

SCHOOL STORIES THAT CAN'T BE BEATEN!

THE

NELSON LEE

2^D



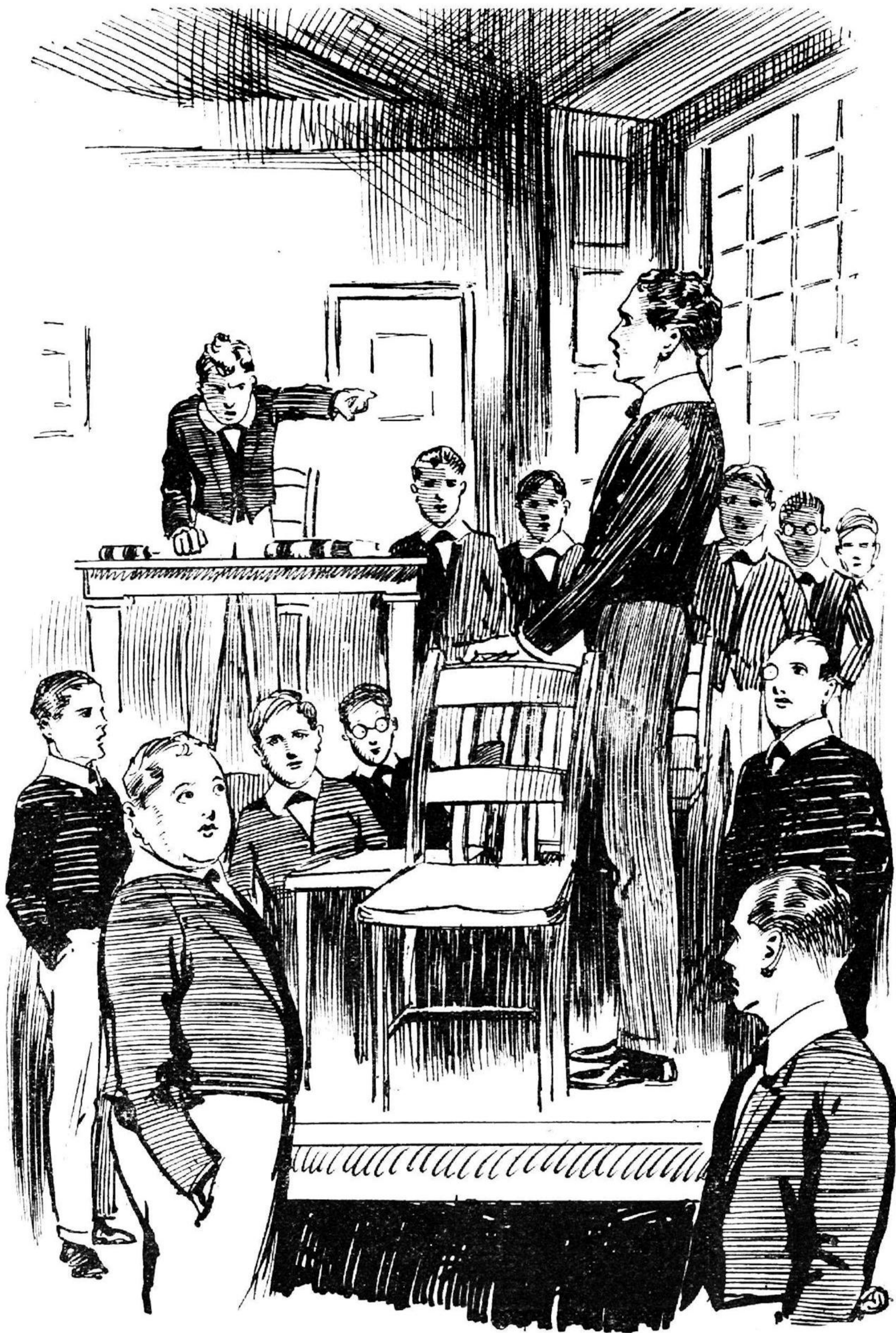
STAGGERING THE SCHOOL

A dramatic long complete yarn of schoolboy fun and adventure, featuring Nipper, Handforth, and many other popular characters at St. Frank's.

New Series No. 75.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

October 8th, 1927.



"I pronounce the prisoner guilty!" roared Handforth, pointing to whom he thought was Alan Castle-ton, but who, in reality, was his twin brother Arthur. Arthur said nothing. He realised that, having been tricked into taking Alan's place, he would have to take Alan's punishment, too!

A "Changed" Castleton!A Surprise for St. Frank's!

STAGGERING THE SCHOOL!



By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

Tricked into taking Alan Castleton's place at St. Frank's, his twin brother Arthur, finds himself scorned by the school. He decides, however, to atone for his brother's rascally behaviour—to fight for his brother's name. How he succeeds in the seemingly impossible task of winning his way to popularity is told in this stunning long complete yarn.—ED.

CHAPTER 1.

The Reception Committee.

"ANY sign of him yet?" Reggie Pitt, of the West House Remove at St. Frank's, asked the question as he came to the gateway and joined a group of juniors who were looking down the lane towards Bellton.

"Not yet!" replied Edward Oswald Handforth, the celebrated leader of Study D. "But we're ready for the rotter when he does turn up!"

"Rather!" said Church and McClure fiercely.

"He's afraid to come back, of course," said Reggie Pitt. "After what's happened, I

don't wonder at it. He's afraid of the reception he'll get! He's been out practically all the afternoon now. It's nearly tea-time, you fellows!"

"That's just what I was feeling," said Church, passing a hand over his middle. "Hadn't we better go indoors, Handy, and rake up some tea?"

"No, we hadn't!" replied Handforth firmly. "We'll wait here until Castleton comes back! Where are the other members of the reception committee, Reggie?"

"Oh, they're all in the Triangle," replied Pitt. "Nipper and Tregellis-West and Watson are talking over by the Ancient House steps. Fullwood and De Valerie and Russell are chatting with Buster Boots and

Bray and Christine. We're all here. You needn't worry, old man. As soon as Castleton shows up we'll be ready for him!"

Apparently there was a hot reception awaiting the missing Removite. Alan Castleton, of the West House, had gone out before dinner — immediately following morning lessons—and he hadn't returned yet. There was something rather grim—something tremendously determined—in these juniors who had waited the whole afternoon to receive Alan Castleton when he returned.

It was small wonder that Alan funk'd a meeting with his Form fellows. Only that morning Nipper & Co. and Handforth & Co. had been publicly flogged—flogged for an offence which Alan Castleton had committed!

He had tricked them; he had wrecked the study of Mr. Horace Pycraft, the master of the Fourth. He had done other things, too, and had arranged his knavery so that the six innocent juniors should appear the culprits. And so clever had been his scheming that his victims had been flogged.

But the Remove had found out the truth—immediately after the flogging. And the Remove was now waiting to give Alan Castleton a little of what he deserved.

Nipper came over from the Ancient House and joined the group in the gateway.

"Well, I think we'd better chuck it up for the time being," he said. "Supposing we go into tea? When Castleton comes back we shall know about it soon enough—especially if we put one or two scouts out here. The rotter can't elude us all day."

"It's my belief he's run away," remarked Ralph Leslie Fullwood. "He made St. Frank's too hot to hold him, and he's bunked! He's bolted!"

Handforth glared.

"Do you mean to say that we've been swindled?" he asked aggressively. "Aren't we to have the pleasure of smashing this cad?"

"Steady, steady!" said Nipper calmly. "You needn't worry, Handy, old man. Castleton hasn't run away. The thing wasn't bad enough for that. He's just funky of coming back while we're so hot after him. He's waiting for us to cool down—that's all."

"Then he's waiting in vain!" replied Handforth promptly. "We haven't cooled down a bit—and we're not likely to cool down, either!"

"But Castleton doesn't know that," said Nipper. "He probably believes that we shall be luke-warm towards him if he turns up after tea. Don't forget it's a half-holiday today, and he's at liberty to remain out until locking-up. I think the best thing we can do is to have some tea and forget the boulder."

"And you said you weren't cooling off!" said Handforth grimly. "You're a fine chap, Nipper!"

"Thanks for the compliment!" smiled Nipper. "But just because I'm calm, old man, you needn't think that I'm at all inclined to let Castleton off. Oh, no! When

he comes back we're going to do the thing thoroughly. We'll try him. We'll put him in the dock, and if he's found guilty we'll give him the sentence that he deserves."

"Try him?" said Handforth, staring. "Put him in the dock?"

"Exactly!" nodded Nipper. "We're going to hold a proper trial—a Form trial."

"But what the dickens for?" demanded Handforth, staring. "We know he's guilty, don't we?"

"So far we've only Bell's word to rely upon," replied Nipper. "Let's be fair, Handy. Don't forget how we were flogged this morning on circumstantial evidence. So we'll give Castleton a fair trial, and after he has been found guilty we'll deal with him thoroughly. That's the plan to go upon."

And the other juniors thoroughly agreed. Even Handforth agreed after a moment or two. He was rather annoyed that he hadn't thought of the trial idea on his own account. It struck him as being particularly good, and he was wild with himself for not having suggested it before anybody else.

