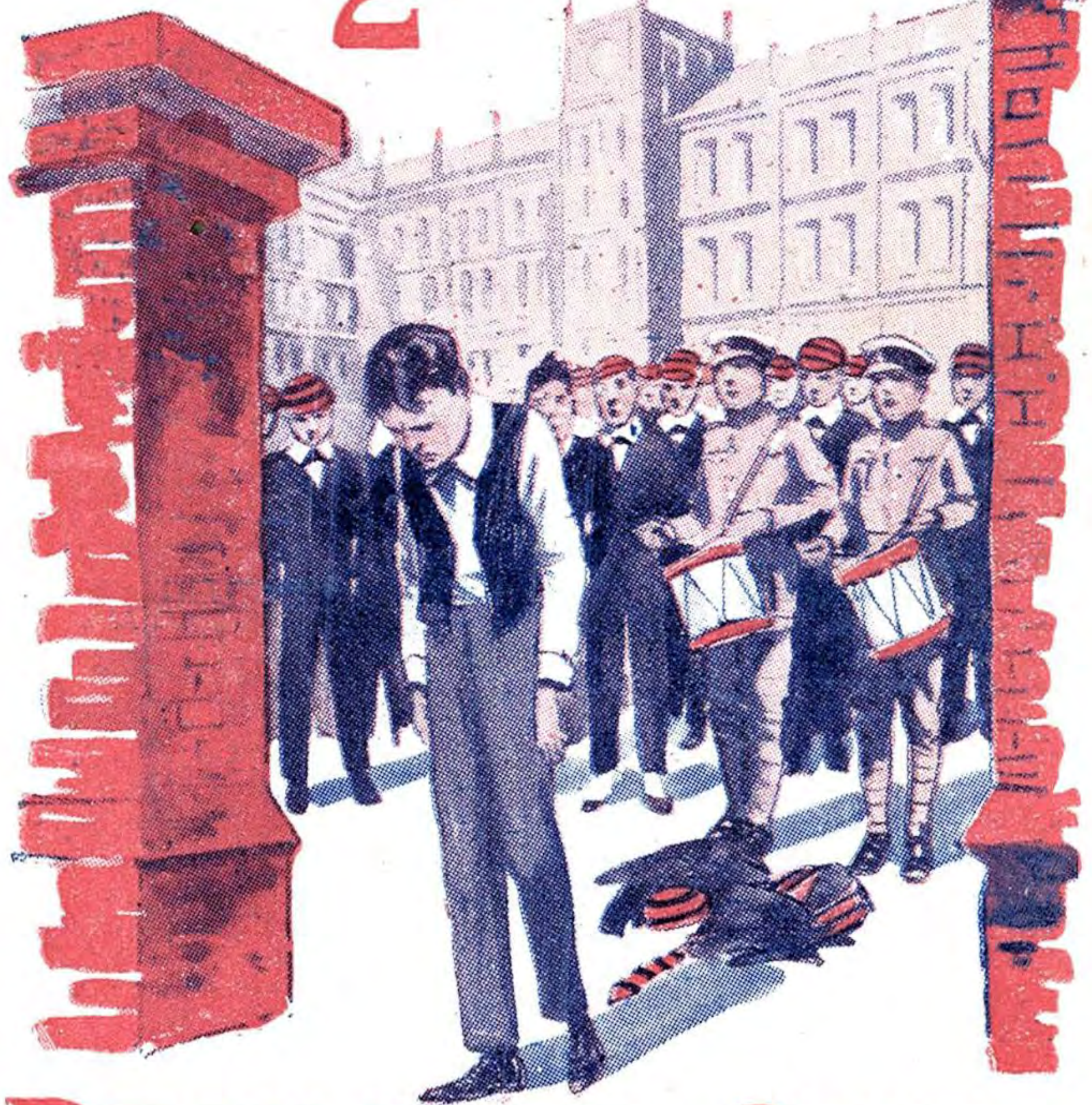


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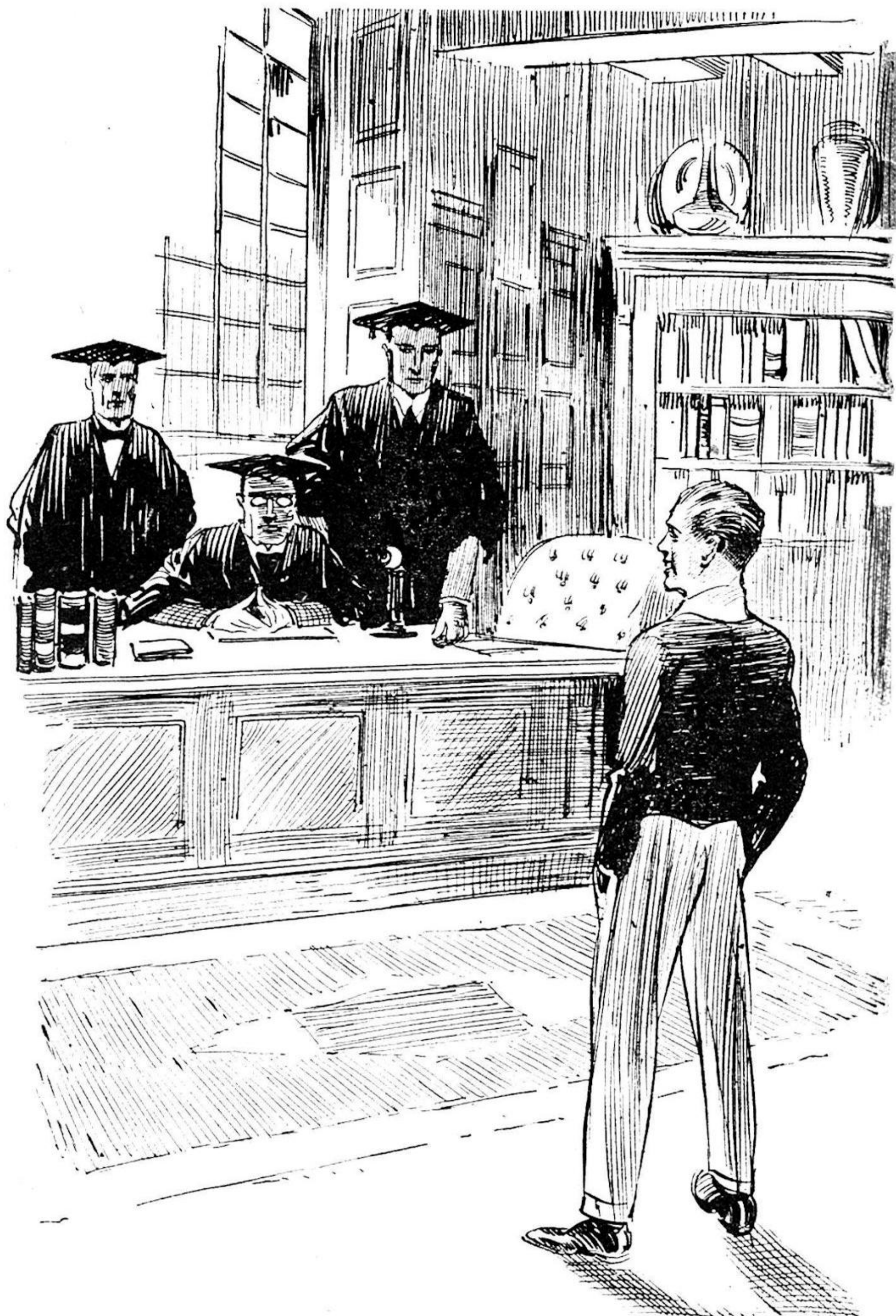
DRUMMED OUT ST. FRANKS!

Being

complete story of school life and mystery—full of dramatic incident and surprises.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

September 10th, 1927.



Bernard Forrest grinned insolently at the Headmaster. "You'd better not sack Nipper and Boots," he said. "I'm the guilty one—and I don't care if you kick me out of the school!"

The Unknown Unmasked!Mystery and Thrills!

DRUMMED OUT OF ST. FRANK'S



By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

The feud between the Remove and the Fourth Form at St. Frank's reaches a thrilling climax this week. You'll enjoy this exciting yarn, which introduces Nipper, Handforth, and many other popular characters.

CHAPTER I.

The Figure at the Window!

CHURCH started violently.

"What was that?" he asked, in a husky voice.

Handforth and McClure looked up from their work, and stared at Church. The chums of Study D were at prep. in the Ancient House at St. Frank's, and outside all was dark. A strong autumn gale was blowing round the buildings of the old school, and the forthcoming night promised to be wild.

"What was what?" asked Handforth. "What the dickens is the matter with you, Churchy?"

Church slowly shook his head.

"Must have been dreaming, I suppose," he said. "But I'll swear I saw a face at the window just now."

"A face?"

"Well, not exactly a face," said Church. "It was a sort of figure—just a hazy outline, you know. Something indistinct and blurry."

Edward Oswald Handforth and Arnold McClure turned, and looked at the window. The blind was not drawn, and outside the West Square was very black.

"Of course, you were dreaming!" said Handforth gruffly. "Why on earth should a figure stand outside our window? Get on with your work, my son, and let's have no more interruptions. Blow this grammar!"

"If it comes to that, blow this algebra!" said Church, glancing at the window again.

"I was only wondering if those beastly Fourth-Formers——"

"My only hat!" said Handforth, with a start. "You mean——"

"Well, it was only just a suspicion," said Church apologetically. "I don't suppose Boots and his gang will do anything to-night. But when I saw that figure——"

"It's more than probable!" said Handforth firmly. "It's a wild sort of night—with plenty of wind. I'll bet the New Klux Klan are on the job!"

McClure grinned.

"Oh, draw it mild, Handy," he said. "Those Fourth-Formers wouldn't start anything at this hour of the evening. We've got something planned for later on, haven't we?"

"Rather!" said Handforth, with enthusiasm. "The Ancient Order of Avengers is booked for a big move to-night. We don't want these giddy Fourth-Formers to spoil anything!"

Handforth got up, and went over to the window. He looked out searchingly, but could see nothing except the lights from the West House on the other side of the Square.

"No, there's nothing here," he said. "Must have been your imagination. Church, old man."

"Yes, I suppose it was," agreed Church.

They settled down to their prep. again, and there were no sounds except the crackling of the fire and the buffeting of the wind outside.

These were exciting days for the Junior School of St. Frank's.

Since the beginning of the term, a feud had been in progress between the Remove and the Fourth. In a way, it was a feud of the Houses, too—since the Remove lived in the Ancient House and the West House, and the Fourth was divided between the Modern House and the East House. The juniors were at serious loggerheads, and matters had been growing from bad to worse.

In fact, the Head had banned every kind of fighting, and he had already "gated" both the Forms, and had deprived them of all half-holidays until further notice. But this drastic action had increased, if anything, the animosity between the rival factions.

For, in order to get round the headmaster's ban, the juniors had formed their own secret societies. Nipper & Co., of the Remove, were the leaders of the Ancient Order of Avengers. And John Busterfield Boots, of the Fourth, was the Grand Master of the New Klux Klan. These secret societies had already had several clashes, and it was quite a fashion, nowadays, for the juniors to be jumpy in their studies—and to start at any unusual sound. For it might mean that hooded or cloaked figures were about to pounce!

One never felt certain of oneself. It was a positive risk to go out into the Triangle, or into the Squares—particularly after dark. One literally took one's safety in one's hands on such occasions. Indeed, most of the juniors had grown into the habit of going about in parties of threes and fours.

"My stars!" yelled Church suddenly.

He looked up, pointing excitedly at the window.

"What the dickens——" began Handforth.

"Look!"

"You've ruined my exercise!" roared Handforth furiously. "You clumsy idiot——"

"There he is!" gasped Church. "That figure! One of the New Klux Klan! I knew it all the time! Quick, you chaps—they're on us!"

Prep. was entirely forgotten. Handforth and McClure stared at the window, and just caught a glimpse of a figure outside in the darkness. It was a figure entirely clothed in flowing robes, with a strange, conical hat reaching right down to the shoulders, and forming an effective mask. The chums of Study D instantly recognised the costume of the New Klux Klan.

"By George!" said Handforth breathlessly. "Let's have a look!"

"Better be careful, old man!" urged McClure.

But Handforth was already at the window, and he tore it open. A gust of wind rushed in, and it was very chilly. Dimly, Handforth could see two members of the New Klux Klan hurrying off in the direction of West Arch.

"Come on!" he panted. "There's only two of them! Let's capture the bounders!"

"Better go easy, Handy——"

"Look! They've turned, and they're making insulting signs at us!" said Handforth wrathfully. "Are we going to stand that? I'll bet they were going to try some of their tricks—but we spotted them in time!"

And Edward Oswald, without any further ado, leapt out of the window, and gave chase. He ran across the West Square at full speed, and Church and McClure, after a quick glance at one another, followed.

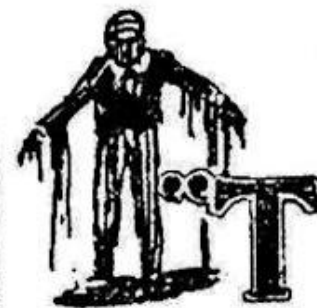
"Handy—Handy!" panted Church. "Come back, you silly ass! I'll bet it's a trap—they're just luring you on! You know how tricky those Fourth Form chaps are!"

But perhaps Oswald Handforth was too ramheaded to take any notice of his chums. He was, perhaps, the only fellow in the Remove who would have been drawn into a chase like this. It was characteristic of him to act without thinking. And it was even more characteristic of him to take no notice of his chums.

He vanished into the darkness of West Arch, and Church and McClure pelted after him, fearing the worst!

CHAPTER 2.

Tar!



HERE they go!"

Handforth pointed eagerly. He had just emerged from the shadow of the archway, and the figures of the two mysterious Klansmen could be seen on the other side of the Triangle—right down past the East House, and near the school gymnasium. Only for an instant did their

forms appear in the reflected light from some of the windows. They had vanished.

"Come on!" said Handforth triumphantly. "If we're quick, we'll collar them!"

"Handy!" gasped Church. "Don't be an ass! There may be a dozen of them waiting for us!"

"Of course!" said McClure. "It's a trap!"

But Handforth was not in the mood to listen to reasonable advice. He was already dashing across the Triangle, towards the gym. And Church and McClure felt in duty bound to follow him—just to keep faith with their leader. It was one of the penalties of friendship. Many times had they accompanied him with the certain knowledge that they were plunging headlong into danger. It was impossible to back out, and to let him go alone.

"Oh, the hopeless ass!" groaned Church. "We ought to have run back, to fetch Nipper and Fullwood and Watson and the others. But it's too late now—we shall have to see after him!"

"It's the only way!" said the other junior. "And we shall deserve whatever comes—for not holding him back!"

They ran on, and were just in time to overtake Handforth as he turned the corner of the gymnasium, where there were a number of evergreens. Behind the building there was a very quiet spot—a kind of grassy hollow. This was the arena selected for many a fight.

"Steady—steady!" murmured Handforth, his voice quivering with excitement. "They went round here, and then came to a halt, and waved their arms about."

"Yes—just to lure you on!" said Church. "There's still time for us to fetch the other fellows—"

"Oh, crumbs!" groaned Mac. "He's off again!"

The low sounds of mocking laughter had come from the darkness just ahead, and it had proved too much for the impetuous Handforth. He ran on, and Church and McClure pelted after him with one thought in their minds. They would grab him, and hold him back!

And then, suddenly, the disaster happened.

Without any warning, the chums of Study D found themselves floundering in something horribly sticky. It caught at their ankles, held them in a tenacious grip, and caused them to pitch forward head first.

With gurgling sounds, they plunged into the sticky mass. To make matters worse, Handforth barged into McClure, and then Church got mixed up in the tangle, too. The three juniors were not merely sitting in the stuff—they were wallowing in it.

And it was—tar!

The hapless juniors could not see anything in that darkness, but their noses were in excellent condition. And the whole air reeked of tar. In point of fact, there was a great pool of it in the bottom of that hollow. And Handforth & Co. had run right into it—and were now floundering about in a miniature lake of the stuff.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Handforth, as he sat up.

"It's tar!" said Church breathlessly. "I'm smothered—I'm absolutely bathed in the awful stuff! Didn't we warn you, Handy? Didn't we tell you—"

"By George!" roared Handforth, with a start. "You don't mean—"

"Isn't it obvious?" asked Church. "Those beastly New Klux Klan chaps lured us here deliberately, so that we should pitch into this tar. And we've done it! We've run right into the tar!"

Handforth gave a bellow of rage. Until this moment he had been too excited to realise the rashness of his actions. And now it was too late! This tar was particularly sticky—unusually glutinous. It clung round their ankles, it held them down. When they tried to rise, their hands stuck to the dreadful concoction, and it felt like so much liquid glue.

It was easy enough to guess how the New Klux Klan had obtained all this material. Tarring operations were in progress out in the lane. For the past two or three days a steam-roller had been busy, to say nothing of a tar-spray, and a gang of workmen. As usual, numbers of tar barrels had been strewn along the grass border of the road, and the Klansmen had obviously borrowed some of these barrels.

"The curs!" shouted Handforth. "This sort of thing isn't playing the game! All our clothes are ruined, and it'll take us hours—days—to get this tar off! It's a dirty trick; it's playing foul!"

Handforth was undoubtedly right.

A jape was one thing, and a good, healthy fight was permissible, too. But this deliberate scheme to lure Handforth & Co. into a tar-bath was going beyond all bounds. It was nothing more or less than a cowardly outrage.

And then, while Handforth and his chums were still trying to extricate themselves from that sticky, glutinous mass, figures appeared out of the surrounding darkness. All of them were clothed in the robes and conical hats of the New Klux Klan.

They capered round wildly, making no sounds except low, triumphant chuckles. There was something rather eerie in the scene, particularly as the moon came out from behind the scudding clouds just then.

There were the chums of Study D, striving hard to get free from the tar, and there, surrounding them in a dancing circle, were the Klansmen. It was almost impossible to realise that only a hundred yards away the life of St. Frank's was going on peacefully and soberly.

"You—you rotters!" gasped Handforth. "We'll make you suffer for this! Just wait until the Avengers get busy!"

"Idle talk!" came a mocking voice. "The Avengers can do nothing. The New Klux Klan are their masters—always. Nothing can reduce the power of the all-conquering New Klux Klan!"

And the dance of triumph went on, with Handforth & Co. growing desperate in their

helplessness. For that tar was of a very strange variety. The more the three victims tried to pull themselves free, the more tightly they were held. The reek of it rose up in suffocating waves, and the victims were beginning to feel dizzy and faint.



CHAPTER 3.

And Feathers!

HANDFORTH'S feelings were bitter. He knew that he had led his chums into this predicament, and he wasn't exactly pleased with himself. And it was a victory for the New Klux Klan, too, a despicable sort of victory. Once again the enemy would triumph.

"You low-down rotters!" panted Handforth. "You don't know what it is to fight fairly, do you?"

"We're full of novel ideas over in the Modern House!" chuckled one of the Klansmen.

"Did you hear that?" asked Handforth fiercely. "The Modern House! So these rotters are Boots and his own set? I didn't think you were such a cad, Buster Boots. Just wait until I get free from this stuff, and then I'll——"

"Now!" commanded one of the Klansmen. "Let them have it!"

The tricksters had evidently been waiting until the chums of Study D were almost on the point of getting free from that tar pool. As a matter of fact, the three luckless juniors were just on the edge of it, and Handforth badly wanted to dash to the attack. But it was impossible. The sticky tar on his boots was so thickly clotted that he could hardly move his limbs, and if he happened to touch his hand on any part of his person it clung there. Church and McClure were in the same predicament.

Swoollsh!

A number of white things came hurtling through the air, unexpectedly. They struck Handforth & Co., and then seemed to explode into a billowing mass of whiteness.

"Oh, crumbs!" gurgled Church. "Feathers!"

They were pillows that had been hurled at the three Ancient House juniors—pillows which had been specially prepared, so that they burst immediately upon contact. The result was startling.

Handforth and Church and McClure were fighting desperately in a wild smother of feathers. They were so thick that it was impossible to see a foot in any direction. The high wind carried the feathers round in flurries, whirling them up and down, and beating them into the juniors' faces.

Naturally, a tremendous proportion of those feathers clung to Handforth & Co.'s tarred persons. Within twenty seconds the trio were transformed. Instead of being

black from head to foot, they were now white!

"Oh, my goodness!" groaned McClure. "We've been tarred and feathered!"

"The cads!" panted Handforth. "Oh, the beastly rotters!"

He looked round, trying to brush the feathers from his face. None of the Klansmen were left. All had mysteriously vanished—melting away into the dim shadows, with low, mocking chuckles.

There had been about six or seven of the enemy. Who were they? John Busterfield Boots and Bob Christine and their friends of the Modern House? Or Armstrong and Merrell and Freeman and the East House crowd?

It was impossible to tell. According to one of the remarks it seemed perfectly obvious that the Modern House section of the Fourth was responsible. But perhaps that had been a blind—a bluff. Still, it seemed positive, nevertheless, that Buster Boots was at the bottom of the affair.

Not that Handforth & Co. cared. They had been attacked by the New Klux Klan—and the New Klux Klan was the Fourth Form secret society. And John Busterfield Boots, as the leader of that society, was morally responsible for the behaviour of his men. They had performed an infamous act. True, Handforth & Co. had not been injured. But tarring and feathering was beyond all limits of reason. It was the kind of treatment that might have been meted out to a trio of known rotters. But Handforth and his two chums were true blue—fellows of the finest fighting spirit. For them to be tricked and tarred and feathered in this way was nothing short of outrageous.

"We didn't think it possible!" muttered Church, under his breath. "We know that Boots has been degenerating lately; he's tried all sorts of rotten tricks on us. But this is the worst of all. I didn't think that old Buster had it in him!"

"The fellow's a cad!" said Handforth thickly. "Let's hope that we get indoors without being spotted. But it'll take us hours to get this tar off, and the smell of it will stick to us for days."

"But how can we get indoors?" asked McClure anxiously. "We're simply dripping with this tar—it's falling from us in blobs at every step we take. We shall leave a trail all across the Triangle, and in the lobby and upstairs. There'll be a big inquiry, and——"

"By George, yes!" interrupted Handforth. "The best thing we can do is to dodge round into the West Square and get some of the fellows out here. We'll give a shout and attract them. Perhaps they'll be able to help in some way."

They were certainly in a serious predicament. If any of that tar got into the Ancient House there would be stern inquiries. It wasn't ordinary tar, either. It was some patent kind of composition—liquid, and yet as thick as treacle. And it had the con-

sistency of warm glue. It was some patent concoction used for roadmaking, and quite possibly it would refuse to come off. This was the thought which caused consternation in the hearts of the three victims.

But there was no sense in hanging about, waiting until somebody came and spotted them. They were conspicuous enough, in all conscience!

