happened to the Fourth? What was the idea of springing on us like that—after we've come back from all sorts of horrid dangers in the Congo region? They might have had the decency to give us a friendly hand, anyway!"

Reggie Pitt shook his head.

"You're not likely to get a friendly hand from the Fourth," he replied grimly. "Boots is on the warpath—and the Fourth is behind him, solid. They've declared open war against the Remove, and it seems as if they mean it!"

"But, why?" asked Nipper. "That's what we want to get at, Reggie, old man. Out with the yarn!"

CHAPTER 5.

A Storm in a Tea-cup!



URGING through West Arch, the crowds of Removites decided upon an impromptu meeting. It was no good going indoors—for there wouldn't be room in either of the Common-rooms. This had to be an open-air meeting—where every member of the Remove could be on hand.

So the quietness of the West Square was disturbed by the excited juniors. They

swarmed round Nipper & Co. and the other returned travellers. After the greetings were over, the explanations commenced.

"It seems to me that it's time we came back!" declared Handforth tartly. "The Remove has been like a ship without a rudder—and I'm the rudder!"

"Cheese it, Handy!" said Fullwood. "Nipper is the skipper of the Remove, and we've badly wanted him these last two or three days. Things might have been all right if you fellows had turned up on the first day of term, with all the rest of us."

"Well, we're here now," said Nipper cheerfully. "Let's hear what's been happening."

"Well, nothing much, when you come to examine it," said Reggie Pitt. "It really started on the first day of term, Armstrong, of the East House, and a crowd of his cronies, thought it a bit of sport to rag Professor Tucker."

"There's nothing much in that," said Handforth. "We've all ragged Professor Tucker, on and off. He goes about asking for it."

"Yes, but this was different," said Reggie Pitt. "The old boy had lost his spectacles, and was quite worried about it. Well, Armstrong and his crowd surrounded the professor, and had some ill-natured sport at his expense. His glasses were hanging on a cord down his back all the time, and one of those East House rotters pulled them off, and stamped on them. I suppose he thought it was funny."

"That was a dirty trick," said Nipper, nodding.

"Of course it was," agreed Fullwood hotly. "So a crowd of us rushed to the professor's rescue, and we gave the Fourth-Formers a good trouncing. As a matter of fact, we bumped them pretty hard."

"And then Boots and Christine and a lot of Modern House chaps arrived on the scene, and things became generally exciting," put in De Valerie.

"But you don't mean to say that Boots agreed with Armstrong's lot?" asked Handforth, in surprise.

"Yes, he did!"

"Then Boots ought to know better!" said Edward Oswald. "I gave him credit for more sense."

"I don't think Boots or Christine or the others realised what Armstrong had been doing," said Pitt. "They only knew that a number of Fourth-Formers had been set upon, and they were angry about it. They regarded it as a slight to the Fourth. So they sailed in, and things became more hot than ever."

"And to make things worse, old Pycraft appeared on the scene," said Russell. "Pycraft's the master of the Fourth, you know, and he took all his own boys away with him, and gave them a pretty stiff impot, I think. And Boots swore to have revenge."

"We thought it had all blown over," went on Reggie Pitt. "But this afternoon's affair, evidently, is intended as an act of retaliation. Boots has been biding his time, and he's sprung this surprise. I believe he's getting some of his old aggressiveness back. Any-

how, he's been tremendously active during these past two or three days—drilling the Fourth-Formers, holding meetings, and all that sort of thing. He's got an idea that the Fourth is better than the Remove, the poor idiot!"

"Better than the Remove!" roared Handforth. "By George! We'll soon teach him some sense!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Let's invade the Fourth Form quarters now, and have our revenge!" sang out somebody else.

"Good idea!"

"Steady, steady!" said Nipper coolly. "There's no reason for all this excitement. If Boots loses his head, that's no reason why we should. As far as I can see, the whole affair is a storm in a tea-cup!"

"That's just what I thought," agreed Pitt, nodding. "Absolutely nothing in it. No reason for all this animosity. It's potty! The whole thing started with nothing, and it looks like developing into a regular feud—"

"That's the word!" put in Fullwood. "Boots has been saying that he means to start a feud against the Remove—and to show the whole school that the Fourth is the Remove's master!"

"My only hat!"

"It's no good dealing gently with these fatheads!" said Handforth grimly. "They've got to be put into their places—and the only way is to use force. It's no good wasting time, either."

"We all feel like that, Handy, but we've got to keep our heads," said Nipper quietly. "If there was some strong reason for enmity between the two Forms, I'd be with you in a minute. But there's no reason at all. I'm all for peace."

"Peace?" demanded Handforth, aghast.

"Yes!"

"Then you're mad!"

"No, I'm not—I'm perfectly cool," replied Nipper. "What on earth is the use of starting a quarrel—a bitter feud between the two Forms? That's what'll happen if we go rushing at the Fourth, and try to wipe them up. I believe in rivalry, but let's keep it friendly, for goodness' sake. We don't want to introduce bitter blood into the affair."

Handforth snorted.

"There'll be plenty of blood if I can get at some of their noses!" he retorted gruffly. "You can go and eat coke, Nipper! We've all been humiliated by these beastly Fourth-Formers, and we're going to have our revenge!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Down with the Fourth!"

Nipper looked round at the excited crowd. He could see that they were in the mood for mischief, and he did not approve of it at all. As captain of the Remove, he felt that it was up to him to calm them down. It would be a senseless thing to start a bitter quarrel with the Fourth. Boots & Co. had had their rag, and it would be far better to call the honours even. Far better, at all events, than to let this thing carry on—until it became a posi-

tive warfare. Perhaps Nipper could see a little further than the others—and something told him that if this quarrel continued it might become a veritable menace to the future peace of the Lower School.

There was football to consider, and other sports, and a hundred and one different things. It would be a thousand pities to have a rift in the lute—to have a prolonged quarrel between the two important Forms of the Lower School. Far better to call a truce, and to have the thing settled once and for all.



CHAPTER 8.

Nipper, the Peacemaker!

HANDFORTH very deliberately rolled up his coat sleeves.

"Who's going to follow me?" he asked, glaring round. "The Fourth needs a lesson, and it's our duty to—"

"Wait a minute, Handy," interrupted Reggie Pitt gently.

"I'm blown if I will!"

"Then I'm afraid you'll go by yourself, old man," said Reggie. "Nipper's the skipper of the Remove, and it's up to us to hear what he has to say. If we don't approve of it, we can shout him down."

Handforth grunted.

"All right, then," he said. "But make it brief!"

Nipper laughed merrily.

"The trouble with you, Handy, is that you take things too seriously," he said, with a twinkle in his eyes. "If you'd only keep cool—"

"Cool!" roared Handforth. "After what those Fourth-Formers did to us?"

"My dear chap, we were all in the same boat," said Nipper. "I don't bear any ill-will against Boots for that little affair. After all, when you come to think of it, it was only a rag. Nothing ill-natured about it. The Fourth felt that they had a grievance against us, and they settled it. That's all. There's no sense in starting a lot of enmity."

"That's true enough!" admitted Fullwood, cooling down.

"Begad, there's somethin' in what you say, dear old boy!" nodded Sir Montie Tregellis-West. "A soft answer turneth away wrath—it does, really!"

"That's exactly my idea," nodded Nipper, with a grin. "This affair started while I was away from the school, and as Junior skipper it's up to me to put it right. There's a perfectly simple way of doing the thing. We'll get up a deputation—about six of us. Then we'll go into the Modern House under a flag of truce and tell Boots & Co. that they're a set of silly asses, and that all this feud stuff has got to stop."

"And won't there be any fight?" asked Handforth, staring.

"Not if we can help it."

"And is that what you call dealing with the affair?" asked Edward Oswald disgustedly. "By George! If I had control, I'd act differently! No flag of truce for me—no talking of peace! I'd go straight into the Modern House, grab Boots by the scruff of the neck, and punch him in the eye!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's one way of doing it, Handy, I'll admit," chuckled Nipper. "But I hardly think it's the best way. If there was some reason for keeping up this feud, I'd go into it heart and soul. But it's all silly nonsense to be on bad terms with the Fourth over nothing at all. So let's fix upon this deputation, see the fatheads, and laugh them to scorn. If they have any sense of humour, they'll realise the ridiculous aspect of the matter, and admit themselves in the wrong. Then, after that, we can be friendly rivals, as before."

There was no doubt about it. Nipper's personality was very winning. Ninety per cent. of the Remove fellows were with him at once. They understood that his view was the right one. To attack the Fourth now would only be to aggravate the whole situation. It was ridiculous from start to finish, and would only become more ridiculous if they kept it up. Boots and his men were in the wrong—so it was up to the Remove to keep in the right.

Handforth was one of the few who opposed the vote, but his voice was drowned by all the others.

"Oh, all right—have it your own way!" he said at last. "But I don't believe in these peaceful methods—never did! There's nothing like a hard fist when a fellow wants to argue! Better than all your words! Anyhow, I'm going to be on this deputation!"

"You're welcome, old man—providing that you give us your word you won't biff anybody unless you're biffed first," replied Nipper. "We're going over there on a peaceful mission, don't forget."

"I promise," said Handforth reluctantly. "But I tell you plainly, if any of those fat-headed Fourth-Formers start on me I'll make mincemeat of them! It might be a good idea to let me do the talking——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Handforth was disgusted to find that practically everybody was against him. They had all come to the conclusion that Nipper's policy was right—that it would be perfectly silly to carry on this feud without any adequate reason. If Boots & Co. liked to make idiots of themselves, that was no reason why they should catch the same fever. Far better to keep their heads.

And so the deputation was formed.

It consisted of Nipper, Fullwood, Handforth, Pitt, De Valerie, and Singleton. Both the Ancient House and the West House were well represented. It was a strong gathering of prominent Removites.

The rest of the fellows decided to wait in the Triangle, so that they would be able to hear the result as soon as the deputation emerged. The afternoon was still comparatively young, and it was a quiet hour. It

would not be tea-time for some little space yet.

As it happened, there was no need to go indoors. For, as the deputation marched through West Arch, they could see right across the Triangle and through East Arch. And there, in the East Square, the Fourth-Formers were holding a meeting of their own. John Busterfield Boots was standing on a box, or some similar object, and addressing his Form fellows. His aggressive voice rang out on the afternoon air, and he was being cheered to the echo.

"There you are!" said Handforth. "Look at that! If we go over there, they'll wipe us up! Far better to make a massed attack!"

All the same, Nipper hesitated for a moment. There was something very warlike, something very significant, about the attitude of the Fourth-Formers. For several terms they had been very quiet. A number of them, including such celebrities as Buster Boots himself, Bob Christine, Lawrence, and a few more, had been prominent at cricket and in other sports. But the majority had contented themselves with remaining inactive. The East House, in particular, had been "dead" so far as sports were concerned. For many terms the East House had been simply nowhere. But now, apparently, a change was taking place. John Busterfield Boots had come back this term in one of his most determined moods. He had made up his mind to revive the fighting spirit in the Fourth—and he was already succeeding!



CHAPTER 7.

Keeping the Peace!

LOOK out!"

"Here come those beastly Removites!"

There was a big stir in the Fourth-Form ranks as Nipper and the other members of the Remove deputation came through East Arch. A number of the Fourth-Formers came of their own accord, grim and aggressive. But they halted, rather uncertain, when they observed Nipper's white handkerchief.

"What's that thing?" demanded Percy Bray as he ran up.

"Flag of truce," said Nipper briefly.

"Rats!" said Denny. "We don't want any white flags! There's going to be no armistice!"

"No fear!" shouted the other Fourth-Formers. "Wipe them up!"

"Hold on!" roared Boots arrogantly. "None of that, you idiots! The white flag must always be respected!"

Such was Buster Boots' power of command that the other Fourth-Formers fell back, rather abashed. In their excitement they had been on the point of committing a bad breach.

John Busterfield Boots came forward, and Percy Bray and Walter Denny were by his

side. These two were his own particular chums, the fellows who shared Study No. 6 in the Modern House with him. In the same way, Bob Christine and Roddy Yorke and Charlie Talmadge hung together. They were the heroes of Study No. 1.

"Well," asked Boots in a tone that expressed no sign of peace, "what do you fellows want? What's the idea of coming here with that white flag? Haven't we given you to understand that we're at war?"

Nipper grinned.

"Chuck it, Buster, old man!" he said genially. "You've had your little joke, so why not laugh with the rest of us? We're the injured parties, and we're grinning. So why can't you—"

"I don't want any of your soft soap, Hamilton!" interrupted Boots curtly.

"Hamilton!" repeated Nipper, aggrieved. "It's always been 'Nipper' until now, Buster."

"I'm not feeling any too friendly towards you chaps," retorted Buster gruffly. "After what happened the other day, there can't be any peace between the two Forms."

"But what did happen?" asked Nipper, in surprise. "According to all I hear, some of our fellows ragged you because you were having a game with old Professor Tucker—"

"Never mind about that," interrupted Boots, with the air of one who knows that he is in the wrong, and won't admit it. "That's all over and forgotten! We've had our revenge for that affair. We've made you fellows look ridiculous."

"Then why, in the name of common sense, keep it up?" asked Nipper cheerfully. "Hang it all, Buster, we don't want to quarrel! There's no need for us to have bitter blood. The whole thing's wrong, and the sooner it stops the better. Friendly rivalry—yes! The more of it the better! But don't let's have any bad feeling."

"Hear, hear!" said the other members of the deputation.

"Why should we take any notice of this piffle?" demanded Armstrong, of Study No. 12 in the East House. "These blessed Removites are getting scared of us! They can see our power! And so they come crawling round, asking for peace!"

"You—you silly ass!" roared Handforth, flaring up. "Getting scared of you, eh? Scared of a set of dummies—I don't think! Why, if it came to a scrap we could wipe the whole lot of you up!"

"Steady, Handy," murmured Nipper. "That sort of talk won't do any good."

"Well, they're not going to say that we're scared of 'em!" snorted Handforth.

"Boots won't agree to a statement like that," smiled Nipper, turning to Buster again. "Will you, Buster, old man?"

"Yes, I will," replied Boots, who was in his most arrogant mood. "The Fourth isn't what it was last term. And if you Remove fellows think that you're going to be the bosses of the Junior School—well, you'd better think again, that's all! The Remove has had its day!"

"Has it?" said Nipper, trying to remain cheerful.

"Yes, it has!" went on Buster. "The Fourth is better than the Remove any day—and this term we're going to prove it to everybody!"

"Better than the Remove?" repeated Nipper, with a laugh. "Chuck it, Buster! You know very well that that's an exaggerated statement—"

"I know nothing of the sort!" interrupted Boots. "You're the skipper of the Remove, and you seem to think that you're a little tin god! Well, your day is at an end, Hamilton! I'm going to be the big boss in future!"

"That's very interesting," said Nipper, his temper slowly rising. "It strikes me, Buster, that you're getting a bit too big! That head of yours has become swelled—just because you took us by surprise this afternoon. I don't want warfare between the two Forms, but if you're asking for a lot of trouble, we'll supply it!"

"And we'll supply it now!" roared Handforth.

"Hear, hear!" yelled the other members of the deputation.

"You'll supply it now, will you?" jeered Buster Boots. "Haven't you had enough? Don't you know your masters when you see them?"

Nipper breathed hard.

"Our masters, eh?" he repeated. "I'll trouble you to withdraw that, Boots!"

"Rats! I'll withdraw nothing!"

"We came here on a peaceful mission—and we want this deputation of mine to be successful," went on Nipper steadily. "But you're making it jolly difficult for us, Boots."

"The more difficult I can make it the better!" said Buster Boots, red with fury. "You'd better clear off while you're safe!"

Perhaps Boots realised that he was not justified in speaking so arrogantly. But he had started in this tone, and he could not very well back out of it now. He could see that Nipper was getting angrier and angrier. This in itself was enough to make Boots continue; he was in just the mood to aggravate things.

"Yes," he said, "the Remove has had its run, and now it's the Fourth's turn. We'll show you fellows that you can't ride roughshod over us! You wiped us up the other day, and we've had a bit of our revenge this afternoon. But we're not satisfied yet—not by long chalks!"

"Are you going to act sensibly?" asked Nipper. "Are you going to talk rot of this sort all the time, Boots?"

"I'm talking common sense," snapped Buster. "And if you tell me that I'm talking rot again, I'll knock you down!"

Nipper laughed.

"You can't mean that, Buster," he said dryly. "You're in a temper, old man—that's what's the matter with you. You know as well as I do that you're talking sheer rot!"

Biff!

John Busterfield Boots made no mistake. His left came out, and caught Nipper

between the eyes. And the junior captain of St. Frank's staggered back, and then recovered himself. He was dizzy, and he could see all sorts of lights in front of him. But Boots' face was in the middle of those lights—and Nipper made for it.

"All right!" he shouted angrily. "You've asked for it, Boots—and you'll get it!"

And the next second Nipper was rushing at the Fourth Form leader with grim intent. As a peacemaker, he had not been exceedingly successful.



CHAPTER 8.

The Fight in the East Square!

FIGHT—a fight!"

"Smash him, Boots!"

"Now's your chance, old man!"

"Beat Nipper, and grab the leadership of the lower school!"

"Hurrah!"

The East Square was filled with excited shouts. By this time the other Removites had come through East Arch, and were crowding round. Fortunately, no prefects had appeared upon the scene, and all the masters seemed to be ignorant of the trouble.

A ring was quickly formed, and nobody else interfered. Nipper and Boots were to be allowed to fight this out between themselves, with fists. The Fourth-Formers were convinced that Buster would win. He was in tip-top form, and so arrogant that he was capable of smashing anybody. The Fourth yelled with excitement, for here was an opportunity of showing the Remove what was what!

"Stand clear, you fatheads!" roared Handforth. "Let them have room! I'll keep time——"

"Rats! We don't want any timekeeper!" roared Armstrong. "Boots will have him out in less than a minute!"

"That's all you know!" sang out half a dozen Remove fellows.

But everybody, Removites and Fourth-Formers alike, realised the importance of this engagement. It was a battle between the leaders. If John Busterfield Boots won, then his power would be great. Nipper had only just returned to St. Frank's, and before he could attempt to wield any kind of authority Boots was fighting him. It was a strange reception for the popular junior captain. He had hardly expected to be involved in a scrap of this sort during his first hour at the old school.