It was very apparent that Alan Castleton—the absentee—was in for a very, very hectic time when he finally turned up!



CHAPTER 2.

Not the Same Castleton!

THE train from Bannington drew to a clattering standstill against the little platform of Bellton Station, and the door of a third-class compartment opened and a well-set-up junior stepped out. He was carrying no luggage, and the old porter looked rather disappointed.

"Evening, Master Castleton!" he said, touching his cap. "Ain't got no bag this time?"

"No, thanks!" replied Castleton.

He got out, delivered up his ticket, and then walked through the booking-office and out into the station yard. From here in the dusk he made his way into the little High Street of Bellton. Anybody might have thought that he was quite new to the neighbourhood, considering the way he looked about him and interested himself in the quaint buildings.

And yet Castleton had been at St. Frank's for some weeks. He was comparatively a new fellow, it was true, but he had had plenty of time to get very well acquainted with all the local geography.

He strolled down the village High Street, and happened to pass the postman just outside the post office. The latter respectfully touched his cap.

"Evening, Master Castleton!" he remarked politely.

"Good-evening!" said Castleton. "Quite mild, isn't it?"

"Ye're right, young gent," agreed the postman. "We can do with some more of this weather. It's real good for the time of the year."

Castleton walked on, and he drew a deep breath.

"Well, it's working all right so far," he murmured. "They mistake me for Alan every time. And they all seem to know me, too."

For, to tell the truth at once, this Castleton was not the same Castleton who had left St. Frank's at dinner-time. He looked exactly the same, it was true—but he happened to be Alan Castleton's twin brother!

It was Arthur Castleton, of St. Jim's, who had come back.

And little did Arthur realise how atrociously his brother had tricked him. He had always known Alan to be a bit of a rotter in his own way, but Arthur would have been staggered, indeed, if he had known the real truth of this present knavery of Alan's.

For Alan, having made St. Frank's too hot to hold him, had cleared out—mortally afraid to go back. So he wired to his brother, at St. Jim's. They had met at Abbotsford Junction, and there Arthur had agreed to an exchange of places. It had only been suggested as a joke. Alan had done it very well. He had put it to Arthur quite casually—just as a little jape. Why not change places for two or three days? Alan would go to St. Jim's, and Arthur would return to St. Frank's. And nobody at either school would know the difference! These twins were so much alike that they resembled peas out of the same pod. They would be able to play this jape on the two schools, and afterwards they would roar with laughter at the success of it. And, undoubtedly, there was a good deal of novelty in the situation.

But Arthur had no suspicion that he was walking right into a hornets' nest. Once or twice he had felt a pang or two—because he feared, in his heart, that Alan might do much to injure his good name at St. Jim's. But he believed that Alan had turned over a new leaf, and was being decent now. Anyhow, he would soon find out when he got to St. Frank's. It was this latter point that had finally decided Arthur.

He had been rather worried about his twin brother. For he had always known that Alan had been wild and uncontrollable. By agreeing to this scheme, and going to St. Frank's, he would be able to find out, at first hand, how Alan was getting on. There was no doubt that Arthur would find out!

The truth was, these twins were vastly different in nature. Arthur was a gentle, thoroughly decent sportsman. He couldn't do a mean or caddish act to save his life. But Alan, on the other hand, had proved himself to be a despicable cad, of the worst description. He was hated and detested at St. Frank's.

Arthur found himself walking up the lane towards the school, and he was now thrilled. He could feel his heart beating more rapidly. He knew, from Alan's very careful directions, that the school was not very far off now. Yes, he remembered it all. He remembered Alan's descriptions.

Very soon he would turn a bend, and then he would find himself in the Triangle, with the West House on his immediate left. Further beyond, up the Triangle, was the Ancient House. And on the other side stood the East House and the Modern House—with the great clock tower immediately ahead. Yes, Arthur had it all clear in his mind. He wouldn't make any mistake of that sort. He would be able to walk straight into the West House as though he had done so scores and scores of times before. That was the essence of the whole thing.

He had carefully studied photographs of Nipper and Handforth and Reggie Pitt and most of the other fellows. Alan had brought him these, and had marked them. Already, Arthur had memorised the various faces. He did not think that he would make any mistake, if he came face to face with them.

"By Jove, it's a pretty novel experience!" he murmured, as he walked on. "Nobody will think that I'm a different Castleton! Nobody at St. Frank's has ever known that Alan had a twin. And, if it comes to that, nobody at St. Jim's knows it, either. I expect Alan is getting on all right there. Yes, there ought to be a lot of fun out of this. It's a great wheeze!"

At first, he had been totally against it. But then, gradually, he had realised that it had many points of advantage. And the greatest of these was that he would be able to find out exactly how his twin had been getting on. For he would be taken for Alan, and he would be able to judge, from the attitude of his schoolfellows, how Alan had fared. And Arthur was very interested in Alan's welfare. In the past, Alan had been very much of a "goer." It would be fine to discover that he had changed all that now. St. Frank's had evidently done him good!

And Arthur walked on—quite certain that he would discover the truth about his twin.



CHAPTER 3.

Before the Head!

M^{R.} NELSON LEE, the Housemaster of the Ancient House, came up to the gateway of St. Frank's, and found a group of juniors there. Tea was over now, and the evening dusk was gathering.

"What is the idea of hanging about the gateway, boys?" asked the famous Housemaster-Detective. "You'll catch cold if you remain out here in this cool air."

"That's all right, sir," said Handforth. "We're waiting for somebody."

"Indeed!" said Nelson Lee. "Can I have one guess?"

"Three if you like, guy'nor!" said Nipper, with a smile.

"Then I imagine that you are waiting for Castleton," replied Lee.

"Right first time!" said Nipper promptly.

"We're waiting for Castleton—to give him a reception when he comes back."

"A very warm reception, sir," said Handforth. "In fact, we've been waiting all the afternoon."

"Well, six of you had better come with me," said Nelson Lee. "You six boys who were flogged this morning are wanted by the Headmaster."

"Oh, crumbs!" said Church, starting.

"Wanted, sir?" said Handforth. "What for? He's not going to flog us again, is he?"

"I hardly think so, Handforth," said Lee dryly. "But the Head was very insistent, and I have promised him that I will take you there at once. All six of you are here, I see, so you had better come along."

Nipper gave Lee a rather sharp glance.

"Is it good news, sir—or bad?" he asked.

"Well, I rather fancy it is good news," replied Nelson Lee. "But you will hear soon enough when you get into the Head's study. Come along!"

"Good news, eh?" said Reggie Pitt, the Junior skipper of the West House. "That's fine, you fellows! The best of luck!"

"Thanks!" chorused the six.

These were the victims of Alan Castleton's treachery. They had been flogged this morning, and they were still rather sore. In addition they had had all their half-holidays docked for the rest of the term, and that meant no football—no sports of any kind. For, instead of being able to play, they would be confined to extra lessons every half-holiday. It was a grim and dismal prospect.

But Nelson Lee had spoken of good news!

Very bucked, they accompanied the Housemaster to Big Arch, and then went across Inner Court to the Head's house. Arriving, they were ushered into Dr. Stafford's study, and Nelson Lee immediately departed. The six were left alone with the Head.

He was sitting at his desk, writing, but he now put his pen down, and invited the boys to sit down. There was a kindly note in his voice, and when he looked at his visitors his eyes were grave and troubled.

"My boys, I have every reason to believe that I committed an act of injustice this morning," he said. "I have been assured that you did not commit the offence on Mr. Pycraft's study, as I first believed."

"How did you find out the truth, sir?" asked Nipper, eagerly.

"I think it only fair to tell you that Mr. Nelson Lee has convinced me that you have all been victimised—that somebody tricked

you. I should like you to assure me that that is so."

"It's quite true, sir," said Handforth promptly. "We were tricked by—by—I mean, we were tricked, sir!"

"Yes, Handforth," said the Head. "By whom?"

"It doesn't matter about the name, sir," said Handforth. "We don't want to sneak."

"Ahem!" coughed the Head. "Perhaps you are right. Anyway, I will not press the point, boys. Mr. Lee has quite satisfied me that you only went over into the East House on a perfectly harmless escapade. Everything else was done by somebody who wished to get you into serious trouble."

"That's true, sir!" they chorused.

"You were flogged this morning, and I would remind you that you committed a serious breach of the school rules by leaving your own House after lights-out," continued the headmaster. "In any circumstances, you would have been flogged for that offence. You must surely know that it is against all the regulations to break bounds in that fashion?"

"Yes, sir," they admitted.

"Very well, then, we will let the flogging suffice," continued the Head. "We will forget the other part of the punishment—the stopping of all your half-holidays for the rest of the term. That part of the sentence is rescinded."

"Oh, thanks awfully, sir!"

"By George! That's ripping," said Handforth enthusiastically.

"Hurrah!"

"I am very sorry that I cannot find out the name of the actual culprit in this affair," continued the headmaster. "However, Mr. Lee has further informed me that you boys are preparing a drastic punishment for this—this wretched boy. Is that so?"