Three white figures—white from head to toe. Those feathers were clinging in their myriads, not merely on Handforth & Co.'s bodies, but on their faces, on their hands, and all over their heads. In their struggles in the tar they had got themselves saturated in the dreadful stuff. And now the feathers were festooned over them in such great numbers that it was impossible to tell the front from the rear. Indeed, they could hardly see, owing to the feathers which clung to their cheeks and round their eyes. If they attempted to pull them away they only succeeded in half-blinding themselves.

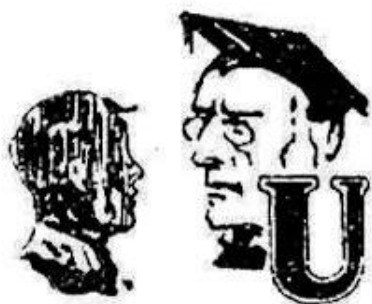
Staggering and lurching they came out beyond the angle of the gym. and then made a rush across the Triangle towards West Arch. If only they could get into the Square they might be able to attract some of their Remove companions, for all the junior studies were on the ground floor, and within easy reach.

It was certainly out of the question to make any attempt to get indoors. Even if they were not seen they would leave a significant trail behind them. No; the only thing to do was to get help. Blankets could be brought perhaps, and then they might be carried bodily indoors and plumped straight into a bath, or—

"Cave!" gurgled Church suddenly.

A figure had loomed up out of the gloom—a figure in a gown which waved in the breeze.

And Walter Church nearly fainted when he recognised that figure as belonging to Dr. Malcolm Stafford himself.



CHAPTER 4.

A Shock for the Head.

UNFORTUNATELY Handforth had not observed the Head's approach, and as he was talking he had not even heard Church's

warning shout.

"We'll have our revenge, you chaps!" he was saying grimly. "Boots is responsible for this—Boots and Christine and Armstrong! They're the three leaders of the New Klux Klan, and—"

"Quiet, you ass!" hissed Church.

"Yes, Boots and Christine and Armstrong!" went on Handforth fiercely.

"They've done this to us, and—"

"Halt!"

The command came through the darkness—sharp and stern. Handforth's words froze

on his lips. For he instantly recognised the voice of the Head! He came to a halt, and gulped. Church and McClure had stopped, too. For one wild moment they thought about making a dash for it—on the chance that the Head would not be able to recognise them. Then they remembered that Handforth had been speaking. And who could fail to recognise Handforth's megaphone-like voice?

It was too late to make any bolt for liberty!

The Head came striding up, and he paused a few paces away—uncertain.

"Who is that?" he asked, trying to pierce the gloom.

"I—I— We—we—"

Handforth stopped, unable to find any coherent words.

"Handforth!" exclaimed Dr. Stafford. "Is that you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good heavens!" ejaculated the Head, as he took another two strides forward and peered at the three white figures in amazement. "What in the world has happened to you? Upon my soul! What are you dressed in?"

"Nothing, sir!"

"What!" gasped the Head. "You cannot mean to tell me, Handforth, that—"

"I—I mean, we're dressed in our ordinary clothes, sir," stammered Handforth. "But something's happened. Nothing much, sir—just a few feathers."

"Feathers!" said Dr. Stafford. "And what is this extraordinary smell? Tar, surely! The whole air is reeking with the odour. Come, all three of you! Step into the light here—where I can see you plainly."

They were almost in the shadow of the West Arch, where all was dark and gloomy. But they did not remain there for long. The headmaster insisted upon them stepping forward, so that the light from some of the windows fell fully upon them. And as the three figures came forward, Dr. Stafford wondered if he was in the middle of a nightmare.

"Good heavens!" said the Head feebly.

He did not see three human beings, but three animated collections of white feathers. No features were visible—nothing but feathers. The Head took a step forward and looked more closely.

"I am amazed," he said at length. "Indeed, I am staggered. Who are you? Handforth I know—but who are these others?"

"I'm Church, sir," said one of the figures.

"And I'm McClure, sir," muttered the other.

"I might have guessed it," said the Head. "Handforth, Church and McClure! Is it possible that you have been tarred and feathered?"

Handforth took a deep breath.

"It's not only possible, sir, but a fact!" he replied fiercely. "We ran behind the gym about five minutes ago, and we fell full

tilt into a great pool of tar. And then—and then——”

“Yes, Handforth? And then?”

“I’d rather not say, sir,” muttered Handforth.

“But you will be compelled to say!” said the Head sternly. “I have no difficulty in guessing, of course, that this is merely an episode in the ridiculous feud which is now raging between the Remove Form and the Fourth Form! Good gracious! Have I not been sufficiently drastic? I have forbidden this quarrel—I have done my best to squash it. And—this—this is the result!”

The victims of the New Klux Klan were silent.

“Go indoors at once and cleanse yourselves!” ordered the Head, in a cold, steady voice. “I will question you later—but wait. Give me the names of the boys who treated you in this disgraceful fashion. Who are they, Handforth?”

“I can’t tell you, sir,” replied Edward Oswald gruffly.

“You cannot tell me?”

“No, sir.”

“I suppose you mean that you will not tell me, Handforth?”

“Dash it, sir, I can’t speak!” protested the leader of Study D indignantly. “I’m not going to be an informer. And, as a matter of fact, I don’t really know——”

“Enough!” interrupted the Head. “There shall be a very strict inquiry into this outrage. Go indoors at once, boys, and try to get yourselves clean. I will tell Mr. Lee of your predicament, and he shall attend to you. Later I will make a thorough investigation.”

“But, please, sir, we’d rather you didn’t take any notice!” said Handforth anxiously. “We’re the chaps who have suffered, and we’re quite ready to forget all about it——”

“Perhaps you are, Handforth—but I am not!” said Dr. Stafford curtly. “When three of my boys are tarred and feathered, it is time for me to make a searching inquiry into the whole appalling business. I had hoped that this quarrel was over, but it appears that it is growing more and more dangerous. Enough! Go indoors at once!”

And the Head turned on his heel and strode off. His brow was as black as thunder.

“This is getting beyond my control!” he muttered to himself, as he went through Big Arch and started to cross Inner Court to his own house. “Good heavens! Scandalous—outrageous! I cannot altogether blame those boys for withholding the names of the culprits. I never encourage the informer. But Handforth was very rash—and I could not fail to hear what he said before I accosted him.”

The headmaster was very stern as he walked on. He could remember those words of Handforth’s even now. Boots and Christine and Armstrong! They were the three names that Handforth had mentioned!

The culprits!

Quite naturally the Head assumed that Handforth & Co. had actually seen their aggressors. He believed that Boots and Christine and Armstrong had been recognised by the Ancient House juniors. And Dr. Stafford decided, then and there, to have those three Fourth-Formers brought to him—so that he could question them and obtain a confession of their guilt.

This feud had gone far enough! It had to be stopped at once—it had to be nipped in the bud! For when it got to the point of tarring and feathering it was high time to bring the chopper down with a firm hand!



CHAPTER 5.

The Anger of the Remove!

THE door of Study C, in the Ancient House, burst open, and Fullwood looked in.

“Quick, you chaps!” he said breathlessly. “There’s trouble out in the Triangle!”

Nipper and Tregellis-West and Watson jumped to their feet. They had finished their prep, and had been sitting round the fire. Ralph Leslie Fullwood’s words were significant.

“Trouble?” repeated Nipper. “With the enemy?”

“I think so,” said Fullwood. “Handforth and Co. have been tarred and feathered!”

“Begad! Really, old boy——”

“We’ll look into this!” said Nipper swiftly. “Great Scott! The New Klux Klan can’t have done a thing like that! It’s almost unbelievable!”

They ran out, and found the passage full of other Remove juniors. The word had soon got about, and it was still speeding from study to study. Over in the West House it was just the same. Reggie Pitt and all his merry men were pouring out into the Triangle to inquire into the startling rumour that had got about.

And there, sure enough, were three grotesque figures.

They were soon surrounded by a shouting crowd, and Nipper had some difficulty in fighting his way through. He arrived at just the same moment as Reggie Pitt, and they glanced at one another after taking a look at the befeathered figures.

“Then it’s true!” said Nipper grimly. “Is that you, Handy?”

“I believe so!” came Handforth’s mournful voice. “We’re in the soup, you chaps—up to our giddy necks!”

“Don’t come near us!” urged Church. “We’re simply smothered in messy tar—or something even worse than tar. Keep your distance, for goodness’ sake!”

“Absolutely!” came Archie Glenthorne’s voice. “I mean to say, we’re frightfully sorry, and all that sort of thing, old ghost,



Dimly Handforth could see the mysterious-looking member of the New Klux Klan. "Come on!" he shouted recklessly, and prepared to leap out of the window. "Let's capture the boulder!"

but this is one of those occasions when a chappie needs to be somewhat wary."

Nipper went nearer to the unfortunate trio, and he shouted for the rest of the juniors to be silent.

"Poor old scouts!" he said softly. "How did it happen? Somehow, I didn't think that Boots and his men would indulge in a dirty trick of this sort. How did they collar you?"

"Hadr't we better let them get cleaned up first?" suggested Pitt. "They must be in a terrible state——"

"It'll only take half a tick to tell you," growled Handforth. "It's my fault—I brought Church and Mac into this mess. I ought to be kicked!"

And he dolefully told the story.

"So you were lured into it, eh?" said Nipper with a nod. "The New Klux Klan is getting altogether too blackguardly. We

shall have to take strong action against this——"

"How can we?" asked Handforth. "The Head knows!"

"What!" went up a concerted yell.

"The Head saw us like this—and made inquiries," said Church bitterly. "He said he's going to make a thorough investigation, and he's ordered us to go indoors. He came face to face with us, and——"

"Well, of course, this is a few degrees more than awful," said Nipper with a grimace. "Just like the Head to butt in when he wasn't wanted. By Jove! There'll be the very dickens of a row now! You didn't give any names, I suppose?"

"Of course we didn't!" said Handforth. "You don't think we're sneaks, do you?"

"Sorry, old man," said Nipper. "Of course you wouldn't sneak—I ought to have known that."

"If it comes to that, we don't know who

did it," said Church. "We can easily guess that Boots and Armstrong and those other chaps are responsible, but we didn't recognise any voices, and we couldn't spot the rotters, because they were all wearing those masks and robes."

"It was done by the New Klux Klan—and that's enough," said Nipper. "The New Klux Klan is purely a Fourth Form society, and they can't deny responsibility. They ought to be ashamed of themselves, the miserable rotters!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Down with the Fourth!"

"Cads!"

The Triangle was echoing with excited voices—angry voices. By this time, practically all the Remove fellows were on the spot, crowding round and shouting with fury. The rage of the Remove, in fact, was great. Three of their prominent members had been outrageously treated by the Fourth, and the indignation ran high.

Over on the other side of the Triangle, collected round the Modern House and the East House, groups of Fourth-Formers were standing—looking on in wonder. They had come out, attracted by the general din, and the majority of them appeared to be puzzled.

"Yah, you rotters!" went up the shout from the Removites.

"What's the trouble over there?" said Buster Boots, as he came out with Bob Christine and one or two other prominent Fourth-Formers. "Anybody might think we'd been doing something, by the way they're shouting!"

"We seem to get blamed for everything," said Bob Christine bitterly. "I can't understand—"

"It's Handforth & Co.!" panted Yorke, as he ran up. "They've been tarred and feathered!"

"What!"

"Fact!" said Yorke. "And these Remove idiots are saying that we did it! They say that the New Klux Klan—"

"Oh, rot!" said Boots. "The New Klux Klan haven't been on the warpath at all this evening!"

"I know that," said Yorke. "But, all the same, these Remove fellows are accusing us—"

The hoots and jeers which came across the Triangle were so loud that Yorke's voice was almost drowned. Buster Boots flushed with indignation and anger. He did not like to be accused of this affair. He had fought cleanly from the very start of the feud, and he would never have dreamed of tarring and feathering any of his opponents. He ran down the Modern House steps, and approached the crowds of Removites.

"Half a minute!" he shouted, in his loud, aggressive voice. "I want to say something!"

"Shut up, you cad!"

"Booh!"

"Get back to your kennel, you dirty dog!"

"What's the idea of yelling at me?" roared Boots. "You don't think I had any hand in

this tarring and feathering, do you? You silly idiots, I know nothing about it!"

"Don't make things worse by lying!" shouted one of the Removites.

"I tell you the whole thing is a mystery to me!" yelled Buster Boots furiously. "The New Klux Klan hasn't moved this evening at all! We haven't done a thing!"

"That's all rot!" interrupted Nipper, his voice very gruff. "Handforth and these other chaps recognised the New Klux Klan, and—"

"I don't care what they recognised!" interrupted Boots. "I tell you we haven't—"

But he was interrupted. The hooting went on at a tremendous rate, and it almost seemed that a riot would result. The Fourth-Formers were squaring up to the Removites, and the whole situation was becoming dangerous in the extreme.

Indignation ran high—as high in the ranks of the Fourth as in the ranks of the Remove. There were the elements here of a dangerous free fight!



CHAPTER 6.

Cross Purposes.

JOHAN BUSTERFIELD BOOTS was in a towering rage.

He was, by nature, an arrogant sort of fellow. He was a powerful junior, with a strong face, and a mop of glaring red hair. He had always been masterful, and he was complete ruler of the juniors in the Modern House. And now—when he heard the Removites hurling maledictions at his head, he nearly lost control of himself. For he knew that he did not deserve these hisses and hoots. He had done nothing to earn this scorn.

"You've all gone mad!" he roared, glaring at Nipper and Pitt and the other prominent Removites. "It's just like you fellows—you're accusing us of things that we haven't done! The New Klux Klan has always fought fairly—"

"Tell that to the marines!"

A combined yell of derision went up—of scornful disbelief.

"You're the ones who have played dirtily!" went on Boots, his voice rising with passionate hatred. "From the very first you've been playing low-down tricks on us, and then you have the nerve to accuse us—"

"That's about enough, you buffoon!" shouted Fullwood. "What's the good of standing there, and denying a thing that's obvious to everybody? These three chaps have been tarred and feathered, and they recognised the Klansmen—"

"Who did they recognise?" demanded a roar of Fourth Form voices.

"They didn't actually recognise any faces—but your own particular get-up is distinctive enough!" said Fullwood. "We all know what the Klansmen look like. Some of your men did it, Boots, and you're responsible!"

"I tell you our men had no hand in it at

all!" yelled Boots. "I ought to know! I'm the leader——"

"Then you've admitted your guilt!" roared Doyle, of the West House. "Come on, you chaps! Let's go for these beastly Fourth-Formers!"

"No—no!" shouted Nipper. "The Head has strictly forbidden all fighting, and we don't want to defy him like this! Keep your heads, you silly asses! Get back into your own Houses——"

But Nipper's voice was not heeded. His advice was ignored, and the rival factions of the Junior School were about to hurl themselves at one another's persons. And then, fortunately, the prefects arrived upon the scene. Fenton and Morrow came out, to say nothing of Kenmore and Reynolds, and several other prefects.

"Now, then, there's been about enough of this!" shouted Fenton angrily. "You juniors mustn't start any fighting here. You know what the Head has said!"

"Down with the Remove!"

"Yah! Rotten Fourth-Formers!"

The shouts were still passing to and fro, and one or two skirmishes were beginning in the darkness.

"If there are any juniors out here at the end of a single minute, I'll take their names, and have them flogged!" shouted Fenton. "You young fatheads! You'll get yourselves expelled if you go on like this! Why can't you keep your heads?"

Gradually the excitement was subdued. The prefects went round, hustling the juniors into their respective Houses. And so the free fight was avoided—but only by a narrow margin. The Fourth-Formers and the Removites were hotly opposed to one another. The feud, if anything, was more bitterly intense than ever. Excitement was at fever pitch, and the fellows collected in their own Houses, talking in groups.

Handforth & Co., in the meantime, had been taken in tow by Nelson Lee, their House-master. He asked no questions—but gave all his attention to the task of cleaning the three juniors. Very decently, Nelson Lee allowed Handforth & Co. to be alone in the bath-rooms. The task of getting that tar off themselves was a strenuous one, and they did not want to be bothered with any masters hanging about them.

Downstairs, Nipper was having a hard time of it in keeping the Removites cool. Over in the West House, Reggie Pitt was just as hard at work.

Many of the fellows wanted to go out, and have a look at that pool of tar behind the gym. But they were kept indoors. It was quite likely that the Fourth-Formers were going to the spot, too. And if any of the rival factions happened to meet, nothing would avert a minor riot.

"The whole thing is jolly mysterious," Nipper was saying, in the Ancient House common-room. "Somehow, I can't believe that old Buster is responsible."

"You don't believe his denials, do you?" demanded Tommy Watson.

"Yes, I do," said Nipper, frowning. "Buster Boots has always been a truthful chap. He's aggressive, and he's arrogant. But, at heart, he's one of the best. It's not like Buster to indulge in these shabby tricks—and it's not like him to tell lies, either."

"But if he didn't do it, who did?" asked Fullwood.

"That's what we shall have to find out," said Nipper. "We can only suspect some of the East House fellows. I don't think Armstrong would descend so low—in fact, I don't think he has enough initiative. Armstrong is full of bluster, but when it comes to action he's pretty much of a wash-out. But there are some other fellows in the East House who wouldn't hesitate at doing anything dirty. Merrell, for example—and Marriott."

"I don't see that it matters," interrupted De Valerie. "The job was done by the New Klux Klan, and Boots has admitted that he's the leader. So he's responsible. If he can't keep his own men in order, that's his fault! We ought to go out now, and smash those Fourth-Formers to smithereens!"

Nipper nodded.

"Yes, I agree with you there," he said. "We can't let a thing like this pass unheeded. Handforth & Co. have been assaulted. There's no other word for it. And so the Remove must take action."

"Good man!" said Fullwood heartily.

"We'll wait until the excitement has died down a bit, and then we'll get busy!" went on Nipper. "I'm a bit fed up with Boots."

"But you were just excusing him——"

"No, I wasn't," said Nipper. "I simply said that Boots himself wouldn't indulge in dirty work like this tarring and feathering. But he's the leader of the New Klux Klan, and so he has to be taught a lesson. In future, perhaps, he'll keep his beastly Klansmen in order. Buster Boots is the fellow for us to go for!"

"Hear, hear!"

"So let's get busy, and think out a good scheme of revenge!" said De Valerie. "We leave it to you, Nipper, and we expect you to do something drastic."

Nipper nodded.

"It'll be drastic all right," he said. "But it won't be dirty. Always remember, you chaps, that we've got to keep our hands clean. It doesn't matter how far these Fourth-Formers go beyond the mark, we've got to carry on the fight in a decent way."

And all the other level-headed Remove fellows agreed. According to all the signs, there were some very exciting events destined for this evening!



CHAPTER 7.

The Head Takes Action!

R. MALCOLM STAFFORD looked up with a worried frown as his study door opened and Mr. Arthur Stockdale appeared.

"Thank you, Mr. Stockdale, for coming

so promptly," said the Head. "I would not have disturbed you, only the matter is very urgent. I have no doubt that you have already heard that three members of the Junior School, belonging to the Ancient House, have been tarred and feathered?"

The Housemaster of the Modern House nodded.

"Yes, sir," he replied gravely. "I have heard about this—indeed, the Triangle is even now seething with excited boys. The prefects are having some difficulty in calming them down. I am startled that such an event could have happened. It seems incredible."

He sat down in response to the Head's invitation, and seemed rather uneasy.

"I imagine, sir, that you had some specific reason for desiring this interview?" he went on. "Do you assume that some of my boys are responsible for this—er—outrage?"

"I greatly fear, Mr. Stockdale, that such is the case," replied the Head. "Handforth and his two companions had no knowledge that I was near to them, and Handforth was rather incautious in his speech. I could not help overhearing certain names that he mentioned. And they were the names of three of your boys, Mr. Stockdale."

"While being naturally shocked, I am not altogether surprised," said Mr. Stockdale in a pained voice. "This ridiculous feud has been getting very serious of late—very grave, indeed. I have been at my wits' end, and I am glad enough that some definite action is being taken at last."

"When three of our boys are tarred and feathered, it is high time that something drastic should be done," declared the headmaster. "Now, Mr. Stockdale, I have heard it rumoured that there is a kind of secret society in the Fourth Form—a preposterous aping of the Klu Klux Klan. Do you know if there is any truth in this?"

Mr. Stockdale coughed.

"I rather fancy it is founded upon fact," he replied. "There is, indeed, a fantastic secret society amongst my Junior boys. But I can assure you that it was impossible for me to take any action in the matter. Nothing is definitely known. I have already consulted Mr. Goole, of the East House, and he, too, knows of this latest phase. But we decided that we were helpless—"

"I quite understand that, Mr. Stockdale," interrupted the Head. "Please do not imagine for a moment that I am censuring you in any way. On the contrary, I sympathise with you in your difficulties. I know what these boys are, once they get out of hand."

"All the Houses are similarly affected," declared Mr. Stockdale. "In the Remove the boys have another secret society, I have heard. These preposterous organisations have come into being because of your recent ban."

"Indeed!" said the Head, with a start.

"You prohibited all fighting and quarrel-

ling in the open," continued the Housemaster, "and the boys, refusing to be defeated in that way, formed these secret societies. Since then they have been conducting various raids, and so forth."

The Head rose to his feet and paced up and down for a moment or two.

"Well, Mr. Stockdale, it must cease!" he said grimly. "There must be an end once and for all to this secret society nonsense. I shall take the strongest possible action, in order to make the boys understand that I am in earnest."

"I am entirely in agreement with you, sir," said Mr. Stockdale heartily.

"When you go back to your House, I want you to send Boots and Christine to me," pursued Dr. Stafford. "And I shall be obliged if you will have a word with Mr. Goole, and request him to send Armstrong, of the East House, also."

Mr. Stockdale looked at the Head in surprise.

"Surely, sir, you do not suspect Boots and Christine of any hand in this tarring and feathering episode?" he asked.

"I fear that I do."

"But, my dear sir, these two boys are quite above suspicion," protested Mr. Stockdale. "I know them well, and I can vouch for their thorough decency. Boots, perhaps, is somewhat too aggressive, but he is quite a good boy on the whole. I know he would not indulge in any disgraceful behaviour."

"In normal circumstances, yes," said the Head gravely. "But you must remember, Mr. Stockdale, that these boys are unduly excited just now. And boys are always liable to overstep the mark without quite realising it. It is one of the faults of youth. And I must point out to you that I heard the names of Boots and Christine and Armstrong definitely mentioned as the culprits. I can only assume that they were seen and recognised by the victims. Otherwise, I would not specifically send for them."

Mr. Stockdale pursed his lips.

"I must confess this is a shock to me," he said. "Boots, I know, is the leader of the Fourth Form, and he is therefore morally responsible for what the others do, since he is at their head. I can only hope that he will be able to prove to you that he has had no hand in this unfortunate affair."