After the first moment or two—after the first three or four blows had been exchanged—Nipper rather regretted the whole business. It was a bad mistake, allowing their tempers to get the better of them like this. Here they were, in full view of all the windows of the Modern House and the East House, fighting recklessly with bare fists!

If a master or a prefect saw them the punishment would be heavy. But nobody seemed to care. The general excitement was so great that masters and prefects were forgotten.

"Go it, Boots! Wipe him up!"

"Hurrah!"

"The Fourth for ever!"

Buster's supporters, fired by the thought of gaining power in the lower school, were filling the air with encouraging shouts. The Removites were doing their share, too.

The ring was a ragged sort of affair, constantly changing in shape, as fresh juniors fought their way to the front. But the two fighters took no notice. They were swaying this way and that way, hitting out with grim intent. Boots knew that this was his chance, and he was fighting with every ounce of skill that he had.

John Busterfield Boots was a hard fighter, but he had taken on a big job when he struck the redoubtable Nipper. For Nipper held the championship of the lower school, and he was acknowledged to be the best junior boxer of St. Frank's. Ernest Lawrence, of the Modern House, was perhaps the only fellow who could really compare with him, but Lawrence was an exception. And in a "mill" of this sort Boots was probably even better than Lawrence himself.

Crash! Biff! Thud!

There was no time-keeping and rounds were not even thought of. This battle was one that was being fought out at express speed, and after Nipper had received one or two jarring knocks he was entering into the spirit of the fight as keenly as Boots. Certainly he wasn't going to let himself be beaten if his strength or skill could prevent it. Nipper knew that his prestige was at stake; at all costs he must defeat this challenger!

But Boots was fighting with even greater strength than ever before. His blows, when they got home, were deadly, and he was as quick as lightning, too. But Nipper, perhaps, was just a shade quicker, and the majority of Buster's drives went astray.

"Good old Nipper!" yelled Handforth. "Go it! Show him who's who!"

"Remove for ever!"

"Hurrah!"

An answering chorus of yells went up from the Fourth-Formers, and there was such ferocity in the shouts that many of the more sober-minded Removites were startled. This feud had assumed dangerous proportions, and it had all started from nothing. That was the ridiculous part of it. Yet here were the junior leaders of the two Forms, smashing into one another with all their strength.

"You're doing it, Boots!" shouted Bray excitedly. "Give him one terrific swipe, old man! Lay him out!"

"You'll do it!" said Lawrence. "Keep your head, Buster—keep your head! Don't get excited, and you'll win!"

Even Lawrence, one of the most decent fellows in the lower school, was all for the Fourth. He had caught the fever of

animosity, that sudden, unexpected disease which had attacked the entire Fourth Form. Such sportsmen as Bob Christine and Len Clapson were shouting all sorts of uncomplimentary remarks about Nipper and the Remove. Friends of many a term were glaring angrily at each other.

Individually, perhaps some of these juniors would have liked to remain on good terms. But collectively they were enemies. It was Form against Form, and nothing could be allowed to stand in the way.

Biff! Thud!

The fighters were still going at it, and now for the first time Buster Boots was beginning to show some signs of weakening. He had discovered that Nipper was not so easy to beat. In spite of all Buster's efforts Nipper remained calm, cool, and dangerous. And as Nipper felt himself gaining the ascendancy, so his anger left him, and he only felt sorry for this aggressive Fourth-Former who had forced the fight upon him.

"Had enough?" he asked, during a brief pause.

"No!" panted Boots. "I'm going to smash you! I'm not whacked yet, even if you think I am!"

"You'll win, Buster!" yelled his supporters.

"Go ahead, Nipper—finish him off!" replied Handforth. "We're lucky so far—no masters or prefects. But it can't last much longer. Finish him off, and get it done with!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Floor him, Nipper, old man!"

And Nipper himself realised the urgency of the case; not that he had been holding back or prolonging the fight in any way. From the very first he had been kept busily engaged in defending himself, and in getting a good drive now and again at Buster's face. But now, realising that he was in the stronger position Nipper acted with every atom of his skill and strength.

Crash! Biff! Crash!

Quick as lightning, he got home three tremendous blows, on Buster's chest, then his chin, with a terrific uppercut to follow.

Buster Boots staggered back, losing his footing, and fell sprawling. He lay there gasping—out!



CHAPTER 9.

War to the Knife!

SILENCE reigned for a few tense seconds, while John Bunterfield Boots attempted vainly to rise.

It was a silence of consternation on the part of the Fourth-Formers, and a silence of quiet confidence on the part of the Removites. Nipper had given Boots the thrashing he deserved, and all was well.

The junior skipper's supremacy had been questioned, and this fight had been absolutely

necessary. But Nipper showed no sign of triumph as he bent over Buster and assisted him to rise.

"Well, that's over, old man," he said breathlessly. "Give us your fist, Buster. Let's shake—"

"Not likely!" interrupted Armstrong gruffly. "You clear off, Nipper! We'll attend to Boots!"

Nipper turned on him angrily.

"There's no sense in making things worse, Armstrong!" he said, with dangerous quietness. "Boots and I are friends, and this little scrap isn't going to make any difference—"

"Isn't it?" snapped Boots, as he struggled up. "Go and eat coke! I don't want your friendship!"

Nipper bit his lip, and a second later Boots deeply regretted that ungracious interruption of his. He wasn't that kind of fellow, and he knew that he had acted wrongly. But before he could make any suggestion of regret a number of the East House juniors surged forward, and Nipper was sent hurtling away. He and Handforth and several others fought desperately, but they had been unprepared for the sudden rush.

"Down with the Remove!"

"Yah, rotters! We don't want to have anything to do with them!"

"No fear! War to the knife!"

"Steady on!" sang out Reggie Pitt. "What about the flag of truce? Don't forget that we're a deputation—"

But the Fourth Formers were altogether too excited to remember the flag of truce, or to respect it. The deputation was roughly seized and hustled across the East Square towards the archway. Here the other Removites were surging, and they all went flying out into the Triangle, hotly indignant at this behaviour on the part of the Fourth. It was a great indignity, and the Remove fellows were infuriated.

"All right!" went up a shout. "Let it be war, then!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Down with the Fourth!"

"Come on—let's go for them!" shouted Handforth. "Nipper wanted to do the decent thing, and they wouldn't let him! Let's show them—"

"Cave!"

"Eh?" gasped Handforth, looking round. "Who the—"

"Old Pycraft!" went up the shout.

The Fourth-Formers went streaming into their respective Houses, in order to avoid Mr. Horace Pycraft's eagle eye. And, sure enough, the master of the Fourth soon came into sight from the direction of Inner Court, looking excited and eager. Mr. Pycraft always enjoyed butting in during a little bit of trouble.

"What is happening here?" he demanded, glaring round. "Answer me! Do you hear, Handforth?"



Fourth-Formers rushed Handy & Co. as the trio shot out of Buster Boots' study. In a matter of seconds the three adventurers into enemy territory were struggling beneath a mass of yelling humanity.

"Speaking to me, sir?" asked Handforth, looking round.

The Removites had no cause to fear Mr. Pycraft. He had no authority over them. But he was a master, and it was necessary to be respectful to him. The fact that he was several kinds of a rotter made it difficult, but the thing had to be done.

"Yes, Handforth, I am speaking to you," said Mr. Pycraft tartly. "What is all this commotion?"

"Which commotion, sir?" asked Handforth innocently. "I can't see any!"

"Do not dare to quibble, boy!" shouted Mr. Pycraft. "There is no commotion now, I know, but there was a commotion a minute ago!"

"Was there, sir?"

"You know very well there was, Handforth!" roared Mr. Pycraft. "I suspect that you Remove boys have been deliberately picking a quarrel with the Fourth! I have noticed many indications of animosity during the past two or three days."

"Really, sir?" asked Handforth. "Perhaps

you're right; but I can't pass any opinion, because I've only just arrived."

"Same here, sir," said Tommy Watson. "We haven't been on the school premises for more than twenty minutes."

"Yes, it is high time that you came!" said Mr. Pycraft sourly. "I do not believe in these lax methods, allowing you to return to school just when you please! However, it is not within my power to—Hamilton!"

He broke off, and rapped out Nipper's name sharply.

"Sir?" said Nipper, looking round.

"Hamilton, you have been fighting!"

"Yes, sir," admitted Nipper.

"With whom?"

"I would rather not say, sir."

"But I command you to give me the name of the boy with whom you have been fighting!" ordered Mr. Pycraft.

"I'm very sorry, sir, but I would rather not," insisted Nipper. "Does it matter?"

"It matters a very great deal!" retorted the Form-master. "I can only regard this attitude on your part, Hamilton, as sheer

insolence. I shall make it my duty to report the matter to your Housemaster!"

"Very good, sir," said Nipper calmly.

A slight sneer came upon Mr. Pycraft's face.

"Of course, I had momentarily forgotten," he added. "Your Housemaster is favourably inclined towards you, is he not? Perhaps it would be better for me to report this matter to the Head——"

"That's not fair, sir!" interrupted Nipper hotly. "Mr. Lee may be my guardian, but in all matters of discipline he treats me just the same as any other fellow. There's no favouritism with Mr. Lee, as you ought to know, sir."

Mr. Pycraft stepped back under Nipper's fierce outburst.

"Oh, very well—very well!" he said raspingly. "We will not pursue the subject, Hamilton! But I shall certainly report you to Mr. Lee at the first opportunity. Disgraceful! Fighting in the open Triangle like this! Positively disgraceful!"

He walked on with a swish of his gown, and disappeared into the East House, where he boarded. And the Remove fellows remained out in the Triangle, gathered together in large groups. They were all excited, and all mightily pleased over Nipper's decisive victory. Nipper received showers of congratulations, but he did not like them.

"Oh, dry up, you fellows!" he said, with a frown. "I'm not feeling particularly pleased over it, even if you are. This thing looks like trouble. Big trouble!"

"All the better!" said Handforth, in his most warlike manner. "There's going to be a struggle for the supremacy of the Junior Forms! Ancient and West Houses against the Modern and East Houses. Do you think we're going to let these silly Fourth-Formers gain the upper hand?"

"Never!" went up a loud chorus.

Nipper nodded.

"Perhaps you're right," he said. "Boots and his men are a bit too arrogant this term. The only possible solution to the problem is for us to fight it out. Boots has declared a feud, and we should be weak if we attempted to make peace now. It's got to go on!"

"Good man!" said Handforth heartily.

War to the knife was just what he wanted—it suited him down to the ground. And, judging by the expression on every other face, it suited the rest of the Remove, too!

CHAPTER 10.

Business as Usual!



DEAR old boy, I suppose it's off?"

Sir Montie Tregellis-West asked that question in Study C in the Ancient

House, after tea. Nipper was sitting in the

easy chair, looking very thoughtful, and, incidentally, looking rather puffy in the region of the left eye and in the vicinity of his right ear.

"Off, Montie?" he asked, looking round. "What's off?"

"The Form match for to-morrow afternoon, old fellow."

"Form match?" repeated Nipper. "To-morrow afternoon? But it's not a half-holiday— Oh, you mean the usual preliminary match? H'm! I hardly know what to say, old man. This feud looks like messing up everything."

"Well, the Fourth-Formers have asked for it," growled Tommy Watson, as he prepared to collect the tea-things.

Nipper got up from his chair and went to the window. Outside, the evening sunlight was brilliant, and the air was heavy with the hum of insects. The window was wide open, and the warm air came wafting through into the stuffy study.

"Not much weather for football, anyhow," remarked Nipper. "We're not really into September yet——"

"All the same, we always have a preliminary match at beginning of term," pointed out Watson. "We can't wait for the weather, I suppose? What about the big League games starting on Saturday? The big clubs will play, even if it's ninety in the shade!"

Nipper nodded.

"That's true," he admitted. "As you say, we can't allow the weather to interfere. But this feud is different. It looks like interfering pretty badly."

He considered for a few moments, and then smiled. He had already made up his mind. Just then the door opened, and Handforth & Co. walked in. Handforth was looking very determined.

"Just a word with you, Nipper, old man," he said, as he closed the door. "We seem to have arrived into a pretty kettle of fish, don't we? Well, I don't mind. This term looks like being pretty interesting, on the whole."

"Of course, I expected something like that from you, Handy," chuckled Nipper. "You always enjoy a scrap, don't you?"

"I haven't had the chance yet!" retorted Handforth, with some warmth. "You're the fellow who's been doing the scrapping. Jolly selfish of you, Nipper. Why couldn't you have let me had a smack?"

"By the look of things you'll have plenty of smacks before long," replied Nipper. "But take my advice, Handy, and forget the whole business for this evening, if you can. We shall all feel better to-morrow, after we've calmed down. There's no sense in making things worse."

"I was thinking about making a raid on the Modern House," said Handforth firmly.

"No harm in thinkin' about it, dear old boy," put in Sir Montie.

"We ought to make a raid to-night, just

to show those Fourth-Formers who's boss," continued Handforth. "I want your support, Nipper. I want you to come along——"

"Awfully sorry, old man, but there's nothing doing," interrupted Nipper. "This feud is quite bad enough, without making it worse. Leave it alone until to-morrow, and perhaps a healthy game of football will bring a big difference."

"Football?" repeated Handforth, with a start.

"Yes."

"But to-morrow isn't a half-holiday!"

"I know that," replied Nipper. "But there's heaps of daylight after lessons, as you know. And we always have a preliminary match against the Fourth at the beginning of the season. It's fixed for to-morrow afternoon—a settled date. We're booked to play the Fourth."

"And do you mean to say that you're going to have the game just the same?" asked Handforth in astonishment.

"Of course I am," replied Nipper. "Why not? This match is one of the ordinary fixtures, and it can't be abandoned. A feud is a feud, but it mustn't interfere with the sports. Anyhow, I'm going to put up a list of players on the notice-board this evening."

"But—but we can't play football with those rotters!" protested Handforth. "They're a set of mouldy, confounded——"

"Chuck it!" interrupted Nipper. "Football is football, and coming down in the train you seemed pretty keen about it."

"We didn't know anything about this feud then!" growled Handforth. "Football's all right—best game under the sun! But fighting——"

"Is better, eh?" grinned Church. "You're hopeless, Handy!"

And Handforth had to admit soon afterwards that Nipper was quite right. It would never do to let this feud interfere with the football fixtures. For example, when St. Frank's played Bannington Grammar School on the following week the team would be picked from both the Fourth and the Remove. And Nipper, as junior captain, had no intention of allowing this quarrel to interfere with the stern business of football. A match between the Remove and Fourth was essential in order for the best players to show their form so that the representative junior eleven could be chosen.

Later on in the evening Nipper went out into the Triangle in the gathering dusk. A number of catcalls greeted him as he appeared. And several groups of Fourth-Formers glared at him with warlike intentions. But Nipper took no notice. He had happened to catch sight of Buster Boots, and he strolled over towards him.

"Just a minute, Buster," he said coolly.

"If you're going to talk about making peace——"

"I'm not," interrupted Nipper. "After what happened this afternoon we'd better let this affair thrash itself out."

"You needn't think you whacked me," went on Boots, glaring. "I'll admit I was floored, but only for a tick. In any ordinary fight with proper rounds I should have been all right. And in the end I should have beaten you——"

"Well, we won't argue about it," said Nipper diplomatically. "Perhaps you'd have beaten me, Buster—we can't tell. Let's forget all about it. I wanted to have a word with you about the football——"

"What football?"

"There's a game fixed for to-morrow afternoon—Remove versus Fourth," said Nipper.

"Of course, that stands just the same, doesn't it? You're going to bring your men on to the field directly after lessons to-morrow afternoon?"

Boots looked startled for a moment, and then he nodded.

"Of course," he said. "We can't allow anything to stand in the way of footer. I'll have my men on the field at the right time, Nipper. You needn't be afraid that I shall try to back out. We can leave our quarrels alone for ninety minutes."

Nipper smiled.

"Good man!" he said.

He smiled and walked away, but there were no answering smiles from the Fourth-Formers. Buster Boots and his men were taking this feud very, very seriously.

CHAPTER 11.

Playing the Game!



NEXT morning there were several indications of the bad blood that was creeping into the life of the lower school at St. Frank's.

The fags took no part in the quarrel, for Willy Handforth put his foot down firmly. He saw no reason why there should be any rupture in the ranks of the Third.

But it was totally different in the case of the Remove and Fourth.

They were two distinct Forms, although at one time they had been one. Even now the distinction between them was very slight. They were all fellows of very much the same age, and until now there had never been any talk of supremacy. It had been generally accepted that the two Forms were on just about the same level as one another.

But now the Fourth was out for glory.

Even before breakfast there were one or two little skirmishes in the Triangle and in the privacy of the Squares. Lord Pippinton, aimlessly strolling round the gym., walked into a group of East House fellows and was promptly seized and rolled in the dust. He was a Removite, and that was all that mattered. The fact that old Pippy was about the most harmless specimen of humanity under the sun made no difference. He was

an enemy, and the East House fellows made him realise it.

In just the same way Snipe of the East House was cornered in the tuck-shop by Doyle and Canham and one or two other West House fellows. And Snipe was not released until a couple of jam tarts had been thrust down his neck. Enoch Snipe did not object to jam tarts going down his neck, always providing they went inside. But these two had been pushed down outside, and they were most uncomfortable.

There were many incidents of this kind. Fourth-Formers and Removites no longer stood together in groups chatting. They avoided one another. And when they did meet they generally passed scathing remarks or attempted to scrap with one another. But on the whole the day was fairly quiet. There were no organised attacks, and Nipper was beginning to hope that the feud would soon peter out.

As soon as afternoon lessons were over the Remove Eleven hurried upstairs and changed into football togs. It was a hot, sultry afternoon, far more favourable for cricket. But nothing could be allowed to interfere with a football fixture, and this was really the first game of the season. Cricket had lost its hold now, and football was the big game that filled everybody's mind.

"Just a word with you fellows before we go out," said Nipper quietly. "Under the peculiar circumstances it's just possible that there might be some unpleasantness on the field. We're playing the Fourth, and although I hope that we shall keep any kind of animosity out of games, there's never any telling."

"I was thinking very much the same thing," said Reggie Pitt. "If there's any rough tackling there might be some trouble. And we don't want the game to end up in a free fight, do we?"

"If those Fourth-Formers start any rot we shan't sit still under it," declared Handforth.

"Not likely!"

"That's the wrong spirit, old man," said Nipper, shaking his head. "Let's forget all about this feud during the game. And I hope Buster and his men will do the same. As soon as we start playing football we want to forget every trace of this feud. Football is football, and nothing ought to be allowed to spoil the sporting spirit of the match."