"When we get hold of him, sir, we're going to put him through a proper trial!" said Nipper grimly. "He's going to be tried by the Form, and if he's found guilty we're going to punish him—and I rather fancy that our punishment will be much more drastic than anything that you could do. Still, there's no need to go into details, is there, sir?"

The Head coughed.

"I hardly think so, Hamilton," he replied. "The less details, the better. Perhaps it would be as well to leave this matter in your hands. I do not usually approve of such things, but there are exceptions to every rule."

"You're a brick, sir!"

"Hear, hear!"

"You can go now, boys," said the Head dryly. "And I may as well tell you that in the morning, after prayers, I shall publicly announce your vindication. But let me add that Mr. Lee is entirely responsible for this attitude on my part. I deeply regret that I should have accused you unjustly this morning."

"That's all right, sir," said Handforth. "We'll take it out of—of—of the chap we're

after! We have our duty to perform there—and we'll perform it, too!"

Dr. Stafford stroked his chin after the juniors had gone.

"Upon my word!" he murmured. "I believe they will!"



CHAPTER 4.

The Hornets' Nest!

ARTHUR CASTLETON walked through the gateway of St. Frank's, and he paused for a moment to admire the imposing buildings of the school. Lights were twinkling in many windows, and St. Frank's looked very impressive in the evening dusk.

"Here he is!"

"Here's Castleton!"

"By Jove! He's turned up at last!"

Arthur started as he heard these shouts, and for a moment a glow went through him. He had hoped to find that Alan was popular—but he had hardly expected such a reception as this! For he now saw that there were groups of juniors at almost all the Houses, and they were all waiting for him. They had evidently been waiting to receive him, and this took Arthur completely by surprise.

"My hat!" he muttered. "Alan must be pretty popular, to have the chaps waiting for him like this! This is going to be difficult!"

He beheld swarms of juniors coming towards him. They came from the West House and the East House; they came from the Modern House and the Ancient House. From every direction they swooped up. And in the dusk he did not at first see their expressions. He received the first inkling of the truth when he heard a number of wild hoots. And those few hoots seemed to be a signal.

For, immediately, they were followed by a perfect storm of hissing and booing. He halted dead in his tracks, startled beyond measure.

"Yah, rotter!"

"Grab him, the cad!"

"Castleton, the hound! He's come back at last!"

Confused, bewildered, agonised, Arthur Castleton found himself surrounded by a surging mob of juniors. Threats were uttered in loud, aggressive voices. He was hustled and pushed hither and thither.

"Steady!" he protested. "What's the matter? What the dickens have I done?"

He asked the question automatically, in his bewilderment.

"Great Scott!" shouted somebody. "Did you hear that? He's asking what he's done!"

"We'll soon tell him what he's done!" roared Armstrong, of the East House. "You cad, Castleton! You didn't wreck Mr. Pycraft's study in our House, did you? You didn't ruin all our clothes with your rotten corrosive acid, did you? You didn't get Nipper and Handforth and the others flogged

this morning by your beastly trickery, did you? Ye gods and little fishes! He asks us what he's done!"

"Yah! Rotter!"

"Smash him!"

"Grab him, and frog-march him to start with!"

"Hear, hear!"

The seething mob surged round Arthur like a flood. Hands reached out at him, to clasp him, to clutch him. And the storm of hooting and hissing continued. He felt physically sick—sick by the sudden realisation of the dreadful truth.

If he had had some inkling of it, it would not have been so bad. But now, all in a second, he began to realise that Alan had played a dirty, low-down trick on him. Alan had fled from St. Frank's because St. Frank's was too hot. And he had sent Arthur back in his place—he had sent Arthur back to face the music!

It was one of the most contemptible dodges that Arthur had ever heard of in all his young life. He was staggered beyond measure. How could Alan have sunk so low?

And his predicament was a fearful one.

He did not know what it all meant. Armstrong had given him one or two hints as to his supposed crimes—but it had all been very vague. His heart was as heavy as lead—heavy at the thought of Alan's knavery.

He wondered, indefinitely, what was going to happen to him. These fellows seemed like wild cats. They wanted to pull him limb from limb. It was something that he had never experienced before.

At his previous school, and at St. Jim's, he had met with rebuffs, and he had been misunderstood. He was no saint—he was no model. But he had always tried to live decently, and as a general rule he had got on well with his schoolfellows. At heart, Arthur was a gentle sort of fellow. He was amiable and good-tempered. He always wanted to be pleasant with his Form fellows, and with everybody whom he had to come into contact with. And to find the whole of St. Frank's against him—the junior section, at all events—was such a shock that he felt giddy.

Nobody knew what might have happened to him during those next few minutes. But an interruption came. Nipper & Co. arrived on the scene, accompanied by the chums of Study D. They had just come from the headmaster's house, and they were all feeling elated and happy.

Their own troubles were over.

In the morning they would be publicly vindicated. They had received a flogging—which, in a way, they deserved, for they had broken bounds after lights-out. They were perfectly willing to let things be. Their half-holidays had been restored, and everything was bright and rosy.

And now, as they came through Big Arch, they heard the shouting and the jeering. Instantly they guessed the truth.

"Hallo!" said Nipper. "It must be Castle-ton! He's back!"

"By George!" roared Handforth. "Let me get at him!"

"Steady, old man!" said Nipper. "It seems to me that we shall have to rescue the chap. He's in the midst of that mob, and we don't want mob-rule here. Castleton has got to be tried by jury, and the whole evidence of the case must be sifted. Let's be fair to the chap, no matter how great a cad he is. We've got to rescue him, and take him into the lecture hall, which will be the court-room."

"Hurrah!"

"Come on! Let's get him away from this crowd!"

And the six juniors rushed into the throng, and Arthur Castleton was saved from the immediate fate that had seemed inevitable.

CHAPTER 5.

Trial by Jury!



CONFUSED and bewildered, Arthur Castleton found himself carried into the Lecture Hall in the Ancient House. There was no hustling now—no disorder of any kind. Nipper and Handforth had made it clear to the crowd that everything should be conducted in a dignified way.

But there was plenty of excitement.

The Remove was there, practically to a man, and there were a great many members of the Fourth, too. They all wanted to witness the trial. The East House fellows were particularly keen on it, for they were the ones who had suffered by Castleton's treachery.

Nipper, as captain of the Remove, was in charge of the proceedings, and nobody disputed him this right.

"Castleton, you'll stand in the dock!" he said quietly. "You needn't be afraid that we're going to do anything unjust. You're going to be given a fair trial, and you'll be punished according to the verdict of the jury."

"Hear, hear!"

"That's the idea!"

Everybody was intensely interested. It was far better to do things like this than to take Castleton by the scruff of the neck and rag him. This trial would provide quite a lot of entertainment. There was something novel in it, something very dramatic. For the juniors were in deadly earnest. This was no rag—no jape. Castleton had come back, and he was to be placed on the carpet.

Still in a kind of daze, Arthur found himself in the dock. It wasn't exactly a real dock, but two or three chairs placed in such a position that they formed a kind of enclosed space. And Arthur stood there, facing the crowd, his mind in a complete tur-

moil. During his train journey he had wondered what kind of a reception he would get when he stepped into St. Frank's in Alan's shoes. But in his wildest moments he had not expected anything like this. No sooner had he entered the school property than he was pounced upon, dragged into this dock, and made to stand his trial.

No wonder Alan had been so insistent upon him changing places. Arthur could remember Alan's earnestness now—his lies to the effect that it was only a joke. A joke! If this was Alan's idea of a joke, then his view was decidedly perverted.

But Arthur knew differently. His brother had sent him here because he was afraid to come back himself. That was the long and short of it. Arthur had no fears on his own account. If these fellows punished him, he would take his gruel without a word. His conscience was clear, and he had done nothing to be ashamed of. But on Alan's account he was grieved. He was pained beyond expression. That Alan could have done such a thing was almost beyond belief; that Alan could have been such a rascal at St. Frank's as to arouse his Form-fellows in this way—well, it was a shock. And Arthur had believed that Alan had been getting on so well, too!

He looked round again with a start. He found that there was now some semblance of order in the big room. The majority of the fellows were crowded towards the rear—the audience. Twelve other juniors were placed aside, and these no doubt formed the jury—consisting of three juniors from each House. At the far end of the Lecture Hall, on the raised platform, a special chair had been placed. This, no doubt, was the judge's seat.

And Edward Oswald Handforth was in the act of climbing into it.

"Silence in court!" he roared. "Ladies and gentlemen—I mean——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Dry up, you cacklers!" thundered Handforth. "This is no laughing matter!"

"It will be, if you're going to be the judge!" remarked Reggie Pitt.

"Rats!" frowned Handforth. "I'm the judge in this court, and here's the jury. I pronounce the prisoner guilty, and sentence him——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Chuck it, Handy, you ass!"

"I pronounce the prisoner guilty!" roared Handforth aggressively. "I sentence him to be frog-marched a dozen times round the Triangle. I sentence him to run the gauntlet. I sentence him to be sent to Coventry for the rest of the term, and——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Cheese it, Handy!" said Nipper. "You can't sentence the prisoner yet!"

"Why can't I?"

"Because there's been no evidence called."