And Mr. Stockdale went, very anxious. He decided that he would not question Boots or Christine on his own account. It was for the headmaster to make the inquiries. So he went back to the Modern House, and he made his way to Study No. 6, in the Junior passage. Boots was not there, but Mr. Stockdale happened to come upon him at the end of the corridor. And Christine was with him, in addition to several others.

"Boots! Christine!" said Mr. Stockdale. "You are to report at once to the headmaster!"

"We've got to go to the Head, sir?" ejaculated Boots, in alarm. "But—but—"

"I have just come from Dr. Stafford, and he requested me to send you to him without any delay," continued Mr. Stockdale quietly. "Armstrong is to go, too. I understand that the Head intends to question you."

"But why, sir?" burst out Bob Christine. "We've done nothing!"

"I hope you are speaking the truth, Christine," said Mr. Stockdale. "To the best of my knowledge you are a truthful boy, and you need have no fear. If you are not guilty of this outrageous attack on the Ancient House boys, you will receive no punishment."

"Of course we're not guilty, sir!" said Boots indignantly. "We never touched them. I should hope we're a bit cleaner than that. We don't resort to tarring and feathering. Why should the Head send for us? There's no evidence. We know nothing, sir—absolutely nothing. It's no good us going to the Head!"

"Not a bit of good, sir," added Christine warmly.

"Nevertheless, my boys, you must go," said Mr. Stockdale. "Dr. Stafford has given his instructions, and you must obey them. I would remind you that the Head is waiting now, and the sooner you reach his presence the better."

And Mr. Stockdale went out, sought Mr. Barnaby Goole, of the East House, and Armstrong received similar instructions. The three Fourth-Formers were startled beyond measure. Why should they have been definitely chosen like this? What evidence was there against them?

CHAPTER 8.

What Happened in Inner Court



JOHN BUSTERFIELD BOOTS and Bob Christine paused out in the Triangle. Timothy Armstrong was coming towards them, and the East House fellow was looking pale and scared.

"Good!" said Boots. "We might as well all go together, Armstrong."

"I was hoping that I'd find you chaps," said Armstrong. "What does it mean, Boots? Why has the Head sent for us?"

"Goodness knows!" growled Boots. "But you know what Heads are!"

"We didn't have anything to do with that affair," went on Armstrong shakily. "We can prove alibis, too—"

"No, we can't," said Boots gruffly. "We can only say that we were with the other fellows, and the Head wouldn't believe evidence of that kind. If we had been in the lecture hall, listening to one of the masters, it would be a different thing. Not that there's any need to worry. I expect the Head wants to question us about the New

Klux Klan. He's heard about our secret society, I suppose, and he wants to get a few details. Naturally, he'll be disappointed. We shan't say a thing."

"Rather not!" agreed Bob. "We can't give the other chaps away."

They went off towards Big Arch and passed through. A number of the other Fourth-Formers had offered to escort them. But Boots had refused. He said there was nothing to be afraid of, and he didn't want a whole army of guards round them.

They found themselves in Inner Court, where the wind came hooting across the open space and where the shadows were dim. In the distance the twinkling lights of the Head's house could be clearly seen.

"Look here, Boots, old man," said Armstrong earnestly, "what do you know about this tarring and feathering?"

"Nothing!"

"Oh, come off it!" growled Armstrong truculently. "It wasn't done by any of the East House chaps. Our section of the New Klux Klan is innocent. So it must have been done by your crowd."

"Well, it wasn't!" retorted Boots. "My men had nothing to do with it."

"Then who the dickens was it?" demanded Armstrong incredulously. "Handforth & Co. recognised the Klansmen—"

"I'm all at sea!" confessed Boots. "None of the Fourth-Formers did it—that's absolutely certain. And there's only one possible inference to draw. Some other chaps were wearing robes just like the Klansmen, and they did this so that we should get the blame."

"Looks like it, although it seems too thick for words!" growled Boots. "I can't think that Nipper or Pitt would indulge in trickery of that sort. It doesn't seem to fit in with their characters."

"Oh, I wouldn't say that!" declared Armstrong. "Look at the rotten things they've done already. Ever since this feud started the Removites have been playing dirty tricks. There's no limit to their rottenness. They've lost their heads, and—"

"Hallo!" interrupted Bob Christine. "Look out!"

"What the dickens—"

"They're on us!" yelled Bob. "The Avengers!"

"What!"

The three Fourth-Formers swung round. Without warning a number of figures had loomed up out of the gloom. And it was possible in that dimness to recognise the cloaks and hoods of the Ancient Order of Avengers. There were at least half a dozen of the forms, and all of them were wearing the characteristic dress of the Remove society. They looked like monks in their loose hoods, and they came sweeping up without a sound.

"Rescue, the Fourth!" roared Armstrong in great alarm.

Crash!

The next moment, before he could utter another sound, he was bowled over. And

Buster Boots and Bob Christine were similarly treated. They had no chance against these overwhelming numbers. They were attacked fiercely—savagely. There was no sportsmanship in this raid. The Avengers kicked them on the shins, punched them in the stomachs, and performed every other kind of foul work. The three Fourth-Formers went over, struggling.

"You cads!" panted Boots. "Oh, you miserable curs!"

They had thought themselves safe in Inner Court—for this ground was forbidden. It was out of bounds. But the Avengers were not at all particular, it seemed. They had deliberately been lying in wait. In some way they must have heard that these three Fourth-Formers had been ordered to report to the Head.

"We've got you this time, Boots!" came a quivering, gloating voice. "Revenge is sweet!"

"You—you—you——"

"We'll teach you to shove tar and feathers on three of our chaps!" went on the gruff voice of the Avenger. "As leader, I feel that it's my duty to punish you——"

"Then you admit that you are Nipper?" asked Bob Christine breathlessly.

"I admit nothing—but you can guess what you like!" came the cool reply. "Not that you'll ever be able to prove anything. We're going to give you a taste of something even worse than Handforth & Co. got. We've got it all fixed——"

"Cave!" came a low, warning shout from one of the other Avengers.

"Hallo, what on earth——"

"Cave!" came the cry again.

And, with one accord, the Avengers dropped their victims as though they were hot bricks. There was a scuffle, a padding of feet, and then silence—utter silence, except for the moaning wind, which came hooting across from the playing-fields. Boots and Christine and Armstrong sat up, then looked about them. Their attackers had gone.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" panted Bob. "Why did they leave us like this?"

"Let's be thankful they've left us, and ask no questions," said Boots, picking himself up. "They must have had a false alarm, or something. There's nobody coming. Perhaps they saw a figure in the distance, and thought it was a master. Anyhow, they've chucked up the game, and we're safe. But we'd better buzz towards the Head's house as quickly as we can—or they might change their minds."

"By jingo, yes!" said Armstrong with a gulp. "They can't touch us once we get into the Head's house. Thank goodness they were alarmed over nothing!"

And, only pausing to hastily brush themselves down, the three Fourth-Formers hurried on, and presented themselves at the headmaster's door. They felt that they had been extremely lucky. By a mere hair's-

breadth they had escaped from the enemy, and they would be able to report to Dr. Stafford as they had been ordered.

Little did they imagine what had really happened in the darkness of Inner Court!

CHAPTER 9.

The Evidence!



HERE was an expression of confidence on Buster Boots' rugged face when he stood in the Headmaster's study. Bob Christine was just as calm. But Armstrong, being a weak kind of fellow, in spite of his burly figure, was ill at ease.

"I am sorry, boys, that I should have been compelled to send for you in this way," said the headmaster quietly. "But I wish to question you——"

"We didn't do it, sir!" panted Armstrong hoarsely. "We had nothing to do with it at all!"

"If that proves to be the case, Armstrong, you will have nothing to fear," replied the Head. "But do not interrupt me. I wish to question you."

The Head rose to his feet, and paced up and down once or twice. He was looking at the three juniors closely; and once, when he caught sight of them from an angle, he paused in his stride and started.

"Bless my soul!" he muttered.

A pained look came into his eyes—changing to an expression of grimness. He went back to his seat, leaned back, and pressed his finger-tips together. Boots and his companions waited rather apprehensively. They knew that attitude of the Head's. He was in one of his most dangerous moods.

"Boots, you are the captain of the Fourth Form," said Dr. Stafford at length. "I shall require you to answer my questions."

"Yes, sir," said Boots.

"It has come to my ears that there is a secret society in the Fourth Form," continued Dr. Stafford. "A grotesque imitation of the infamous Klu Klux Klan. Is this correct?"

Buster Boots hesitated.

"Well, yes, sir," he admitted at last.

"And you, Boots, occupy the position as leader of this secret society?"

"Yes, sir."

"I shall not ask you for the names of your companions," said the Head. "Neither shall I punish you for forming this ridiculous band. It seems to me that both the Fourth Form and the Remove Form are equally guilty in the matter—and to single out any particular individuals for punishment would not be fair. Therefore, I shall give a general order prohibiting these secret societies from this minute onwards."

The three Fourth-Formers were silent.

"But now for a more definite matter,"



frantically, Handforth and his two chums tried to escape from the glutinous tar, but the more they struggled the worse became their predicament. The New Klux Klan had done their work only too thoroughly!

went on the headmaster. "Three members of the Remove Form were placed in a pool of tar not long ago, and afterwards they were feathered. I have every reason to believe that this outrage was committed by the—ahem!—by the Klux Klan——"

"It's not true, sir!" interrupted Armstrong hotly. "We had nothing to do with it!"

"I am speaking to Boots, Armstrong," said the Head coldly.

"Sorry, sir!" gasped the East House junior.

"Not only do I believe that this attack was made by the Fourth Form secret society, but I have every reason to suspect that you three boys are the actual guilty parties," said Dr. Stafford accusingly. "I would advise you to be perfectly frank in this matter. An admission of your guilt will mitigate your sentence——"

"I'm sorry, sir, but we're not going to admit guilt," said Buster Boots firmly. "We didn't do it, and we're not going to say that we did."

"Do you deny this charge?"

"Yes, sir."

"I am sorry to hear you say that, Boots," went on the headmaster dangerously. "You stand here, self-confessed, as the leader of this society, and it has already been established that the three boys were attacked

by your society. Are you telling me that you know nothing of it whatever?"

"Nothing at all, sir," said Boots. "It wasn't planned by the New Klux Klan at all—there's not a fellow in the Fourth who knows anything at all about it."

"I see!" said the Head, drumming the desk with his finger-tips. "And about this tar, Boots. Have any members of your Form interfered with any tar this evening?"

"Not one of them, sir," said Boots promptly. "And, surely, if we had messed about with tar, making a pool behind the gym, we should have got ourselves stained, or something? None of us have touched tar at all."

"We haven't been near it, sir," said Christine.

"We didn't even know there was any on the premises," added Armstrong eagerly.

"Indeed!" said the Head, more dangerously than ever. "You all tell me, quite flatly, that you have not touched any tar? You deny all participation in this outrage on the Remove boys?"

"Yes, sir," said the three juniors.

The Head rose to his feet, and his face had become very grim.

"I am amazed!" he said, his voice quivering. "I am astounded that you should have the effrontery to stand in front of me and tell these falsehoods!"

"Falsehoods, sir?" ejaculated Boots.

"Yes, Boots—falsehoods!" thundered the Head. "You wretched boy! How dare you deny this charge when your guilt is obvious?"

"Obvious, sir?" asked Buster, thoroughly startled by the Head's tone. "But—but—"

"Enough!" snapped Dr. Stafford. "I am more pained than I can say. I am ashamed of you, Boots—I am ashamed of all three of you! A frank admission of your guilt might have led to my being somewhat lenient with you. But as it is, I shall take the most drastic measures. Not only have you committed this rascally act, but you have the effrontery to deny it!"

"Of course we deny it, sir," said Bob Christine. "We haven't been anywhere near—"

"Be silent!" ordered Dr. Stafford. "If you have not had any hand in this episode, and if you have not touched any tar this evening, perhaps you will explain the meaning of these stains?"

"Stains, sir?" asked the three juniors in one voice.

The Head pointed with a quivering finger.

"Yes, you wretched boys!" he thundered. "Your clothing is literally smothered with patches of tar! And yet you have denied—"

"Tar?" yelled Boots. "But there's no tar on us, sir! There can't be! We haven't even been near that place, or—or anything! We haven't touched any tar."

"If you say that again, Boots, I will thrash you as you stand!" shouted the Head. "Upon my word! How dare you keep up this ridiculous farce? Look at yourselves! Look at your clothing!"

And the three Fourth-Formers, twisting round, and going into all sorts of contortions, received the shock of their lives.

On their trousers were several dark patches—their jackets, in the rear, were even sticky with tar-stains. They had none on their hands, but their clothing bore all the evidence that the headmaster needed. Even their boots were spattered with tar. And not a minute since they had denied handling the stuff!

They stood there, in the headmaster's study, palpably guilty. And they had made their case doubly worse by telling lies!

How was the headmaster to guess that these three Fourth-Formers had been made the victims of a deliberate plot?

clothing. The thing had come as a dreadful shock to them. They could not imagine how those stains had got there. But Boots had jumped to the truth.

"Don't you see?" he asked. "Those Avengers!"

"Eh?" gasped Bob.

"As we were coming across Inner Court—"

"Oh, my goodness!"

"They bowled us over, and in the confusion they must have put this tar on us!" went on Boots. "That's it! It was all a plot—a scheme to get us—"

"Silence!" interrupted the headmaster angrily. "Boots, how dare you? Your guilt is obvious!"

"Hold on, sir!" interrupted Buster Boots. "We can explain these tar stains!"

"Do you mean that you are about to confess?"

"No, sir!"

"Then I am afraid that I cannot listen to you," said the Head curtly. "I sent for you three boys because I suspected you of participation in the outrage on the Remove juniors. When I saw these tar stains on your persons I knew that I had made no mistake. Anything that you can say will only add to your—"

"Please, sir," insisted Boots, "I tell you we can explain these tar stains! Have I your permission to speak for just a minute?"

"Very well," said the Head. "I desire, above all else, to be fair. You shall have an opportunity of giving an explanation, Boots."

"Thank you, sir," said the captain of the Fourth. "Well, we haven't touched any tar at all—we haven't been near any tar. We didn't commit that outrage on Handforth & Co., and don't know anything about it."

"Upon my word! How dare you—"

"Just a minute, sir!" went on Boots. "As we were coming across Inner Court, in response to your summons, we were suddenly set upon by six or seven mysterious forms. We don't know who they were, but they suddenly left us alone, and we thought they had received an alarm, or something. But I can see the dodge now. They only bowled us over so that they could put these tar stains on us. They knew that we were coming to you, and they wanted to provide some evidence, so that we should be accused, and found guilty."

The Head looked at the juniors in astonishment. Perhaps they did not realise how false this story sounded—how fantastically untrue. On the very face of it, it was only an excuse—a weak, pitiful tissue of lies in order to get out of the responsibility. There was nothing else for the Head to think.

"Boots, I am amazed that you should expect me to believe such a story as this," said the Head harshly.

"But it is true, sir!"

"Silence!" thundered Dr. Stafford. "Do you expect me to believe such nonsense? Six or seven mysterious figures, you say? Who were they?"



CHAPTER 10.

The Sentences!

"Y Jupiter!" shouted Buster Boots suddenly.

For the moment, he had forgotten that he was in the headmaster's presence.

He turned an excited face to Bob Christine and Armstrong. They were both looking stunned—both staring at those stains on their

"We don't know, sir," confessed Boots. "We didn't recognise them."

"I can quite believe that statement," replied the Head grimly. "You did not recognise them, Boots, because there were no such figures. This is merely an excuse—an attempt to explain away these tar stains——"

"It isn't, sir!" shouted Armstrong desperately. "Those fellows who attacked us were Removites! They were members of the Ancient Order of Avengers!"

"Good gracious!" said the Head. "The other secret society, I take it?"

"Yes, sir!"

"And are you seriously suggesting, Armstrong, that these Remove boys attacked you so that they could put tar stains on your clothing?" demanded the Head furiously. "The suggestion is outrageous! You must remember that I definitely heard your names mentioned as the culprits, and when I tell you to come to my study I find that you are stained with tar. It is enough!"

"But——"

"Not another word!" said the Head. "You are only making matters altogether worse by these denials. Not only are you guilty of the assault itself, but you have added to your crime by telling me a deliberate string of falsehoods. You, Boots, must take the punishment, since you are the ringleader. You have admitted that you are the chief of this ridiculous secret society. There can be only one punishment for you. To-morrow morning you will leave St. Frank's for ever!"

Buster Boots staggered, his face turning pale.

"You—you mean I'm to be expelled, sir?" he gasped.

"Yes, Boots—to-morrow morning you will be expelled," replied the Head, in a terrible voice. "And Christine and Armstrong will be publicly flogged at the same time. Once and for all, I intend to put an end to this impossible situation. Not for another minute shall it continue! And only by drastic steps shall I achieve my end."

"But you're all wrong, sir!" shouted Boots. "I didn't do this—neither did these other fellows! I tell you it's a plot against us—a deliberate scheme to get us into trouble! It's not fair to sack me! You ought to make inquiries——"

"This inquiry has gone far enough, and you are only making matters much worse by your present attitude," said the Head. "You may go!"

He had given one glance at Timothy Armstrong, and, certainly, there was every evidence of guilt on Armstrong's face. The East House junior was so scared that he had turned as pale as chalk. He was shaking in every limb. There was not much stamina in this burly weakling.

Buster Boots, after the first outburst, had fallen into silence. He looked as though he were stunned. There was a dazed expression in his eyes.

"I shall not order you to go into the Punishment Room," continued the headmaster. "You will return to your Houses,

and in the morning I shall deal with you in Big Hall. Let there be no disturbances, or perhaps some other boys will be expelled, too."

"It's unjust, sir!" muttered Boots. "I'm not guilty!"

"You are guilty of inciting all your Form fellows to engage upon this feud," said the headmaster coldly. "You are guilty of instigating, and taking part in, a definite outrage upon three of the Remove boys. And my only possible course is to expel you from the school, Boots. I need not tell you that I am grieved to take this action. I am pained that you should have ended your career at St. Frank's so disastrously. But I must be firm—I must take this strong action in order to teach a lesson to all the others. Further talking will not do any good. I am quite satisfied that you are the guilty parties, and your punishment shall follow. Go!"

"Yes, sir, but——"

"Go!" repeated the Head.

And John Busterfield Boots and the other two juniors turned on their heel, and went out of the study. They went in a kind of trance. They had come here, expecting to be questioned—confident in their innocence.

But now the chopper had fallen!

Armstrong and Christine were to be publicly flogged—and Boots himself was sacked!

CHAPTER 11.

Rough on Boots and Co!



"SACKED!" said Buster Boots huskily.

They were standing outside in the darkness of Inner Court. The events of the past few minutes seemed almost like a dream to the staggered Fourth-Formers. Christine and Armstrong were startled enough at their own punishment. A public flogging was not to be lightly dismissed. There was the pain of it—which could be easily stood. But there was the humiliation, too—the black mark which would be against their names. There were the reports which would be sent to their parents. A public flogging was a great disgrace.

But what was this compared to the ultra disaster of being expelled?

"Poor old Buster," muttered Bob Christine gently.

"Oh, don't sympathise with me!" said Boots, taking a deep breath. "I can't bear being pitied!"

"Sorry, old man! I was only——"

"Besides, I'm not going to be sacked," interrupted Boots fiercely. "Do you think I'm going to let the thing rest here? Not likely! We're none of us guilty and we're not going to receive the punishment!"

They walked on a few paces, and it was Bob Christine who broke the silence.

"It's all very well to talk like that, Buster, but what can we do?" he asked. "The Head has satisfied himself that we're guilty. And

when you come to look at the thing in cold reason, he can't be blamed. He knows about the New Klux Klan, and he suspected that we were the fellows who did that tarring business. And when we go to his study, we've got tar spots all over us. How can you expect the Head to believe our yarn?"

"But it was true!" insisted Boots.

"Sometimes, old scout, the truth sounds even more fantastic than a lie," said Bob Christine quietly. "That's the case just now. Hang it, you've got to admit that that yarn of ours sounded tall. I don't wonder that the Head disbelieved it."

"Perhaps you're right!" admitted Buster. "But what is the meaning of it? Who were those chaps? Nipper? Pitt? Fullwood? Who were they?"

"We don't know, and it's quite possible that we shall never know," replied Bob. "They were Avengers, and that's about as far as we shall get."

Boots flushed angrily.

"But think of it!" he exclaimed, his voice thick and indignant. "What a dirty trick! What a foul, filthy game! Those Avengers weren't sure that we were guilty, but they shoved that tar on us, so that the Head wouldn't make any mistake! They deliberately faked up the evidence, so that we should be punished! Can you think of anything dirtier than that?"

Bob Christine shook his head.

"I can't!" he replied frankly. "And I don't believe that Nipper had anything to do with it."

"It seems a bit thick," admitted Boots. "But if Nipper isn't the chap, who is? Anyhow, we know jolly well that the Avengers are guilty, and Nipper is the chief of the Avengers. So he's responsible. Those rotten Removites have been getting worse and worse, ever since this quarrel started. Confound the feud!"

"Yes, I agree with you; but it's too late to say that now," replied Bob. "You're sacked, and Armstrong and I are booked for a public flogging in the morning. My only hat! What a life!"

"It's not fair!" burst out Armstrong fiercely. "Why should we be made to suffer like this? - We didn't touch Handforth! It's outrageous! Why should the Head jump on us—"

"Steady — steady!" interrupted Boots gruffly. "It's no good getting hysterical!"

"I'm not hysterical!" roared Armstrong.

"Yes, you are!" said Buster. "I'm the chap to go up in the air, if it comes to that. A public flogging isn't much—it's soon over. But what about me? I'm kicked out of the school! Goodness only knows what I shall say to my pater! I hope he'll believe me when I tell him that I'm innocent!"

They walked on towards Big Arch, gloomy and depressed. All the fight had been taken out of them. They no longer had any desire to go for the Removites. Buster Boots, usually so arrogant, was subdued. He had no interest in St. Frank's now. He was sacked

—he was an outsider. And the valiant spirit of the great J. B. B. faltered.

By the time they got into the Modern House, they found crowds of Fourth Formers round them. Everybody had known that these three had been sent for by the Head, and the rest of the Fourth fellows crowded round, wanting to know how the trio had fared.

"Oh, don't all shout at once!" said Boots. "I can tell you what's happened in two minutes."

"But the Head hasn't swished you, has he?" asked Bray.

"Armstrong and I are to be publicly flogged in the morning!" said Bob Christine bitterly.

"What!"

"Flogged!"

"Oh, my goodness!"

"But that's not the worst!" went on Bob. "Poor old Buster is sacked!"

There arose a confusion of startled shouts.

"Sacked!"

"Oh, draw it mild, Bob! This is no time for joking!"

"No; cheese it, Christine!"

"I'm not joking!" shouted Christine fiercely. "I tell you that Buster has been sacked! We've been accused of doing that tarring and feathering, and the Head has come down with the chopper. And poor old Buster, as the ringleader, has got it in the neck!"