"Hear, hear!" said several other members of the team.

"I've asked old Browne of the Fifth to act as referee, and his influence will be all to the good," went on Nipper. "Browne's a cheery soul, and he has a wonderful way with him. If there are any unpleasant incidents he'll deal with them. Trust old Browne for that!"

When they got down to Little Side the Fourth-Formers were already on the field. But there were no friendly glances.

William Napoleon Browne, in shorts, was on the spot looking very lanky with his bare

knees. He came across to the Removites, and he was solemnly shaking his head.

"Alas! brothers, what is this I hear?" he said. "It has come to my knowledge that there is a certain feeling of electricity in the air. War clouds are gathering on the horizon. In other words, I believe that you and our brothers of the Fourth are about as well disposed towards each other as a party of cats in a dogs' home."

"Yes, there's been some trouble, Browne," said Nipper frowning. "But I don't think it'll spread to the game."

"Let us trust not, Brother Nipper," said Browne. "It would be a disaster, indeed, if a bevy of Fourth-Formers, in attempting to score a goal, should change their minds and duck Brother Handforth into the river instead. One can never tell with these excitable youngsters. I fear that I have taken on a task of grave responsibility. But we must be courageous—we must face these trials with stoicism. Never has a Browne been known to flinch in the face of danger!"

He gave his whistle a preliminary blast, and the teams lined up in readiness to play. Browne stood there looking at his watch, and crowds of Removites and Fourth-Formers gathered round the ropes—keeping well apart, however.

Browne glanced up, his whistle ready.

"What is this?" he asked mildly. "Are we about to start a football match or a fight. Seldom have I seen such 'zero hour' expressions. Are you about to play football, brothers, or are you intending to go over the top? It is just as well to know these things before we begin."

"Chuck it, Browne!" said Boots curtly. "You're here to act as referee, not act the fool!"

Browne bowed.

"Possibly I deserved the snub, who knows?" he murmured. "I was, perhaps, somewhat too caustic. Well, well, well! We will allow it to pass. Brothers, prepare yourselves!"

He blew the whistle and the game started.

Within the first two minutes, amid a roar from the Removites, Reggie Pitt secured the ball on the right wing and sped down the touchline in one of his famous runs.

And then the animosity between the Forms exhibited itself. For Armstrong, one of the Fourth Form backs, ran up with wild recklessness and charged the unfortunate Reggie so roughly that he went over badly fouled.

It was hardly a good start.

CHAPTER 12.

The Fighting Footballers!



"FOUL!"

"Turn him off the field!"

"Yah, rotter!"

"— — — — —" A chorus of angry shouts went up from the Remove spectators

The Fourth-Formers stood silent, knowing full well that Timothy Armstrong had allowed his ill-feeling to get the better of his sportsmanship. Armstrong himself stood back flushing deeply. Reggie Pitt was just rising to his feet shaken but not much hurt.

"I regret, Brother Armstrong, that you should have thought it necessary to adopt these tactics," said Browne sternly. "I have no option but to award a free kick. And I must warn you——"

"I—I didn't mean it," muttered Armstrong. "I—I was excited, I suppose. I'm sorry."

"That's all right, old man," said Reggie Pitt, with a smile. "It's forgotten."

"You needn't try to be friendly with me!" said Armstrong with a sudden glare. "You're a Remove chap, and I don't speak to Remove chaps!"

"Just as you like!" said Pitt quietly.

Browne shrugged his shoulders, and diplomatically said nothing. He placed the ball, and awarded a free kick. It was rather poetic justice that Nipper should pounce on the leather, and make a first-time shot at goal—and score! It was a glorious drive—and the ball went into a corner of the net, well out of reach of the Fourth Form goalie.

"Oh, good shot, Nipper!"

"Goal!"

"That's the way to show these Fourth-Formers!"

In any ordinary match, the Fourth-Formers would have been spurred on by that incident. Being a goal down would have made them redouble their efforts. But just at present, with that feeling of electricity in the air—which Browne had referred to—there was no telling what would happen. The weather, too, was all against the juniors. It was close and sultry, and there were any amount of irritating thunder-flies about. Tempers, already on edge by reason of the developing feud, became utterly ragged because of the trying heat.

The fault was not entirely on the side of the Fourth, either.

One or two members of the Remove eleven were allowing their feelings to get the better of them, and it was creeping into their play. Whenever they came near a Fourth-Former, they went for the man instead of the ball. This sort of thing was bound to lead to trouble.

Steele was the next offender—and his action brought about a very startling result. Steele was one of the Fourth Form half-backs, and he tackled Church as the latter was about to pass the leather up the field to one of his forwards. Steele charged just as Church was steadying himself to kick, and the charge took Church right in the middle of the back.

Thud!

Church went over, all the wind knocked out of him; Browne blew his whistle shrilly, and came running up with long strides.

"Brother Steele, I have a mind to send you off the field!" he said sternly. "That

was a deliberate foul—I might even say, a scaly act of the blackest description!"

"I—I only meant to charge him!" said Steele, with a gulp. "He turned, just as I was——"

"That's enough!" interrupted Handforth, rushing up. "You dirty rotter! Where's Church? You might have broken his back!"

"Steady, Handy!" said Nipper.

"Kindly leave this matter in my hands, brothers," said Browne. "I would remind you that I am the referee, and that——"

"Oh, dry up, Browne!" interrupted Steele. "I tell you it was an accident——"

"It wasn't!" shouted McClure. "You fouled him deliberately, you rotten Fourth-Former!"

"Mind your own business!" roared Steele, twirling round.

He flew into a sudden violent temper—caused, no doubt, by the knowledge of his own guilt. Out came his right, and McClure received a thudding blow on the side of his face. And that blow was like applying a spark to a trail of dynamite.

"By George!" thundered Handforth. "Not content with knocking old Church down, you go for Mac, do you? All right—take that!"

Biff!

Steele, yelling wildly, went over backwards. And every other member of both teams came crowding excitedly round.

"Brothers—brothers!" protested Browne, aroused out of his customary calmness. "This sort of thing won't do——"

But his voice was like a mere whisper amidst that din. Armstrong and several others had rushed at the Removites, and the Removites were defending themselves. Before there could be any possibility of a stoppage the affair had developed into a minor riot.

Nipper and Reggie Pitt and Bob Christine and one or two others did their utmost to stop it, but when they found it was impossible, they entered the fight themselves. It was the only thing to be done. And Browne stood back, surveying the scene in astonishment.

"This is not merely murky, but blue round the edges," he decided. "It is no part of the referee's duties to tackle twenty-two excited warriors. However, we must do our best."

He hovered round the edge of the scrambling mob. The affair had become a free fight—a hectic, rough-and-tumble which could only end in one way. Indeed, Browne came to a halt when he observed that crowds of Removites and Fourth-Formers were running on to the field, to take part in the scrap. When the spectators joined in, was obviously time for the referee to retire.

"A scaly affair from every angle," decided Browne, as he walked off the field in disgust. "I greatly fear that this feud will continue for many weeks. This, undoubtedly, has set the seal upon it. War is declared in earnest, and we shall soon be seeing our

young friends digging the trenches, and preparing for a four years' struggle!"

Browne had done everything possible, and he felt that it was opposed to all his dignity to remain on the scene. The sooner he could get away from it, the better. It did not take him long, with his lengthy strides, to vanish.

In the meantime, the battle progressed, the game being abandoned for good. In the end, the wild excitement died down somewhat, and the two teams retired—battered, bruised, and rather scared by what they had done. The battle itself was a drawn affair; neither side could claim a decisive victory.

But football, obviously, was impossible under the existing conditions. Neither Nipper nor Buster Boots had believed that the bad blood could have led to a scene of this sort. It was really a disgrace to both teams, and they were anxious to hush it up.

As for the feud—it was now positively and irrevocably declared!



CHAPTER 13.

The Gathering Storm.

EXCITEMENT reigned supreme in the Junior quarters of all Houses at tea-time. The Remove fellows put the blame entirely on to the Fourth—and the Fourth-Formers were inclined to accuse the Remove. Fortunately, the free fight had not come to the ears of any of the masters, and no inquiries were made. Browne was sportsman enough to keep quiet on the subject.

Nobody thought of tea in the ordinary way. The meal, for the most part, was a scrambled affair—just a slice or two of bread-and-butter, a cake, and a cup of hastily-made tea. And then the fellows crowded off into the Common-rooms, or out into the squares. They all wanted to hold meetings, and to discuss the general situation. The football fiasco had made things a hundred times worse. There was an air of hectic explosiveness, and the enmity of the rival Forms had flamed up.

"Something has got to be done—that's certain!" declared Handforth. "We can't let the matter rest here. These beastly Fourth-Formers have got to be put into their places!"

"Hear, hear!"

"It was Steele's fault that the game degenerated into a fight!" said Reggie Pitt warmly. "Armstrong started it—and then Steel put the finishing touch."

At that very moment, over in the Modern House, Buster Boots and his colleagues were declaring that Handforth was the culprit. Handforth had knocked Steele down, and the fight had started after that. Therefore, Handforth was to blame. It was only natural, perhaps, that either party should blame the other. They were not likely to accept the responsibility themselves.

"We can't let the matter stand!" Buster Boots was saying, to a crowd of his supporters. "These Removites must be put into their places!"

The exact words of Edward Oswald Handforth!

Already the feud was assuming alarming proportions. There was no telling what would happen next—what fresh outbreak would suddenly blaze up. The origin of the quarrel had long since been forgotten. It didn't matter a toss now. The Fourth, as a body, hated the Remove. The Remove, collectively, decided that the Fourth was not worth wiping its feet upon. With such a feeling in the school, trouble was absolutely inevitable.

Nipper, knowing that any attempt to quell the warfare would be fatal, advocated a policy of aggression. And, to tell the truth, Nipper was just as hotly incensed against the Fourth as any of the others. He was no longer a peacemaker; he wanted to teach Boots a lesson.

"There's one thing we must guard against, though," he said, as he addressed a big crowd. "We mustn't do anything in a hurry. We mustn't act rashly, or we shall find ourselves up against the masters. That'll only be cutting off our noses to spite our faces. But if we go easy we can get the better of the Fourth, and suffer no consequences ourselves!"

"How?" asked a number of voices. "What do you suggest, Nipper?"

"Yes, out with it, old man!"

"Let's have the suggestion!"

"Absolutely!" said Archie. "I mean to say, I'm not usually a chappie who likes to go dashing into the good old fray, but there are exceptions to every dashed rule. Kindly say the word, Nipper, old top, and we'll whizz into action!"

"Hurrah!"

"There's no need for action just yet," said Nipper. "I think we'd better plan a raid."

"By jingo, that's the idea!"

"A raid on the enemy headquarters," continued Nipper. "In other words, the Modern House. Boots is the chief man over on the other side, so we'll leave the East House fellows alone for this evening. But at half-past seven we'll make a quick dash into the Modern House, and grab every Fourth Form cap that we can find, and carry them away as trophies!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Jolly good!"

"Is that what you call jolly good?" demanded Handforth, in amazement. "Well, I'm jiggered! Is that all you're suggesting, Nipper? That we should go into the Modern House, and pinch a lot of caps?"

"What do you suggest as an alternative?" asked Nipper.

"Why, we'll make a clean sweep of the whole crowd!" replied Handforth promptly. "Half of us will raid the Modern House, and the other half will dash into the East House."

We'll wipe up all the Fourth-Formers, and

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good old Handy!"

"What are you cackling about?" asked Handforth, glaring.

"At your optimism, old man," smiled Nipper. "If we indulge in fighting, as you suggest, we shall have every prefect in the school down on the top of us—and every master, too!"

"What does that matter?" asked Handforth excitedly.

"It matters everything," replied Nipper. "We don't want our half-holidays taken away for the rest of the term. We don't want whacking great impots. No, our policy is to make a swift raid—a dash in and a dash out. We ought to do the whole thing in about three minutes. We shall be out again before any of the prefects can know what's happening."

"It's a jolly good idea," said Reggie Pitt. "If we can get a lot of those Fourth-Formers' caps, we'll nail them up in our own Houses as trophies. Let's see which House gets the most! I'll back the West House every time!"

"Rats! Ancient House!"

"Chuck it, you asses!" grinned Nipper. "It's quite bad enough to have a feud between the two Forms. We don't want to have any splits in our own camp. For the period of this feud, the Ancient House fellows and the West House fellows are one."

"Hear, hear!"

"That's the policy!" agreed Fullwood. "We all belong to the same Form, and that's all that matters. All the same, it'll be rather interesting to see which of us grabs the most caps."

Nipper's suggestion had caught on. The majority of the fellows were enthusiastic about it. A sudden, lightning-like dash into the Modern House, and then a swift retirement. It would be a fairly safe proceeding as far as the masters were concerned, and it would show the Fourth that the Remove was alive to the challenge, and ready to force the pace. It would never do to allow the Fourth-Formers to make the next move.

Handforth was about the only fellow who was dissatisfied, but nobody took any notice of him. Handforth always wanted a big fight. Grabbing a few caps did not appeal to him in the least. It seemed very wishy-washy to his mind. He wanted something more hectic, something more violent.

"It's a pity I'm not Junior skipper on this side!" he said tartly. "I'd show you what to do! I don't mind admitting I'm pleased with Nipper for the general way he's acting, but it doesn't go far enough. I'm going to make a speech now, and I want you all to listen carefully."

"Go it, old man!"

"I'm going to give you my views," continued Handforth firmly. "Now, in my opinion, there's only one policy to adopt. From first to last, we've got to be aggres-

sive. We've got to be the attackers every time. These Fourth-Formers have asked for it, and it'll give us great pleasure to supply them with the trouble they want. It's only a matter of— Hi! Half a tick, you idiots! I'm making a speech!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go it, Handy! You've still got Church and McClure!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come back!" bawled Handforth. "You—you traitors! I'm just going to tell you—"

He broke off, breathing hard. The audience had entirely vanished, with the exception of Church and McClure. The fellows were walking off in every direction, chuckling. They had no desire to listen to one of Edward Oswald's war-like speeches. They knew exactly what he was going to advocate, and they knew how impossible it would be. They were quite content to pin their faith to Nipper and his level-headed leadership.

Handforth set his jaw grimly as he turned to Church and McClure.

"All right!" he said, with a fierce light in his eyes. "If these fatheads won't help us, we'll raid the enemy on our own!"



CHAPTER 14.

Asking for Trouble!

CHURCH looked at McClure, and McClure looked at Church. Then they both looked at Handforth.

"What was that?" they asked in one voice.

"You heard!" retorted Handforth.

"Yes, but you're dotty!" said Church. "We can't raid the enemy on our own, Handy!"

"I like that word—enemy!" said Handforth, with relish. "Enemy! It sounds like the real thing! There's no sense in being squeamish about it. We're up against the Fourth properly this time, and we're going to teach them a lesson they'll never forget!"

"We agree with all that in the main," said McClure. "But the Remove is going to do that, Handy—not we three alone. The raid is planned for half-past seven, and Nipper is getting out the details—"

"Bother the raid!" interrupted Handforth. "It's only about twenty-past six now. Why should we wait for over an hour?"

"I could think of about twenty good reasons, but one ought to be sufficient," said Church. "If we penetrate the enemy territory, we shall be bagged."

"Don't you believe it," said Handforth. "You seem to have forgotten I'm going to lead you!"

"No—we were remembering it," said McClure.

"My scheme is to do a little predatory raid on our own," continued Handforth excitedly. "There's no particular sense in



The West House juniors regarded the three figures in blank amazement. They were bound and gagged, and smothered from head to feet in motor oil. "It's—it's Handy!" gasped Pitt. "By Jove, what a mess!"

The rival Form had done its work only too well.

attacking any of the nonentities, so we'll raid Boots' own study."

"There's no particular sense in that, either," remarked Church tartly.

"We'll raid it—and wreck it!" proceeded Handforth, laying his plans carefully. "That's what we'll do—wreck it!"

"It's not a bad idea," said Mac, "but Boots might object, I'm afraid. You haven't forgotten, I suppose, that Boots & Co. will be on the scene, Handy?"

"Not if we choose our time," replied Handforth. "The chances are that all the Modern House chaps are in the common-room. So while they're in there, jawing, we'll go to Boots' study and get in through the window. We'll wreck the place completely."

"Wouldn't that be a bit too steep?"

"You fathead! I don't mean to wreck it, really!"

"But you just said you were going to wreck it absolutely," pointed out Church.

"Well, so we shall—although we'll do no actual damage," said Edward Oswald. "My scheme is to turn everything upside down. We'll take all the books out of the book-case and shove them in the coal-box, and then we'll mix soot with any grub that we find in the cupboard. And we'll empty the ink-pots over all the lesson-books we can find."

"But we shan't do any actual damage?" asked Church politely.

"Of course not," replied Handforth. "I don't believe in being vindictive. Those Fourth Form chaps will probably go beyond the limit if they get the chance, but we'll teach them a lesson in moderation. Well, let's be going. Are you fellows ready?"

"Not yet," said Church. "In fact, I don't think we'd better go at all, Handy. I mean, why ask for trouble like this? It's all very well for you—I believe you like it. But Mac and I are more particular."

"Much more particular," said McClure, nodding.

"You're not afraid, by any chance?" asked Handforth, glaring at them.

"No!" they roared in one voice.

"Then don't let me hear any more of this talk!" said their leader. "Think of the glory for us when we come back with the news that we've wrecked Boots' study. What a feather in our cap!"

"Yes, but look here, Handy——"

"I don't want to hear any objections!"

"All the same——"

"Either you'll come with me now, or I'll biff the pair of you!"

"But——"

"I've made up my mind, and there's an end of it!" said Handforth grimly. "Are you coming or not? I'll give you five seconds to make up your minds!"

Church and McClure sighed, and gave it up. It was obviously impossible to turn the war-like Edward Oswald from his purpose. Feeling very much like martyrs, they followed him across the dusky Triangle, and



The West House juniors regarded the three first smothered from head to feet in motor oil. "The rival Form

then they crept into the gloom of East Arch. They had an instinctive feeling that they were booked for something particularly violent. But to argue with Handforth was impossible. As he had said, he had made up his mind—and there was an end of it. But Church and McClure did not quite agree with this. In their view, a mythical object, which had no beginning—Handy's mind—could therefore have no end. But they did not point this out to their leader.

Low clouds hung in the sky, bringing dusk earlier than usual, and it really seemed that they were to be successful.