"That's nothing!" said Handforth. "Castleton is bound to deny the charge,

anyhow, and as there's no direct proof, why shouldn't we get on with the punishment, instead of wasting time?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's all very well to have this trial, but I don't believe in being dotty over it," continued Handforth. "I am the judge, anyhow, and I pass sentence——"

"Rats!"

"Get out of that seat, Handy! Reggie Pitt is the judge!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Go it, Reggie!"

"That's quite right, old man," said Nipper, looking at Handforth. "We'd better let Pitt be the judge!"

"And why?" demanded Handforth. "He's one of those silly West House chaps——"

"That's the very reason he's got to be the judge," replied Nipper, nodding. "Castleton is a West House chap, and Pitt is his junior skipper. Besides, we can't be the judges, anyhow—we're two of the chaps who suffered because of Castleton's act. We're prejudiced parties, according to all the rules of law. But Pitt is independent, and he happens to be Castleton's skipper, too. That's good enough. Pitt is the judge."

"Hear, hear!"

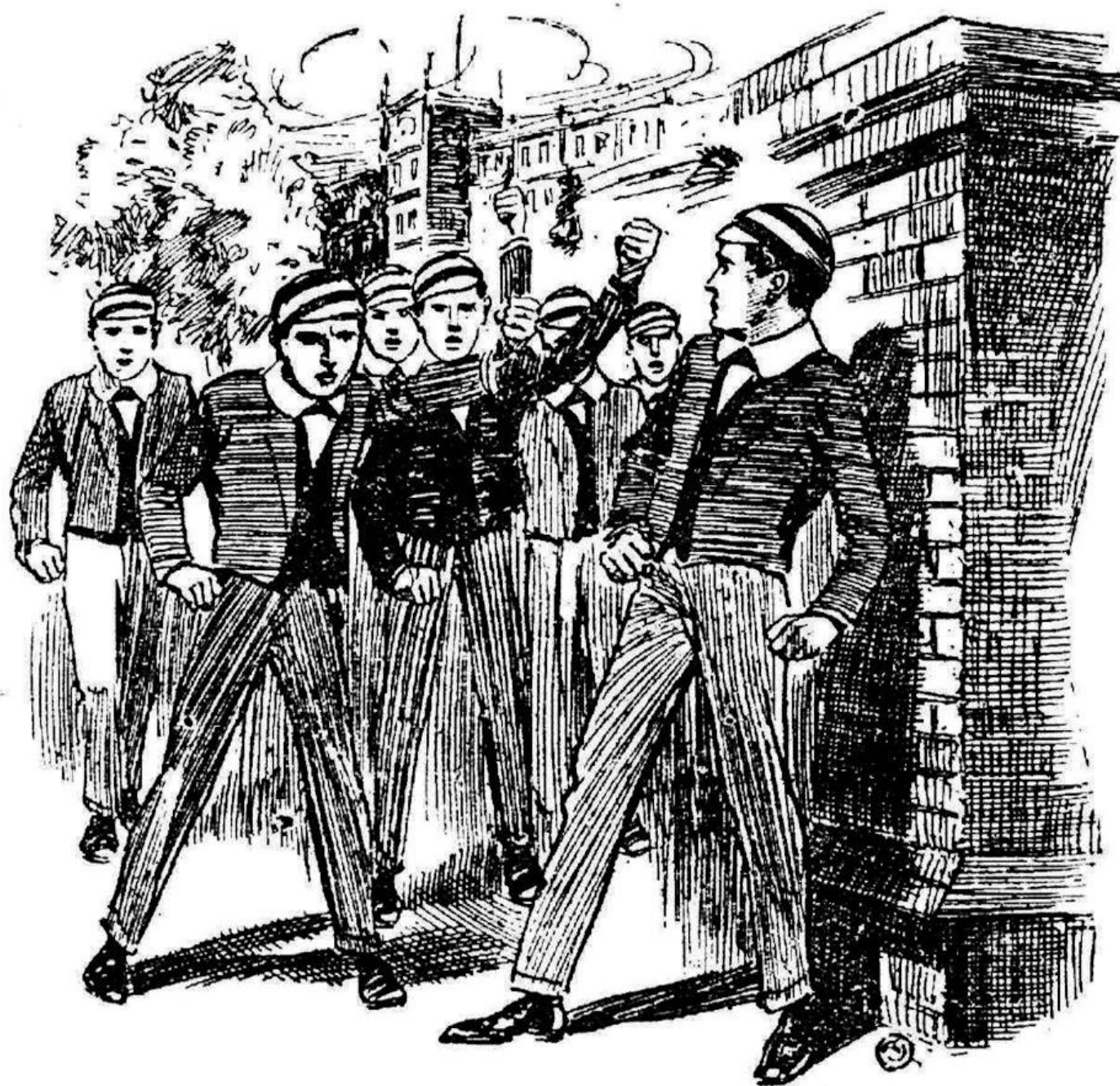
"Come off it, Handy—you're squashed!"

And Handforth was. He could not refute Nipper's arguments. As one of the injured parties, it was impossible for him to act as the judge.

So Reggie Pitt sat in the judge's seat, and the trial was due to start.

Arthur Castleton stood there in the dock, in his brother's shoes, feeling strangely isolated. It seemed to him that he was in a world apart, that all these strange fellows were nothing to do with him. He had a feeling that he was looking on, as a stranger.

For really it was Alan who was on his trial; Arthur was only in the dock by proxy!



No sooner did Arthur Castleton enter the school-gates than he was surrounded by a mob of angry, hissing juniors, who shook their fists at him threateningly. "It's Castleton come back!" shouted somebody. "Grab him, the cad!"

the judge, and then he looked at the prisoner. In an unofficial sort of way, Nipper was the counsel for the prosecution.

"Gentlemen of the jury," he began, in an impressive voice. "it is my intention to place the evidence before you in as concise a form as possible. I want you to listen carefully, as we have decided to give this prisoner a fair and honest trial."

"This is all rot!" said Handforth gruffly. "We know the evidence. Why repeat it?"

"I beg to remind my learned friend that the jury must have their minds refreshed," said Nipper, frowning upon Handforth.

"Your what friend?" asked Edward Oswald.

"I beg your pardon," said Nipper gravely. "Perhaps you're not learned, after all!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Fathead!" said Handforth, turning red.

"Gentlemen of the jury," continued Nipper, facing the grinning twelve, "the evidence against Castleton can soon be stated. Last night, after lights out, five members of the Ancient House, accompanied by myself, went into the East House on a rag. It was our intention to sprinkle perfume over the clothing of Armstrong, and sundry youths of the Fourth, and to decorate their various studies with ribbons and flowers."

"Like your cheek!" said Armstrong, of the Fourth.

"If there are any further interruptions,"

CHAPTER 6.

The Evidence.

ORDER in court!"

"Anybody who interrupts will be chucked out!"

Nipper stood up, and he turned from the jury to



said the judge, "I shall clear the court!"

"Hear, hear!"

"That's the stuff to give them, Reggie!"

"Needless to say, this rag of ours was a perfectly humorous affair," continued Nipper. "But it turned out to be somewhat tragic, inasmuch as we were all flogged this morning—and flogged right heftily!"

"What's all this got to do with Castleton?" asked one of the jurymen.

"Everything!" replied Nipper. "For, unknown to us, Castleton had added a corrosive acid to our bottles of scent. Thus, when we sprinkled the supposed scent on various articles, belonging to Armstrong and his henchmen, we inadvertently destroyed that clothing. This acid was placed in the bottles by the prisoner, as I shall presently prove by the statements of certain witnesses. Furthermore, Castleton entered Mr. Pycraft's study in the East House, and he wrecked it completely. He wrecked it wantonly. He did an enormous amount of damage, and his object in so doing was to throw the blame upon myself and my five companions."

Arthur listened to all this, amazed. He was rather glad of this mock trial now, for it was enabling him to hear all the story—to hear the details. He might not have been permitted to know the real truth otherwise. So this trial was a very good thing from his point of view. He was finding out Alan's complete roguery.

He could not help noticing that many glances were being constantly cast in his direction. He stood there in the dock, pale-faced and calm. Truth to tell, many of the juniors were vaguely wondering.

They had hardly expected Castleton to act like this. They had anticipated outbursts from him, with expressions of rage, feverish denials. But nothing of the sort had occurred. He stood there, still and cool. But it was a different coolness to Castleton's usual attitude. He did not look so supercilious, so insolent. There was a vague, intangible difference in him. Yet nobody appreciated the real truth. Nobody guessed, for a moment, that this Castleton was a totally different fellow!

Knowing nothing of a twin brother, and seeing that Arthur looked exactly like Alan, the mistake was very understandable. Indeed, it was impossible for the St. Frank's fellows to guess anything. This fellow was Castleton—beyond any question he was the culprit. Any change in his attitude was attributed to the gravity of his position. He was subdued—he was scared. That was the explanation of his changed manner. If any of the fellows thought of it at all, they told themselves this.

With a start, Arthur came out of a little reverie. He found that Nipper was still talking.

"And so, gentlemen of the jury, I shall now proceed to put my witnesses into the box," he was saying. "First of all we will call George Bell, of the Remove."