Percy Bray and Walter Denny—Buster's study mates—clung to their leader.

"Buster, it's not true!" panted Bray. "You're not being expelled, are you?"

"Hasn't Bob just told you?" asked Boots steadily.

"Yes; but that's all rot!" yelled Denny. "It can't be true!"

"Unfortunately, it is true—as matters stand at present!" said Buster Boots grimly. "I've been sacked, and I'm booked to leave the school in the morning. I expect the Head will make a public affair of it, and humiliate me in front of the whole school. But, by jingo, we'll see about that!"

The other Fourth-Formers looked at their leader eagerly.

"What do you mean, Buster?" asked Clapson.

"I mean that we're not going to sit still under this injustice," replied Boots, his eyes blazing. "We're not guilty, and we're going to move heaven and earth this evening to prove that we're falsely accused!"

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Buster!"

"Never say die!"

But Buster Boots, in spite of his confident words, was experiencing a dull, sinking sensation within him. What a terrible end this was to all the recent excitement! Would it be possible to bring the guilt home to the real culprits?



CHAPTER 12.

The Avengers Prepare!

IN the meantime, all unconscious of the fate which had befallen the enemy, Nipper and his fellow Removites were holding a big meeting in the Ancient House. They had come to the conclusion that some sort of drastic action should be performed.

The New Klux Klan had treated Handforth & Co. abominably, and a reprisal was necessary.

"Swift action—that's what we want!" Fullwood was saying. "We jolly well know that the New Klux Klan is responsible for that tarring and feathering, and they've got to be taught a lesson."

"Hear, hear!"

"Absolutely!" said Archie Glenthorne. "I mean to say, of all the foul abominations, tar is positively and absolutely the foulest. Why, dash it, I've been worried for days over one tiny spot of the beastly stuff. Even old Phipps wilted somewhat when he caught sight of the atrocity on the refined gent's wear."

"Never mind about your spots of tar, Archie," said Nipper. "We're dealing with a serious matter here, and we've done about enough talking. I suggest that we get busy."

"Good man!" said Handforth heartily.

"Hallo! Here's Handy!"

"Poor old scout!"

Handforth & Co. had just come in, and they were looking themselves again. A certain odour of tar hung about them, but they had succeeded in getting all visible traces of the stuff off. And they were tender, too, for that patent tar-mixture had been very caustic in its effect. Their skins were burning red from the effect of it.

"Has anything been decided?" asked Handforth, as he strode forward.

"Yes," replied Nipper. "The Ancient Order of Avengers must get busy at once. My idea is quite a simple one. We'll all get into our hoods and cloaks, and then make a determined raid on the Modern House."

"What about the East House?"

"The East House chaps aren't so important," replied Nipper. "Boots is the leader of the Fourth, and so we'll make our raid on his headquarters. If we're quick about it there won't be much risk, because we shall be in and out before any of the prefects can get on the job. And we shan't be recognised, anyhow, because of our cloaks and hoods."

"And what shall we do, once we're in?" asked Handforth.

"Grab every Fourth-Former that we can see, bump him, and rag the whole place generally."

"Tophole!" said Reggie Pitt, nodding.

"That's the best scheme."

Handforth stared.

"And is this all we're going to do?" he asked.

"What else?" asked Fullwood.

"You fatheads!" said Edward Oswald witheringly. "What else, indeed! Those rotters have tarred and feathered us, and the Avengers ought to take a tremendous step by way of reprisal. It's no good ragging the fatheads. It's no good bumping them. They don't understand that sort of thing."

"We've got to go easy, old man," said Church. "We're all feeling pretty rotten about it, I know, but we must keep our heads."

"Rats!" said Handforth aggressively. "There's only one thing to be done. We've got to take Boots, and Christine, and the other ringleaders, and dump them into that tar."

"No!" said Nipper promptly. "We can't do that."

"Why not?"

"Because two wrongs don't make a right," said Nipper quietly. "I hope to goodness I don't sound as if I'm preaching, but we simply must be sensible, Handy. Let the Avengers remain a clean body."

"It's all very well to talk about clean bodies," growled Handforth. "But what about our bodies, before we washed ourselves?"

"Well, if it comes to that, I expect you're pretty clean now," chuckled Reggie Pitt. "And you can't get away from the fact that tar is a good disinfectant."

Handforth glared.

"Are you suggesting that we need a disinfecting?" he roared.

"No, of course not," said Reggie hastily. "What a chap you are for jumping to conclusions, Handy! I'm just trying to tell you that Nipper is right. We've got to keep within reasonable limits. The Avengers aren't going to commit any outrages. We'll leave those sort of things to the Fourth."

"Hear, hear!" said all the other level-headed juniors.

For a little while there was quite an uproar. A number of the Removites considered that the suggested punishment was altogether too mild. Something much more drastic was indicated. Something spectacular ought to be done.

"I don't know; I think Nipper's right," said Handforth, at length. "Goodness knows, I don't want to be vindictive. And a raid on these chaps ought to fill the bill. But we won't be very gentle, that's all. When we bump them, we'll bump them properly. And it wouldn't be a bad idea to take a lot of bottles of ink, and squirt them with it."

"That's a reasonable suggestion," said Nipper, with a nod. "There's not much harm in ink."

"If you ask me, you're too jolly soft!" said Forrest. "These Fourth-Formers have been up to a lot of dirty games, and I think

the ringleaders ought to be dipped in that tar."

"Hear, hear!" said Gulliver and Bell.

"And I've got to agree with these chaps, too!" added De Valerie. "We don't want to be squeamish."

But they were overruled by the majority. The Ancient Order of Avengers had always been fair and just in their actions, and this was no time to start questionable conduct. A determined raid on the enemy would be sufficient to meet the demands of the case.

"Now, we've got to have the thing absolutely settled," said Nipper briskly. "I suggest eight o'clock as the hour for action."

"It's a quarter to eight now," said Pitt, glancing at his watch.

"Yes, and that'll give us time to prepare," said Nipper. "Let eight o'clock be zero hour. I suggest that we all go off now to our own studies or dormitories, and smuggle our cloaks and hoods out. We'll collect in the West Square, and put our Avengers' things on at exactly one minute to eight. And then, as the clock begins striking, we'll sweep out through West Arch."

"That's good!" said Pitt. "Simple but effective!"

There were other murmurs of agreement.

"So let's go quietly away, and pretend that everything is normal," continued Nipper. "We'll get out into the West Square in twos and threes. In fact, it would be a pretty good idea for us to slip out of our study windows. Then nobody will notice us in the passages."

"That's it!" said Handforth. "We can get into our cloaks and hoods in our studies—after putting the lights out. Then we can hop out of the windows, and be ready. And we all make a sudden rush for the Modern House—eh? Good egg! We'll show them something, by George!"

And so it was settled.



CHAPTER 13.

Queer Developments!

RASH!

A stone came hurtling through the window of Dr. Stafford's study, and it fell with a loud thud in

the very centre of his desk.

"Good heavens!" ejaculated the Head, startled.

He had every reason to be taken aback. He had been standing with his back to the fireplace, his hands clasped behind him.

Dr. Stafford felt that he had done the right thing. Strong action had been called for, and he had been strong. It was the only possible way to kill this absurd feud.

And the Head had no doubt whatever regarding the guilt of John Busterfield Boots. The whole thing was obvious from start to finish. Boots had admitted that he was the

leader of the New Klux Klan. He was the acknowledged ringleader of the Fourth Form movement. And those tar stains on him had been very significant. They were, indeed, proof.

For, if Boots was innocent—as he had stated—how could those tar marks have got upon him? The story he had told about being set upon in Inner Court was obviously a faked-up yarn. How was it possible to credit such nonsense?

It grieved the Head very much to be compelled to send a boy away from the school. But there were times when such steps were necessary. There was no sense in being soft, for that was just the way to give these juniors the idea that he was weak. And strength was required now, more than anything else.

"Yes, I rather fancy that the feud will die away," murmured the Head. "After Boots has gone, the other juniors will naturally be afraid to pursue their absurd quarrels. I dislike to have the boys at enmity in this way. It is bad for the school—bad for discipline. And sport, too. I believe that all football has ceased since this feud has started. Perhaps matters will now improve —"

And then, at that moment, the stone came hurtling through the window.

The Head started back, hardly knowing what had happened for the moment. Then he saw the stone in the middle of his desk, reposing on some papers. A glance at the window revealed a jagged gash in one of the panes. It was splintered to smithereens, and the night wind was blowing in, and causing the curtains to billow out into the room.

"Upon my soul!" ejaculated the Head. "Have some of these boys dared to play about in Inner Court? But surely they would not throw stones at one another? I do not know what things are coming to nowadays!"

He strode to his desk, and picked up the stone. Then he paused, his eyes opening wider. He grabbed for his glasses, and placed them on his nose. Then he stared at the stone again.

"Good gracious!" he ejaculated, thoroughly startled.

For it was no ordinary stone—at least, it was not merely a stone. Tied to it was a luggage label, and there were words written upon the label.

"TO THE HEADMASTER OF ST.
FRANK'S. URGENT."

Those were the words that Dr. Stafford read on the label, and he was more astonished than ever. He had assumed, at first, that the stone had come through his window accidentally. But this assumption was obviously wrong. Somebody had deliberately hurled that heavy brickbat through his window, careless of any possible consequences. If it had happened to strike the Head in the face, serious injury might have

resulted. Dr. Stafford went red with fury as he turned the label over.

"What—what is this?" he stuttered.

For there was a message on the other side of that label—written in printed characters, and in some curious kind of red fluid, which almost looked like blood. And the words which swayed in front of the Head's eyes were these:

"THE AVENGERS ARE ALL-POWERFUL! THEY CARE NOTHING FOR YOUR AUTHORITY, AND THIS IS A WARNING FOR YOU TO KEEP OUT OF THIS QUARREL. THREE OF OUR MEMBERS HAVE BEEN TARRED AND FEATHERED, AND WE INTEND TO HAVE REVENGE ON THE NEW KLUX KLAN AT EIGHT O'CLOCK PRECISELY. INTERFERE AT YOUR PERIL.

"THE ANCIENT ORDER OF AVENGERS."

Dr. Stafford could hardly believe the evidence of his own eyes.

"This—this is outrageous!" he gasped. "Never, in the whole course of my career, have I encountered anything so utterly and absolutely insolent. The young scoundrels! The confounded young rascals! So they have the audacity to defy my authority? They tell me to mind my own business! Good gracious! Can it be possible?"

Small wonder that the Head was staggered, for the very effrontery of this message was beyond all bounds of common sense or reason. And it had come from the Ancient Order of Avengers—the secret society of the Remove.

And the message it contained was a perfectly true one, too! For the Avengers were preparing to have their reprisal at eight o'clock.

Dr. Stafford glanced at his watch, and then jumped.

Four minutes to eight!

"Perhaps there is still time for me to put a stop to this hooliganism!" he muttered. "I would like to consult Mr. Lee and Mr. Stockdale and the other masters, but there is not time. What is the school coming to? What madness is this which is sweeping through the junior Forms? I can see that there must be several other expulsions before I have these young fools under control!"

The Head was simply furious. He was boiling with righteous rage. So it had got to this! The feud had got to the stage where all the school authority was defied and ignored!

With a brow as black as thunder, the Head swept out of his study, and he did not even wait to don his hat. He rushed outside, and went across Inner Court at the double. At any moment he was expecting to hear the school clock chime the hour of eight. But perhaps he would be in time. Once and for

all, he was decided. He would put a stop to this civil war among his boys.

And then, just as Dr. Stafford entered the gloom under Big Arch, the school clock solemnly chimed out the hour of eight.

Passing through the archway, the Head paused on the other side, just within the Triangle. A number of mysterious forms were sweeping up from the West Square. The Avengers were getting busy! He was just in time to witness the raid!

CHAPTER 14.

Another Disaster!



"COME on!" sang out Nipper crisply.

Eight o'clock was just striking, and all the Avengers were ready in the

West Square. There were crowds of them, and they had been collecting for some minutes, appearing from windows, from odd corners, and from dark doorways. All of them were unrecognisable in their cloaks and monk-like hoods.

"Hurrah!"

"Down with the New Klux Klan!"

And the Avengers swept out of the shadow of West Arch, and started across the Triangle in a body towards the Modern House.

"Halt!"

The command came in a harsh, furious voice—the voice of the headmaster!

Dr. Stafford was standing there, just beyond Big Arch, and he was staring in amazement at these hooded forms. Instinctively, Nipper pulled up, and all the other leading Avengers followed his example. A command from the Head was not to be lightly ignored.

And then an extraordinary thing took place—an event which gave Nipper one of the surprises of his life. As he halted, staring towards Dr. Stafford, he heard some whizzing sounds.

And then—crash! Splinter! Crash!

The air became filled with the shattering sounds of windows being smashed to smithereens. Nipper turned, looking at his Avengers in dumbfounded surprise.

Whizz—whizz—whizz!

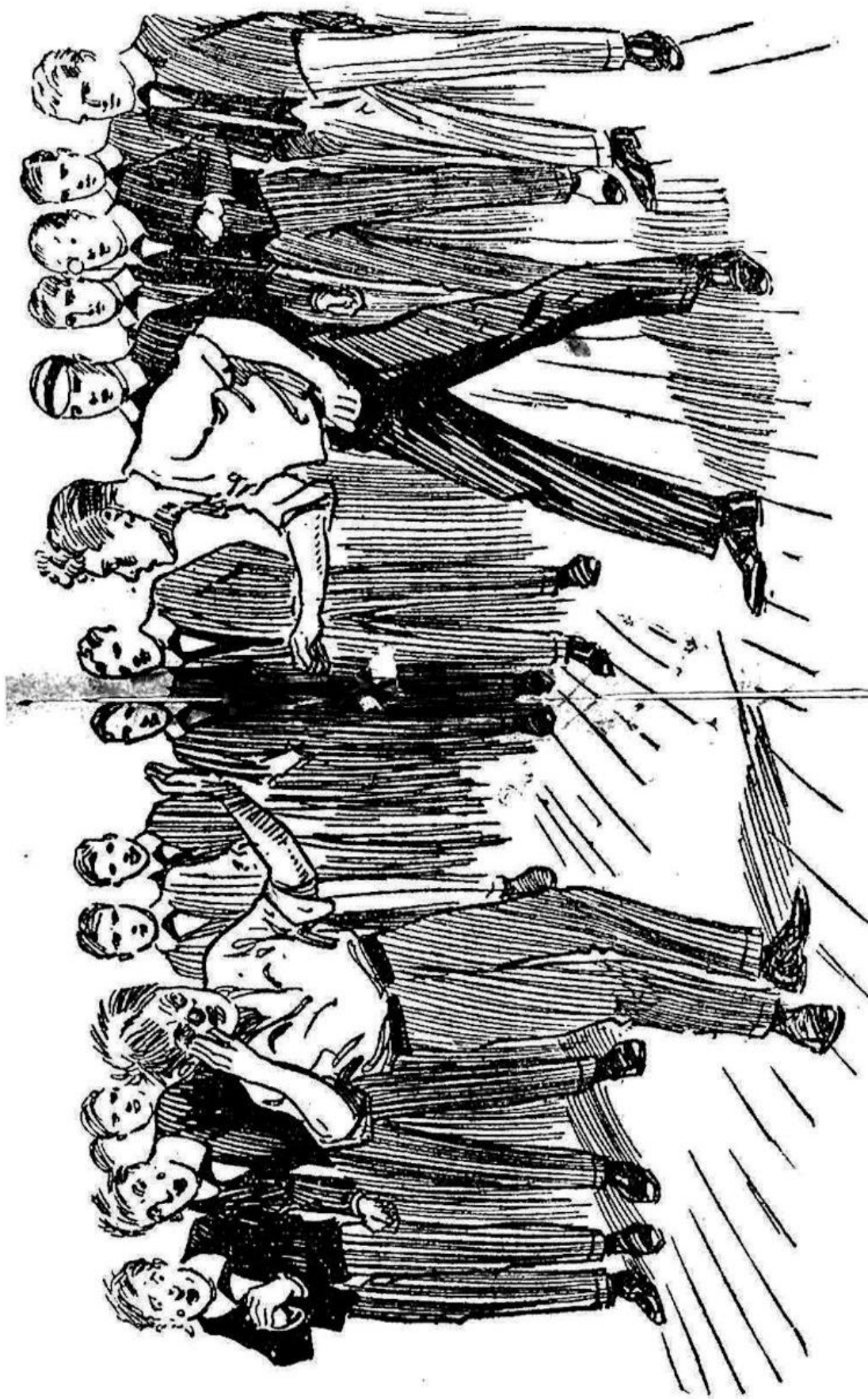
"Great Scott!" gasped Nipper.

Many of the hooded figures were hurling stones—throwing them fiercely and deliberately at the windows of the Modern House and the East House! For a moment Nipper thought that his senses were betraying him. But then, in a flash, he knew the truth. Some of his followers were not content to merely raid the enemy, and to bump them. They were throwing stones at the windows—committing wilful damage.

"Stop!" shouted Nipper urgently. "You idiots! You crazy fools! Stop this!"

Crash! Crash! Crash!

Five or six more windows went into smithereens, and confused shouts from within the Houses clearly told of the consternation



Handforth was like a human tornado. His blows rained upon Forrest blindly, and at last the cad was a battered, beaten wreck. "All right!" Forrest panted. "I'll go to the Head—I'll confess!"

that was being caused. The whole affair was startling in the extreme.

As for the headmaster, he was so startled that he was helpless for a moment or two. That warning message had been right, then! These boys had planned to act like hooligans, and to make a dastardly attack upon the Modern House and the East House! It seemed too shocking to be really true.

"Stop!" shouted the Head, recovering his voice and the power of his limbs. "Every boy will remain where he stands!"

He ran forward, and it was a signal for many of the Avengers to bolt. About a quarter of them succeeded in running through West Arch, and a few others dodged round the angles of the buildings and were lost to view. But the majority were in full sight—right in the centre of the Triangle. There could be no escape for them—unless they deliberately ignored the Head's command, and fled.

But, somehow, there was no hope of getting away. Discipline was deeply ingrained into all the decent members of the Remove. And when the headmaster commanded, it was their duty to obey. They were so disguised that they could not be recognised, but this did not matter. They had been told to stand, and they stood.

The headmaster could see that all these figures were clothed in hoods and cloaks. They were the Ancient Order of Avengers! He knew them at once for the Remove secret society. Not five minutes ago he had received a warning that they would be engaged upon this work, and these very boys had had the audacity to send him that warning. He half expected to be swept off his feet, and to be trampled underfoot.

But this did not happen.

"Every boy here will remove these ridiculous cloaks and hoods!" said the headmaster in a fierce, quivering voice. "Waste no time!"

"Unmask, you fellows!" said Nipper, turning to the Avengers. "We can't defy the Head's orders."

"No," came Pitt's voice. "It's all up now."

"Yes, but who threw those stones?" demanded Handforth furiously. "We didn't do it! None of our chaps——"

"It's no good talking, Handy," said Nipper. "Our chaps did do it—we saw them. Those stones were all thrown by the Avengers. But I shan't rest until I find out the identity of the actual throwers. The cads! The destructive hounds! There must have been eight or nine of them!"

This was true enough. Eight or nine Remove fellows. Who were they? Who could they be? As far as Nipper knew there weren't nine such chaps in the whole Remove. It was an inexplicable puzzle.

From all quarters, crowds of fellows were appearing—fags, Fourth Formers, and seniors in their scores. They had all been attracted by the crashing of glass, and by the shouts from the Triangle. There was a first-class sensation here, and nobody could afford to miss it.



Handforth was like a human tornado. His battered, beaten wreck. "All right!"

The central part of the Triangle was occupied by the Avengers, and by the headmaster. Round the House doorways, in the archways, and all the windows were filled with faces, and eager eyes were watching by the score.

Nipper, Handforth, Pitt, Fullwood, De Valerie, in fact, all the prominent Removites, had already pulled their hoods off, and they were now divesting themselves of their cloaks. They threw them on the ground—knowing that they would not be required any more. For the Ancient Order of Avengers was naturally killed from this moment onwards. And the rest of the Removites, following the example of their leader, discarded their cloaks, too. They stood there, in front of the Head, in their own identities.

"As I expected!" said the headmaster, his voice stern and deadly. "All you boys belong to the Remove Form. I take it that you are the—er—Avengers?"

"Yes, sir," said Nipper quietly.

"And I caught you in the very act of making an attack on the Modern House and the East House," continued the Head.

"We didn't mean to throw any stones, sir," urged Handforth. "In fact, we don't know who did it——"

"Enough!" interrupted the Head harshly. "Who is the ringleader of this dangerous society?"

"I am, sir," said Handforth promptly.



orrest blindingly, and at last the cad was a
'I'll go to the Head—I'll confess!'

A roar went up.

"Don't you believe it!" exclaimed Nipper, running forward, and facing the Head. "That's only Handforth's bluff, sir. I'm the leader of the Avengers! As captain of the Remove, I'm the Chief of the Avengers. Everybody knows it, too."

Many shouts of assent went up, and Dr. Stafford nodded.

"I am glad that you have admitted your guilt in this way, Hamilton," he said grimly. "Very well. You are the leader of the Avengers. You have admitted this. Tomorrow morning you will be expelled from the school at the same time as Boots. This quarrel shall be settled now—once and for all!"



CHAPTER 15.

Very Serious!

EXPELLED!" repeated Nipper dazedly.

"Yes, you wretched boy!" said the Head.

"You stand there self-confessed, as the leader of this hooliganism. I might as well inform you that Boots, of the Modern House, has already been expelled for the outrage upon Handforth and those other two boys. He is the ringleader of the Fourth

—and you are the ringleader in the Remove. Enough! After you have both gone, perhaps the rest of the boys will regain their scattered wits."

The Remove fellows were utterly stunned.

"But—but you're not going to sack him, sir?" gasped Handforth, running up. "I'm just as much to blame as he is—"

"Be silent, Handforth," commanded the Head. "There will be a full inquiry into this whole disgraceful affair, and the culprits will be publicly flogged. Hamilton is the ringleader, and he shall be expelled. There can be no question of innocence—for he has confessed his guilt here. Furthermore, I caught him red-handed."

"There's one thing I'd like to say, sir," said Nipper steadily. "I didn't give my men any orders to smash the windows."

"Absolutely not!" shouted Archie Glen-thorne. "I mean, that was a perfectly foul piece of business. None of we fellows threw any stones!"

"It's a complete mystery, sir!" added Nipper. "Our object was to make a raid on the Modern House, and to bump some of the fellows—quite a harmless sort of affair. I can't explain why the windows were smashed, or who did it."

"I am shocked, Hamilton, that you should attempt to escape your responsibilities in this way," said the Head sadly. "I have always held such a high opinion of you, too. It is grievous that you should have sunk so low."

"I haven't sunk at all, sir!" said Nipper, flaring up. "It's not fair to say that!"

"Be silent, boy!"