For the East Square was entirely deserted, and only a few of the junior studies were illuminated. A murmur of excited voices came from the Common-room windows, and this told its own story. Exactly as Handforth had stated, most of the Fourth-Formers were congregated in the Common-room excitedly discussing the general situation. The studies were nearly all empty.

"What did I tell you?" murmured Handforth, as they approached the window of Study No. 6. "Locked! This window's all dark! The study is empty! We shall do the whole thing in less than five minutes, and then we'll have the laugh on these rotters!"

"All right—let's get it over," said Church anxiously.



agement. They were bound and gagged, and
"gasp'd Pitt. "By Jove, what a mess!"
only too well.

As they had anticipated, the window of the study was wide open, for the evening was still warm. One after the other the heroes of Study D scrambled over the sill and found themselves in the apartment.

"Here we are!" grinned Handforth, switching on the electric light. "By George! Now for——"

"You ass!" gasped Church. "Put that light off!"

"How can we see to wreck the place in the dark?"

"I don't know about that, but switch the light off," urged Church. "All the East House fellows can see us if they only look out of the windows. There'll be an outcry in half a jiffy, and we shall be surrounded——"

"My only hat!" murmured Handforth, turning the light off. "I hadn't thought of that. Still, we can pull the blind down. That'll be the best thing to do."

"Great corks!" murmured McClure, who was at the window. "We've been spotted already. Can't you hear those East House chaps shouting? They saw us in here when you switched that light on. Some of them must have been sitting at the windows opposite. Oh, crumbs!"

There was no doubt about it. Handforth's rashness had already brought trouble. A rush of feet sounded from outside, and Armstrong,

Merrell, Turner and several others came surging round the open window.

"They're in here!" Armstrong was shouting. "I saw Handy as clearly as daylight. It's a raid! Come on, you chaps!"

Handforth, near the door, suddenly made up his mind.

"Quick!" he hissed. "We can't get out of the window—there are too many of us. But if we make a quick dash we can probably get down the passage and then escape. Come on!"

He flung the door open and they all rushed out just as Armstrong and the others were swarming in the window.

But luck was against the raiders.

Out in the passage they ran into Bob Christine and his two chums of Study No. 1. The next minute Oldfield and Clapson and Nation came along, to say nothing of about a dozen others.

Handforth & Co. put up a good fight, but they might as well have attempted to push the tide back. They were soon struggling on the floor beneath a mass of youthful humanity.



CHAPTER 15.

Returned Without Thanks!

EVEN o'clock was striking as Reggie Pitt, accompanied by Jack Grey and Singleton and Levi and one or two other picked West House men emerged into the Triangle and made off towards the Ancient House. They were on their way to join Nipper and his men. Certain fellows had been chosen for this raid, and it was going to be a big affair—thoroughly organised. Nipper had already given his instructions very carefully.

"It's getting near the time now," murmured Pitt as they walked. "Everything seems to be pretty quiet on the enemy's side. It won't be so quiet in half-an-hour."

"Let's hope we make a success of it," said Singleton. "I rather think we ought to do something stronger than just bagging their caps, but I expect it'll do for a start. We don't want to be too violent at the beginning, do we? This feud will probably get serious enough in the course of a few days without making it bad to-night."

"That's what we're all afraid of," nodded Pitt. "Once these things start you never know where the dickens they're going to lead to. But we can't allow the Fourth-Formers to do just as they like, you know. They've challenged us, and we've got to accept. If we don't, we shall be stamped as weaklings for all time."

"We'll make them smart already," said Solomon Levi. "We should let them walk on us! Is it likely?"

"No fear!" said Singleton. "We've got to show a strong hand here, and—— Hallo, what's all this? What the dickens——"

He broke off, and the others came to a halt. They were just about to mount the Ancient House steps, but they were aware of some peculiar sounds—gasping, grunting sounds. And there were movements, too.

"There's somebody here," said Pitt curiously.

Sure enough there were three figures on the steps—three grotesque figures. Judging by their attitudes they appeared to be bound hand and foot, and handkerchiefs were tied round their mouths so that they could give no outcry.

"Somebody has been at work already by the look of it," remarked Pitt grimly. "I can't see who they are. We'll soon— Oh, my goodness!"

He broke off, gazing in horror at his hand. A moment earlier he had placed his hand on the shoulder of the nearest figure, but he withdrew it quickly. It was dripping with some black cold liquid, which dropped from his fingers in significant blobs.

"Good heavens!" gasped Jack Grey. "What is it—blood?"

"You silly ass!" said Pitt. "It's oil!"

"Oil!"

"Yes, motor oil, too," said Reggie. "Look at 'em! Literally smothered in it—dripping from head to foot!"

"Well, I'm blessed!"

"We can't be squeamish at a time like this," went on Pitt. "Come on, off with these gags!"

He braved the oil, and tore the first gag free. A gasp went up—a kind of gurgling, spluttering sound. But there was no mistaking that voice!

"Handy!" said the West House juniors.

"The—the rotters!" bubbled Handforth. "The beastly cads! They've ruined our clothes! They've smothered us from head to foot in that old motor oil. We're in a terrible state!"

"You needn't tell us that, old man," said Pitt grimly. "By Jove, what a mess!"

Handforth & Co. were indeed in a state. They had been returned without thanks!

They would long have cause to remember their attempted raid on the Modern House. Buster Boots and his men had been drastic with them. They had been dragged to the back of the Modern House, and there they had been roped up. Handkerchiefs had been bound round their mouths so that they could make no outcry. And then somebody had thought of the idea of getting a pailful of old motor oil which had been lying about outside one of the garages. This oil, to say nothing of a garden syringe, had figured in the next murky incident. In brief, Handforth & Co.

had been sprayed from head to foot with that oil.

The terrible stuff had got into their hair, down their necks, and their clothing was saturated with it. Never in their lives had they been in such an awful state. Mud was nothing compared to this motor oil. It was the worst stuff they had ever encountered.

"Oh, crumbs!" mumbled Church when his gag was removed. "We knew what would come of this affair. Thank goodness you've found us, you chaps!"

"Yes; but who did this?" asked Pitt angrily.

"Boots!"

"Boots!" echoed Reggie. "I thought it was the work of those East House rotters—Snipe and Merrell and their set. You don't mean to say that Buster Boots squirted you with this oil?"

"Yes, he did!" snorted Handforth. "It was Boots himself who gave the order, and he stood by while it was being done, too! By George, I'm going to smash him up for this!"

"He deserves to be smashed up, too," said Solomon Levi. "By my life! This is a bit too thick, you chaps! Those rotters should know who they're dealing with! This is another challenge!"

At that minute Nipper and Fullwood and several other Ancient House fellows came on the scene. They were aghast when they saw Handforth & Co.'s condition.

"It's a good thing you've come, Nipper," said Reggie Pitt. "Handforth & Co. are in trouble. We're trying to get these ropes undone, but we can't quite manage it. We've got their hands free, but their ankles are still—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A chorus of subdued cackles came across the Triangle, and the Removites needed no telling that the Fourth-Formers were on the alert watching.

Nipper was very angry when he heard the full story.

"Yes, this is going altogether too far," he said furiously. "There's such a thing as moderation. My idea was to just go and pinch the Fourth-Formers' caps, and that was legitimate. But to smother these chaps with oil like this is going well beyond the mark. I'm surprised at Boots! He ought to have known better."

All the other Remove fellows were enraged, too.

"What about that raid?" asked Singleton. "Shall we go on it now?"

"Yes; but you needn't speak so loudly," replied Nipper, in a low voice. "Those Fourth-Formers are watching us, and listening, too. We don't want to give any of our plans away. Handy, how did you get into the hands of the enemy?"

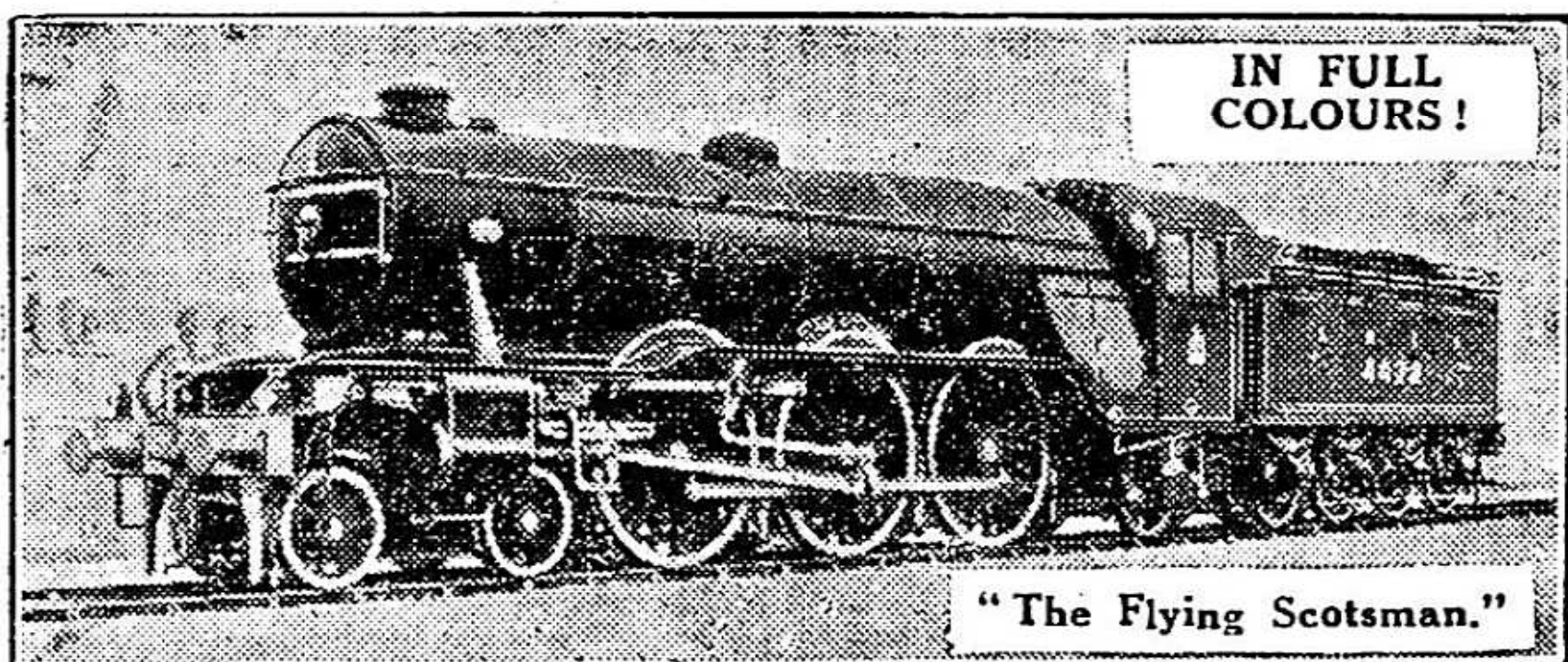
"We went over to Boots' study, to turn it upside down," explained Handforth indignantly. "And then they swarmed over us—"

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"You went over to Boots' study?" interrupted Nipper incredulously. "Just the three of you?"

"Yes."

"You—you reckless ass!" said Nipper. "You asked for this, Handy. Of all the crazy things to do! Why couldn't you have waited until the right hour? What was the idea of going over there on your own?"

"I wasn't on my own—Church and McClure were with me."

"Worse luck!" mumbled Church.

"Well, I mean the three of you," said Nipper. "Why did you do a mad thing like that?"

"Oh, don't ask him!" said McClure, struggling with his bonds. "You know what a reckless fathead he is. We tried to dissuade him, but it was useless. We got into Boots' study all right, and we might have been successful, only Handy switched the electric-light on. I never knew such a chap for inviting disaster! He's a marvel at it!"

"Well, we'd better get you indoors, and——"

Nipper broke off as a cry of alarm came from the lobby.

"Cave!"

It was an urgent cry, indicating, clearly enough, that a master was coming. Like

shadows the juniors melted into the dimness of the Triangle. And Handforth & Co. were left on the steps.



CHAPTER 16.

Rough on Professor Tucker!

PROFESSOR SYLVESTER TUCKER, the science master of St. Frank's, came toddling out of the Ancient House, with a small telescope tucked under his arm. He was about to examine some of the stars, and he was in a good humour.

From the shadows Nipper and many of the other juniors were watching.

"Wasn't it a bit of a dirty trick, to desert Handy & Co. like that?" murmured Fullwood.

"There's no need for us all to be collared," replied Nipper. "We're standing by, anyhow, and we can easily show ourselves if necessary. But it's only the old professor—and the chances are that he'll walk by without even noticing anything wrong."

"Let's hope so, anyway," said Reggie Pitt softly.

As it happened, their hopes were in vain.

For the professor, finding his way barred by something at the bottom of the steps, moved to one side. Unfortunately, he stepped on a spot which Handforth had just vacated. And the professor's left foot, alighting on a particularly oily patch, whizzed up from under him.

"Good gracious!" he gasped. "What—what—I—I—"

The next second the unfortunate Professor Tucker would have crashed heavily on his back. But Handforth, realising the danger, grasped the science master in a loving embrace, and just saved him in time.

"Upon my soul!" breathed the professor, blinking at Handforth. "Thank you, my boy—thank you exceedingly! I nearly fell. Possibly some careless boy has been dropping banana skins!"

"Ahem! You never know, sir!" mumbled Handforth. "Lots of chaps are careless like that!"

He noticed that the professor was not wearing any spectacles, and he was rather relieved. For the science master was very short-sighted, and he had probably noticed nothing out of the common. And he was so absent-minded that if he *did* notice anything he would forget it within a minute or two.

"You boys appear to be in difficulties!" went on Professor Tucker, gazing vaguely at Church and McClure. "Ah, no doubt you have fallen on that banana skin yourselves, eh? Let me help you, my boys!"

"No, no!" said Church hastily. "Don't come near us, sir!"

"We're all right, sir," added McClure.

But Professor Tucker took no notice. He insisted upon helping the juniors to rise, being totally unaware of the fact that they were soaking with motor oil, and that their feet were tied. The fact that he was wearing gloves kept him in complete ignorance of the truth.

"I wish you wouldn't bother, sir," said Handforth anxiously. "If the Head came along he might not like—"

"Good gracious me!" ejaculated the professor with a start. "The Head! Upon my soul! What is the time? My boys, what is the time?"

"Why, just after seven, sir."

"This is terrible!" said Professor Tucker in a fine fluster. "I have an appointment with Dr. Stafford at seven o'clock—a most important appointment concerning my treatise on the astronomical phenomena of—"

"Then you'd better buck up, sir," said Handforth. "It's past seven."

Handforth's only anxiety was to get rid of the professor as quickly as possible. But Church and McClure attempted to hold the old gentleman back, fearing the consequences if he should enter the headmaster's presence in his oily state. For Handforth's embrace, followed by the professor's own efforts, had resulted in dire consequences. It was very dim out there in the Triangle, but the juniors could easily see that the professor was smothered.

He went off, murmuring to himself. Once

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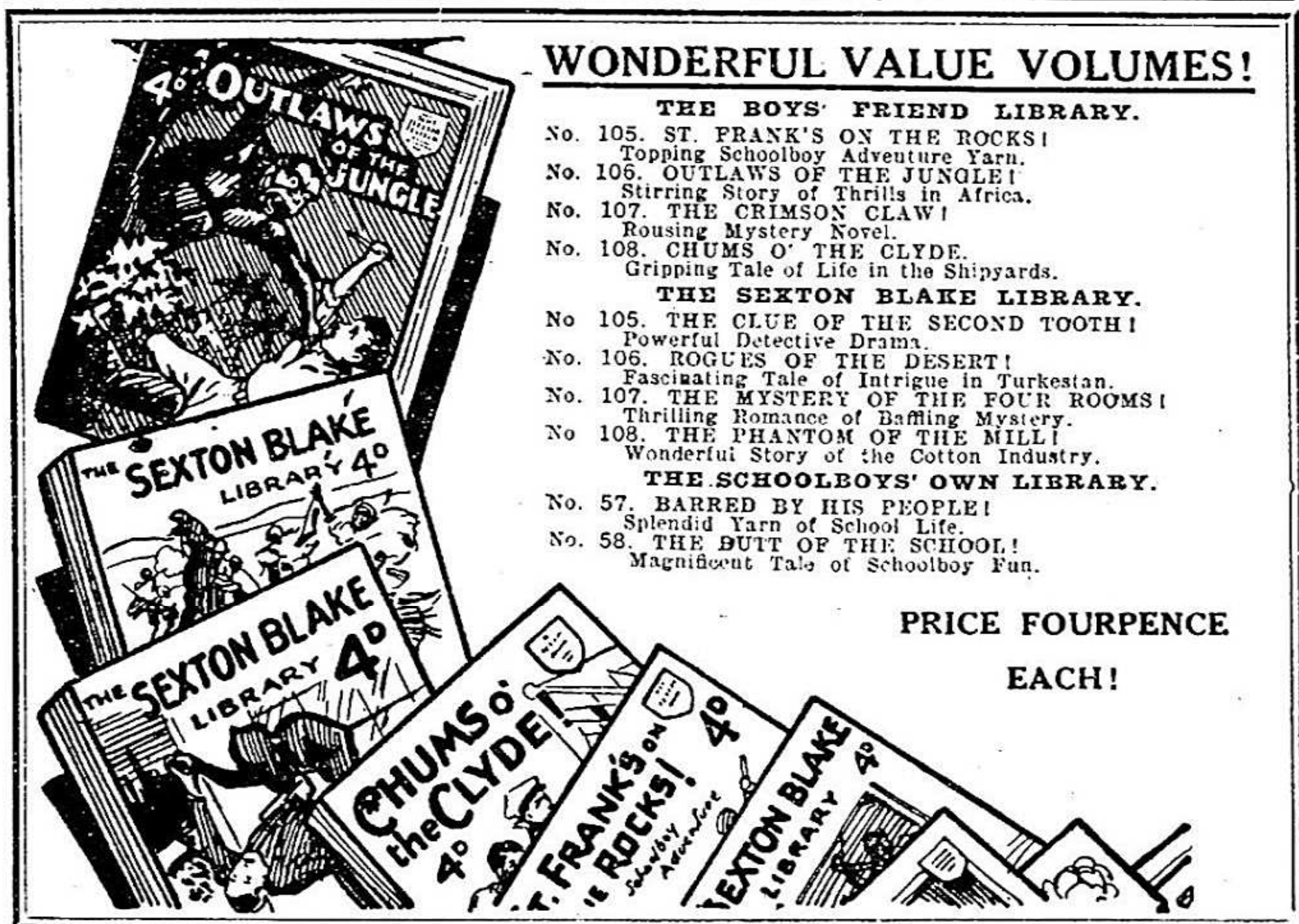
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or twice he paused, gazing longingly at the stars. But then he steeled himself. He had no time for astronomy now. This appointment with the headmaster could not wait. He was late already.