"Bell, stand forward!" ordered Handforth.

"Let the witness go into the box!" said the judge, waving his hand towards another col-

lection of chairs on the other side of the court.

Bell, of Study A, came forward tentatively. Bell was several kinds of a rotter himself, and he greatly disliked the ordeal that was in front of him. But there was no getting out of it. He entered the witness-box, and looked round him uneasily.

"All right, you ass," said Handforth. "You needn't look so scared. You're not in the dock! Now, I'm going to ask you a few questions."

"If it's all the same to you, Handy, I think we'll let the prosecuting counsel proceed," put in the judge gently. "Kindly stand aside!"

"Rats!" said Handforth. "It's my turn to be prosecuting counsel now!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Chuck him out!" said the jury, in one voice.

"Hear, hear!" agreed the public, from the other parts of the court-room.

And Handforth was obliged to stand aside, much to his disgust. Nipper proceeded to question the witness.

"Your name," he said, "is George Bell, is it not?"

"You know it is," said Bell tartly.

"You are, I believe, a personal friend of the prisoner?"

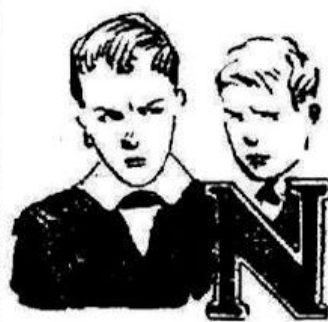
"I was—but I'm not now!" replied Bell, with a glare across at Arthur. "I'm not a particular chap, but Castleton is a bit too low-down for me!"

"Then he must be low-down!" said Handforth sarcastically. "Because nobody could be much lower than you!"

Arthur listened with his heart sinking. His brother's reputation at St. Frank's was even worse than he had first supposed!

CHAPTER 7.

Witnesses for the Prosecution!



NIPPER looked at Bell rather sternly.

"Now, George Bell, I want you to tell the court what took place immediately after prayers this morning," he said impressively. "Be as brief as you can, but give the full details."

"There's nothing much to tell!" growled Bell. "I was standing in the Triangle with Wallace and Gulliver, and Castleton came across to us. He was chucklin' and gloatin'. We asked him what was the matter, and he admitted that he had faked up the evidence against you six fellows."

"What were the prisoner's exact words?"

"How the deuce should I know?" demanded Bell. "My memory isn't so good as all that! But Castleton admitted wreckin' Pycraft's study, and he admitted that he had changed the scent in those bottles. He put a lot of corrosive acid in them—and he pinched the acid from the lab. I thought it was a bit

too thick, so I told Castleton what I thought of him. That's all I can say."

"And enough, too!" remarked one of the jurymen.

"Rot!" said Handforth. "Castleton is bound to deny this. And how can we take Bell's word, anyhow? We all know what a rotter he is—and he's not any too particular about the truth, either. This witness' evidence isn't worth a farthing!"

"Rats!" said one of the jurymen. "We're satisfied with it, anyhow!"

"Hear, hear!"

"I'll admit that this particular witness is several kinds of a fibber," said the judge soberly. "At the same time, gentlemen of the jury, I think you can take his present statements in all good faith. Many of us were in the Triangle at the time, and we heard the squabble. We also heard Castleton boasting of his despicable conduct. I ask you to bear these facts in mind."

"We've got 'em all taped!" nodded the foreman of the jury.

"George Bell, you can now stand down," said Nipper, with a wave of his hand. "You have told the court that Castleton confessed his guilt in this trickery, and now we will have another witness."

The court waited with interest.

"James Little, stand forward!"

Fatty Little, of the West House, started up.

"Not likely!" he said. "I'm not going to enter the witness-box!"

"James Little, you are called!" said the judge sternly. "Stand forward at once—or be pushed forward!"

"Great pancakes!" groaned Fatty. "This is a bit too thick!"

But he was obliged to go into the witness-box, and he took his place there, looking very self-conscious and uncomfortable. Nipper faced him rather sternly.

"James Little, did you, or did you not, enter Study S in the West House at a certain hour this afternoon?"

"Oh, well, I was only looking in the cupboard for some spoons!" blustered Fatty Little. "If you're going to accuse me of raiding the tuck—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fatty Little's reluctance to enter the witness-box was now explained.

"We are not dealing with tuck," interrupted Nipper. "And it does not interest the court why you entered Study S, or why you looked into the cupboard. That evidence does not bear upon the case."

Fatty brightened somewhat.

"Oh, well, that's all right, then," he said. "What do you want me to say?"

"Study S, in the West House, as everybody knows, is occupied by Lord Pippinton and Castleton," said Nipper. "Tell the court exactly what you found in the cupboard of that study, James Little."

Fatty Little snorted.

"I didn't find much!" he replied promptly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Again, I fear, you are allowing your mind to dwell upon foodstuffs," said Nipper sternly.

"I—I had forgotten, for the minute!" stammered Fatty, turning red again. "Well, I turned over the things in the cupboard, looking for—for those spoons, and right at the back I found a bottle. As a matter of fact, it was a ginger-beer bottle. I opened the cork, and took a sniff."

"And then?"

"Well, the stuff in that bottle wasn't ginger beer!" replied Fatty Little indignantly. "It had an awful smell—like some beastly acid. It wasn't very pungent, but it was strong. You know, it took my breath away. And I happened to put my lip to the bottle, and the rotten stuff peeled some of my skin off!"

"Retribution!" murmured one of the jurymen.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Kindly remember, gentlemen of the jury, that this is no laughing matter!" insisted the counsel for the prosecution. "Here we have the evidence of a witness who went to the cupboard of Study S—the study, you must remember, that is occupied by the prisoner. Under no circumstances can we believe that Lord Pippinton put that bottle there. Thus we arrive at the definite conclusion that Castleton is the culprit. And I submit that this evidence is direct and concrete proof of the prisoner's guilt. In his study cupboard a bottle is found—a bottle containing acid. Therefore it becomes quite clear that Castleton procured this acid from the laboratory—using a ginger-beer bottle for the purpose—and concealed it in his study cupboard. At a convenient moment he added this acid to the scent bottles in question. I will now produce this ginger-beer bottle as evidence, and I shall ask you to examine it closely."

The ginger-beer bottle was forthwith produced, and passed from jurymen to jurymen. Each one took a sniff, and each one looked very grave after he had done so.

"Well, this is good enough!" said Handforth impatiently. "Why call any more evidence? We have enough now to prove the prisoner's guilt—and that's all we want!"

Nipper turned and looked at the prisoner in the dock.

"Castleton," he said, "are there any witnesses that you wish to call for the defence?"

Arthur started, and cleared his dry throat. The evidence was quite sufficient to convince him. The trial, when all was said and done, was nothing but a farce. The case was so plain that a conviction was inevitable. And how could he produce any witnesses for the defence, anyhow? He didn't know a soul in the whole school!

"No!" he said in a low voice. "I have no witnesses to call."

"Then the case must go to the jury forthwith," declared the prosecuting counsel.

"Thank goodness there's something being

done at last!" said Handforth tartly, turning to the jury. "And look here, you chaps! I'd better give you a warning. If there's any disagreement, there'll be ructions! You've got to bring in a verdict of guilty, and unless you do——"

"I protest!" said the foreman of the jury. "We have the evidence, and we don't want any guidance from an outsider!"

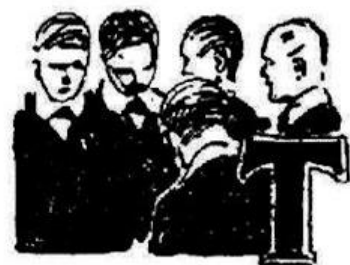
"Hear, hear!"

"Chuck it, Handy! Leave it to the jury!"

And there was absolutely no doubt as to what the jury's verdict would be!

CHAPTER 8.

The Verdict.



THE court was not kept waiting.

Just for the sake of appearances, the jurymen whispered together for a moment or two, and then the foreman stood up.

"You have arrived at a decision?" asked the judge.

"Yes, my lord!" replied the foreman.

"We are unanimous in our verdict. The prisoner is guilty. He is guilty of trickery, treachery, and general despicability. In the opinion of the jury, he is a rotten cad, and deserves to be drummed out of the school!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Out with the cad!"

"Let's drum him out now!"

The judge held up his hand.

"I would remind you, gentlemen, that it is for me to pass sentence!" he said sternly.

"There must be no injustice. The prisoner must be dealt with according to the nature of his crime, and much will depend upon his attitude now."

Handforth looked at the judge in surprise.

"Aren't you going to sentence him?" he asked in astonishment.

"I shall sentence the prisoner after he has had an opportunity of answering these accusations," replied the judge. "And his punishment will depend upon his attitude, as I've just said. Prisoner at the bar, you are now called upon to make a statement. What have you to say in answer to these grave charges of which you have been proved guilty?"

Arthur Castleton licked his dry lips. He didn't know what to say at first—and then the truth came to him. What was there to say—except one thing?