"I won't be silent!" shouted Nipper passionately. "You've sacked me for something I haven't done! I don't mind taking my punishment for starting a raid on the Modern House. I admit I planned it—but there's nothing disgraceful in it. I gave no orders for windows to be smashed, and it's not fair of you to think—"

"Silence!" thundered Dr. Stafford.

He was so angry that he was almost on the point of striking the excited Nipper. The rest of the Removites were looking on, aghast. As a rule, Nipper always kept his temper—he was always cool. It was something new to see him as humanly weak as any of themselves.

"It is not my intention to argue with you, Hamilton," said the Head curtly. "You have admitted that you are the ringleader of this society, and you are therefore responsible for the activities of your followers. You have lead them into this crisis, and so you must take the consequences. 'I have no option but to expel you from the school.'"

And Nipper had nothing to say, since, his anger dying away, he could see that there was reason in Dr. Stafford's decision.

"From this moment onwards, these secret societies must cease," continued the headmaster. "I shall instruct my prefects to keep their eyes very wide open. If there is any further sign of activity—if there is the slightest indication that these societies still live

—there will be other expulsions. I am taking this drastic action because you boys have apparently gone out of your minds. You will all go indoors at once—and remain indoors. Every junior boy of the school is confined to his own house.”

And the Head turned on his heel, and strode away.

A babel of voices broke out directly he had passed beyond the range of Big Arch. His drastic action had been like the explosion of a bombshell. Certainly it had the right effect. From that minute onwards, there would be no more secret societies at St. Frank's!

Even the feud was killed—for who would have the heart to carry it on now? The two ringleaders had been expelled.

Everybody was too excited to take the headmaster's orders literally. Nobody went into the House, and the juniors came crowding round, excited and eager. Even the Fourth Formers hovered about, their fury overshadowed by their curiosity. They had been enraged at the attack on their windows, but the Head's announcement had cooled them down. Nobody had the heart to carry on the feud now.

“Dear old boy, this is dreadful!” said Sir Montie Tregellis-West frantically. “Begad, I can't believe it! You're not really sacked!”

“I'm afraid I am, Montie, old man,” said Nipper quietly. “I was an ass to lose my temper just now. But it's so unjust—so—so— Oh, what's the use? I was the leader of the Avengers, and I suppose it's up to me to take the blame.”

“Not likely!” roared Handforth. “I'm going straight to the Head, and I'm going to tell him that I'm the leader!”

“Don't be potty old man!” urged Church. “You can't tell a fib like that—”

“It's not a fib!” retorted Handforth. “I've always called myself a leader, haven't I?”

“Well, yes—but that was only your bluff,” said Church. “You know jolly well that Nipper was the leader.”

“All the same, I'm going to the Head,” insisted Handforth. “Why should he sack Nipper like this? Nipper hasn't done anything!”

“Go easy, old man!” said Nipper steadily. “There's something very fishy about all this, and I want to think.”

“What do you mean—fishy?” asked Tommy Watson. “Oh, my goodness! This is too awful for words! I wish we'd never started the Avengers! It was Handforth's idea in the first place!”

“By George, so it was!” shouted Handforth. “There you are! That's proof! I'll go along to the Head and tell him that I suggested the secret society, and you other fellows will have to back me up. Then the

Head will let Nipper off, and punish me instead—”

“Thanks awfully, old man; but there's no reason why either of us should be sacked,” interrupted Nipper. “For some days I've had a suspicion that somebody has been working against us, and now I know it!”

“Working against us?” asked Pitt quickly.

“Yes!” replied Nipper. “The real Avengers did not throw those stones. You know what we planned. It was just a harmless raid on the Modern House.”

“But if the Avengers didn't throw the stones, who did?” asked Handforth, staring. “We saw them.”

“We saw a number of cloaked figures throwing stones,” replied Nipper. “But I'm beginning to suspect that there were some outsiders amongst us. And perhaps the same sort of thing has been happening over in the Fourth. Perhaps you weren't seized by the New Klux Klan, Handy!”

“But we saw them!” said Church.

“You saw some figures dressed in the garb of the New Klux Klan,” replied Nipper keenly. “Just as we saw some figures dressed in the garb of the Avengers. But I'm pretty certain that we've been fooled! They weren't members of either society; they were outsiders, wearing cloaks and hoods, and deliberately acting so that we should all be blamed.”

“But—but—”

“It's a wheeze pinched from the Klu Klux Klan in America,” went on Nipper. “The Klu Klux was started as a decent sort of society, but it's happened, many times, that gangs of crooks have worn the familiar clothes of the Klu Klux Klan, and have committed all sorts of outrages. And the Klu Klux has been blamed—unjustly. That's what's been happening here. There's a mystery that requires to be searched into—and we'll jolly well get to the bottom of it, too!”



CHAPTER 16.

Who Is The Unknown?

XCITEMENT ran high in the Triangle.

Nipper's words had been heard by many, and they were repeated eagerly by

group after group.

“There was that affair the other night, when three of us were pushed into butter tubs, and perched on the tops of poles,” went on Nipper. “I don't believe those Fourth-Formers did that job at all. I don't believe they tarred and feathered Handforth & Co. There's an unknown crowd working against us—”

“And working against the Fourth, too?” asked Pitt.

“Yes, of course.”

“Phew! If that's so, a lot of things will be explained,” said Reggie. “You mean that

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somebody has been deliberately setting us against each other?"

"That seems to be the general idea," agreed Nipper. "I've only been suspecting this for the last few days, but to-night it's more than a suspicion. It's a cert."

"It's a pity you couldn't have said something before," said Watson bitterly. "You're sacked now, and it's too late to do anything."

"I haven't left the school yet," replied Nipper. "There may be time to make some investigations. I'd like to know where those Avengers went—the ones who ran off. They mixed with us in the West Square, and nobody suspected anything, because they were disguised in their cloaks and hoods. But —"

"Begad!" interrupted Montie. "Old Boots is comin' across here."

John Busterfield Boots was striding through the Removites, and nobody attempted to stop him. An hour earlier he would have been seized, bumped, and hurled back to his own side of the Triangle. But all that was over now.

"There's one thing I want to ask you, Nipper," said Boots squarely, as he came face to face with the Remove skipper. "Will you give me a straight reply?"

"Yes, of course," said Nipper.

"Well, did any of your Avengers attack Christine and Armstrong and me in Inner Court, an hour ago?"

"Attack you?"

"Yes: and put tar on our clothing," replied Boots. "We were set upon by six or seven fellows wearing the hoods and cloaks of the Avengers, and they put tar on our clothes without us knowing it. So when we went into the Head's study, he saw the tar, and took it for granted that we had been guilty of that rotten outrage on Handforth. So I've been sacked in consequence."

Nipper whistled.

"This is further proof!" he said grimly. "Boots, I give you my word of honour that none of the Avengers touched you in Inner Court. As a matter of fact, we were all holding a meeting in the Ancient House at about that time. A few of the fellows weren't there, I know, but they can all be vouched for. Even Forrest was with us."

"Thanks, awfully!" sneered Bernard Forrest. "Why drag me in?"

"There's something very rummy about this," said Boots, scratching his shock of red hair. "Some of your chaps were tarred and feathered by an outside gang—wearing the clothes of the New Klux Klan. And we were attacked by some gang, wearing the clothes of the Avengers. They're working against us, and both you and I, Nipper, are sacked! Cheerful, isn't it?"

They looked at one another, and Nipper was smiling rather whimsically. There was a fellow feeling between these two, since they were both in the same boat. And the sudden revelation that there were outsiders at work made all the difference.

"Yes, somebody—goodness knows who—is

working against us in common," said Nipper. "The trouble is, it seems quite impossible to prove it. We've accused you chaps of lots of rotten things during this last week or two, Boots."

"And we haven't been guilty," said Boots, nodding. "It's been just the same on our side. We thought you were responsible for slashing Bob Christine with a dog whip, and for throwing a stone and hitting somebody in the face—"

"By George!" shouted Handforth. "Why, we thought you fellows had done the same thing to two of our chaps! Archie Glen-thorne was nearly blinded by a stone thrown out of the darkness, and Reggie Pitt was slashed across the face with a dog-whip. That was when the feud first started. We thought you were responsible!"

"Well, we weren't," said Boots. "And we now know that you didn't get up to any of those dirty tricks, either. We've been accusing each other of all sorts of rotten things."

The excited talk went up and down the Triangle like a wave. A great deal of the animosity died down at once. For this revelation had come like an avalanche.

The Fourth had been blaming the Remove for all sorts of shabby games, and the Remove had been blaming the Fourth. And yet neither Form was guilty!

That was clear enough now, and the bitter resentment and anger which had swept through both junior Forms now faded away. They were all in trouble together, and they could tell that they were the victims of a cunning and deeply-laid plot.

But who were the unknown outsiders?

"It's not much good telling a story like this to the Head," said Nipper slowly. "He wouldn't believe it—and who can blame him? He would naturally assume that we were inventing the yarn just to escape the consequences. Unless we can produce the real culprits, we're all in the soup."

"Just what I was thinking," said Boots, nodding. "But how the dickens can we capture the beasts when we don't even know who they are? And yet they must belong to St. Frank's. That's as clear as daylight, or they wouldn't know the plans, and they wouldn't be able to get wind of our movements. It beats me hollow."

Some of the fellows might easily have suspected Bernard Forrest, but Forrest had been wholeheartedly with the Remove from the very start. Besides, he, Gulliver, and Bell had been indoors when Handforth & Co. were being tarred and feathered. They had also been indoors, with many of the other fellows, during that episode in Inner Court. So they were effectually placed beyond suspicion. But who could be the culprits? Once the known rotters were marked off the list, it seemed that a deadlock had been reached.

Handforth was by no means alarmed.

"You two chaps needn't think that you're going to be sacked," he said firmly. "Leave

this to me! I'll investigate the whole mystery, and arrive at the truth."

"Oh, chuck it, Handy!" said Fullwood. "This is no time for joking!"

"I'm not joking, you chump!" roared Handforth indignantly.

"Well, it's no time for your rot!"

"You can call it rot if you like, but just wait until I've finished my inquiries," said Handforth. "First of all, I'm going straight to the Headmaster, and I'm going to tell him he's all at sea. I'm going to make him give you fellows twenty-four hours' respite, so that I can have a chance of investigating the case."

"Don't do it, Handy!" urged McClure. "You'll only get yourself sacked, too. The Head isn't in any mood to listen to you. You've only got to go to him, and he'll jump down your throat."

"These chaps are innocent, and I'm not going to see them suffer," said Handforth obstinately. "We've all got to join together, you fellows—we've all got to find out who the guilty parties are. There mustn't be a wink of sleep for anybody until the mystery is solved."

Unfortunately, nobody was taking any notice of Edward Oswald, and nobody had any faith in his powers as a detective. This mystery seemed like remaining unsolved for all time.



CHAPTER 17.

Marmaduke's Masterly Move.

YOU'RE looking pretty worried, Willy, my lad!" said Handforth kindly.

He had encountered his minor in the Ancient House lobby, about five minutes later, and Willy looked at him with anxious eyes.

"Yes, I am worried!" he agreed. "Very worried. And who wouldn't be? He's in a bad way!"

"Yes, rather!" said Edward Oswald, nodding. "But he's got me behind him, and I'll do everything I can."

"I don't want you to interfere, Ted!" said Willy promptly. "You can't do any good. You'll only make him worse."

"There can't be anything worse than being expelled," said Handforth gruffly.

"Expelled?" said Willy, staring.

"Yes."

"Oh, you're talking about Nipper?" asked Willy.

"Of course I'm talking about Nipper!" said his major. "Aren't you?"

"No, of course not. I'm worried about old Marmaduke," said Willy calmly. "He's had terrible pains inside lately, and I'm having to doctor him up—"

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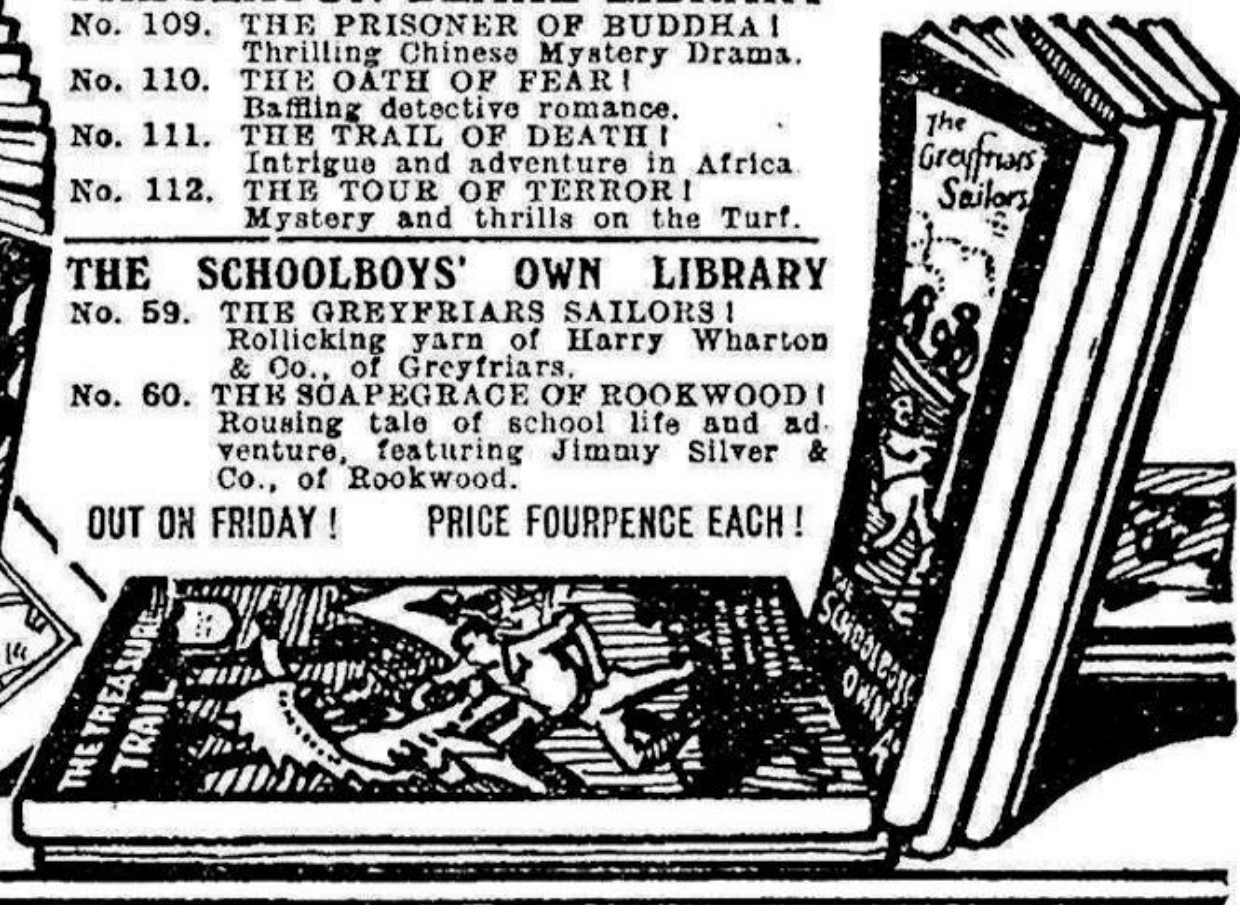
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"Marmaduke!" gasped Handforth. "You—you silly young ass! Have you been talking about your beastly monkey all the time?"

"Don't you run old Marmy down!" said Willy. "I tell you, I'm worried. Unless I'm careful, I'll lose him!"

"The sooner you lose him, the better!" snorted Handforth, striding indignantly off.

"Heartless boulder!" said Willy, with a frown. "What does he care about poor old Marmy? What does Ted care if Marmy pines away and dies?"

Willy went outside, and found Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon waiting in the Triangle. The two Third-Formers were full of excitement over the dramatic events which had been happening to the Fourth and the Remove. But Willy took no notice of their chatter. He was very attached to his pet monkey, and he had no time for discussing the troubles of the Removites just then.

"It's an awful affair!" Chubby Heath was saying. "Poor old Nipper has been sacked, and Boots has been sacked, too! There's some talk of a misunderstanding, but nobody seems to know the rights of it."

"Talk to me about it later," interrupted Willy gruffly. "For the moment we've got to go to the bike shed, and give Marmy his evening dose of medicine. Think what a tragedy it will be if he dies!"

Neither Chubby Heath nor Juicy Lemon seemed particularly frantic at the prospect. Indeed, they were thoroughly bored, and wanted to talk about the feud and the smashing of the windows in the Modern House and the East House. They wanted to talk about Buster Boots' troubles, and similar matters. But Willy wouldn't let them. Marmaduke came first. Marmaduke had to be attended to now, and nothing else mattered.

So the Third Form trio went round to the bicycle sheds, and Willy flashed on his electric torch. He had brought a bottle of medicine with him and a spoon. Marmaduke had been rather a trouble in the morning. He had refused to take his medicine, and it had been forced down his throat, much to the little monkey's indignation. Willy was hoping that the patient would be in a more tractable mood to-day.

"You fellows have got to hold him," he said. "It'll only take us half a jiffy——"

"Rats!" said Juicy Lemon. "He may bite!"

"The poor chap is too ill to bite anybody!" interrupted Willy. "Come along, we've got to—— By Jingo! What the—— Why, look at him! He's frisking about all over the place!"

Willy was delighted. Marmaduke, in his little house, was chattering gaily, and his delight at seeing his youthful master was obvious. And there was a great change in the monkey now. In the morning he had been listless and sullen. Even at tea-time he had displayed no activity. But now he almost seemed to be himself again.

"This medicine must have been doing wonders!" said Willy delightedly. "I told you it was powerful stuff, didn't I? Come along, Marmy, old man! We'll let you out for five minutes, and see if you're strong enough to stand!"

He opened the cage and took Marmaduke out. Chubby and Juicy were much relieved. They hadn't relished the thought of holding the monkey while Willy forced some medicine down his throat.

"That's the style!" said Willy, with a chuckle. "Why, I'm jiggered if he isn't frisking about! This is a lot better than I had hoped for! Hi, come here, you fat-head! Whoa, Marmy! You don't want to go out there."

"He's escaped!" said Chubby Heath, with a kind of morbid satisfaction.

"It'll take you hours to find him!" said Juicy cheerfully.

"He can't have got far," said Willy, running to the door. "He hardly had strength to walk this evening, and now he's almost back in his usual health. Marvellous how these animals recover!"

When he got outside there was no sign whatever of the monkey. Marmaduke, finding himself free, and feeling particularly frisky after his recent illness, was making hay while the sun shone. Liberty was his, and so he was off somewhere into the darkness.

And then, just as Willy was about to give one of his peculiar whistles—a signal which Marmaduke would recognise at once—there came a smashing of twigs and the tramping of feet. A yell of fright followed.

"He's in those trees over there!" said Juicy.

"Yes, and there's somebody else there, too!" said Willy, rushing forward. "Someone must have been hiding, and old Marmaduke surprised him. I wonder——"

Willy broke off, really alarmed. For the yells of fright were being repeated. They were uttered in a tone of sheer terror. A moment later, when Willy and his chums ran up, with Willy's torch gleaming, they beheld a cloaked figure on the ground—a figure that was almost enshrouded in the black robe of the Avengers! And there was Marmaduke, clawing at the figure, and showing his teeth with anger. Obviously Marmaduke didn't like this specimen.

"It's all right—don't get the wind up!" said Willy curtly. "It's only my monkey!"

The figure moved, and they could hear the panting breath of the scared one.

"Who the dickens are you?" went on Willy. "One of those Remove chaps, I expect? Anyhow, you're wearing the Avengers' costume. Scared of a little monkey, eh? By Jingo! You haven't got much pluck!"

Willy was rather disgusted. But then he was prejudiced. Marmaduke could be very dangerous when he liked, particularly when he was up against somebody he did not care about.

The figure of the Avenger was behaving in a peculiar way. He was trying to get up—to crawl away without revealing his true identity. And Willy, remembering a few words he had overheard recently, suddenly looked keen.

"I wonder!" he murmured. "Come on, you chaps—off with this hood of his!"

And the three fags jumped upon the figure just as he was about to make a dash for liberty. They bore him to the ground, and with one jerk Willy pulled the hood off, and flashed his electric torch right into the face of the Avenger.

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

He saw the face of the Hon. Aubrey de Vere Wellbourne, the cad of the River House School!



CHAPTER 18.

Getting at the Truth!

"HO!" said Willy Handforth slowly.

"Let me go, confound you!" gasped Wellbourne.

"I—I was only waiting for somebody. I'd arranged to meet Forrest, and he hasn't come yet."

"Do you usually meet Forrest dressed up like a monk, in a black cloak and hood?" asked Willy.

"I—I—I—"

"That's right—hacker and stacker!" said Willy. "I'm not a bit surprised, because you can't find a quick lie, you rotter! Take my advice, and hold your beastly tongue!"

"But—but I don't understand!" said Chubby Heath, staring at the River House junior. "What's this chap doing here? He's not one of the Avengers."

"No—not officially," replied Willy. "But if you only use your wits, Chubby, my son, you'll see daylight. Lots of mysterious things have been happening recently. Boots has been sacked because my major and two other chaps were tarred and feathered. I rather think that Wellbourne can explain something about that tarring and feathering."

"I can't!" panted Wellbourne, in acute alarm. "I don't know anything about it."

"No good, my lad!" said Willy. "You were too prompt in your denial. It was just as good as an admission that you helped in the affair. Anyhow, you're coming along with us to Nipper, and the other Remove fellows. I rather think they'd like to question you!"

Wellbourne turned pale with fright.

"Let me go!" he gasped. "I—I'll give you a quid each if you'll only—"

"Bribery, eh?" interrupted Willy, with a grim light in his eye. "If that's your game, my lad, you'd better dry up! You won't bribe us with your dirty quids! This affair has to be thrashed out by the Remove, not by us. So you'll come along."

The Hon. Aubrey de Vere Wellbourne was shivering with apprehension. Marmaduke, by sheer chance, had discovered him, lurking amid the bushes. Indeed, but for the little monkey's keenness Wellbourne's presence would never have been known.

What was the meaning of his activity? Why had he been dressed as an Avenger? And why had he been waiting here in the darkness? There was something very significant here. Wellbourne was the biggest rotter in the River House School. And he was one of Bernard Forrest's greatest friends.

Was Wellbourne the snake in the grass?

There were plenty of decent fellows at the River House School—Harold Brewster and Georgie Glynn, and all their set. But it so happened that there were many rotters at the River House, too, and Wellbourne was their leader.

At any rate, Willy's discovery—owing to the keenness of Marmaduke—caused a great sensation in the Remove five minutes later.

Nipper and Handforth, together with the other prominent fellows, had marched into the Junior common-room in the Ancient House, and all their faces were long and serious. Nipper was to be expelled in the morning, and the Remove was in a state of woe. And then Willy & Co. arrived, forcing Wellbourne in their midst. The Hon. Aubrey was still wearing his cloak and hood, for Willy had not allowed him to remove them.