So he arrived at the Head's house and was admitted by Phipps. He handed his hat to Phipps, but forgot about his gloves. And Phipps gave a violent start as he felt the rim of the professor's hat.

"One moment, sir!" said Phipps, in a choking voice. "I fear there is something wrong——"

"Do not bother me, my man—do not bother me!" interrupted the professor. "The headmaster is in his study? Good! He is expecting me!"

"But really, sir! I urge you——"

"Stuff and nonsense!" interrupted Professor Tucker tartly. "Stand out of my way, Phipps. I have no time for you now. Afterwards perhaps—afterwards!"

He strode past, grasped the door of the headmaster's study, and tried to turn the handle. But for some peculiar reason his grip slipped over the brass knob, and he found it almost impossible to enter.

"Very peculiar!" he murmured. "The door-handle appears to be oily, for some reason!"

At last he got it open and walked in. Dr. Malcolm Stafford was seated at the open window, where the cool evening air came into the apartment.

"Ah, professor!" he said, turning with a smile.

"I am very sorry, sir, for being late," said Professor Tucker apologetically. "I must crave your indulgence——"

"Pray do not mention it, professor," smiled the Head. "Take a seat and—Upon my word! Really, professor, what—what——"

He broke off, staring at his visitor in amazement. For in the electric light of the study Professor Tucker's appearance was indeed startling. One side of his gown was completely smothered in thick, black oil. One of his sleeves was dripping with the stuff, and to the headmaster's horror the professor was preparing to sit down in the easiest chair.

"Wait!" shouted the Head, leaping forward. "One moment, professor—one moment! My dear sir, whatever have you been doing with yourself? You're in a most terrible condition!"

Professor Tucker started.

"Really, sir?" he said. "I must confess that I do not understand——"

"Where have you been, professor?" demanded Dr. Stafford sternly, as though he were addressing one of his junior school-boys. "What is the meaning of this? What have you been doing with yourself, sir?"

He gave a moan of anguish as Professor Tucker leaned on the side of the desk and smothered a number of papers with black oil. So far, the science master was unconscious

of the fact that anything was wrong. But he knew it a moment later, when he remembered with a start that he had not removed his gloves. And in removing them he encountered the oily horror with his bare fingers.

"Dear me!" he gasped. "Dear me!"

He stared at his hands dazedly.

"There appears to be oil on your desk, sir," he said mildly. "My hand is quite——"

"On my desk!" shouted Dr. Stafford. "My dear sir, the oil is on your person! You are smothered in it!"

"Good gracious!" ejaculated the professor. "I? The oil is on my own person? This is most extraordinary! Most remarkable, indeed!"

He could give no explanation as to how he had got into that condition. Never for a moment did he connect the oil with those figures he had encountered on the steps of the Ancient House.

At last Dr. Stafford got rid of this most unsavoury visitor—the professor being led away by Phipps. The mystery remained unsolved, although that was nothing new with Professor Sylvester Tucker. He was always getting himself into the most peculiar predicaments.



CHAPTER 17.

The Unknown!

EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH drew a deep breath.

"Well, thank goodness we've managed to get into clean things again!" he said. "And none of the masters have spotted us, either!"

"What about Professor Tucker?" asked Church.

"He doesn't count," replied Handy. "We needn't be afraid of anything from the old Professor. By George! We'll make those Fourth-Formers sit up for this affair! We'll make them smart!"

"Well, we'd better buck up," said McClure. "It's nearly half-past seven, and the Remove forces are gathering in the West Square. But perhaps we'd better not take part in that raid, we've had enough for one evening."

Handforth glared.

"Oh, have we?" he retorted. "You seem to forget that I'm going to take Boots by the scruff of the neck, and push his head into the thickest mud I can find!"

Handforth was very enraged, and nobody could say that he was enraged without reason. He and his chums had been treated very drastically by the Fourth-Formers, and some sort of retaliation was highly necessary. This was essentially a case for a reprisal, and the Removes were grimly determined to make Boots & Co. go through the mill.

Handforth & Co. had changed by now, and they were feeling themselves again. True, the Fourth-Formers had not been hurt at all, but the humiliation of being dipped into

motor oil, and left bound up on the steps of their own House, had been great. A thing like that could only be wiped out in blood. At least, Handforth thought so. His mind dwelt upon the noses of his enemies.

In the meantime the Triangle was quiet and deserted.

There was no indication that a storm would soon break—that large numbers of dim figures would come creeping out, bent upon a hostile raid. The lights twinkled from the windows, and the scene was peaceful indeed.

A figure appeared near the school wall—the wall which divided the Triangle from the lane. It was after locking-up now, and the gates were closed. The figure moving with extreme caution, ventured out from the shadow of the wall and dodged near the tall chestnut trees.

There was something significant about the movements of this Unknown. He moved stealthily, and all his actions were mysterious.

Buster Boots happened to appear at the door of the Modern House a minute later. He stood there, looking across at the rival establishments on the other side of the Triangle. Boots was quite alone, and he appeared to be making a survey. He stood there, thoughtful and motionless.

Whizz!

A stone came hurtling through the air from the darkness, and it struck Buster Boots forcibly on the neck. He staggered back, startled, and in much pain. But he knew what had happened. Somebody had hurled a stone at him—somebody from the other side of the Triangle!

"Great Scott!" muttered Boots, aghast.

He put a hand to his neck, and when he looked at his fingers there was blood upon them. That stone had inflicted a graze. It was not a severe one, but that stone might have struck him in a much more dangerous spot. A great rage welled up within Buster Boots' breast.

"You cur!" he shouted, shaking his fist across into the darkness. "I don't know who you are, but you're a cowardly hound!"

Whizz—crack!

Another stone came, missing Boots by an inch. It struck the stonework of the doorway, and rebounded on the steps. Boots turned on his heel, realising that he was in a position of danger. He went indoors, and met Bob Christine and Timothy Armstrong and one or two others in the Fourth Form passage. His face was black with rage.

"Hallo!" said Bob Christine curiously. "What's the matter, Buster?"

"Look at this!" said Boots, pointing to his neck.

"Did you fall over?" asked Len Clapson.

"No, I didn't!" replied Buster fiercely. "Some of those beastly Remove fellows threw stones at me!"

"What?"

"I can hardly believe it but it's a fact!" went on Boots, his voice rising dangerously. "So this is what it has come to! The cads! The cowardly brutes! Things are a bit steep

when it comes to chucking stones in the darkness!"

His rage was tremendous, and so was the rage of all the other Fourth-Formers.

And, peculiarly enough, while Boots was telling his companions of what had just happened, Archie Glenthorne strolled elegantly to the door of the Ancient House. The Genial Ass of the Remove was in a thoughtful mood. He was wondering whether it would be a good plan to go upstairs and change into his oldest clothing.

"I mean to say, this raid business," he murmured. "A chappie is liable to get his clobber frightfully messed up. I am all in favour of the raid—absolutely! I mean, it's absolutely the stuff to hand across! At the same time, a chappie must remember that his clothing——"

Whizz! Crash!

Archie staggered back, startled and dumbfounded. A stone had come hissing across from the other side of the Triangle, and, by sheer ill-luck, it had struck the rim of his precious monocle. And that monocle of his had been in his eye!

"Good gad!" he gasped, as he clapped a hand over his eye.

For a tense moment he believed that he had been seriously cut—that his eye, even, had been injured. But this was not the case. Strangely enough, his monocle had saved him from grave injury. But for that eyeglass the stone might have entered his eye itself. As it was, the glass was shattered, but no damage had been done beyond a cut on the cheek.

"Odds outrages and caddishness!" shouted Archie. "You frightful frights! You utter blighters! I mean to say, it's a bit steep when——"

"Talking to yourself, Archie?" came a voice behind him.

Archie Glenthorne turned back into the lobby, and found Handforth & Co. there, with Nipper and Tommy Watson.

"No, dear chappies, I was talking to some rascal on the other side of the Triangle," said Archie Glenthorne, his face flushed with anger. "I mean to say, one of those Fourth Form blots has just had the frightfulness to hurl a stone at me."

"My only hat!"

"I say, Archie, is this true?" asked Nipper sharply. "They surely haven't started throwing stones?"

"Absolutely!" said Archie. "And it's jolly nearly destroyed the good old eyesight!"

He revealed the buckled and empty rim of his monocle, and described what had happened. A yell went up from all the Remove fellows. They were hot with rage.

"It must have been one of those rotten East House chaps—Snipe, or one of his breed!" said Nipper grimly. "But Boots is responsible, all the same. Boots is the leader over there, and he ought to keep his men under control. Oh, the curs!"



With brutal violence the thong of the whip lashed across Reggie's face. He reeled from the searing sting of it, as from the lips of the shadowy, unknown assailant there came a chuckle of evil laughter.

And so, while the Fourth-Formers were reviling the Removites—the Removites were reviling the Fourth-Formers! And neither party had performed this base trickery!

Who was the Unknown? There was a mystery here. Was this strange figure deliberately attempting to increase the animosity between the two Forms?

"Good!"

Boots passed along the line, like a general inspecting his troops. Seventy-five per cent of the Fourth had gathered here, and all were filled with subdued excitement. The Triangle itself was still dark and empty, but there was not much prospect of it remaining in this condition.

"Now, don't forget the orders," said Boots, as he paused again. "As the clock strikes we go over the top. Straight across for the Ancient House—all of us. We'll sweep in, and create as much general disorder as we possibly can within the space of two minutes. Don't forget that—two minutes only! Christine, Armstrong, Clapson and I will give a yell at the right moment. Then we shall all retire. But during those two minutes we ought to do quite a lot of damage."

"By jingo, rather!"

"We shall catch the beggars on the hop!" The situation was becoming rather interesting.

For Buster Boots and his men had planned

CHAPTER 18.

Another Raiding Party!



IN the shadows of the East Square a number of figures were forming up into line. There was much activity, although scarcely a sound broke the evening peace.

"You fellows all ready?" came a murmur from John Busterfield Boots.

"Waiting for zero hour, old man," said Bob Christine.

a raid at the exact minute of seven-thirty! And that was the zero hour for the Remove fellows! At this very moment, indeed, the Removites were gathering in the West Square, opposite. The events of the next few minutes were liable to be very entertaining—for it was on the stroke of seven-thirty now.

Yet there was not much coincidence in the affair. Seven-thirty was about the quietest period of the evening, when everybody was supposed to be at prep. So it was an excellent time for a surprise raid. But neither party had the slightest idea that the others were getting ready for action at that exact minute.

In the West Square Nipper was whispering his final instructions.

"When the clock sounds we'll make a dash for the Modern House," he was saying. "There's to be no fighting—no vindictive stuff, either. We're only going to grab every cap that we can find, and trophies of a similar nature. It's just a move to show the Fourth-Formers that we're on the alert, and ready to whack them."

"It isn't half strong enough," grumbled Handforth. "We ought to do something more drastic——"

"You're prejudiced, old man," smiled Nipper. "And I don't blame you, either, after that oil affair. Still, we can make some fresh plans later on. For this evening this raid will be sufficient to be going ——"

Clang-clang!

The half hour boomed out from the old school clock.

"Now!" shouted Nipper, at the top of his voice.

And it seemed to the Removites that an echo came from the other side of the Triangle.

"Now!" it came, in a voice that sounded uncannily like that of Buster Boots.

And the Removites swept through West Arch, and made a bee-line for the Modern House. They came surging out in a great flood. Nipper was at their head, and he suddenly checked. For, simultaneously, a great mass of Fourth-Formers came pouring out of East Arch! And these Fourth-Formers were making for the Ancient House! Nipper jumped to the truth in a moment.

"Look out!" he yelled. "The Fourth-Formers are making a raid, too. It's off!"

"Not likely!" yelled Handforth. "We're not going to give up——"

"Yah! Beastly Removites!"

"Rotten Fourth-Formers!"

The air became filled with yells and shouts. The two rival factions hesitated for only one moment, and then they dashed at one another with tremendous vigour.

The raid was off—distinctly and absolutely off. But something else was on!

The rival "armies" had met by sheer chance in the centre of the Triangle, and the result was inevitable. In less than a moment they were at one another's throats, so to speak, fighting desperately and with tremendous ferocity. The combatants struggled backwards and forwards in the dark-

ness, and there were many gasps and grunts and thuds.

"Remove for ever! Back up, you fellows!"

"Yes, father!"

"We'll wipe up these Fourth-Formers!"

Similar shouts came from Boots and his men. There wasn't a junior present who had not heard of the stone-throwing incidents. The Remove was enraged against the Fourth-Formers for indulging in that dangerous activity. And the Fourth-Formers were hot against the Remove for the same reason. How were they to know that neither party was guilty?

A battle developed within the space of twenty seconds.

Nobody gave a thought to any possible interruption. Nobody ever remembered that there were such unpleasant individuals as prefects or Form-masters or Housemasters. In the general excitement, there was only one thought in every mind.

Here was the enemy—and the enemy had to be attacked!

So the juniors went at it with a will. In the past there had been many quarrels between rival Forms at St. Frank's, but seldom had there been such a startling scene as this. The Remove and Fourth, fighting desperately in the darkness of the Triangle—struggling to and fro, hitting out at anything and everything.

Former friends were grimly punching at one another. This feud had become a really serious affair—without a trace of humour in it. It was no innocent rivalry now, but genuine warfare. Its very ferocity was all the greater, perhaps, because of the suddenness with which it had all developed.

Hitherto, John Busterfield Boots had been on the friendliest possible terms with Nipper and his colleagues. But now, when Boots once again found himself opposed to Nipper himself, he fought with grim determination. And Nipper returned every one of Buster's blows with interest. The rival captains were setting an example to every one of their followers. They were enemies now—bitter enemies.

And in a corner of the Triangle, unseen, unnoticed, lurked a strange figure.

The Unknown!

Here he was watching, gloating. But he had no stones in his hand now—he was not taking any part in the battle.

So far only about half a minute had passed, and the confused noise of the struggle had not reached the ears of anybody in authority. This state of affairs was not likely to last long, but while the rival factions could fight without interruption, they fought. As yet, there was no sign of decisive victory on either side.

The battle had resolved itself into a number of individual scraps. Three or four fellows were struggling here, one or two there, and in certain cases the wounded were lying on the ground, or crawling away. Handforth was having the time of his life—driving his heavy fists into every face that he could come across. He was quite impartial, and now

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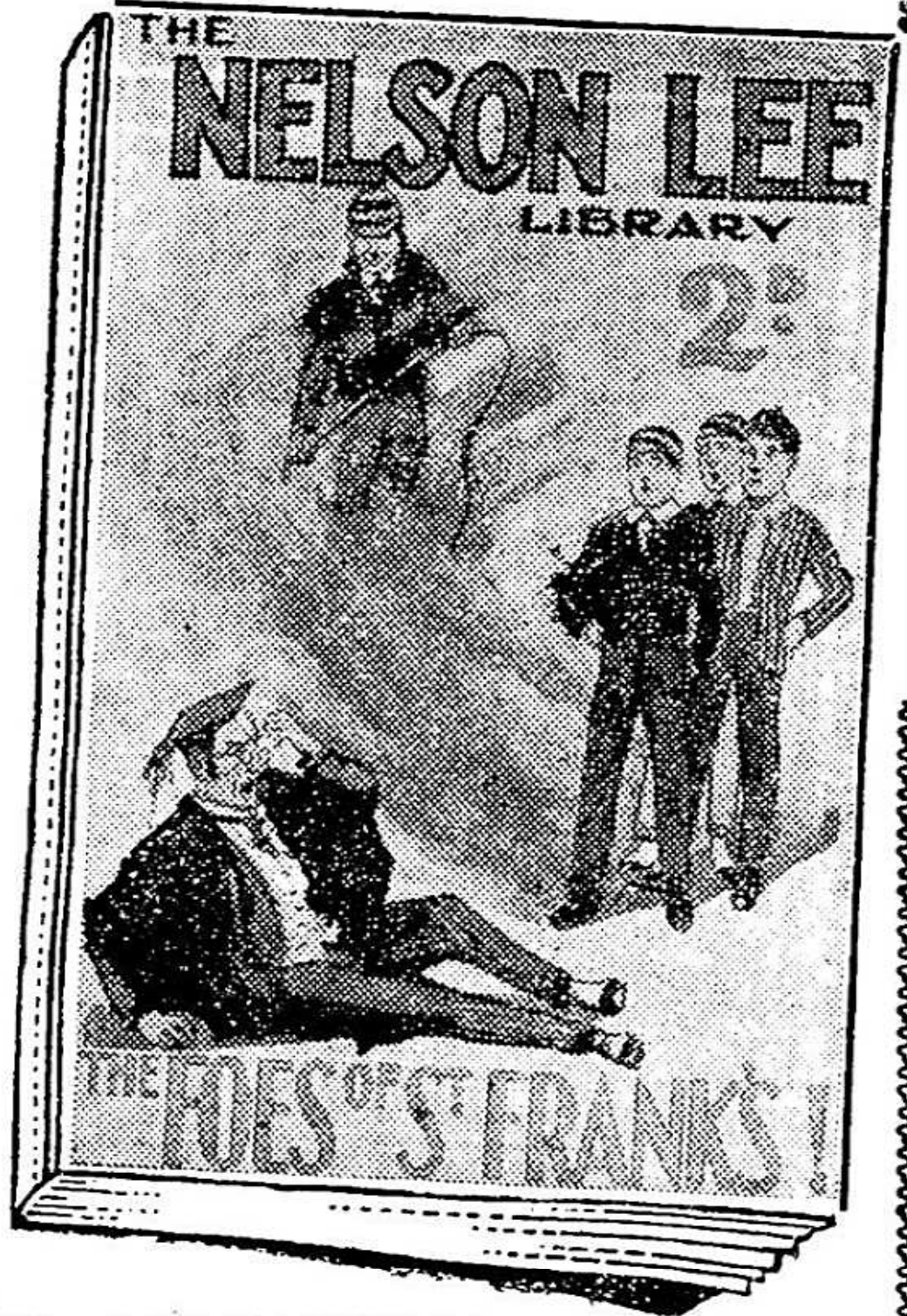
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and again he found himself ~~scrapping~~ with one of his own men—until they yelled out a warning to him.