It was perfectly clear to him that Alan had done these things, and it was even clearer that Alan deserved drastic punishment. This trial proved beyond question that his twin brother had been acting like a cad and a rascal.

Arthur himself was, to all intents and purposes, now Alan. Everybody believed him to be Alan—and he was standing in Alan's shoes. Therefore, it was up to him to take his gruel.

It was impossible to tell the court that he was Alan's twin brother—that he had arrived at St. Frank's for the first time in his life only an hour earlier. Who would believe such a statement? The court would only think that he was getting up some yarn in order to escape the punishment. He would be laughed at—scorned—ridiculed more than ever.

Alan deserved the punishment, and Arthur had agreed to come to St. Frank's in Alan's place—and to live as Alan. So there was no getting out of the situation. But in his heart Arthur's bitterness against his brother was deadly. Later on, there would be a reckoning! Yes, he would go through with it—he would take his medicine. But when he saw Alan again there would be a reckoning!

He faced the court, his expression earnest, his eyes calm. Having come to this understanding with himself, Arthur was perfectly self-possessed. He had done nothing to reproach himself with—his own conscience was clear. And, if possible, he would do something to lessen the scorn which filled all these juniors.

"I admit my guilt," he said in a low voice.

"You can't do anything else!" growled Handforth.

"Let the prisoner speak!" said Reggie Pitt, looking at Arthur curiously. "Prisoner at the bar, continue."

Everybody, in fact, was regarding Arthur in some surprise. He was so different—so strangely different. It wasn't that he was subdued and cowed. Nobody could justly accuse him of that. His whole attitude was one of earnest gravity.

"I am guilty, and I will take whatever punishment the judge sentences me to," continued Arthur quietly. "But I would like to express my keen regret for what I have done. I can only conclude that I was not myself at the time."

If the court had only known it, there was an element of grim humour in that last statement of Arthur's.

"I am glad to hear you speaking in this strain, prisoner at the bar," said the judge, nodding. "You have expressed your regret, and that is all to the good. Have you anything further to say before I pass sentence?"

"There is very little that I can say," replied Arthur. "You all know what happened, and I realise that this trial is only an expression of fair play. But when I tell you that I am deeply sorry for everything I hope you will believe me."

"Rats! We don't believe you!"

"Rather not!"

"You rotter, you're only doing it to save your skin!" shouted Armstrong, of the East House. "I hope you're not going to be influenced by this cad's foolery, Pitt? He's putting it on very nicely; he's acting his part splendidly. But we all know what a clever bounder he is. We all know how deep he can be!"

"Yes, rather!" said Handforth. "I don't think we ought to let him make any further statements. Why not get on with the punishment, and get it over? In my opinion somebody ought to go and get a horsewhip. That's about the best thing to be done with a rotter like this! We'll horsewhip him——"

"Dry up, Handy!" said Church. "Let the judge say what the punishment shall be!"

Handforth looked at the judge and glared.

"I'm not a vindictive chap," he growled.

"I'm not the kind of fellow to be revengeful. But Castleton is a blot on the fair landscape of St. Frank's. Unless something drastic is done with him he'll start his rottenness all over again. And I say that he ought to be dealt with severely."

"Hear, hear!"

"Handy's right!"

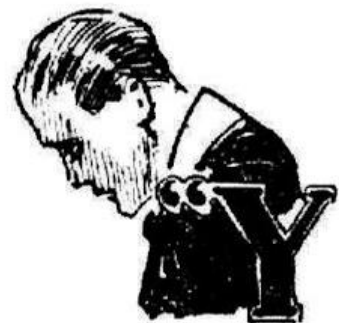
Arthur listened to all this with greater agony than ever. For it proved to him how deeply Alan had hurt these fellows. He had made himself thoroughly detestable.

But it was impossible for Arthur to tell the court that he was not the real culprit—that he was only a proxy. He was in Alan's shoes, and so he must go through with the part, whatever it might bring.

And then Arthur started talking. He had no idea in mind to mitigate his sentence. That was the last thing he thought of. But he did want to help Alan. Alan didn't deserve any help, but at the same time, there was a strong blood tie between these two twins. And if Arthur could do anything to lessen his brother's caddishness he would do so.

CHAPTER 9.

Arthur's Winning Way!



"YOU won't believe me, of course, and I've no right to expect that you should," said Arthur quietly. "But I am in deadly earnest when I tell you that I am deeply sorry for everything that I have done. I admit my guilt, and I am ready to take whatever punishment this court sentences me to. But before that sentence is passed I should like to say a few more words, if I have the permission of the judge."

Reggie Pitt looked at the prisoner rather warmly.

"Go ahead!" he invited. "Say whatever you like, Castleton."

"Now that it is too late, I know that I have done a very rotten thing," continued Arthur earnestly. "At least, it was done by the fellow who stood in my shoes until now. My other self, shall we say? And I will take the blame, and the punishment. But I am different now, although, of course, you won't believe it. Mere words cannot express my sorrow for the caddishness of the behaviour that led up to this trial."

"Well, dash it, I mean, the chappie is

rather frank about it!" said Archie Glen-thorne. "And when a chappie is so regretful of what he has done, dash it, it rather disarms a chappie, what?"

"It's only spoof!" shouted Armstrong. "He's laughing up his sleeve all the time!"

But Reggie Pitt did not believe this. There was something different about Castleton—something vaguely changed. It was a queer business altogether. Castleton didn't seem the same.

Considering that he was not the same, there was nothing surprising in this. But not a single member of that court had a suspicion of the truth. They all thought that Castleton had changed in some way, that he had at last come to realise the despicability of his conduct. And, as Archie had said, when a fellow confessed his guilt so frankly it disarmed his judges.

Truth to tell, Arthur Castleton had a very winning way with him. There was some intangible charm in his personality which attracted all and sundry. At St. Jim's he had made himself positively popular. There was that indescribable "something" in his character which made it impossible for decent fellows to be unfriendly with him. He was so thoroughly decent, right to the backbone. Through and through Arthur Castleton was as true as a die. And in spite of the fact that all these St. Frank's juniors were bitter against him, that personality of Arthur's was breaking through the defence, or, rather, breaking through the barricades.

"I feel," continued Arthur, "that I would like to do something to definitely prove my regret. It doesn't cut much ice, I know, to stand here and to say that I am sorry. You'll only think that I am trying to escape the punishment that I deserve!"

"We jolly well know it!" said Griffiths, of the East House.

"Yes, rather!"

"Silence in court!" ordered the judge sternly. "Let the prisoner speak!"

"I don't want to escape my punishment," said Arthur quietly. "And the only way I can prove that is to offer to go straight to the headmaster now, this minute, and confess. In fact, I want you to let me do this. I will go to the Head, and I will tell him what a cad I was, and I'll take my gruel with good grace. If I'm sacked, all well and good. I dare say I deserve to be sacked. Anyway, I'll accept whatever happens. If I am flogged, all the better. Perhaps it will make me be different in future!"

"Well, I'm jiggered!"

"My only hat!"

"What's come over the chap?"

Arthur was so genuinely in earnest that he greatly impressed his audience. He had offered to go to the headmaster, and to take his punishment. And a confession of his guilt to the Head would mean a much heavier sentence than this court would pass. It might, indeed, lead to expulsion.

Arthur fell silent, and he stood there, look-

ing at his accusers with a calm face and steady eyes.

"Have you anything further to say, prisoner at the bar?" asked the judge.

"No," replied Arthur, in a low voice.

"Then it is for me to pass sentence," continued Reggie Pitt. "I need hardly tell you that I am much pleased by your expressions of regret, by your general change of attitude. I don't pretend to understand it, but you have convinced me that you are in earnest. Your offer to go to the headmaster is sufficient proof of that."

"Rats!" said Armstrong. "He's only spoofing!"

"I'm not!" replied Arthur promptly. "I'll go now! Don't you believe me? I tell you I'll go now—straight off. I'd rather have it that way."

"Prisoner, kindly be silent," said the judge. "We shall not let you go to the headmaster to confess. You have already shown us that you are penitent. And that goes a long way."

"Rather!" said Handforth enthusiastically. "By George! I was bitter against Castleton at first, but he's changed. I can see that the chap means what he says. He's not such an out-and-out cad as I thought he was."

"The sentence of this court," said Reggie Pitt, "is that you shall be frog-marched twice round the Triangle, and then you shall be sent to Coventry for the period of one week. The court is now closed!"

Armstrong stood forward excitedly.

"Is that all you're going to sentence him to?" he demanded.

"Yes!"

"Then you're crazy!" said Armstrong indignantly. "He deserves a lot more than that!"

"I agree with the judge," said Nipper. "Castleton is sorry, and we don't want to be vindictive."

"Hear, hear!"

"Absolutely, old scouts!"

Arthur's winning way had had strong effect. Originally the court had meant to pass a very much heavier sentence. But there was such a change in Castleton that it was impossible to carry out the original plans.

And so forthwith the sentence was put into execution.

The prisoner was taken and frog-marched round the Triangle in accordance with the judge's sentence. But somehow the juniors did not take much delight in their occupation. They couldn't understand Castleton at all. They had expected him to defy them—to be insolent. They had expected him to deny the charges, and to lie up hill and down dale. His humility had taken them off their guard; his sorrow had taken all their anger and animosity away.