"Here's somebody you might be interested to question," said Willy calmly. "We found him in the bushes just near the bicycle shed. He was waiting there for somebody, I believe."

"Wellbourne!" went up a general shout.

"By George!" roared Handforth excitedly. "Then—then— So these River House rotters have been busy! Look! He's wearing the costume of the Avengers!"

"It—it was only a bit of fun!" panted Wellbourne. "I haven't been on the premises for more than five minutes—"

"That's enough!" interrupted Nipper. "Why the dickens didn't we think of this before? Willy, you're a wonder!"

"Don't give me the credit," said Willy. "Marmaduke found him."

"Well, we'll get up a special feed for Marmaduke later on," said Nipper. "Now, Wellbourne, you'd better speak plainly and truthfully. So you and your fellow rotters have been taking part in this feud of ours, eh?"

"Yes, on purpose to stir up trouble," said Reggie Pitt. "It's as clear as daylight."

"Smash him!"

"Bump him on the floor!"

"Give him a thundering good hiding, Nipper!"

"I'm going to—unless he speaks frankly," said Nipper, pushing up his sleeves. "Now, then, Wellbourne, I'll give you your choice. Are you going to take a hiding from me or



The three fags pounced upon the Avenger just as he was about to make a dash for liberty. With one jerk Willy Handforth pulled the hood off—and then he gasped. For it was not a Removite who became revealed—but the Hon. de Vere Wellbourne, the cad of the River House!

will you tell us why you were lurking in those trees dressed in these robes?"

Wellbourne looked round him like a caged tiger.

"I—I'll tell the truth!" he gasped frantically. "But—but you needn't blame me. It was Forrest's idea!"

"What!"

"Forrest's!"

"Yes!" said Wellbourne with a gulp. "He put the scheme into our heads, and he got us to help him."

"Who do you mean by 'us'?" asked Nipper.

"Why, Carstairs and Coats and the rest of us," replied Wellbourne huskily. "Forrest thought it would be rather rich if we could make you fellows carry on this feud until you were ready to slaughter one another. Forrest's idea was to do a few things so that each Form would accuse the other——"

"And who else was in it?" demanded Handforth.

"Gulliver and Bell, I believe," said Wellbourne. "Anyhow, Forrest instigated the

whole thing from start to finish. You can't do anything to me."

"Can't we?" said Handforth thickly. "You—you rotter! You—you snake!"

"No, Handy, Forrest is the snake," said Nipper, his eyes gleaming. "These other fellows are only his dupes. By Jove! And we thought that Forrest was with us all the time! He's had an alibi on every occasion. Of course, we can understand now. He had these other fellows working for him; he directed the operations and then laughed up his sleeve when we were always mixed up in these misunderstandings."

"Oh, the despicable cur!"

"The hound!"

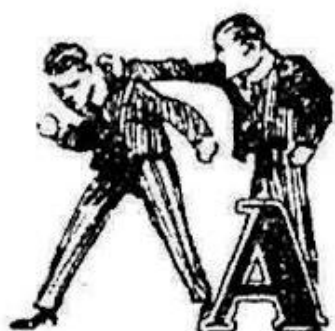
"We don't want to hear any more from you, Wellbourne," said Nipper, turning to the River House cad. "You'd better get out as quickly as you can, because I won't guarantee what these other fellows will do. And if any of your rotten companions are lurking about you'd better give them the tip, too. If we find any of you here after ten minutes——"

"That's all right," interrupted Wellbourne, making a dash for the door. "You won't find

any of us here. I was only waiting to have a word with Forrest, but I don't think it matters now!"

And the Hon. Aubrey was allowed to go, to Handforth's chagrin. But after all he didn't belong to St. Frank's, and there was other work to be done. Bernard Forrest was the traitor, the unutterable cad who had been causing all the strife in the Lower School.

An interview with Bernard Forrest seemed rather imperative.



CHAPTER 19.

Straight From The Shoulder!

MAZEMENT was the chief emotion in the Junior common-room after Wellbourne had gone. The shock of the thing had hit the fellows like a sudden blow.

They hadn't suspected Forrest because he had always been on the spot when anything questionable had happened. He had always been able to prove an alibi, if necessary. The juniors had never dreamed that Forrest had allies from another school.

But now that they knew the truth it was all so obvious.

Wellbourne and his companions of the River House had always had their knife into the St. Frank's juniors. So they had probably been only too glad to help Forrest in this despicable campaign of his. Forrest's guilt was all the more atrocious because nobody in the Remove or the Fourth had done anything to him. He had no reason to seek any revenge. He had engaged in these activities simply because he was a young blackguard.

Of course, it was just possible that Wellbourne had been lying—but it was very doubtful. An interview with Forrest would soon settle the question, anyhow.

"Come on!" said Handforth grimly. "We'll soon find out the truth now. By George! Didn't I tell you that we should get on the track?"

"Yes, thanks to your minor," said Fullwood.

"Well, he's a Handforth, anyhow," said Edward Oswald triumphantly.

"You'll let me do the talking, Handy, if you don't mind," said Nipper. "I'm more concerned in this affair than you are—"

"Rot!" interrupted Edward Oswald. "I'm in charge of this affair, and I don't want any interference. As a matter of fact, you don't belong to St. Frank's at all, Nipper. You're expelled! So now you haven't got any authority!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"No authority whatever," went on Handforth firmly. "It stands to reason. You've been sacked—and I'm in charge of things in your place. So come along, we'll drag Forrest & Co. out and put them through the Third Degree!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Good idea!"

"That's the style, Handy! You lead the way!"

The others were only too ready to follow Handforth's lead. In an affair of this kind he could be trusted to do the right thing. And so a swarm of fellows poured out of the common-room and marched along the Remove passage until they came to Study A. They flung the door open violently. Bernard Forrest and Gulliver and Bell swung round, staring in amazement.

"There they are!" went up the shout.

The cads of Study A glanced at one another, and then Gulliver turned as pale as chalk. Bell seemed to shrivel. But Forrest stood there, defiant and cool. He had not lost his head.

"What's all this?" he asked calmly. "Is there any trouble?"

"Not yet, but there soon will be!" said Handforth. "We want you three fellows in the common-room."

"Sorry," yawned Forrest, "we can't come now!"

"Can't you?" thundered Handforth. "If you don't come of your own will we'll drag you out! You've got one second to decide!"

"Oh, well, if you're going to be violent we might as well humour you," sneered Forrest. "Come on, you chaps, these idiots seem to have got some bee in their bonnet."

They were hustled out of Study A, hustled along the corridor, and then pushed forcibly into the common-room. Other Removites were appearing now—from the West House. The news was spreading like wildfire. Even Boots and Christine and one or two of the other Fourth-Formers appeared. They were ignoring the Head's order that they should remain in their own Houses. This affair was altogether too exciting to be missed.

"Now then, Forrest!" said Handforth curtly. "Ten minutes ago we found Wellbourne lurking about here wearing the garb of the Avengers. Wellbourne says that he and his other rotten River House pals have been doing all these crooked things against the Remove and the Fourth."

"Is that so?" said Forrest. "Then Wellbourne's a dirty dog!"

"He says that you instigated everything!" roared Handforth. "They were only acting under your orders—"

"That's a lot of nonsense!" interrupted Forrest angrily. "I don't know anything about it. You fellows know perfectly well that I've been with you all along the line. I'm sorry I had anything to do with the infernal business now. If you're goin' to accuse me—"

"Shut up, you rotter!"

"We don't believe any of your lies!"

"We'll give you just five minutes to confess!" went on Handforth, his voice terribly angry. "Yes, all three of you! If you don't confess we'll bump you and frog's-march you and we'll make you run the gauntlet—"

NEXT WEDNESDAY!

*Startling New Series!**Don't Miss This!***"THE RASCAL OF THE REMOVE!"**

A new boy—and he's an out-and-out rotter!

Yet he comes to the school with the reputation of being a corking athlete, a fine boxer, and a great footballer.

It's when he comes up against Handforth that the trouble starts. Handy is prepared to like him—but he can't bring himself to like a rotter.

This opening yarn is one of the most vivid school-life stories that the Old Paper has ever given you. It shows Edwy Searles Brooks in his best vein.

**ORDER IN ADVANCE!**

one after the other. By the time we've finished with you, you won't know how to stand—or to sit down, either!"

"Yes, and we mean it, too!"

"Absolutely!"

"Confess, or take the consequences!"

Gulliver and Bell looked at one another with frightened eyes.

"Leave us alone!" babbled Gulliver. "We—we didn't want to take part in it!"

"We told Forrest what would happen!" gasped Bell. "We knew it would end in this!"

There was a roar from the excited juniors.

"Then you confess?" demanded Handforth triumphantly.

"Yes," gasped Gulliver. "It was Forrest's idea at the very start. When the feud began he happened to be out in the Triangle, and he chucked a stone at one of the Modern House chaps. Then he thought it would be a good idea to chuck a stone at Archie—so that all you chaps would be set against one another. And Forrest developed it after that, and instituted a whole series of affairs, with Wellbourne & Co. helping. We had costumes like the New Klux Klan, and other costumes like the Avengers. We changed them at a moment's notice sometimes, and

mixed with you fellows, and you never knew anything about it!"

"My only hat!"

"You—you miserable curs!"

"It wasn't our fault!" bleated Bell. "Forrest forced us into it! We never wanted to—honest injun!"

The juniors looked at the two arrant funks in contempt. It was almost impossible to punish them; they were too pitiful. And, in all truth, there was something in their story. They were only Forrest's dupes. They had obeyed his orders. From first to last Forrest's brain had been the evil one. All these other fellows had only been carrying out his plans. The evidence to that effect was overwhelming, for Gulliver and Bell had corroborated Wellbourne's story.

There was no need to make any further investigations. It was unnecessary to go into any details regarding the various misunderstandings which had arisen. Every despicable act that had been accomplished had been the work of these cads. Neither the Avengers nor the New Klux Klan had done anything of a questionable nature. They had fought cleanly all the time.

These rotters had been the culprits always, with Bernard Forrest at their head, directing. It was a sensational revelation!

CHAPTER 20.

Forrest's Choice!



BERNARD FORREST stood there, contemptuous and defiant. There was not an atom of remorse in his attitude. But behind the defiant glare there was a look of fear in his eyes. He knew that he had come to the parting of the ways.

His exposure had arrived unexpectedly—with dramatic abruptness.

Ten minutes earlier he had been safe, without a soul in the school suspecting him. Now he was exposed, and facing the anger of his Form-fellows. And all because of the action of a little monkey! The ways of Fate are sometimes strange!

"It won't be fair to report us to the Head, or anything!" said Gulliver, almost incoherent with terror. "We—we didn't want to take part in all this. But Forrest forced us to. He threatened us with all sorts of things unless we agreed."

"That's right!" said Bell breathlessly. "Forrest's plan was to get Nipper and Boots sacked, and to-night he had succeeded!"

"So you planned this from the very first, did you, Forrest?" asked Nipper, looking at Forrest steadily. "You deliberately set yourself to get Boots and me sacked from the school?"

"I don't know anything about it!" retorted Forrest coolly.

"What have I ever done to you, Forrest, that you should be so vindictive?" asked Nipper. "And what, in Heaven's name, has Boot's done?"

"Don't be a fool!" said Forrest curtly. "I deny the whole thing! These fellows are talking piffle! You-know what liars they are, and you can't prove anything at all. I'm tellin' you now—straight from the shoulder—that I don't know a thing about it!"

"Liar!"

"Smash him!"

"Yes, rather! Grab him and bump him!"

"Hurrah!"

But Handforth faced the excited mob and held up his hand.

"Stop!" he roared. "Leave this cad to me! I know what to do, and everything will be all right if you leave Forrest in my hands. Don't forget that he tarred and feathered me, and I'm not feeling particularly friendly towards him!"

"After all, Handy, it's my job," said Nipper. "He got me expelled——"

"Yes, and you haven't got any authority now," replied Handforth coolly. "So you can jolly well go and eat coke, my son! I'm dealing with Forrest, and I don't want any more rot!"

He turned back to Bernard Forrest, and tore off his jacket.

"Now, Forrest!" he said. "Do you know what I'm going to do?"

"I don't know—and I'm hanged if I care," replied Forrest defiantly.

"You will care in a minute!" went on Handforth. "I'm going to give you your choice. Will you go straight to the headmaster and confess, or shall I give you a thrashing?"

"You confounded fool!" said Forrest, between his teeth. "I'm not going to the Head to confess something just because you tell me to! And I won't fight you, either——"

"Oh, won't you?" snapped Handforth. "We'll see about that! And let me tell you another thing—this won't be any ordinary fight! I shan't be satisfied until you're absolutely out—smashed to pulp! I'm going to give you the biggest hiding that you've ever had in all your life! But you can escape from it if you'll go to the Head now, and confess that you instigated all these outrages."

"You fool!" snarled Forrest, looking round him like a trapped animal. "I'll not confess! And I tell you I won't fight——"

"A ring—a ring!"

"Hurrah!"

"Lock the door somebody, so that we can't be disturbed!"

"Good gad! That's a priceless scheme!"

"Now then, Handy! Smash him until he agrees to confess!"

There wasn't a single note of sympathy for Bernard Forrest. He had proved himself to be the greatest cad that the Junior School had ever sheltered. Gulliver and Bell were forgotten amid the general excitement. They hadn't even been bumped. For, after all, they had only been the dupes—the tools. Forrest was the real culprit.

Seldom, indeed, had the juniors been so enraged. But for Handforth's grim intention, things would have gone very badly for the cad of Study A. For the other juniors would have seized him, and they would have mobbed him so roughly that he might have been seriously injured. They were excited enough for anything. But Handforth kept them back. He regarded Forrest as his own particular game.

And then and there the fight started.

Forrest was no coward, particularly when he was cornered. He could fight after a style, and he knew quite a lot about boxing. He was desperate now, and he faced Handforth with burning eyes and with his teeth clenched. He seemed to possess extra strength.

But, if it came to that, so did Handforth. And the valiant leader of Study D was no weakling with his fists. Handforth's reputation as a fighter was almost second to none in the Lower School. Perhaps he did not possess the science of Nipper or of Lawrence, but there was plenty of strength behind his blows.

And then they went at it—hammer and tongs. The Removites had seen many a "mill" in their time, but this one eclipsed anything that had previously been witnessed. It was a terrific affair from start to finish.

There were no rounds, and they fought with bare fists. At first, Forrest managed to get in a few blows, but then Handforth's superior stamina began to tell.

"Hurrah! Go it, Handy!"

"You're whacking him!"

"I'm going to slosh him until he agrees to confess to the Head!" panted Handforth. "There you are, Forrest—take that! And that! Yes, by George, and this, too!"

Crash! Thud! Biff!

In the ecstasy of his anger, Handforth was like a tornado. His blows rained upon Forrest blindly. Already Forrest's left eye was closed, his right ear was puffy and red. He was becoming a dreadful sight.

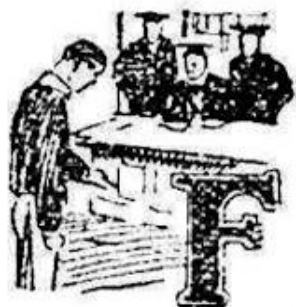
But his defiance and his evil obstinacy kept him up. Nothing, however, could withstand Handforth's ferocity. And at last Forrest went down, a battered wreck of his ordinary self. He was beaten—utterly and absolutely beaten.

"All right—I'll go!" he panted, his voice shaking with fury. "You cads—you rotten cads! I'll go to the Head now, if you like! Yes, I'll go and confess—but leave me alone! Do you hear me—leave me alone!"

"If you'll only express some regret, Forrest—" began Nipper.

"Hang you, I'll express nothing but scorn!" snarled Forrest. "I hate the lot of you! I'll be glad to clear out of this school—out of your sight! I hate you more than ever I did before, and if I get the chance to trick you again, I'll do it!"

Many fellows had been ready to soften towards this battered cad, but these defiant words hardened their hearts. Forrest was bad to the core, through and through. How could they sympathise with such a young blackguard?



CHAPTER 21.

The Confession!

FIVE minutes later, Forrest was on his feet partially recovered. He had been patched up hastily, and the Remove fellows were ready to escort him to the Head's house. Great crowds were waiting, in fact—and if Forrest showed any signs of going back on his word, he would be carried to the Head's door by sheer force. The Remove had never been quite so angry as it was now.

If only Forrest had shown a little remorse, things would have been different.

But he showed nothing but evil animosity—and everybody was hardened towards him. There was no regret in this cad. He was bad—thoroughly bad.

"Now, Forrest, you've got to go in to the Head, and you've got to tell him the full truth," said Handforth relentlessly. "It won't be enough if you just tell him that you're the chief schemer. You've got to explain that you planned all the outrages, and that you

did everything in your power to ferment the trouble."

"Hang you!" snarled Forrest. "Leave me alone! I know what to say!"

"You'll tell the Head that it was you and your rotten pals who tarred and feathered us," went on Handforth. "You'll tell the Head that it was you and your rotten pals who threw those stones at the windows. You'll exonerate Nipper and Boots. Understand? If you don't do the thing thoroughly, we shall soon know—because the Head won't hold any inquiry. And then we shall have to take fresh action."

"Will you?" asked Forrest sourly. "What action? Are you goin' to kill me, or what?"

"There are all sorts of ways," said Handforth darkly. "For example, there's a dog-whip in your own study cupboard, Forrest—I suppose that's where you keep it. We might give you a taste of that—your own rotten medicine. But you needn't worry—we shan't descend to those depths. But you'll never be allowed to speak to a soul in this school—you'll be shunned by everybody. You'll be spurned—"

"That's enough!" snapped Forrest. "I'll go into the Head—and I'll tell him everything."

He walked forward, defiant and insolent. His mind was thoroughly made up. He knew very well that life was impossible for him at St. Frank's now. The Junior School was so thoroughly incensed against him that they would not allow him to have a moment's peace from this minute onwards. It would be sheer torture for him to remain.

And so, with an air of bravado, he went into the headmaster's presence. What did he care? He was going to be sacked, so he might as well be insolent while he was about it! He had often wanted to cheek the Head to his face! Might as well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb!

As it happened, the Head was talking with Mr. Nelson Lee and Mr. Stockdale and Mr. Stokes. They had been holding a consultation regarding the feud. In fact, there had been a bit of an argument, for Nelson Lee had been urging the headmaster to reconsider his sentences on Nipper and Boots.

And then Forrest walked in—without knocking.

"Forrest!" said the Head sternly. "How dare you come in here—"

"That's all right," said Forrest. "I've got something to say."

His tone was so charged with impertinence that all the masters looked at him in astonishment.

"Yes, and I'll clear up a bit of a mystery," went on Forrest. "You needn't stare at me like this—I'm not a ghost!"

"The boy must be mad!" said the Head, in amazement. "What on earth have you been doing, Forrest? You are in a dreadful condition!"

"I know it—so you needn't tell me!" sneered Forrest. "One of the fellows has knocked me about like this—he smashed me to pulp."

"Good heavens! What in the name of wonder—"

"Oh, let me get it over quickly!" said Forrest coolly. "I've come here to confess—by order of the Remove! It was I who started this business. I knew there was a feud between the Remove and the Fourth, so I made it a bit worse. I threw stones at some of the chaps, and slashed them across the faces with a dog-whip."

"Are you in your right senses, Forrest?" demanded the head, aghast.

"Yes, of course I am," retorted Forrest. "I got lots of other fellows in to help me—Gulliver and Bell, and a good few of those River House chaps. Oh, I don't care about sneakin'—if they get into trouble, all the better. We planned everything very nicely. We tarred and feathered Handforth, and those other rotters. We smashed all the windows. And, by gad, it was I who threw that stone through this window here—with that fake message on it?"

"You unutterable young scoundrel!" said Nelson Lee sternly. "Have you no remorse, Forrest? How dare you come here, and address your headmaster in such an insolent tone? If you have done these things, and you are confessing, why do you not express your regret?"

"Because I'm not regretful—that's why!" said Forrest sourly. "I'm jolly glad I did it all—and if it hadn't been for an accident I should have seen those two goody-goody cads sacked from the school. As it is, you'd better let them off. They didn't do anythin' to deserve the sack. As for me, I don't care a twopenny-halfpenny string if you kick me out of the school row. I'm fed up with the mouldy old place, anyhow. St. Frank's makes me sick. It's always been a rotten hole—always will be!"

The Head's face turned pale with anger.

"You—you wretched youth!" he said, in a quivering voice. "I am amazed—staggered—that you should come to me, and address me in this way!"

"Thought you would be!" said Forrest, nodding.

"You impertinent young jackanapes!" shouted Dr. Stafford. "So you admit your guilt? You confess that it was you who—"

"Oh, don't go over it all again, for goodness' sake!" interrupted Bernard Forrest. "Haven't I told you once? How many more times do you want tellin'? Sack me, and get it over!"

"Upon my soul!" ejaculated the Head, glancing helplessly at the other masters. "The boy must have taken leave of his wits! Never have I been so addressed!"

"Well, it's about time," said Forrest, with a grin. "There's too much starch in you, old chap—that's the trouble with you!"

Not a word of regret for his conduct—not a trace of respect for his headmaster! Bernard Forrest was at the end of his tether, and he didn't care a hang what happened. That was just his character—his way. He knew that he was booked for expulsion, so he had ceased

to worry. In a vindictive, vicious sort of way, he was quite enjoying himself.

But the truth had come out—and the situation was saved.



CHAPTER 22.

The End of the Feud.

R. STAFFORD mopped his brow

"Well, upon my soul!" he said huskily. "I feel quite weak, Mr. Lee—quite exhausted! That boy! That

wretched, impertinent—"

"Don't concern yourself over him, sir," said Nelson Lee. "I have known for many months that Forrest was bad—but I'd always had a sneaking hope that he might improve. Instead, I am afraid he has steadily grown worse. It will be a good thing for St. Frank's to get rid of him."

"We shall certainly get rid of him!" said the Head grimly. "Whatever his previous offences, he would be expelled for his very attitude towards me in this room! In no circumstances could I overlook such studied insolence. But, good gracious! To think that those two boys were to have been expelled in the morning—and they are quite innocent of the charges. I am pained—shocked—that Forrest could have been so cunning, and so deceitful. It grieves me terribly, Mr. Lee."

Bernard Forrest had been sent away to his own House. He was to be expelled on the morrow. And there were many hoots and jeers sounding from the Triangle. Nobody made any attempt to silence them. The Head realised that it would do the school good to relieve itself in this way. And Forrest was so utterly bad that he deserved all the scorn that his schoolfellows heaped upon him.

Nipper, Buster Boots, Bob Christine and Armstrong had seen sent for, and they would soon be in the Head's study.