"Down with the Fourth!" Handforth was roaring. "Come on, the Remove! We'll soon wipe them up!"

"Hurrah!"

"Yah! Fourth for ever!"

And the battle progressed, accompanied by catcalls and angry shouting.



CHAPTER 19.

The Figure of Mystery!

IF anything had been necessary to establish a state of warfare between the two Forms, this fight in the Triangle was doing it.

It was deadly business, in which every member in the Remove and Fourth took part. Even the weaklings and the rotters—who generally steered clear of this sort of thing—were keyed up by enthusiasm, and were scrapping as heartily as any of the firebrands.

So swiftly was everything taking place that

even now there was no sign of a prefect or a master.

Bob Christine, who had been fighting desperately side by side with York and Talmadge, found himself suddenly quite on his own. One of the enemy units had seized him from the rear, swinging him round by the shoulder.

"All right!" panted Bob. "If you want a scrap, I'll give you one! Take that!"

He lunged out, but the dim figure of the other fellow dodged. Bob Christine ran after him, intent upon forcing the fellow to fight.

Just for a brief second they were entirely alone, separated from all the other combatants. And then an extraordinary thing happened.

Bob Christine's adversary turned and stood at bay. Bob came on, filled with the excitement of battle. He did not know who this Removite was, and he did not care. Indeed, he did not even know if the figure *was* that of a Removite—but he assumed so. What else was he to think?

Slash!

Without any warning, a whip cracked in the darkness—and the hide thong hissed

across Bob Christine's face like the sear of a red-hot iron. He fell back, half-blinded, half-stunned. A low chuckle sounded from that other figure, and he turned on his heel and vanished amid a tangle of fighters.

Bob Christine, with his hands to his face, staggered back, gasping. The agony was intense, and he was filled with a terrific rage. He knew, in a flash, that a dog-whip had been used—brutally, recklessly! That cur had slashed the whip across his face with deliberate intent.

Then, before he could even know what was happening, Doyle and Scott and two or three other West House Removites jumped on him. They bore him to the ground, and took no notice of his protests. They were too excited to listen to his words.

And while this was happening, the Unknown slipped across the Triangle, keeping to the dense shadows. There, on the very far side of the battle, he hovered about the outskirts. Before long Reggie Pitt came reeling out of the turmoil. Reggie had received a drive between the eyes—from Handforth's fist.

"That's one to be going on with, you beastly Fourth-Former!" Handforth roared.

"You—you hopeless idiot!" gasped Reggie.

"Why can't you fight the enemy?"

"Great Scott!" said Handforth. "Is that you, Pitt?"

"Of course it's me, you dangerous lunatic!"

"Sorry!" said Edward Oswald. "But it was your own fault! You shouldn't get in my way!"

Handforth charged back to a group of other warriors, and Reggie Pitt waited for a moment or two to regain his breath. Somebody plucked at him from the rear, and caught him a loud slap on the neck. He swung round, and saw a figure in the gloom.

"Just as you like!" said Reggie grimly.

"I'm ready for you!"

He prepared to make a dash at this supposed Fourth-Former who had challenged him to battle. And then—

Slash!

With brutal violence the dog-whip came into action. This time it was being used upon a Removite! Clear proof, indeed, that this Unknown was quite impartial. The thong struck Reggie Pitt across the cheek, and then hissed round the back of his head. He fell back.

"You cowardly hound!" he gasped. "Who are you? By Jove, you shall pay for this, you——"

"Cave!"

It was a general shout, but nobody took any notice of it for the moment, the excitement was too great. Reggie Pitt, running after the strange figure, found it impossible to capture it. The fellow, whoever he was, had dodged behind a number of others, and was lost.

Reggie Pitt stood quite still, holding his face in his hands. His cheek was throbbing painfully, and he had seldom been so angered. But what was the use? He did not know who had struck him with a dog-whip,

and so it was impossible to make any definite accusation.

Prefects were arriving now—Fenton of the Sixth, accompanied by Morrow and Biggleswade and one or two others, put in an appearance. They had heard the sounds of disturbance from afar, and, seizing canes, had sallied out to see what all the trouble was about.

"Come on, you chaps!" shouted Handforth enthusiastically. "We're getting the better of them! Only a few more dashes now, and we'll put them to rout!"

He surged forward into the battle, his collar gone, his hair tousled, his jacket tattered. Handforth was thoroughly enjoying himself. In his opinion, this feud was one of the finest innovations that had ever been introduced to St. Frank's! But then, Handforth was a born fighter, and any trouble of this kind was a sheer joy to him.

"Come along—no slacking!" he roared, grabbing at two figures who were pushing through the crowds. "Why aren't you fighting, you bounders?"

"Down with the Fourth!"

Yells went up on every side, and Handforth, believing that these figures belonged to the enemy, rushed at them.

Biff! Crash!

"Great Scott!" gasped a voice. "Hold the dangerous young ass! He nearly knocked my teeth out just then!"

"Great pip!" gasped Handforth. "Wilson!"

"Yes, Wilson!" snapped the prefect. "Any more of this business, Handforth, and I'll haul you up before the Head! What the dickens do you mean by putting your leg-of-mutton fist into my mouth?"

"How was I to know?" asked Handforth. "You ought to have told me who you were! Never mind—it doesn't matter. You needn't apologise."

"What?" said Wilson faintly.

"As long as you keep out of the scrap, you won't come to any further harm," went on Handforth. "Only, for goodness' sake, steer clear, Wilson. This is our quarrel, and we don't want any interference!"

"Ye gods!" said Wilson blankly. "You don't want any interference, eh? I'm awfully sorry, Handforth, but I'm very much afraid that you'll get it—and plenty of it, too! If this fight is going on at the end of another minute you can call me a Dutchman!"



CHAPTER 20.

The Fourth are Angry!

E

DGAR FENTON, the captain of St. Frank's, cleaved through the fighters, using his cane vigorously.

"Get into your Houses—all of you!" he shouted. "Stop this nonsense, and get indoors before your Housemasters come! Good

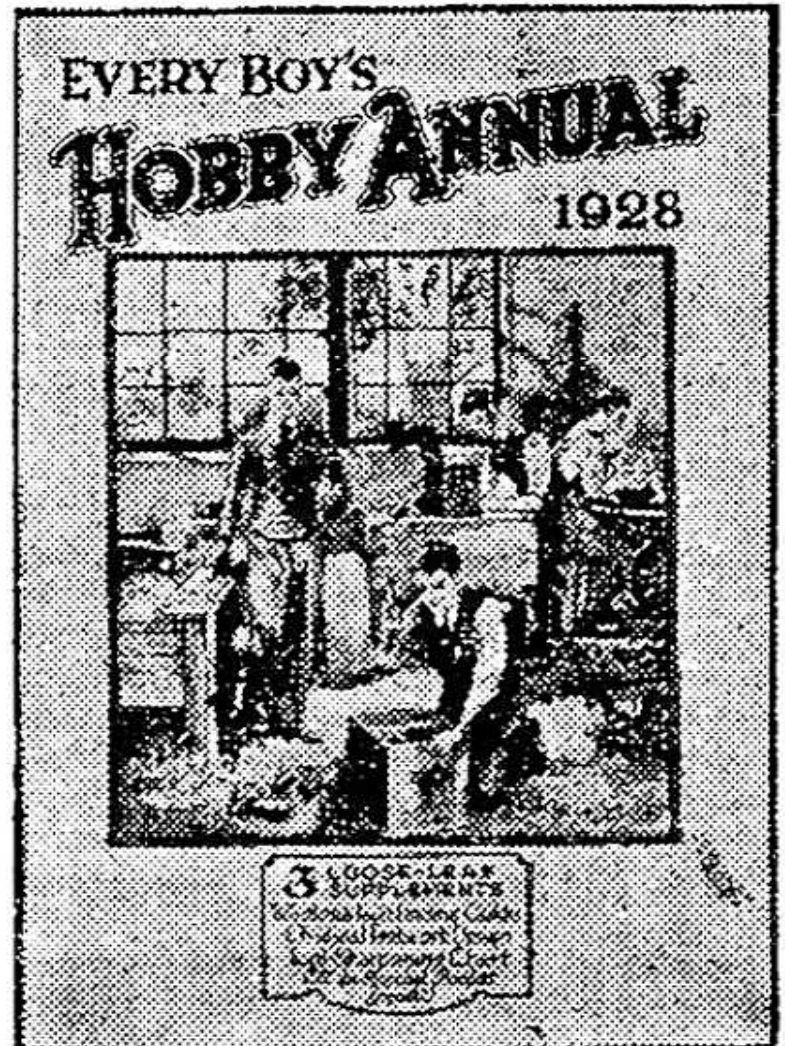
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heavens! I've never known such a disgraceful scene!"

The other prefects were acting in the same way, and they were really anxious that the juniors should escape before any of the masters arrived. Fenton and his colleagues had no great desire to get these juniors into a lot of trouble, and their canes had a lot of effect.

In less than a minute, the battle was over, and the rival forces were in swift retirement, dragging their "wounded" with them. By the end of another minute, the Triangle was empty, except for the prefects and a number of other seniors, who had come along to watch the events.

"Silly young idiots!" said Fenton, frowning. "What on earth's the matter with them lately? Fighting at every opportunity, and generally behaving like a set of Hot-tentots!"

"There seems to be a sort of feud on," said Morrow, of the West House. "The trouble is we can't single anybody out for special punishment, and it's not much good reporting the whole Form. I think we'd better let the matter drop, Fenton."

"That's what I think, too," said Reynolds, the head prefect of the Modern House. "My juniors were as much involved as yours, if it comes to that. We can't do much."

Fenton nodded.

"Yes, we're pretty helpless," he said, frowning. "All the same, we shall have to keep our eyes open. We can't allow these youngsters to go fighting about all over the place, and converting the school into a battlefield."

"Always remember, brother, that boys will be boys," said William Napoleon Browne benevolently. "In the not too far distant past I have no doubt that you, yourself, might have derived much pleasure from a similar state of affairs. In our old age we are apt to lose sympathy with these boisterous pleasures."

"That's all very well, Browne, but it won't do," replied Fenton. "How are we going to maintain any discipline if the boys leap at one another's throats every time they meet?"

"I rather fancy, brother, that this quarrel will wear itself out if we only have a little patience," said Browne. "It would be a bad mistake to prohibit all fighting, I fear. For that, human nature being what it is, would lead to further bloodshed. One has only to prohibit a certain thing, and the populace is madly anxious for it."

"Something in that!" said Morrow. "On the whole I think we'd better pop indoors, and wink at the whole affair. Anyhow, the youngsters aren't likely to get up any fur-

ther quarrels to-night. One free fight is enough for an evening, I should imagine!"

The prefects went indoors, to their respective House. They pretended not to notice the groups of juniors who were collected in the lobby, and in the passages.

In the Modern House common-room Buster Boots was telling all his supporters that they had won the engagement.

"No question about it," Boots was saying. "There were a lot more Remove fellows knocked out than Fourth-Formers. If those silly prefects hadn't butted in we should have made it a complete rout."

"It would have been a lot better if the Remove had stuck to fair methods," put in Bob Christine angrily.

"What do you mean?" asked Bray.

"I mean what I say!" replied Bob. "Look at this!"

He took a hand from his face, and the other Fourth-Formers crowded round, uttering shouts of consternation and anger.

For a dreadful weal was apparent right across Bob's face, stretching from one side to the other, and missing his left eye only by a half an inch. It was a terrible-looking weal, and it was causing Bob great agony still.

"How did you get that?" demanded Boots fiercely.

"He must have got into the way of one of the prefects' canes, I should think," said Billy Nation. "Phew! What an awful place, Bob! Hard lines, old man! You ought to have been more slippery!"

"But the prefects wouldn't do a thing like that!" said Roddy Yorke.

"The prefects didn't do it!" said Bob. "It was done by one of those Remove rotters!"

"What!"

"With a dog-whip!" added Bob savagely.

"Great Scott!"

"A dog-whip?"

"Yes, a dog-whip!" insisted Bob. "One of those Remove fellows tricked me into following him. I thought he wanted a scrap, and I was ready for him. But before I could even get one blow in, he slashed his whip round, and caught me across the face. I thought I was blinded, for a minute."

"The hound!" said Buster Boots, taking a deep breath. "So they're using these methods, are they? First of all they throw stones at us, and then they use dog-whips in the dark! That's not fighting fair at all—it's brutal, cowardly and despicable!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Something ought to be done about it!" went on Talmadge excitedly. "Are we going to let those Remove chaps behave in this way? My only hat! I'll never speak to one of them again as long as I live! They're all a crowd of rotters and beasts!"

"So they are!"

"Down with the Remove!"

The common-room resounded with angry shouts. Everybody was hotly incensed against the Remove. Bitter blood had already existed, but the events of this even-

ing had made it a thousand times more bitter. This Form quarrel had been serious enough at the very beginning, but now it was becoming an affair of great gravity.

And how were these Fourth-Formers to guess that the stones had been thrown by a trickster? How were they to know that the dog-whip had been wielded by the same mysterious hand?

Who was this Unknown? And why had he joined in the battle? Why had he treated the Fourth and the Remove alike? What could his object be—except, indeed, to enrage the warring parties more and more hotly against one another?

At all events, the uproar in the Fourth was tremendous.

The news soon spread into the East House, and Armstrong and Griffith and their supporters came crowding into the Modern House to discuss the affair with Buster Boots. It was generally agreed that something would have to be done—promptly. The stone-throwing episode had been bad enough, but this dog-whip affair was beyond the limit. It could not be allowed to rest without an inquiry.

Boots, who was inclined to keep his head, frankly stated that such fellows as Handforth or Nipper or Pitt could not be responsible, and that they would single out the culprit, and hand him over to the Fourth for punishment. But the other Fourth-Formers tarred everybody in the Remove with the same brush. The enmity was at fever-pitch.



CHAPTER 21.

Nipper Takes Action.

"WELL, we whacked them!" said Handforth, with satisfaction.

"Yes, rather! We gave them a terrific hiding!"

"And they won't forget it in a hurry!"

In the Ancient House, the same tale was being told. For the Remove fellows naturally acclaimed themselves as the victors. In the West House, Reggie Pitt and his supporters were of the self-same opinion.

According to the stories that were being told in every house, victory had attended the efforts of every party.

As a matter of fact, the battle had been undoubtedly drawn. If the prefects had not interfered, there might have been a decisive victory, on one side or the other, but as it was none could rightfully claim a triumph. But the fact remained that there had been a stiff battle, and all the juniors were inflamed more than ever.

"On the whole, there aren't many casualties!" said Nipper, with satisfaction. "Only about six black eyes, and as many fat ears. It might have been a lot worse."

"And now, I suppose, we'll go on that raid?" asked Handforth carelessly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Aren't you ever satisfied, old man?" grinned Fullwood. "I think one affair is enough for an evening. The raid's off—until next time."

"Oh, that's rot!" said Handforth. "We set out to raid the Fourth-Formers, and we ought to do it."

"My dear chap, it's impossible," said Nipper. "The prefects are all on the alert now, and we shouldn't stand an earthly. They'd be on us in a flash. Then we should be rounded up, and reported to our House-masters. No—we shall have to wait until things have quietened down a bit."

"That's my idea!" said Gulliver, nursing a swollen mouth. "I've had enough for one night!"

"Same here!" said Fullwood. "Enough's as good as a feast, Handy."

"Yes, let's chuck it up for to-night," said Forrest, as he tenderly felt his left ear. "By gad! Somebody caught me a swipe during that battle!"

"We don't expect any support from you Study A chaps, anyway," said Handforth tartly.

"You leave them alone, Handy," said Nipper, with a glance at Forrest & Co. "They did jolly well! They were in the fight as much as anybody, and we couldn't expect more than that."

Nipper, as a matter of fact, was very pleased with Forrest and Gulliver and Bell. They were admittedly the cads of the Ancient House, and as a general rule they would have nothing to do with matters that interested the Form in general. In this feud, however, they were as enthusiastic as anybody else, and had not held back when it came to a question of a general scrap. For once, the entire Remove—to a man—was held together by the same bond.

The same could be said about the Fourth Form. Even the weaklings of the East House, including Snipe and Merrell, were all fired by the same spirit of animosity. It was a real warfare.

Reggie Pitt came into the Ancient House soon after the trouble had died down, and he was looking very quiet and thoughtful. He happened to meet Nipper and Handforth in the lobby, and they pulled him up.

"Well, it was rather a disappointing business," said Nipper. "We didn't have our raid, and the fight was stopped by the prefects before there was any real victory. Let's hope we have better luck next time, Reggie."

"Yes," said Pitt slowly.

"Anything the matter?" asked Fullwood, looking at him closely.

"No—not exactly," replied Reggie. "It doesn't matter."

The Ancient House fellows looked at him in a rather queer way. It was not like the genial Reggie to lose his smile. Until now he had been quite cheery—for it took a great deal to rob Pitt of his customary geniality.

"What's the matter, Reggie?" asked Nipper. "And why are you holding your hand over your face like that?"

"I—I'd rather not say," replied Pitt quietly.

But Handforth and one or two of the others forced his hand away, and they all uttered exclamations as they saw the terrible weal left by that dog-whip.

"What's this?" asked Nipper grimly.

"I didn't want to tell you anything about it, but perhaps you'd better know," said Reggie reluctantly. "One of those Fourth-Formers did it."

"But how?"

"With a whip!"

"Don't you know who did it?"

"Haven't the faintest idea."

"But it was one of the Fourth-Formers?"

"Who else?" asked Reggie, in surprise.

"I shall see Boots at once," said Nipper in a dangerous voice. "We'll get up a deputation now—and go straight off."

"Jolly good idea!" said Handforth, instinctively rolling up his sleeves.

"But there'll be no fighting, Handy," added Nipper. "We'll go over there to protest against such blackguardly behaviour. A feud is all very well, but this sort of thing is going beyond all bounds. We must put a stop to it at once. I don't suppose we shall be able to find the actual culprit, but Boots will probably be able to put his hand on him, and then deal with him in private."

"That's a lot of satisfaction to us, isn't it?" growled Handforth. "The rotter ought to be handed over for us to deal with!"