And still they did not guess the truth!



CHAPTER 10.

The Realisation I

LORD PIPPINTON gathered up his books and prepared to leave. Arthur Castleton had just entered Study S in the West House, and he looked at the fair-haired Pippy with concern. "All right!" he said. "Don't trouble to go—"

"No trouble at all!" said Lord Pippinton. "I mean, when you come in, Castleton, I go out. That's the general order of things. I mean, I rather draw the line."

And with that his lordship passed out of the study, and closed the door. Old Pippy was a very simple youth, but he had a great dislike for Castleton—at least, for Alan—and of late he had got into the habit of going out of the study whenever Alan had entered. He didn't know, of course, that Arthur was a very different proposition.

Arthur sat down at the table and rested his chin on his palms. He stared at the fire absently.

"Oh, what a cad!" he muttered under his breath. "I never thought Alan was capable of it."

Realisation was coming to him in full flood.

He was sore and bitter. He was sore in body and bitter in spirit. The frog-marching had just finished, and Arthur was bruised in many places. He looked very much of a wreck, too. The juniors, however, had not been very severe with him. Originally they had told themselves that they would take great delight in inflicting dire and violent punishment. And yet they had taken no delight in that rag at all. The change in Castleton had robbed them of that pleasure.

But as Arthur sat at the table now he did not think of the frog-marching. He wasn't worried because he had been sentenced to Coventry. He knew well enough that Alan deserved much greater punishment than this.

"Alan came and met me and told me that it would be a good joke for us to change places!" he muttered fiercely. "And yet Alan knew all the time that these St. Frank's fellows were preparing a hot reception for him. He deliberately sent me here to suffer the penalty for his own sins. Oh, what a shabby trick! And my own brother did this—my own twin! I didn't think he could be such a rascal!"

He pondered over Alan's deception, and the more he pondered the more grieved he became. He knew that Alan was weak, he knew that Alan had mixed with bad companions at Barton Grammar School. But Arthur had never guessed the real extent of his brother's caddishness. Now he was discovering it all in one flood.

He tragically wondered what Alan was doing now. The very thought was alarming. Alan had gone to St. Jim's, where Arthur's



With one accord Wallace & Co. jumped on Arthur Castleton, and bore him to the study carpet. "Bang his head on the floor, Bell!" snarled Wallace. Just then the door burst open, and Handforth strode in. "Stop that!" he roared aggressively.

record was clean. What was he doing? Probably mixing with Racke and Clampe and the other black sheep of St. Jim's. It would only take Alan a few hours, perhaps, to besmirch Arthur's good name! By this time, no doubt, he had already undone the good work that Arthur himself had accomplished. At St. Jim's Arthur was held in high esteem. How low would Alan drag his fair name?

For a moment Arthur thought about hurrying out and catching the first train back to St. Jim's. He wouldn't let this thing go on; he wouldn't allow Alan to continue his career of shame. And then, just as suddenly, Arthur threw the project aside.

No, he must go on with it.

He had arranged with Alan that they should remain at one another's schools until the Saturday. Only three days! But it seemed almost an eternity to Arthur in his present agonised condition of mind.

Three days!

Suddenly Arthur started up, and there was a new light in his eyes. A sudden idea had come to him—a great thought. In three days he might be able to retrieve Alan's name! Whatever Alan did at St. Jim's, that made no

difference to the position at St. Frank's. Before Saturday, perhaps, Arthur might be able to undo all the harm that Alan had done.

"Why not?" he asked himself. "Ever since Alan came here he's evidently been going from bad to worse. He's made everybody hate him—he's made himself thoroughly detested. Well, it's for me to change all that. And I believe I can do it, too! Anyhow, why not try? Alan doesn't deserve it, but perhaps when he comes back and finds that the fellows are treating him better, perhaps he'll live up to it then."

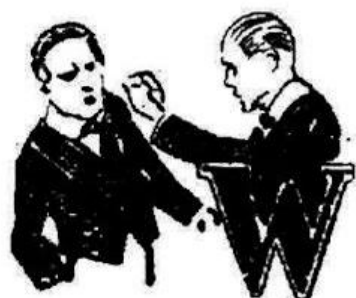
He felt that it was rather a vain hope. But it was something. He was fearing the meeting between himself and his twin. It wasn't in Arthur's character to lecture—to preach. He would say very little now that he came to think over the matter. Earlier he had told himself that there would be a reckoning. But what could he do? Of course, he could fight Alan and take it out of him like that. But that wouldn't give Arthur any satisfaction at all. He wanted Alan to live more decently—to be a better chap. That would be the best thing of all.

And if he could make things better at St.

Franks, perhaps—by some sort of miracle—Alan would realise his faults. Anyhow, it was worth trying.

"Yes, that's what I'll do!" Arthur muttered, rising to his feet with gleaming eyes. "There's a difference already. Some of these chaps aren't half so bitter as they were when I first came in. I might be able to help Alan a good deal. But how? I don't quite know how to begin. There's old Pip—What's his name? Pippinton, I believe. There's old Pippinton. It was significant the way he cleared out of this study just now. I shall have to talk to him and get friendly. Perhaps he'll realise that I'm not a rotter. By Jove, I've got a pretty hefty task in front of me, I imagine!"

But the thought of that task heartened him. He cast aside all doubts about Alan and what Alan was doing at St. Jim's. He would find that out later. Just at the moment his duty was to clear his brother's name here at St. Frank's. Would he be able to succeed?



CHAPTER 11.

Very Strange!

WALLACE came out of the Ancient House, and grinned when he saw Castleton was already in the Triangle. It was the next morning,

and the day was sunny and crisp. There was a keen nip in the wind, but the sky was blue, and Nature seemed to be in a good mood.

"There he is!" said Wallace, nodding. "Let's go and have a word with the chap."

"No—leave him alone!" growled Bell uncomfortably. "Why have anything to do with him?"

"Hang you!" said Wallace, turning on him. "You're too squeamish lately, Bell! Unless you change, Gully and I will kick you out of Study A!"

"Yes, we will!" agreed Gulliver, glaring.

"Go to the dickens!" said Bell, walking off.

"I want a word with Castleton," said Wallace, frowning. "He's created ructions in our study, and I want to know why."

"You can't be down on the fellow!" protested Gulliver. "He's all right—although I'm blessed if I can understand his attitude last night, and that idiotic trial. I believe he was only spoofin'!"

"Of course he was only spoofing!" scoffed Wallace. "You don't think he meant it when he offered to go to the Head, do you? That was all part of his game, the cunnin' blighter! I've said from the very first that he's as deep as the deuce!"

They walked across the Triangle, and found Arthur Castleton by the fountain. Arthur was in a very thoughtful mood this morning. He had slept badly—partly because of Alan's misdoings, and partly because he was in strange and novel surroundings. He was only

just beginning to know the fellows by their names—although, of course, he was supposed to know them perfectly well. It had been very difficult, but Arthur had managed famously. There were still no suspicions regarding the truth.

"Hallo, Castleton!" said Wallace, as he came up.

"Feeling sore, old man?" asked Gulliver sympathetically.

Arthur turned and glanced at the dandified pair. And in that one look he read their characters. Because he was such a decent fellow himself, perhaps, he recognised rotters when he saw them. At all events, he knew Wallace and Gulliver for what they were at once. Just like Aubrey Racke and Leslie Clampe, of St. Jim's! Just exactly the same type! They advertised it in their expressions, in their supercilious insolence.

"Hallo!" he said cautiously.

"You mustn't take any notice of what Bell did," said Wallace. "I don't know what's come over the idiot lately. We're your pals, Castleton. You know that, don't you?"

"We've been your friends ever since you arrived," added Gulliver. "Hang the rest! Let them think what they like—we'll stick together, eh?"

Arthur looked at them with even greater interest. So these were his friends! These, to be exact, had been Alan's friends! He wasn't surprised. And he decided that it was obviously his game to keep up a little pretence. It wouldn't do to disown them straightaway.

"Come along into our study," invited Wallace genially. "There's just time for a cigarette before brekker."

"I'll come, if you like," said Arthur, with a nod. "Thanks!"

They walked away to Study A, watched by many of the other juniors. So Castleton was as bad as ever! His ragging the previous evening had done him no good. He was still mixing with Wallace and Gulliver!

Within the privacy of Study A, Wallace produced his cigarette-case.

"Now we can light up in comfort," he said. "There's not much chance of any prefects butting in now—before brekker. Try one of these, Castleton—they're extra."

"Thanks all the same," said Arthur, "but I won't smoke."

"You won't smoke?"

"No."

"Why not?" asked Wallace, staring. "I thought smoking was one of your favourite little vices?"

"All the same, I won't smoke," replied Arthur steadily.

"What the deuce has come over you?" demanded Wallace, looking at Arthur in a strange way. "You don't seem the same, Castleton!"

"Don't I?"

"No, you jolly well don't!" growled Wallace. "You're getting goody-goody, by the look of it! Hang it! You needn't keep up that silly pretence with us!"

"What silly pretence?"