"And what of these other boys?" the Head asked with a puzzled frown. "What of Gulliver and Bell, and the boys belonging to the River House School? Forrest mentioned many names—"

"In the circumstances, sir, I should strongly advise you to deal leniently with these other boys," said Nelson Lee. "Those from the River House, of course, cannot be punished by you, since they are not under your jurisdiction. And I fear it would only cause trouble if you complained to Dr. Hogge. As for Gulliver and Bell, a sound flogging will easily fit the case, I think."

"A public flogging?"

"No, I should hardly think so," replied Lee, shaking his head. "Have them in your study here and give them a good talking to, and then thrash them. I am quite certain that they are Forrest's dupes. Forrest has been the viper all the time."

Nelson Lee often gave the Head advice of this sort, and Dr. Stafford never refused to

act upon it. And so that part of the question was settled.

And then Nipper and Boots and Christine and Armstrong came in—to say nothing of Handforth and Reggie Pitt. These other two juniors hadn't been sent for, but they felt that they were essential.

"Well, sir," asked Handforth eagerly, "did Forrest confess?"

"Yes, my boys, Forrest has confessed," said the Head kindly.

"I thought he would!" said Handforth. "I thrashed him enough, anyhow. I gave him the hiding of his life, and he knew——"

"Ahem!" coughed the Head. "We need not inquire into any details, Handforth. It is quite sufficient for me to know that Forrest is the real instigator of all the recent trouble. I can well understand the animosity between the two Forms. Those belonging to the Fourth believed that the Remove were guilty—and *vice versa*. It has been a long series of misunderstandings."

"So it seems, sir," said Nipper, nodding.

"Naturally, Forrest is to be expelled on the morrow," continued the headmaster. "And in view of these circumstances, the punishments that I inflicted upon you boys will now be cancelled. But cannot you be friends?" he added, looking at them earnestly. "Is there any need for this quarrel to continue? The cause of the trouble—Forrest—is to be removed. Can't we have this matter settled now?"

"I'd like to have it settled, sir," said Nipper quietly.

"Splendid!" beamed the Head. "And you, Boots?"

"If Nipper will take my hand, sir, I shall be the happiest chap in the school," replied Buster Boots promptly.

"Here it is!" said Nipper, extending his hand and smiling his friendliness.

They gripped, and Handforth patted them both on the backs.

"That's the style!" he grinned. "No more rows—no more feud! Of course, we shall have some good old rags now and again—and plenty of japes, too."

"Yes—yes—ahem!—quite so!" said the Head hastily. "It gives me great pleasure, boys, to see you so friendly again. The junior captain of the Fourth is shaking hands with the captain of the Remove. Nothing could be better!"

"We're only too glad that it's all over, sir," smiled Nipper. "There have been misunderstandings all along the line, but they're cleared up now."

"Rather!" said Boots heartily. "Thank goodness!"

"And so say all of us!" murmured Reggie Pitt.

They were all smiles—all as happy as sand-boys. Now that the truth was out, these juniors knew that there had never been any cause for them to hate one another. They were pals again—friendly rivals.

And so they went out into the open, where the moon was shining down upon Inner Court. There were crowds there—thronging of

Removites and Fourth-Formers. But it was noticeable that the rival factions were keeping well apart.

"My only hat! Here they come!"

"Arm in arm, by Jingo!"

"Well I'm blessed!"

Nipper and Buster Boots came out first, arm in arm, and chatting amiably. Then came Handforth and Bob Christine, while Reggie Pitt and Armstrong brought up the rear. They were all looking supremely contented.

"It's all right, you chaps!" sang out Handforth joyously. "Forrest's been sacked, and these other fellows are exonerated!"

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Nipper!"

"Three cheers for Boots!"

"Hurrah!"

"And the feud's over!" roared Handforth. "No more fighting—no more silly scrapping! So if any of you fellows start any of your rot, I'll biff you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I mean——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Remove and the Fourth, taking their cue from the respective skippers, fraternised freely. And they were only too glad to. The two Forms were reconciled. They all went back into the Triangle in groups, talking, laughing, and discussing the general situation. Once again the Remove and the Fourth were friends. The old feud was over.

And, by the same token, the last had been heard of the Ancient Order of Avengers and the New Klux Klan!

CHAPTER 23.

Drummed Out!



YOU have disgraced the school that has sheltered you, and you have dishonoured the badge that you wear on your cap,"

said Dr. Stafford, in a stern, relentless voice. "Bernard Forrest, you are to leave St. Frank's forthwith, but I may be able to feel just a little pity for you if you will express your regret. If you will give me some indication of remorse——"

"You can spare yourself the trouble!" interrupted Forrest insolently. "I don't want your pity! I'm not a bit remorseful—and I don't intend to indulge in any idiotic heroics. I'm jolly glad to be leavin' this hole, and there you have the truth!"

The Head compressed his lips.

"That is enough, Forrest!" he said coldly.

"You had better not speak again. Go!"

The school seethed with anger.

"Sssssssss!"

A low hiss started somewhere among the juniors, and it was taken up by the whole school, until Big Hall was echoing and re-echoing with the sibilant sound. Bernard Forrest turned and waved his hand towards the massed ranks.

"That's it—go ahead!" he jeered. "The more you hiss the better I like it! I don't care a snap for any of you, and you can darned well hoot your heads off for all I care!"

Two prefects came along, and escorted Forrest off the platform. And these two prefects had been instructed to remain with Forrest until he was off the premises.

Dismissal came, and St. Frank's poured out into the open. Everybody was amazed at the truculent behaviour of Bernard Forrest. Right to the last word he was defiant and callous. There wasn't an ounce of sympathy for him in any House.

Twenty minutes later Bernard Forrest came out of the Ancient House with a sneering smile on his face. His shiny topper was set at an acute angle on his head—a rakish tilt. He had even the audacity to light a cigarette—although somebody soon knocked it out of his mouth. He came with a swaggering gait, apparently enjoying the whole programme.

But then Forrest paused, rather surprised by what he saw in the Triangle.

Not a sound greeted his appearance. Every member of the Junior School was out there in the open, but there were no hisses—no hoots. Only—dead silence.

And Forrest now saw that he would be obliged to walk between two long lines of cadets, all in uniform. The Junior Cadet Corps had prepared this as a surprise, and a sneer turned Forrest's lips as he watched.

"By gad, they've got somethin' special up for me," he said coolly.

And then, as he reached the bottom of the steps, two figures approached him. One was Nipper, and the other was John Busterfield Boots. They were both in uniform, and behind came Handforth, Pitt, and several more. All their faces were grave and stern.

"Halt!" commanded Nipper quietly.

"What the deuce— Oh, just as you like!" said Forrest, finding that his way was barred. "What the dickens do you want now? I'm leavin' you, aren't I? Do you want to kiss me good-bye?"

Nipper held up a school cap, and showed it to Forrest.

"This is your cap, Forrest," said the Junior captain sternly. "It bears a badge that you have disgraced. You will take the cap, and perhaps, at some later date, you may feel some tinge of remorse."

"What peurile rot!" said Forrest savagely.

The badge was torn from the cap, and thrown down. And then the same ceremony was gone through with his old cricketing blazer.

"Very pretty—very picturesque!" sneered Forrest. "I don't want these confounded things!"

The cap and the blazer had been forced upon him, since they were his property. But he tossed them aside, and gave them a contemptuous kick. And the Junior School stood watching, boiling with rage.

Everybody had been hoping that Forrest would reveal just a trace of sorrow at the

last minute. But the contrary was the case.

As the cadets stood back, he was allowed a free passage straight across the Triangle, towards the gates. And he swaggered along, his head in the air, his eyes gleaming with resentment and feigned amusement.

And then the drums started.

The drummers of the Cadet Corps were following Forrest in the rear, beating solemnly. The Scamp of the Remove was being drummed out in real earnest! And not a single hiss sounded—not a single shout of derision.

At the gate he turned, and suddenly all his arrogance seemed to drop from him. His shoulders hunched, and he seemed to realise the full meaning of all that had passed—that he was being expelled with ignominy, that he had disgraced the school and its honour.

Then the moment passed, and his old brazen smile returned—but it was now very forced. He turned on his heel and walked away, and a number of the juniors solemnly closed the gates, and this was the signal for a general babble of voices.

"Pah!" said Handforth, in a disgusted tone. "The cad—the unutterable worm! By George! If it hadn't been for Church and McClure, I should have knocked him flat!"

"Instead of that, he nearly knocked us flat!" said Church breathlessly. "We had an awful job to keep Handy still!"

"The air seems sweeter now!" remarked Nipper, as he took a deep breath. "I've always known Forrest to be a cad, but I never dreamed that he could be so utterly base. Well, he's gone now—and we can all breathe again."

"Rather!"

"I mean to say, laddies, there was a certain dashed murkiness in the atmosphere while that foul blot was marring the landscape," said Archie Glenthorne. "Good gad! I seem to taste a frightful tang in the air, even now! The bally old atmosphere won't be right until some time next week. I mean, it'll take all that time to become purified!"

Upon the whole, there was very little demonstration. Bernard Forrest had gone—and the school settled down to its normal life. Once again the Remove and the Fourth were friends, and there was not likely to be another feud of the same sort.

As for Gulliver and Bell, they were very, very subdued. They had visited the Head, but nobody made any inquiries. And it was generally agreed that these two outsiders should be left alone. After all, they had only been dupes, and they were not so much to blame. And they had had their punishment.

And thus ended the great feud at St. Frank's—with the instigator of it all gone, and with the air thoroughly cleared.

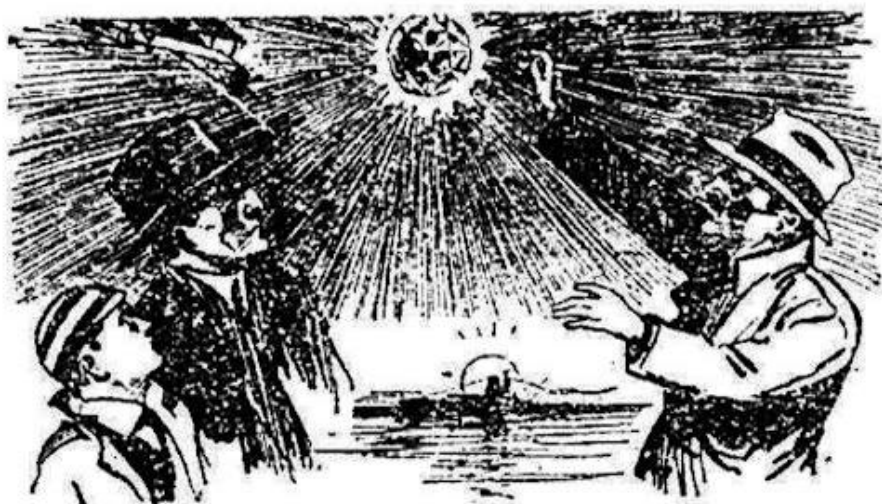
THE END.

Mr. Brooks at his best! That will be your verdict when you read "THE RASCAL OF THE REMOVE!"—the opening of a smashing new series beginning Next Week. Make sure of your copy by ordering in Advance!

TRACKETT GRIM'S GREATEST CASE!

NOTE.—

Handforth flatly refused Mr. Edwy Searles Brooks' offer of assistance in the writing of this story. It now appears as it came from his pen, with the exception that certain errors in spelling and punctuation have been corrected by the Editor.



By
**EDWARD
OSWALD
HANDFORTH**

WHAT'S HAPPENED IN PREVIOUS CHAPTERS:

Having recovered the Blue Ruby from Armand Rocke, the master crook, Trackett Grim, the world's greatest detective, and his assistant Splinter, are flying across the Pacific in their wonderful aeroplane when they are forced to descend. They are picked up by a sailing ship which, later, is attacked by

Armand Rocke's submarine. The sailing ship is sunk, and our two intrepid heroes find themselves on a raft, at the mercy of the Pacific. After drifting about for days, they sight an iceberg and, as their raft is slowly sinking, they jump on to this. Suddenly something hits the iceberg below the water line. What is it?

NOW READ THIS STUPENDOUS INSTALMENT.

Foiled Again!

"IT would be more correct to say, Splinter, that something has hit us!" said Trackett Grim, with his usual sagacity. "We have been rammed by something. Look! The wreckage is already beginning to come to the surface!"

They were standing on the edge of the iceberg, looking down at the sea. And there, sure enough, chunks of wreckage were coming up. Other things were coming up, too—men by the score! They were swimming desperately, and grabbing at the iceberg. And among them was—Armand Rocke himself!

"Ah, Trackett Grim!" he shouted savagely. "We meet again!"

"Yes, and now I am the master of the situation!" roared Trackett Grim.

In a trice, he knew the truth. Armand Rocke's submarine, ploughing its way through the ocean, under the surface, had biffed into the iceberg by accident. Everybody knows that icebergs go down for a long way under the surface of the sea. And this iceberg was no different to any other. The submarine had crashed into it at full speed, bursting itself to bits.

By now Armand Rocke and all the members of his gang were climbing on to the berg. There was a light of greed and cunning in Armand Rocke's eyes.

"This is an unexpected pleasure, Trackett Grim!" he said, as he came face to face with the master detective. "I want the Blue Ruby! I made a mistake when I blew up that pirate ship. I forgot that you had the Blue Ruby on you, and I thought I had killed you. But this is much better. Hand over the ruby, and I'll allow you to live!"

"You can go and eat coke!" retorted Trackett Grim, with fine bold defiance. "I don't care

a snap for you and all your men! I have recovered the Blue Ruby for my client, and I will never give it up!"

"We'll see about that!" snarled Armand Rocke. "All my men are here, and you are powerless against us! Men, surround these two! Surround them, and search them! I shall never be satisfied until I have the Blue Ruby in my possession again!"

Things looked very rocky for Trackett Grim and Splinter. Fearless as the great detective was, he could not expect to win against such odds as this.

But Providence came to his aid.

For, abruptly, there was a tremendous explosion. The engines of the submarine had blown up! Everybody had thought that the vessel had sunk, but they were wrong. And as the boilers burst, so the iceberg shivered and splintered from end to end.

And just as Armand Rocke's men were about to surround our heroes, so the iceberg broke into two! A great gap appeared between Trackett Grim and Splinter and the rotters. It widened rapidly. A shout of triumph went up from Trackett Grim's lips.

"Foiled again, Armand Rocke!" he shouted mockingly.

And, by George, he was right. Armand Rocke was foiled, and no mistake!

Off to the Klondike!

ARMAND ROCKE shook both his fists at his victorious enemies.

"All right, you rotters—wait!" he bellowed. "You've eluded me this time, but I'll have you yet!"

"Yan!" roared Splinter. "We've dished you, Armand Rocke, and we've still got the Blue Ruby! We'll never be satisfied until we have

returned it to Sir Esau Starrs, and our case is ended!"

Further conversation was impossible, for the two sections of the iceberg had drifted far apart. Trackett Grim and Splinter found themselves on the smaller portion. It wasn't much bigger than a billiard table, and it was top-heavy, too. There was every likelihood that the iceberg would topple over, and precipitate them into the cold sea.

Then, just at that moment, a very curious thing seemed to happen.

For the little iceberg was suddenly swept round and carried off at a great speed, leaving the other piece of the berg standing, as it were. At the same time the air became colder, and it was seen that the sea was boiling and foaming on every side.

"What does it mean, guv'nor?" asked Splinter, in an awed voice.

"There is nothing to worry about," replied Trackett Grim, who was never at a loss. "We have been caught in an Arctic current, and we are being whirled northwards."

"Into the Arctic, you mean, sir?"

"Undoubtedly," replied Trackett Grim coolly. "But what does it matter? All hope seemed lost a few minutes ago, but once again Armand Rocke has been foiled. There's nothing for us to worry about, Splinter. I think the best thing we can do is to have a nap. We're warm enough in these fur coats of ours, and so we'll sleep."

And they did. It was a wise thing to do. When they woke up they stared about them in amazement. They had slept all through the night, and another day had come. And there, on either hand, was land!

It was a startling discovery. During the night, they had been drawn into a great river, and now the little iceberg was drifting along on the current.

"Land, sir!" panted Splinter, with delight. "We're saved!"

"So it seems," replied Trackett Grim, rising to his feet, and examining the river banks with interest. "By George, this is lucky, Splinter! We are on the Yukon!"

"The Yukon, sir!" said Splinter. "How do you know?"

Trackett Grim shrugged his shoulders.

"I know every river by sight!" he replied simply. "It is my business to know things, Splinter! This is the River Yukon, and we are on our way to the Klondike!"

"Well I'm blessed!" said Splinter, aghast.

It was too much for him to realise all at once. But he had read about the Klondike—and he knew that it was a place where they had lots of gold rushes. But before he could think much about the subject the iceberg drifted ashore, and he and Trackett Grim leapt upon the bank. They felt like new men. It was splendid to be able to stretch their legs, and walk up and down.

The first thing was to find a town, or a village, or something of that sort. Then, perhaps, they would be able to find out exactly where they were, and they could then set off for civilisation.

But before they could begin there was a sudden series of shouts, and a dozen Esquimaux came rushing down upon them.

"Hold!" cried Trackett Grim. "We are friends!"

"Seize the strangers!" shouted one of the Esquimaux. "They are trespassing on our land! They've come here to rob us of our furs! Grab 'em!"

"You bet!" shouted the other Esquimaux.

The next moment, Trackett Grim and Splinter were fighting desperately against these savage men of the north.

It was a hopeless fight from the very start. The Esquimaux were great big fellows, and they

were determined ruffians, too. They weren't the ordinary kind of Esquimaux—they were a criminal gang. And they seemed to know, instinctively, that Trackett Grim was an enemy—a detective. They swarmed over him and over Splinter. It seemed that all hope was gone.

Crash! Biff! Thud!

The battle went on, and Trackett Grim and Splinter were giving a good account of themselves. They got in a lot of good hefty blows, but the odds were too great. At last, they were held by their enemies.

"So you thought you could defy us, eh?" said the Chief of the Esquimaux. "We're going to take you to our village, and we'll keep you prisoners. You're English, aren't you?"

"Yes—and proud of it!" replied Trackett Grim, in ringing tones.

"We like capturing Englishmen!" said the Esquimaux, with a grin of triumph. "We'll hold you to ransom, and get a big price for you."

But just then a number of shouts came from the distance, and when Trackett Grim and Splinter glanced round they saw that hundreds of men were sweeping towards them—rough-looking men, many of them with knapsacks on their backs. They were running as hard as they could go, and all of them were looking tremendously excited. They swept up like a human avalanche.

They didn't take any notice of the Esquimaux and their prisoners, but just swept over them as though they did not exist, swinging by on their way, shouting excitedly, and with a wild excitement in their eyes. And as last they had passed on, leaving most of the Esquimaux stretched on the ground, with all the wind knocked out of them.

Splinter sat up, gasping.

"What does it mean, sir?" he asked, bewildered. "Who are those men? Why did they dash along like that, without saying anything to us, or offering to help us?"

Trackett Grim rose to his feet, and his eyes, too, were gleaming with sudden excitement.

"Don't you understand, Splinter?" he snapped. "That was a gold rush!"

"What!" roared Splinter.

"A gold rush, my lad!" replied Trackett Grim. "Haven't you seen them in the pictures? By a lucky chance, a gold rush is on at the moment, and we are saved from the Esquimaux! Come, Splinter! We'll join this gold rush—and make our fortunes."

Through the Trackless Snow!

TRACKETT GRIM and Splinter were tremendously excited at the prospect of making their fortunes on the Klondike. Having suddenly discovered that a gold rush was on, they were in a fever of impatience to join the great rush. Trackett Grim, indeed, was so excited that his veins were standing out on his face like whipcord, and Splinter was as red as a beetroot, and his eyes gleamed like stars.

"When shall we start, sir?" he panted eagerly.

"Now!" retorted Trackett Grim, in his usual concise manner.

"But we need stores, sir—and traps and things," said Splinter. "We can't set out across the trackless snow without provisions, and—"

"Enough!" interrupted the great detective. "You evidently mistake me for an ordinary man. Splinter! How dare you? You know that I need none of these things! My powers are so great that I can go forward into these Arctic snows, and everything will be all serene!"

"By jingo, yes, sir!" said Splinter. "I'd forgotten that!"

He gazed at Trackett Grim with admiration. The famous incriminator was as cool as a cucumber—which wasn't surprising, considering that the temperature was forty below. But Trackett Grim

was cool in another way, too. This famous man—indeed, he can safely be described as a superman—never got excited. Always he was cool.

"Oh, crumbs!" ejaculated Splinter, in sudden dismay. "I've just thought of something, guv'nor! We can't go!"

"What do you mean?" demanded Trackett Grim.

He looked at Splinter with annoyance. It always made him wild when his young assistant cast doubts upon his great abilities. And he now saw that Splinter was looking at him with eyes that were full of consternation.

"Why, sir—the gold rush has passed by!" said Splinter. "All those men have gone off to the Klondike—to the goldfields! They are out of sight. How can we follow them through this trackless waste?"

Trackett Grim snapped his fingers impatiently.

"Tut-tut!" he exclaimed. "No other man on earth could do this thing, Splinter—but I can! Only a detective could follow this gold rush. But have you forgotten my powers as a tracker? While other men would be in a complete fog, I can see everything! There are no marks in the snow—since the downfall is so tremendous. But I can follow! Never have I failed to track my man!"

Splinter was satisfied. Once again he had misjudged his famous master, and he felt duly squashed.

And so they set off, our famous pair. Off they went into the vast unknown stretches of the Arctic. The snow was coming down in blinding flurries, and the cold was so intense that both of them would have frozen in their tracks if they had only paused. But they kept straight on—always on!

Never once was the great detective at fault.

Although the trail was obliterated to ordinary eyes, Trackett Grim saw it. He was like some hound on the trail. With his head bent low, and his gaze fixed on the snow, he walked on, and Splinter came faithfully behind, having full confidence in his great master.

Onwards to the goldfields!

It was a great thought—a thought which sent Trackett Grim's blood surging through his veins like the dickens.

And then, at last, after wearying miles—after marching onwards for hours without rest—the pair came to the summit of a great mountain. Below them stretched the plains of the Yukon. In the distance was Dawson City.

The Klondike! The place where gold could always be found! The air was crystal clear, and the sun was shining from a brilliant blue sky. In fact, a thaw had set in, and for the past few miles the going had been rather stiff.

"Come, Splinter!" said Trackett Grim briefly.

They were the first words that he had spoken for many hours. And down they went—down the mountain side.

But they went faster than they had intended. For hardly had they taken a couple of steps when they went slithering down, and hundreds and thousands of tons of snow came tumbling after them.

It was an avalanche—a deadly, menacing Arctic avalanche!

— —
Gold!

DOWN they went—down, down!
"Quick, sir!" panted Splinter. "It's an avalanche!"

"I know that, you young fathead!" roared Trackett Grim, as he struggled madly against the ever-growing force of the snowslide. "Keep close to me, and all will be well!"