"That's impossible, old man," said Nipper quietly. "Even Boots won't be able to find the culprit at once. But, if he is the fellow I believe him to be, he'll issue a warning to all his men—and tell them that dog-whips are not allowed. A thing like that couldn't have been done in broad daylight. Some hound took advantage of the darkness. I'll bet it was the same fellow who threw the stone at Archie!"

And so, without any further delay, a deputation was formed—only four fellows. They consisted of Nipper, Handforth, Reggie Pitt and Singleton. But Reggie backed out at the last minute.

"No, I won't go," he decided. "I'm not going to let them see this weal on my face! They'll only gloat over it—and make things worse. You go in my place, Fullwood."

And so it was decided.

CHAPTER 22.

The Misunderstanding.



It was only natural that Nipper and the other Removites should assume that a Fourth-Former was responsible for that dog-whipping episode. Who else, indeed, could have committed the outrage?

It was so obvious.

Nipper was a fellow of action, and he was wasting no time.

Under a flag of trust, he and his three companions entered the Modern House, and were nearly set upon in the lobby, Clapson and Oldfield and two or three others were

there, and they glared ferociously at the Removites as they came in.

"Clear out, you rotters!" shouted Oldfield angrily.

"We've come here to see Boots!" said Nipper quietly. "And we're here under the white flag. We want five minutes' conversation with him."

"You won't get it!" said Crowe curtly. "Boots isn't on speaking terms with any of you!"

"If it comes to that, we're not on speaking terms with you, either," said Handforth. "But we've got to see Boots—and we're not going to be put off—"

"Hallo! Who wants me?" asked John Busterfield Boots, as he came striding out of the Fourth Form passage. "Hallo! The enemy!"

"Yes, the enemy," said Nipper, nodding. "We only want a few words with you, Boots."

"That's all you'll get!" said Buster fiercely. "You confounded rotters! I wonder you had the nerve to come here—"

"Wait a minute!" interrupted Nipper, keeping his temper. "I don't think you know what has happened, Boots. I'm not accusing anybody in particular, but some of your chaps have gone beyond the mark—or one of them has, at all events. He has committed an act of blackguardly brutality—"

"What?" shouted Boots.

He went red with rage. In a second he flew into a towering passion. It wasn't like John Busterfield Boots to lose his temper so completely, but he did so now.

"You—you impudent rotters!" he thundered. "Why, we were just about to come over to the Ancient House to make the same complaint!"

"What do you mean?" asked Nipper.

"I mean that some of you Removites have been acting like blackguards and hooligans!" roared Boots.

"You'd better be careful!" shouted Handforth angrily.

"I'll say what I like!" retorted Boots. "You're here under a flag of truce, and there isn't to be any fighting. You came here to talk, didn't you? Well, you'll have to listen, instead!"

"You—you silly idiot!" shouted Nipper, completely losing his own temper. "Nobody in the Remove has acted in a blackguardly way. We fought fairly from first to last—"

A yell of jeering laughter went up.

"From first to last!" insisted Nipper. "It's you fellows who've acted blackguardly—who've acted foul! And if you'll listen, we'll explain exactly how—"

"We don't want to hear!" shouted Boots. "It's like your infernal nerve to come here at all! So we've done with you—we've done with you for good! Until now we thought you were decent fellows, but we were wrong!"

"Look here—"

"Get out of here!" stormed Buster.

"Yes, get out!" shouted a dozen others.

Nipper turned to his companions.

"Yes, we'd better get out!" he said in a suppressed voice.

And so they went—without a single word of the real truth being told! Nipper had not complained to Boots about the dog-whip episode, or the stone-throwing, and Boots had not said anything on his own account regarding the same parallel incident, and so the misunderstanding was complete.

The feud had increased in its bitterness until it was a deadly, violent war of hatred. Never in the history of St. Frank's had two Forms been so opposed to one another.

All four Houses at St. Frank's were in an uproar that evening. The Fourth-Formers were enraged to fever-pitch because Nipper had had the audacity to come across and complain of blackguardly behaviour. Didn't the Fourth know that it was the Remove who had behaved in a blackguardly way?

"It's no good!" said Nipper grimly. "They've all taken leave of their senses on the other side of the Triangle. That's the only way to look at it, and we've got to teach them a lesson. We've got to make them understand that they can't do just as they like!"

"You mean that we'll carry the war on?" asked Handforth eagerly.

"Yes—to the bitter end!" replied the junior skipper. "We'll give the Fourth the biggest lesson it's ever had in all its existence!"

"Hurrah!"

"Down with the Fourth!"

And dimly, from across the dark Triangle, came echoes of those cheers and shouts.

"Down with the Remove!"

"Hurrah!"

And, lurking in one of the shadows, was a figure, and that figure chuckled softly and gloatingly. Four very simple little actions—but the result was already stupendous!

Who was this Unknown—this creature who was setting the Remove and the Fourth against one another's throats?

THE END.

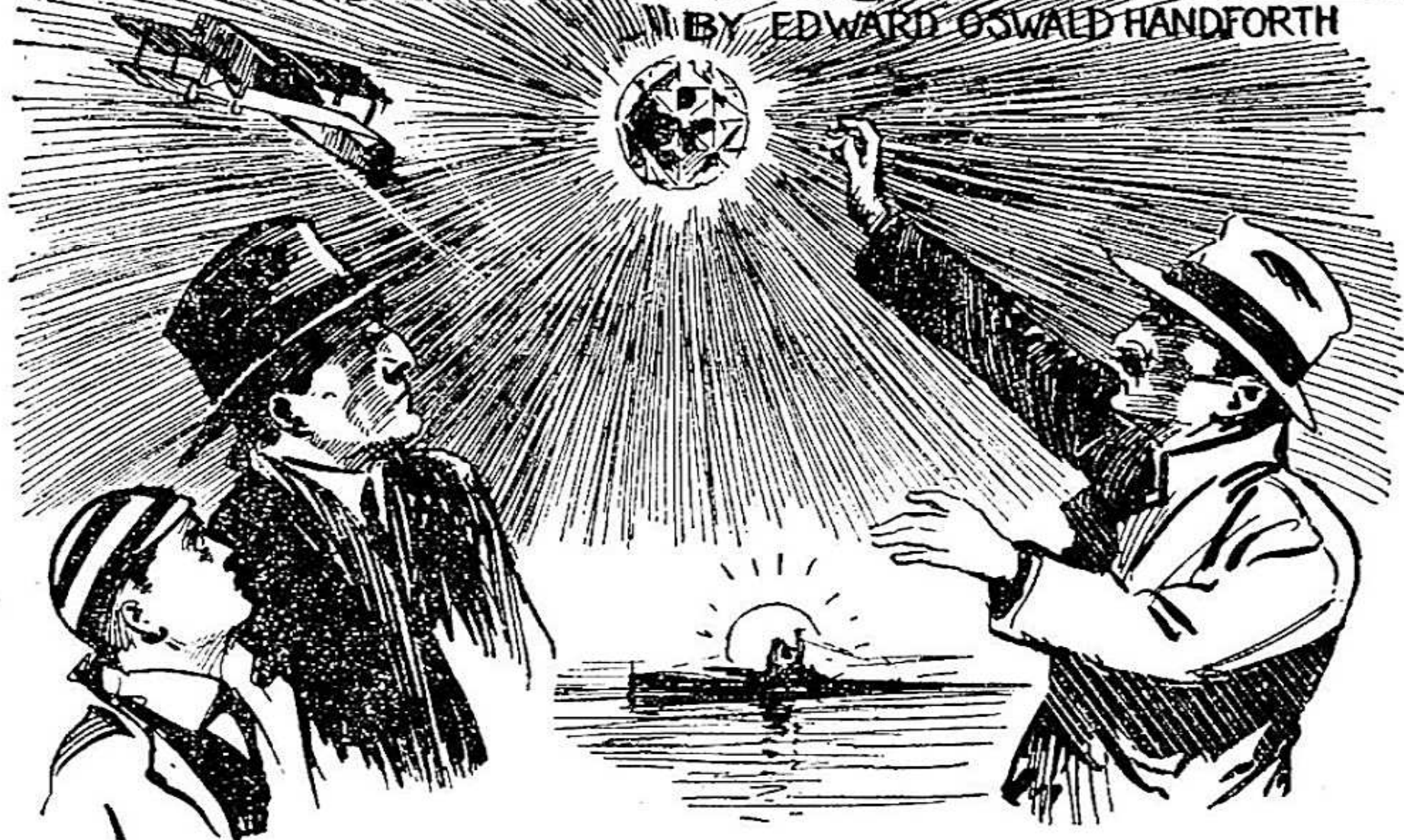
(Another story in this absorbing series next Wednesday. Don't miss "THE FOES OF ST. FRANK'S!")

BETWEEN OURSELVES.

Owing to pressure of space, this popular feature is unavoidably held over this week. It will, however, appear as usual in our next issue.

TRACKETT GRIM'S GREATEST CASE!

BY EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH



NOTE.—Handforth flatly refused Mr. Edwy Searles Brooks' offer of assistance to the writing of this story, and insisted that it should be published exactly as he wrote it. The story now appears as it came from Handforth's pen, with the exception that certain errors in spelling and punctuation have been corrected by the Editor.

HOW THIS STORY BEGAN!

Trackett Grim, the greatest detective on earth, has been engaged by Sir Esau Starrs, the famous astronomer, to recover the great Blue Ruby. Trackett Grim has gone down to Sir Esau's observatory, on the Kent coast.

Trackett Grim knocks out Armand Rocke, the master criminal, in the obser-

vatory, and the miscreant has dived head first into the Atlantic, carrying the Blue Ruby with him. Just as Sir Esau Starrs is wailing out that his ruby is lost for ever, Trackett Grim sees Armand Rocke climbing into a submarine. So Trackett Grim has accepted the challenge, and is about to follow Armand Rocke to the ends of the earth.

NOW READ ON!

On the Trail of the Great Blue Ruby!

TRACKETT GRIM'S eyes were like points of steel as he stared down at the blue waters of the Atlantic. He pointed a quivering finger, and Splinter, staring out of the observatory window, gave a violent start.

"Yes, sir, it's a submarine!" he declared. "It's a submarine!"

"I know that, you young fathead," said Trackett Grim. "Of course, it's a submarine! And Armand Rocke has done a bunk with that ruby! Are we going to let him get away? Not likely!"

Trackett Grim prepared to take a head-long dive to the water, three thousand feet below.

"Wait, sir!" gasped Splinter. "Wouldn't it be better to chase that submarine in our aeroplane?"

"Of course it would!" said Trackett Grim, pulling himself up. "I was only spoofing, you ass! Where's the aeroplane? Quick! We'll get on the track!"

Sir Esau Starrs, who had been standing back, watching Trackett Grim with awe and admiration, now stepped forward.

"Mr. Grim!" he pleaded. "I beg of you not to give up this chaso until Armand Rocke

'has been captured—until my precious ruby has been recovered!"

"Fear not!" replied Trackett Grim in his simple way. "I will chase this rotter to the equator—and then to the poles, if necessary. I will not come back until I have the Blue Ruby in my possession!"

"And on that day, Mr. Grim, I will hand you a cheque for fifty thousand pounds!" said Sir Esau Starrs.

Trackett Grim waved his hand.

"Tut, tut!" he said. "I do not want your money, Sir Esau! I am not chasing Armand Rocke for your sake, or for the sake of the Blue Ruby, but because I have accepted the rotter's challenge. He thinks he can foil me, but he has made a bloomer! Once Trackett Grim is challenged, it's all up with the idiot who throws down the gauntlet!"

And with these words Trackett Grim spun round on his heel, and went off on the great hunt. Splinter was just behind him, and in next to no time they had reached their aeroplane, which was still resting in Sir Esau's tennis-court.

In a moment, Trackett Grim and Splinter were within the cabin of the Vulture, and then the aeroplane soared aloft, and sped out over the Atlantic.

"Do you think we shall find the submarine, sir?" asked Splinter. "Armand Rocke has got a good start of us, and we might never get on his track——"

"Don't talk such rot!" interrupted Trackett Grim. "Have I ever failed to get on the track, Splinter? There! Look! What do you call that?"

He pointed, and, far below, underneath the surface of the water, they could see the shape of Armand Rocke's submarine. As everybody knows, submarines may be invisible to people on the surface of the water, but if you fly over them in an aeroplane, you can spot 'em as easy as winking. And that was what Trackett Grim and Splinter were doing now. They were directly over the submarine, and, although the miscreants who were in that craft could not see anything of the aeroplane, Trackett Grim and Splinter could see the submarine quite easily.

"Well, we've picked up the trail, sir," said Splinter contentedly.

"And now we shall proceed to shadow these villains," said Trackett Grim. "They are travelling rapidly, Splinter, but we can always beat them!"

Little did the crooks know, as their submarine sped through the water, at a hundred miles an hour, that Trackett Grim's famous aeroplane was high above the clouds, overhead, and the great detective, looking down, piercing the crystal air, could see exactly where the submarine was going to.

And so the chase went on—right across the Atlantic. Lots of people think that it's a wonderful thing to cross the Atlantic in an aeroplane. Little do they know that Trackett Grim has sometimes crossed the Atlantic on one of his cases, two or three times a week! But there, Trackett Grim is not the kind of

man to boast of these things. His whole mind is always concentrated upon his amazing detective work.

At last, the submarine entered the mouth of a river, and wended its way up through dense forest lands. At the first glance, Trackett Grim knew that he was in Brazil. He could see the Brazil-nut trees growing everywhere. And this river was the Amazon—the mighty Amazon, which is three or four hundred miles wide.

Never once had the Vulture faltered. She had flown on and on, always keeping Armand Rocke's submarine in sight, and now, after the submarine had travelled up the Amazon for about a thousand miles—when the river had narrowed down to a mere fifty miles wide—the end of the chase seemed imminent. For the submarine turned in towards the bank, and nosed its way into a kind of harbour. It was the secret lair of Armand Rocke and his gang!

And just then, when Trackett Grim was planning out his next move, the powerful engine of the Vulture gave a sort of splutter. The petrol had given out—and the Vulture was skimming down towards the forest, compelling them to make a forced landing!

The Lair of the Gang!

SPLINTER gave a cry of horror.

"We're dropping, sir!" he gasped. "Our juice has given out, and there's something wrong with the carburettor! What are we going to do? How are we going to land? There are nothing but trees below us—hundreds and thousands of trees! We shall be smashed to pieces!"

"Rot!" said Trackett Grim. "You leave this to me, Splinter, and I'll show you something! The Vulture is capable of landing anywhere!"

And he proved his words two or three minutes later, too. Nothing was impossible to the great criminologist. Never once had he been beaten.

Down below, as Splinter had said, there were dense masses of jungle. There wasn't a single break in the trees to be seen. It was the virgin, tropical forest. It was on the equator here, too, and the sun was beating down with such terrific heat that the atmosphere was like that of a furnace.

Just as it seemed inevitable that the Vulture must crash, Trackett Grim skilfully guided her through a break in the trees, and they skimmed under a lot of boughs, and then came to rest, as lightly as a feather, in a little clearing. Brazil-nut trees were growing all round them, and a couple of tigers leapt off into the jungle, and a whacking great rhinoceros lowered its head, and charged full tilt at the Vulture.

As cool as a cucumber, Trackett Grim drew his revolver, and shot the rhinoceros dead with the first bullet. A herd of elephants thundered off, frightened by the report.

"Come, Splinter!" said Trackett Grim curtly. "We have no time to fight with these tropical animals. We've got to get on the track of Armand Rocke. He's not far away—only through this belt of forest, and once we have grabbed the Blue Ruby, we can start off home again."

"But you've forgotten something, sir!" said Splinter.

"Rats!" said his master. "I never forget anything!"

"Then what about the petrol?"

"Eh? Petrol!" said Trackett Grim. "You silly young ass, can't we grab some petrol from the submarine? I'd thought of that already!"

"My goodness, sir!" gasped Splinter. "You always think of everything, don't you?"

"Always!" replied the great incriminator.

And off they went through the forest, caring nothing for the lurking dangers that lurked on every hand. Snakes slid across their path, and tigers roared menacingly in the undergrowth.

The air was quivering with heat, and there were thousands and millions of insects buzzing everywhere. But Trackett Grim took not the slightest notice. When he was on the track, he never deviated a yard from his course.

His sense of direction was extraordinary, and without the slightest faltering he found that little gap in the river where the submarine had nosed her way in, and there she lay, moored against a little landing stage.

Trackett Grim and Splinter peered through the undergrowth, and took in the whole scene with one swift glance. Just at the back of the inlet, there was a shack—a kind of jungle home, made of logs of wood and leaves and things. Armand Rocke had just come out of the submarine, and his gang was following him. They were carrying the stores into the lair.

"What's the programme, sir?" asked Splinter breathlessly.

"We must wait," replied Trackett Grim. "I have always told you, Splinter, that it is a foolish policy to rush headlong into anything. Coolness is the only safe method, and the more cool we are the more certain we shall be of success."

There was something pretty marvellous about this great detective as he stood there, waiting. Any other chap would have rushed forward, eager to give battle. But Trackett Grim was not like that. He always bided his time. Sometimes he would wait for six months, and then spring. Sometimes he would spring after half a minute. He always knew just when to dash out.

Suddenly the famous detective grew rigid, and he clutched his revolver.

"Come, Splinter!" he muttered. "The whole gang has now gone into the hut. It is our chance. We'll sweep up to the door, and then make all the rotters hold up their hands. Then we'll pinch the submarine, and foil them!"

But Splinter did not make any reply.

"Did you hear me, Splinter?" said Trackett Grim.

Still Splinter made no reply, and Trackett Grim turned and stared. But Splinter wasn't there. In some mysterious fashion, he had vanished. Trackett Grim twirled round, and commenced searching the undergrowth. Then he heard a kind of muffled cry for help. In a flash, he realised that poor old Splinter had been collared by a rhinoceros or something. He ran into the jungle, forgetting all about Armand Rocke in his anxiety for his faithful assistant.

And then, with a swoop, about four dozen savages fell upon Trackett Grim. He fought gamely, and half a dozen of the brutes went down from one punch. Another half a dozen went flying backwards as Trackett Grim brought his right into action. But it was no good. Reinforcements were at hand. About a hundred blacks came screaming out of the jungle, and Trackett Grim went down, fighting gamely. He could deal with twenty or thirty of these cannibals, but even Trackett Grim's enormous strength was unable to cope with such an onslaught as this.