They clutched at one another as they went slithering down that mountain side. They were

accompanied by immense masses of snow. Then, at last, when all hope seemed gone, our heroes came to a halt. The avalanche was over—and they were at the bottom of the mountain pass. But over them were hundreds of tons of snow. They were buried alive—buried under this vast mass of snow!

"What are we going to do now, sir" asked Splinter desperately.

"What are we going to do?" repeated Trackett Grim. "We're going to fight our way out, of course!"

It was a brave speech, considering the enormous difficulties. And so Trackett Grim and Splinter took spades and picks, and foot by foot they fought their way out of that deadly mass of snow.

For hours they worked, and at last they had constructed a great tunnel. And they saw the daylight—for when it seemed that nothing on earth could save them, they broke through the final crust.

"Free!" shouted Splinter joyously.

"There's no need to make a fuss, young 'un," said Trackett Grim. "Of course we're free. Have you ever known me to be at a loss? And look here! What's this?"

He bent down, and picked up something from the ground. It was enormously heavy. In fact, it was so heavy that Trackett Grim could hardly lift it. And yet it was only a small, rugged piece of rock, by the look of it.

"Great guns!" gasped Trackett Grim. "Look! It's a nugget! Splinter, my son, we've found one of the richest 'strikes' in history!"

And his statement proved to be true. For when they examined the ground about them they found hundreds of such nuggets. Many of them were as big as cokernuts, while the ground was simply filled with nuggets as big as

(Continued on page 41.)



Be a Turkish Adventurer

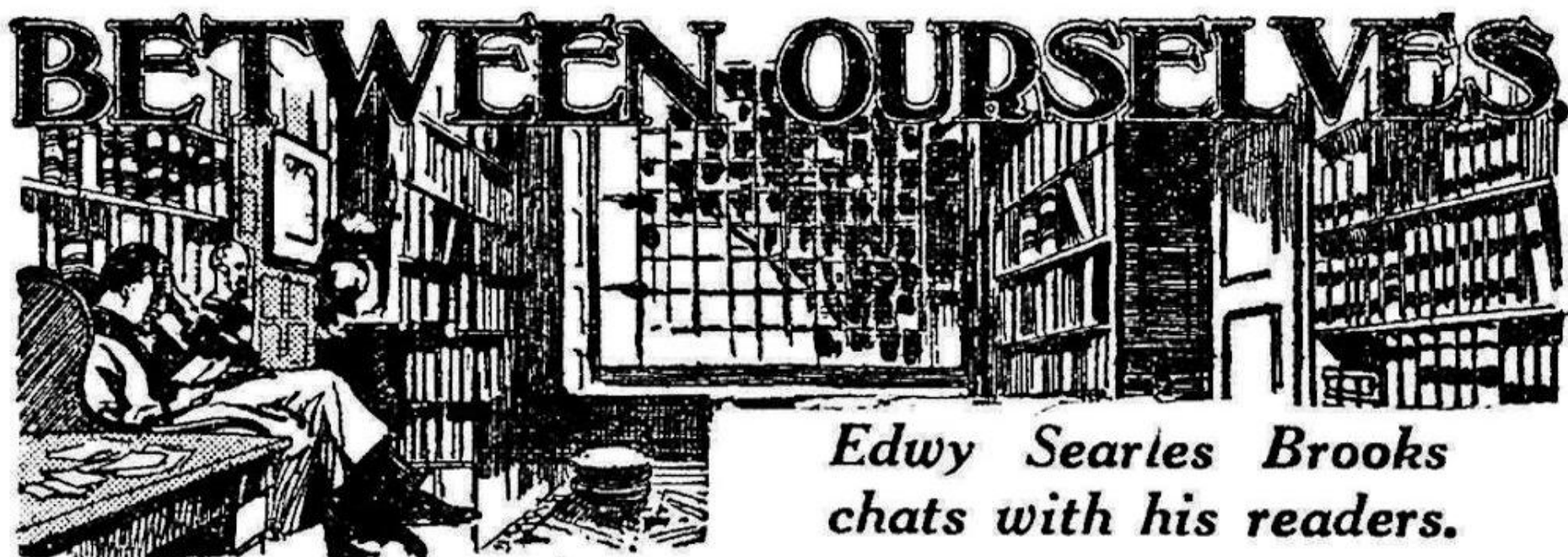


All you need is 2d. to make a most thrilling find. But this quest hangs on a request—the four magic words "a Cadbury Turkish please." You say them in a sweet shop and you wouldn't change places with a pirate! O gee! O gee! It's Cadbury's!

P.S. You can tell the mater that Cadbury's Turkish Delight is practically a perfect food. What luck!

Cadbury's
Turkish Delight
2^d Try 2d Marshmallows too. **2^d**

See the name 'Cadbury' on every piece of chocolate.



*Edwy Searles Brooks
chats with his readers.*

NOTE.—If any reader writes to me, I shall be pleased to comment upon such remarks as are likely to interest the majority. All letters should be addressed: EDWY SEARLES BROOKS, c/o The Editor, THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, LONDON, E.C.4. Every letter will have my personal attention, and all will be acknowledged in these columns. But please note that the acknowledgments cannot appear for at least 6 weeks after the letters reach my hands. Letters of very special merit will be distinguished by a star (*) against the sender's name. Communications which name writer's age are naturally easier for me to answer. My photo exchange offer is open indefinitely: my autographed photo for yours—but yours first, please.—E.S.B.

HAVE you ordered an extra copy of No. 72, dated September 17th—next week's issue? If not, why not? There may be two answers to this question. Firstly, you may have forgotten all about my little suggestion—or, secondly, you may not feel inclined to whack out that additional twopence on the chance of roping in a new reader.

In a week's time, that new series will start, and it will be a golden opportunity to introduce the St. Frank's characters to people who have never yet met them.

It will be a golden opportunity, also, to shove up the membership of the St. Frank's League a good few notches. It will be a fine chance for all the putters-off to join up, and also for those who are already members to take another step towards getting their Bronze or Silver Medal—as the case may be. And think what a happy man you'll make the Chief Officer of the League if all this happens!

"It's all so simple, too. Those who are not already members just get Section C of the League Form in their extra copy signed by the non-reader they give it to. All they've got to do then is to send this in to the Chief Officer with the Form out of their own ordinary copy signed under Section A. And back comes the Certificate and Badge to them at once. Now, could anything be easier?

As to those who are already Members, look what a fine chance it will provide for them to kill two birds with one stone. They can do their whack in this united effort I'm trying to get you all to make and, at the same time, take another step towards getting the particular Medal they're after.

So, don't forget, all of you! I'm relying on every one of you to do your bit as soon as No. 72 comes out next Wednesday. You've still got a week in which to mark down your "victim," and plan the form of your own particular share in this Big Push. But there's one thing you ought to do NOW, and that is to MAKE SURE of your

extra copy of No. 72 by ordering it from your newsagent AT ONCE.

D. H. Newland (Melbourne), Lucy Cole (Sutherland, N.S.W.), Jack C. Crawford (Sydney), W. E. Drennan (Sydney), Rob Frazer (Greenslopes, S. Brisbane), N. F. Hoddell (Enfield), J. A. Evans (Sheffield), Victor O'Dare (Chard), Jack E. Ockenden* (Pyrford), Mrs. Gracie P. Wilson* (Loughborough), Jacob Whitboy (Beaconsfield, S.A.), George Buist* (Arbroath), D. Staynes (West Brompton), W. A. Picton (Longley), Rita M. Enteggart (Dundalk), F. C. Reddace (London, N. 22), Wm. E. Godden (Basingstoke), Reggie Edwards (London, N.W.1.), Jack Hunter* (Nelson), Frank Fletcher (Manchester).

The stories in the "Monster Library," D. H. Newland, were not merely copies of various series that appeared in the Old Paper, years ago—but the actual series themselves, made into complete book form. So it is scarcely any wonder that you noticed a similarity! You mustn't think there was any hanky-panky about it, because the "Monster Library" stories were always acknowledged to be reprints, and I think ninety-nine readers out of a hundred knew this.

Here are two quotations for readers who have an idea that they are getting too old to read my school yarns. This is what W. A. Picton says: "A while back I was reading your chat, and saw part of a letter from a reader of 17 who seemed to consider himself too old to be reading the 'Nelson Lee Library.' But I am 27, and my father, who is a reader, is 65." Thanks, W. A. Picton, for your nice letter—and I am glad to hear that your father is just as much a boy as you are—or as I am, if it comes to that! The other quotation is from a letter from Frank Fletcher, and this is what he tells me: "I am at an age when most chaps consider themselves too old to read books of this description—past 18—and I can safely say I have never found anything lacking, re humour, adventure, and excitement, and everything. I have a brother, aged 26, who knows a good book when he reads one, that takes my copy of the Old Paper to work with him to read in his spare time—and that I think is ample proof that one is never too old to start

reading it." Exactly, Frank, old man. Your view is exactly the same as mine.

Certainly, Wm. E. Godden, your nephew is eligible as a new reader, if you want to qualify for a St. Frank's League Membership Badge. There is no stipulation that the introduced reader should be outside the family circle, as you suggest. Go right ahead, and get that nephew of yours to join the crowd. No. 1 of the Old Paper—that is, No. 1. Old Series—was called "The Mystery of Limehouse Reach," and was a detective story. St. Frank's did not appear in the Old Paper until No. 112, and the yarn itself was called "Nipper at St. Frank's."

Sorry I can't send you my photo unless I have yours first, Jack Hunter. You tell me that you haven't a photograph of yourself alone—thus implying that you have a photograph of yourself with others included. Good enough! Send one along to me, and I don't care if there are twenty other people in the photograph. As long as you are included, I shall be satisfied—only I hope you won't be like the chap who sent me a newspaper cutting of the photograph of the crowd at the Oval and said: "This is my photograph, Mr. Brooks—you'll find me somewhere in the middle, just towards the left."

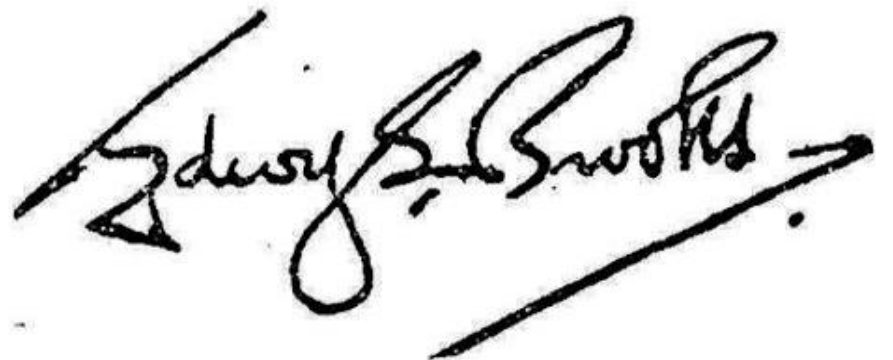
"Brainy" (Bedford), V. Maddox (Peterborough), H. Miller* (Bethnal Green), "Dorothy"* (Edinburgh), H. W. Dobson (Hornsey), Roland C. Beacham (Toronto), "Bruin" (Catford), Leslie Strachan (Forest Hill), "Jazzmania" (London, E. 17), "Handy's Admirer" (Acton), Joe Brooder (Rathdowney), R. Westover (Brighton), W. Stanley Hughes* (Stoke-on-Trent), A. D. Luke (Plymouth), Maurice Stodel (Shoreditch), "Harry & Co."* (Huddersfield), Albert Winchester (Highgate), J. W. Boucher* (Camberwell), Terence Sullivan* (Tufnell Park), John Exley (London, E. 1.).

That's the style, V. Maddox! You say: "I will write to you every time I feel a bit fed up, and want someone cheerful to write to." I hope I shall get lots of letters from you—Wait a

minute, though! That sounds as if I'm hoping that you're often fed up, doesn't it? Well, lots of us are inclined to get the blues now and again. So, when you feel a dose coming on, just write to me. I never get the blues. And that's really an honest fact, you know. I'm one of those fortunate people who take life philosophically, without worrying over anything.

Now and again, readers have told me that they dislike my habit of re-telling the main events of a series in each successive story. They tell me that it is a waste of time—but I always retort that there are new readers every week, and these new readers naturally like to get a grip of the series, even if they started in the third or fourth yarn. Well, this is what W. Stanley Hughes says: "Another thing I should like to say is, what a splendid idea it is to publish a kind of synopsis of the previous week's. It refreshes the minds of old readers and gives new readers just a chance of imagining what has gone before." I hope the rest of you will see the point, and be patient when you come across a few paragraphs which are expressly written to refresh your memories, and to help new readers.

A. D. Luke of 8, Paradise Place, Plymouth, is an enthusiastic Member of the St. Frank's League, and he has a bit of advice for all other readers. In fact, I'm going to quote his exact words: "I am a Member of the St. Frank's League, and as such I advise every reader to join. I have correspondents all over the world through the Correspondents' Column." So buck up, you fellows who have been hesitating! The League isn't nearly big enough yet, so let's see if something can't be done.



TRACKETT GRIM'S GREATEST CASE!

(Continued from page 39.)

walnuts and acorns. They crammed their pockets with them, and then Trackett Grim had a thought.

"We must stake our claims!" he declared firmly.

They looked round for some stakes, and soon found them. Then, with a feeling of pride and happiness, they staked their claims. Out there in that wilderness of the Klondike they drove the stakes in, and from that minute onwards the ground was theirs.

"Now we'll get on to Dawson City!" said Trackett Grim. "At Dawson we shall be able to buy all sorts of machinery, and then we can come back and work our claims. Think of it, Splinter! By the time we get back to England we shall be millionaires!"

"Perhaps we shall be able to buy an Austin Seven, sir," suggested Splinter eagerly.

"We'll have one each, Splinter!" retorted Trackett Grim. "But let us not delay. We must hurry."

And they continued onwards—ever onwards towards Dawson City. They went for two or

three miles, and quite by chance Splinter happened to glance back. Then he stood frozen to the ground. It was some few moments before Trackett Grim noticed that his young assistant was absent. Then he looked round, and saw Splinter still there, rooted to the spot.

"What's the matter, you young ass?" demanded the great detective.

"Look, sir!" panted Splinter, pointing with a quivering finger.

And when Trackett Grim looked he jumped with sudden rage. For, back along the trail, some figures were to be seen. And they belonged to Armand Rocke, the master crook, and his gang! Once again the great criminal was about to cross Trackett Grim's path!

But more! With a sudden shock, our heroes saw that Armand Rocke and his gang were about to jump their claims! As everybody knows, the Klondike is full of claim-jumpers—rotters who go about jumping on all the claims they can find. It is one of the laws of the Klondike that when a claim is jumped on, the ground becomes the property of the jumper.

And, to Trackett Grim's and Splinter's horror, Armand Rocke and his gang were preparing to leap—to jump upon their precious claims!

(Next week's concluding instalment of this wonderful serial is a real stunner. Don't miss it, you chaps—E. G. H.)



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.

An Exeter Club.

A CAPITAL letter is to hand from G. D. Edwards, 38, Fore St., Heavitree, Exeter. This correspondent is keen on camping, and likes to camp out in the country and bike to and from work.

The club he is running is a big success. Two large attics have been turned into a club room. From the windows there is a view for miles. The place is well furnished with carpet, a long table, clock, armchair, other chairs and a card table. Each member pays 6d. per week, and the club is very useful in winter time.

Biking in Lincolnshire.

A West Country chum (A. F.) wants to make a cycling tour of an extended nature, and as he is curious about Lincolnshire, I should certainly advise him to go there. I spent a good many hours on a push-bike in that county recently, and can guarantee good roads and interesting and attractive scenery. My correspondent can proceed along the main western highway near which he lives; he must aim for Henley, from which town there is a cross-country route leading via Hertford and Ware into East Anglia.

The British Amateur Press Association.

Mr. W. A. Downes, St. Kevin's Park, Stillorgan, Co. Dublin, informs me that much useful business was done at the Annual Convention at Birmingham. Members of the S.F.L. interested in amateur journalism should certainly get in touch with Mr. Downes, who would be glad to hear from amateur journalists and see their literary efforts. The subscription is half-a-crown, and there is no age limit.

A Description of Melbourne.

B. Stevens, 22, Queen's Avenue, Auburn, Melbourne, sends me a chart of his own making, showing the principal streets of the capital city of Victoria, with details of train services, etc., and the traffic at the peak times. There is an interesting account of the Capitol Theatre, the ceiling of which keeps changing colour.

Cheers for the League!

A jolly letter has just come to hand from Chas. O'Neill, of the Boys' Home of Montreal, Canada. He says he finds the League of immense assistance to him. He had for long been looking out for such a chance.

Camping at Mountain Ash.

J. P. J. writes to say he is going camping, and asks for tips. He should get a Scout's cooker at a sports' shop, also ground-sheet, and portable tent. Cooking your own food is part of the game. There should be no litter left when camp is struck, and permission must be asked to pitch tents.

No Equal to the "N.L.L."

A. H. G. writes from Newcastle, Staffs, to say that he gets more and more convinced there is no finer boys' paper than the NELSON LEE LIBRARY, with Edward Oswald Handforth taking the chief part. Right on the wicket again!

CORRESPONDENTS WANTED.

Arthur Fluck, 25, Hopkins Street, Weston-super-Mare, wishes to hear from readers who are interested in football, also those in his own district who would help to form a sports' club.

John Wright, 105, South Frederick Street, South Shields, Co. Durham, wishes to correspond with readers.

William Thompson, Sherrygrove, Dunganon, Co. Tyrone, Ireland, has over 312 "Nelson Lee Libraries" for sale, including all numbers of the new series to date.

G. Lodge, 24, Ingelow Road, Battersea, London, S.W.8, wishes to hear from his

(Continued on next page.)

THE ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE.

The Application Form for membership of the St. Frank's League will be published again next week. All holders of BRONZE MEDALS who have qualified for SILVER MEDALS and wish to exchange their medals for the higher award should send their medals together with a stamped addressed envelope, to the Chief Officer, the St. Frank's League, c/o "The Nelson Lee Library" Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C.4.

nearest Organising Officer, also from members.

Chas. Watson, 130, Wellington Parade, East Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, wishes to hear from members in his district who will help him to form a club; he also wants to correspond with readers anywhere.

Kenneth Slack, 9, Harrison Street, Currock, Carlisle, wishes to correspond with readers in Australia, South Africa, India and America interested in cycling, photography and sports; also with readers who will help form a club in Carlisle.

J. S. Ricketts, 5, Caroline Row, Venton-league, Hayle, Cornwall, wishes to hear from readers in his part of the country who are keen on football; so that matches may be arranged.

Clive Gahan, 186, Elizabeth Street, Richmond, Victoria, Australia, wishes to hear from the O.O. in his district.

V. M. Sellers, "Winchester," 10, Campbell Street, Balmain, Sydney, N.S.W., Australia, wishes to correspond with readers aged twenty and over.

Jack Hambleton, 51, Birch Avenue, Oldham, Lancs, wishes to correspond with readers living in Northern Scotland and Ireland, interested in sports and birds' eggs. All letters answered.

J. Unsworth, 7, Barkstone Street, Harpurhey, Manchester, wishes to hear from readers in India, also in his own district.

J. P. John, 7, Oakland Street, Miskin, Mountain Ash, Wales, would like to correspond with readers in New Zealand and Canada.

JOIN THE ROYAL NAVY AND SEE THE WORLD.

Boys are wanted for the Seaman Class (from which selections are made for the Wireless Telegraphy and Signalling Branches), Age 15½ to 16½ years.

MEN also are required for
SEAMEN (SPECIAL SERVICE) ... Age 18 to 25.
STOKERS ... Age 18 to 25.

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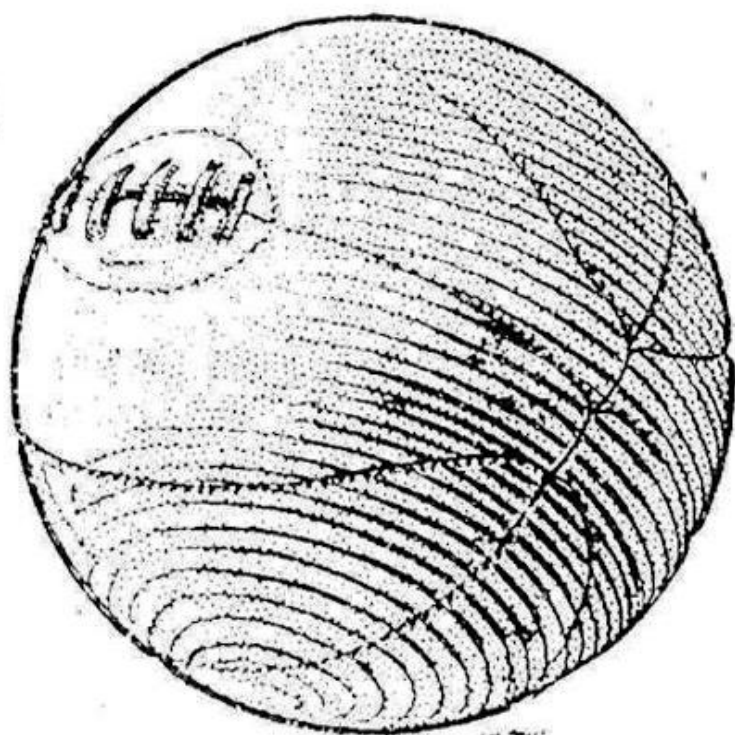
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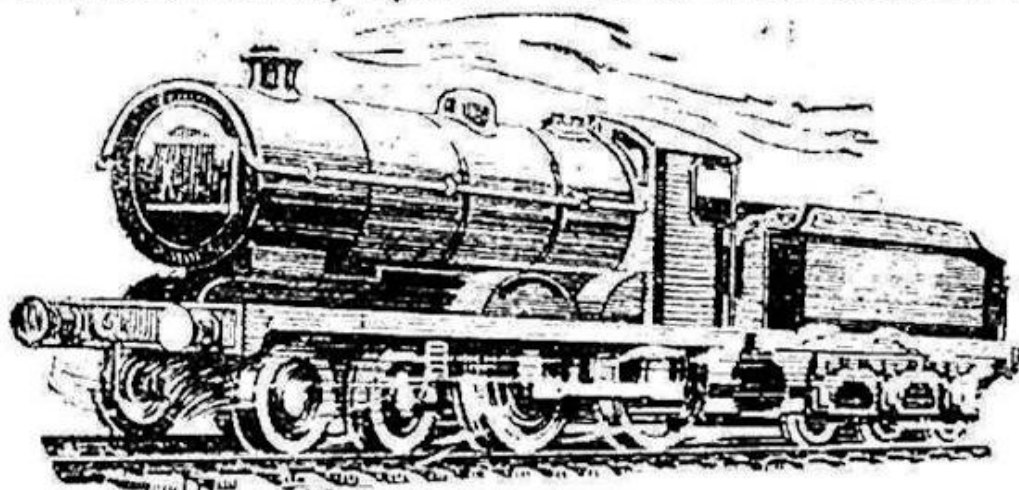
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