And two minutes later both Trackett Grim and Splinter were being led through the jungle—led towards the hut where Armand Rocke was waiting!

The River of a Million Perils!

ARMAND ROCKE, the master-criminal, wore a mocking smile as he looked at his two prisoners. There was something sinister and deadly about this crook. The upper part of his face was concealed by a mask, and all round him his confederates were masked, too. They looked a pretty mouldy lot.

"At last, Trackett Grim, we are face to face again!" said Armand Rocke, with a hiss of hatred. "You have fallen into my clutches!"

"You needn't crow!" said Trackett Grim. "Don't forget that he who laughs best laughs last! I've followed you all the way to Central Africa to get the Blue Ruby, and I'm not going to be satisfied until I've got it. Understand that, you dog?"

Armand Rocke scowled with malicious hatred.

"Fool!" he hissed. "We will see who is master! This time, Trackett Grim, I am going to settle you—once and for all!"

Trackett Grim gave a mocking laugh of contempt.

He stared straight into Armand Rocke's face, and defied him. There was something fine and manly about Trackett Grim's action. There he stood, with his arms bound tightly to his sides—bound there cruelly with ropes. But Trackett Grim didn't care. He snapped his fingers contemptuously in Armand Rocke's face, and then he pulled out his cigarette-case and coolly lit a cigarette.

"Go ahead!" he said coolly. "Do your worst!"

And, by George, Armand Rocke did do his worst! Even Trackett Grim was a bit startled when he found out what the miscreant was planning. It was certainly a bit thick.

The famous detective and his assistant were carried out of the hut, and then they were shoved on to a raft. It was only a little raft, made of logs, and Trackett Grim and Splinter were tied to it. There they were, lashed face upward to that raft—spreadeagled upon it.

"Do you know what I am going to do to you?" hissed the master-crook. "You have dared to cross my path, Trackett Grim. You have dared to follow me, in the vain hope of getting hold of the Blue Ruby. Never were you more mistaken, for you are now going to your death!"

Again Trackett Grim snapped his fingers in the brute's face.

"I defy you, Armand Rocke!" he said mockingly. "It is your turn now, but wait a bit. Just you wait, my son! I'll jolly well get my own back for this!"

Armand Rocke did not say another word. Instead, he gave a sharp order, and the raft was pushed out into the river and allowed to drift. Armand Rocke maintained his grim, relentless silence.

"Farewell, Trackett Grim!" he sang out sneeringly. "Within an hour the crocodiles will have you! The sharks will be snapping round you! I wish you luck!"

And the villain gave vent to a great shout of laughter. The other crooks roared, too, and Trackett Grim and Splinter found themselves floating down the mighty bosom of the Amazon, that river of a million perils!

"They mean to kill us, sir!" panted Splinter.

But Trackett Grim was gagged, and he could make no reply. But the glance he gave Splinter was sufficient to hearten the youngster, for Splinter could see that his famous master was in no way perturbed. He was not despairing.

And so they floated out upon the great river, while crocodiles came swimming up, snapping at the raft and threatening to eat them.

"Be of good cheer, Splinter!" said Trackett Grim steadily. "I am already loosening my bonds. You know that I am tremendously strong, and in another two minutes I'll have these ropes free."

And, sure enough, in next to no time Trackett Grim had wrenched his hands free, and then he tore that cruel gag from his mouth. But just then the peril became deadly.

For two great sharks had biffed against the raft, and in a second it overturned, leaving Trackett Grim and Splinter in a pretty frightful position.

For, although Trackett Grim had freed his hands, his ankles were still bound to the raft. And there he hung, head downwards, in the river. And Splinter was in an even worse predicament, for he was bound hand and foot

to the raft, and there was no way of turning it over again. They were doomed to be drowned!

But no! Not drowned! For, as Trackett Grim hung there, in the water, crocodiles came squirming round him, opening their vile mouths, and snapping at him, and it seemed that the whole game was up, when the most startling thing took place. For, suddenly, the raft was lifted high and dry above the level of the water, and Trackett Grim and Splinter found themselves upon an island—far out of the reach of the crocodiles and the sharks and the hippopotamuses.

"We're saved, sir!" gasped Splinter, shaking a couple of goldfish out of his hair. "But how did we get on to this island, sir? It—it seemed to rise up out of the sea!"

"It did!" agreed Trackett Grim. "And it isn't an island at all, Splinter. Don't you understand? We're on the back of a whale!"

The Finding of the Great Blue Ruby!

AMAZING as it seemed, Trackett Grim had only spoken the simple truth.

A whale had mercifully come up out of the Amazon, and had lifted the raft, with Trackett Grim and Splinter clinging to it, high and dry above the mighty stream. In the nick of time they had been saved from the deadly perils of the Amazon.

But even now there was no certainty that this safety would last. For the whale might take it into his head, at any minute, to dive again. So there was no time to be lost.

Quick as lightning, Trackett Grim pulled out his knife, and he cut Splinter free.

"We are free, Splinter!" he said, in a terrible voice. "Free to go back to Armand Rocke's lair! And this time we shall be the victors! Our battle against Armand Rocke has only just commenced, but we are bound to be the victors. It is a case of right against might, and right always wins!"

And with these fine words Trackett Grim plunged fearlessly into the river, and commenced that long swim back to the crooks' hiding-place. Splinter, nothing loth, joined his master, and together they swam up against the current.

It was just an indication of the great detective's marvellous determination. He had promised Sir Esau Starrs that he would recover the great Blue Ruby, and he would take no rest until he had completed his mission. That was Trackett Grim all over. Once on the trail, always on the trail. He haunted his quarry like a shadow, until the miscreant was nearly sent dotty with fear.

At last they reached that inlet, where they had seen the submarine vanish. But now, as they swam ashore, they found that the submarine had gone. Armand Rocke and his gang had vanished!

"Now is our chance, Splinter!" said Trackett Grim, as he landed. "The beggars have gone off on another *coup*! I expect they've gone up the river, to rob some tea-

planter, or somebody like that! Come! We will search Armand Rocke's headquarters while we have the chance!"

It was a great idea—as great as any of Trackett Grim's ideas. Moving cautiously, the pair stole up to the building, and they found the door closed and locked. Not that Trackett Grim was worried by a trifle like this.

In a flash, he brought out his bunch of skeleton keys, and in another flash the door was open. The great criminologist and his assistant walked in, and Trackett Grim's revolver was ready.

But he did not need to use it. For the place was empty and deserted. All the rotters had gone, and there weren't even any savages left to guard the place. This indicated, surely enough, that Armand Rocke believed Trackett Grim and Splinter were dead. Never had the master crook thought that his arch enemy could escape.

"All is well, Splinter," said Trackett Grim complacently. "We can now search until we find the great Blue Ruby. It is bound to be here. Make no mistake about that. This is Armand Rocke's headquarters, and we shall probably find lots of other loot here, too. Let us begin the search."

So they went round the place examining every inch—probing into every nook and cranny. Two hours passed in this way, but, so far, the great ruby had not shown itself. Not that Trackett Grim was getting disheartened. He was thorough in his methods, and he never gave up a search until he had discovered what he was looking for.

And it was just the same in this case.

With a sudden shout of victory, he pointed.

"At last!" he said triumphantly. "We have found the great Blue Ruby, Splinter!"

And there, in the centre of the mantelpiece, was the marvellous stone—glinting and scintillating with a thousand fires, and sending its sparkling radiance into every corner of the apartment. The search was at an end, and Trackett Grim's thorough methods were rewarded. After hours of labour, the great ruby had been found.

"It's marvellous, sir!" said Splinter breathlessly. "You always win—and it's only because you're such a great detective, sir!"

"I have not become famous for nothing!" replied Trackett Grim modestly. "But it is not my habit to sing my own praises, Splinter. And, remember, we have to get back to England yet. Our duty is not done until we have placed this ruby into the hands of Sir Esau Starrs. Come! Let's be going!"

They hurried out of the place, and there was no sign of Armand Rocke and his gang. Throbbing with victory, Trackett Grim and Splinter plunged into the forest once again—en route for their aeroplane.

But Trackett Grim had not forgotten the petrol. He knew that he could not get back to England without fuel for his engine. So he had bagged a can of petrol, and he was

now carrying it. It just proves how thorough Trackett Grim was. Never did he overlook the slightest detail!

"Here we are, sir!" said Splinter breathlessly. "Here's the Vulture—waiting for us! We've succeeded, guv'nor! We've got the Blue Ruby, and now we're about to start off home again!"

But just then—just as they went out into the clearing, intending to board the Vulture—a terrible thing happened.

Two enormous lions sprang down from the upper branches of the trees, and one lion alighted on the shoulders of Trackett Grim, and the other lion dropped upon Splinter! Down they went—fighting, clawing, and battling for life!

(It's all right—you needn't get the wind up! Trackett Grim and Splinter aren't killed by these two lions. You'll hear how Trackett Grim, by a marvellous plan, saved the lives of himself and Splinter, in next week's instalment. And next week, too, our heroes meet with some terrific adventures in mid-Pacific, on a sailing ship, skippered by a pirate captain! Look out for the next thrilling instalment of this marvellous detective story.—E. O. H.)

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SECTION

A

READER'S APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP.

I desire to become enrolled as a Member of THE ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE and to qualify for all such benefits and privileges as are offered to Members of the League. I hereby declare that I have introduced "THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY" and THE ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE to one new reader, whose signature to certify this appears on second form attached hereto. Will you, therefore, kindly forward me Certificate of Membership with the Membership Number assigned to me, and Membership Badge.

SECTION

B

MEMBER'S APPLICATION FOR MEDAL AWARDS.

I, Member No. (give Membership No.), hereby declare that I have introduced one more new reader, whose signature to certify this appears on second form attached hereto. This makes me (state number of introductions up to date) introductions to my credit.

SECTION

C

NEW READER'S DECLARATION.

I hereby declare that I have been introduced by (give name of introducer) to this issue of "THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY."

(FULL NAME)

(ADDRESS)

INSTRUCTIONS.

INSTRUCTIONS.—Reader Applying for Membership: Cut out TWO complete Application Forms from Two copies of this week's issue of THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY. On one of the forms fill in Section A, crossing out Sections B and C. Then write clearly your full name and address at bottom of form. The second form is for your new reader, who fills in Section C, crosses out Sections A and B, and writes his name and address at bottom of form. Both forms are then pinned together, and sent to the Chief Officer, The St. Frank's League, c/o THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY, Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C.4. **Member Applying for Bronze Medal:** It will be necessary for you to obtain six new readers for this award. For each new reader TWO complete forms, bearing the same number, are needed. On one of the forms fill in Section B, crossing out Sections A and C, and write your name and address at bottom of form. The other form is for your new reader, who fills in Section C, crosses out Sections A and B, and writes his name and address at the bottom of

the form. Now pin both forms together and send them to the Chief Officer, as above. One new reader will then be registered against your name, and when six new readers have been registered, you will be sent the St. Frank's League bronze medal. There is nothing to prevent you from sending in forms for two or more new readers at once, provided that each pair of forms bears the same date and number.

Bronze medallists wishing to qualify for the silver or gold medals can apply in the same way as for the bronze medal, filling in Section B. Every introduction they make will be credited to them, so that when the League reaches the required number of members, they can exchange their bronze medal for a silver or gold one, according to the number of introductions with which they are credited.

These Application Forms can be posted for £d., providing the envelope is not sealed and no letter is enclosed.

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You can qualify for the various awards by promoting the growth of the League.

If you want help or information on any subject, you will find the Chief Officer ever ready to assist you.



THE CHIEF OFFICER'S CHAT.

All **LETTERS** in reference to the League should be addressed to the Chief Officer, The St. Frank's League, c/o THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY, The Fleetway House, Farringdon St., London, E.C.4. Enquiries which need an immediate answer should be accompanied by a stamped and addressed envelope.

That Blazer Badge!

H. Frederick Mullett, of Combe St. Nicholas, Somerset, has hit on a capital notion for a specially designed League badge on his blazer. The effect is admirable. The idea cost five shillings. He asks me if this is O.K. Rather!

"The Brooks' Brain Box!"

Thanks go to R. Bond, of Bexley Heath, for this term of praise to the author. This reader says the "N. L. L." gets better every week. Not far out, that!

The Hairy Mammoth.

An Islington reader asks me about the prehistoric mammoth. I suppose the finest specimen of this gigantic monster is the one in the museum at St. Petersburg. It was dug out of the Siberian ice, and was in a perfect state of preservation. One venturesome individual ate a portion of the flesh, but he died of the effects. Study the mammoth, but do not eat him!

When Young Lindbergh Arrived.

"Sparks" has let me know, through his friends in Liverpool, that when the gallant airman returned to New York the enthusiasm was tremendous. "Sparks'" ship hung out all the flags and helped in the whistle-blowing—full blast! It was a great scene, and one never to be forgotten.

A Dining Car Attendant.

A Herts chum tells me he has one great ambition—namely, to be an attendant in a dining-car. His age is eighteen. His only course is to apply to one of the big railway lines which run those handsome cars, but he must be prepared for disappointment, as these jobs are much coveted.

75 Miles 279 Yards in an Hour!

This was the performance on a push-bike by Jean Brunier, at Montlhery, November 1st, 1925, and I give the record in answer to a Reading reader.

A Limerick Club.

Hilary O'Brien, 16, Newenham Street, Limerick, sends me word of the club he is running, and of the S. F. L. Soccer team. Both have done well. Cricket also has been to the fore. The pitch is by the side of the River Shannon, and, despite floods, the eleven put in a good show. The secretary will be glad to hear from readers in England. There are boxing bouts in the club-room, likewise concerts and plays for the raising of funds.

More Club News.

The Amberton All Sports Club is going great guns, and congratulations go to the president, G. Wilson, and the general secretary, W. Birchel. This club is keen on cycling.

CORRESPONDENTS WANTED.

Thos. G. Mercer, 1, Sweden Grove, Waterloo, nr. **Liverpool**, wishes to hear from readers.

A. Hawes, Wycombe Lane, Wooburn Green, **Buckinghamshire**, wishes to correspond with readers in Australia, New Zealand and elsewhere in the British Empire who are interested in sports and stamp collecting.

A. L. Moxom, 59, Manor Drive, Headingley, Leeds, **Lancashire**, wishes to hear from readers who has NELSON LEES before 386 for sale.

D. Chandler, 29, Smith Street, King William's Town, Cape Province, **South Africa**, wishes to hear from Mr. and Mrs. Shells, of Newcastle, or any relation of them or anyone who knows of their whereabouts; would also like to hear from readers.

W. S. Hawken, 17, St. Austell Street, Truro, **Cornwall**, wishes to hear from readers who are interested in Pitman's shorthand, book-keeping, and commerce. Also wishes to hear from an O.O.

Charles V. Brereton, 50, High Street, Congleton, **Cheshire**, wishes to hear from readers in Calgary, Alberta, also in the United States.

J. Markwick, 75, Sandown Road, Brighton, **Sussex**, wishes to correspond with readers interested in the wireless.

Douglas F. R. Pope, 15, Duncombe Street, Woolaston, **Stourbridge**, wishes to hear from stamp collectors overseas.

Donald Howell, 44, Marlborough Road, Swansea, **Wales**, wishes to form a St. Frank's League jazz band. All willing to help should call at his address. He is a violinist himself. He also wishes to correspond with members.

Harry MacMahon, 50, Long Street, West Broken Hill, N.S.W., **Australia**, wishes to hear from readers in U.S.A. and England, specially London.

Robert Johnson, Jun., 11, Loughborough Road, **Leicester**, wishes to correspond with readers interested in radio and stamp collecting. Also wants to hear from the O.O. in his district.

J. R. Wenham, 72, Covert Road, Tooting, **London**, S.W.17, wishes to correspond with readers.

C. Goldstein, "Clifton," 148, Queen's Park Road, Brighton, **Sussex**, wishes to obtain Nos. 1-40 old series "N. L. L." Also "Schoolboy Magician" Series.

Kenneth Bruce, 2, Lambeth Villas, Portsmouth Road, Surbiton, **Surrey**, wishes to correspond with readers anywhere.

Ernest Bolland, Jun., 44, Cartmell Terrace, Darlington, **Durham**, wishes to correspond with readers in Australia, New Zealand and South Africa.

Kenneth Barrett, 33, Athelstan Road, Clive Vale, Hastings, **Sussex**, wishes to hear from readers anywhere. He especially wants to get news of Frank Cooper, 4, Cross Street, Hove, Sussex, and P. Roche, "Sublin," 14, Navy Street, Coburg, Melbourne, Australia.

(Continued on next page.)

CORRESPONDENTS WANTED

(Continued from previous page.)

James Nair, 24, Ibrox Street, Glasgow, wishes to hear from readers anywhere in the Empire.

R. Bond, 40, Erith Road, Bexley Heath, Kent, wishes to obtain Nos. 1-32 (new series) "N. L. L."

F. Tondour, 13, Courtenay Square, Kennington, London, S.E.11, wishes to hear from clubs, average age 13, with view to matches.

George Edmonds, 297, Essex Road, Islington, London, N.1, wants to hear from readers who are interested in prehistoric monsters like the giant mammoth. This reader is anxious to join a club; but not entirely a sports one, as he cannot play games owing to a weak leg.

Percy Walter Gibbs, 22, Livingstone Road, Hove, Sussex, wishes to hear from readers overseas, interested in sports. He also wants to join a club in his district.

John William Boucher, 13, Horsman Street,

Grosvenor Street, Camberwell, London, S.E.5, has set of "N. L. L." for sale, and wants the "Forged War Orders."

Geoffrey Forsythe Guest, 11, Vincent Avenue, Chorlton-cum-Hardy, nr. Manchester, wishes to hear from stamp collectors. He requires certain numbers of "N. L. L." from No. 1 to 47.

J. Bennett, 78, Middle Street North, Driffield, East Yorks, would like to hear from readers interested in back numbers.

S. G. Mumford, 23, Tweed Street, West Derby Road, Liverpool, wishes to correspond with readers in Samoa, North Africa, and Australia.

Vera Barsby, 30, Daleside Road, Windhill, Shipley, Yorks, wishes to correspond with readers anywhere.

F. Redman, Lo. Midland Road, Bedford, wishes to correspond with readers interested in swimming, cycling, or any sport.

W. L. Felton, Jun., 23, Willoughby Road, Wallasey, Cheshire, wishes to hear from readers, also from a club in his area.

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