"Oh, come off it!" interrupted Gulliver. "You're a darned sight worse than we are, Castleton! You've proved that twenty times ever since you've been at St. Frank's. So come off it. You needn't try to spoof us!"

Arthur disliked this pair more and more. In fact, he thoroughly detested them. He could tell they were rotters and outsiders, and they were angering him. He felt like banging their heads together—he wanted to clench his fists and go for them bald-headed. He wanted to show them that he was no longer in sympathy with their petty meanness, and their unsavoury habits. But perhaps it would be as well to lead them on a bit further.

"I've changed, have I?" he said. "Well, perhaps I have. Perhaps I'm beginning to realise what a rotter I've been in the past—and I realise, too, what a pair of rotters you two are!"

Wallace started.

"You'd better go easy!" he said aggressively. "We didn't bring you to this study, Castleton, so that you could insult us!"

"I'm not insulting you," replied Arthur. "I'm just getting some sense, that's all. If I've been a goer, it's because I didn't appreciate what a dirty game it was. But I do appreciate it now."

They stared at him in wonder. They couldn't understand this attitude of his. It was characteristic of Castleton, of course, to spoof the other chaps. But why keep it up now, in the privacy of this study? It was incomprehensible.

"Chuck it, you fool!" said Wallace roughly. "We don't want to hear your silly nonsense!"

"It isn't silly nonsense—and I don't want to be called a fool," replied Arthur dangerously. "In fact, Wallace, if you call me a fool again, I'll knock you down!"

Wallace dropped his cigarette in surprise.

"You'll do what?" he gasped.

"I'll knock you down!"

And there was something in Arthur Castleton's tone which plainly proved that he meant it!

CHAPTER 12.

The Challenge!



BUT Wallace broke into a scornful laugh after a moment's thought.

"You'll knock me down?" he sneered. "By

gad! You're even a bigger fool than I thought you were! Gully and I were prepared to be decent to you, and I'm hanged if we will now!"

"Not likely!" said Gulliver hotly. "Smash him, Wallace!"

"I'm not going to spoil my hands with him!" retorted Wallace sourly.

The door opened, and Bell came in.

"Hallo!" he said, looking from one to the other. "Having a row?"

"Yes, we are!" snapped Wallace. "This—this confounded idiot has threatened to knock me down!"

"Didn't I tell you he was no good?" asked Bell. "I'm glad you've found it out! I'm not any too particular, but I draw the line somewhere! You'd better clear out of this study, Castleton!"

"Nothing will give me greater pleasure!" replied Arthur, his voice full of scorn. "The air seems rather polluted in here. I wonder why I was friendly with you fellows? I must have been mad!"

"Stop that!" snarled Wallace, boiling with rage. "By gad! You've got a fine nerve to talk like that in this study—after all you've done! For two pins, I'll thrash you!"

"Go ahead!" invited Arthur. "You can thrash me if you like—or if you can!"

"If I can!" roared Wallace. "I could wipe you up with one hand!"

He was thinking of Alan's prowess as a fighter. Not long ago, Alan had had a scrap with one of the other Remove fellows—and he had revealed himself to be a veritable weakling. He knew practically nothing about boxing, and his fighting was childish. Wallace, on the other hand, knew quite a lot about boxing, and he could fight fairly well. He knew that he could "knock the stuffing" out of Alan without the slightest difficulty. And he was under the mistaken impression that he was facing Alan now.

Arthur appreciated and enjoyed the situation. He could guess exactly what was passing through Wallace's mind, and the prospect of fighting this young rascal appealed to Arthur enormously. Perhaps it would do him a lot of good in the Form, too. If he definitely proved that he had broken with Wallace & Co., the other fellows would probably take to him more. And Arthur badly wanted to be friendly with all the decent fellows in the lower school. He had been sent to Coventry, he knew, and nobody would speak to him, but, all the same, it might help Alan's cause if he thrashed the three young rascals.

"You're a very bold spirit, aren't you?" he said, looking at Wallace with deliberate provocation. "If you want to have a fight with me, I'm perfectly willing—and, what's more, I'll beat you, Wallace! I'll take on the three of you at once, if you like! I don't care—I'm game to try it!"

"You'd take on the three of us at once?" asked Wallace, staring.

"Yes—with pleasure!"

"You infernal idiot!" roared Wallace, exasperated. "You couldn't fight a fag out of the Third! What about the time you had a scrap with Pitt? You don't even know the first rules of boxing!"

"All the same, I'll take you on!" snapped Arthur. "I don't like your ways, Wallace—I don't like your expression! And I don't like these other two cads, either!"

"Let's smash him!" said Bell hotly.

He had neglected to close the door of the

study, and Handforth & Co., who were passing at that moment, paused. They could not fail to hear the sounds of quarrelling voices.

"Hallo!" said Handforth. "When rogues fall out, eh?"

"Oh, leave them to it!" said Church. "We don't want to interfere with those rotters!"

A voice came clearly to their ears.

"Yes!" it said. "I'm ready to fight the three of you, but I doubt if you'll accept it. You're too cowardly—you're too caddish!"

It was the voice of Castleton.

"You—you cheeky rotter!" roared Wallace. "Do you think I'm going to ignore a challenge like that? I'll take you on myself—single-handed! There's no need for these other fellows to chip in! And I'll smash you up—I'll give you the hiding of your life!"

"That's fine!" came Castleton's voice. "If you can give me a hiding, I'll gladly take it. But don't blame me if I black both your eyes, and——"

"Jump on him!" advised Gulliver savagely.

And, with one accord, Wallace & Co. jumped on Arthur. It was a surprise move. Arthur had not been expecting anything of the kind, and before he could attempt to defend himself he was bowled over and held down. Wallace knelt on his back, Bell practically sat on his head, and Gulliver held his feet down.

"Now!" snarled Wallace. "We'll show him something! Bang his head on the floor, Bell!"

"Just what I was going to do!" said Bell.

Arthur struggled in vain.

"You cads!" he panted. "Is this your idea of a fair fight? I said I'd thrash you, Wallace—and so I will, if you'll give me the chance. But this isn't fighting at all!"

The door burst open, and Handforth & Co. strode in.

"Stop that!" roared Handforth aggressively.

Wallace twirled round.

"Clear out of here!" he shouted. "Mind your own confounded business, Handforth! You're always shoving your nose into other people's affairs!"

"By George!" said Handforth, with a start. "Are you talking to me?"

"Yes, I am!" roared Wallace recklessly.

"All right, my lad, I'll give you the hiding——" began Handforth.

"Rats!" interrupted Church. "Castleton has threatened to give Wallace a hiding, and we've come in here to see that he does it! Don't spoil everything, Handy! Make these rotters release Castleton, and then make them fight!"

"That's the ideal!" agreed McClure, nodding.

"All right! I'll give Castleton an opportunity!" said Handforth grudgingly. "Naturally, he won't be able to do anything—he won't be able to fight Wallace! Haven't we seen him in action? My minor could wipe him up with two fingers!"

"Could he?" asked Arthur grimly. "All I want is a chance to show Wallace what I'm made of. And I'd like to take on these other two cads at the same time. I'm game to fight the three!"

"The three?" yelled Handforth & Co. in one voice.

"Yes!" retorted Arthur. "I ask it as a favour—I want to take on the three of them at once! If I am wiped up, I'll stand by the consequences. But let me have the chance!"

Handforth grinned.

"You'll have the chance all right!" he retorted promptly. "Leave that to me, my son!"

CHAPTER 13.

A Surprise for the Juniors!



NIPPER came out of Study C, accompanied by Sir Montie Tregellis-West and Tommy Watson. He paused as he was about to

go down the passage, and he glanced in the direction of an open doorway, just ahead.

"What's all that noise?" he asked in surprise.

"Sounds like Handy," said Watson. "Trouble with those cads of Study A, by the look of it. Anyhow, that's where the racket is coming from."

They halted outside the door of Study A, and looked in.

"Good man!" Handforth was saying enthusiastically. "Of course, you'll be wiped up, Castleton, but I admire your spirit! You've improved since you came back yesterday. You're different, somehow. Blessed if you seem like the same chap!"

Arthur glanced at him sharply.

"Am I changed so much?" he asked.

"It's marvellous!" declared Handforth. "Why, if I didn't know you to be an outsider and a rotter, I'd say you were a fairly decent chap! You've got that look about you! You've lost that sneer of yours, too!"

"Half a minute, Handforth!" said Nipper, frowning. "What are you doing?"

"Talking to Castleton!"

"Then you shouldn't talk to Castleton!" said Nipper.

"Eh? Why not?"

"You know well enough that he's in Coventry!"

"By George!" said Handforth, with a start. "So he is! I'd forgotten all about that. Still, there's an exception to every rule!" he went on firmly. "Castleton's just offered to fight Wallace and Gulliver and Bell—all at the same time. And I'm jolly well going to see that he does it!"

"Don't be an ass!" said Nipper, frowning. "You know that Castleton can't fight!"

"That's why I want to see him have a go at these chaps," replied Handforth. "They can't fight much, either—and he's liable to

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get smashed up pretty badly. It will do him good. That's why I'm keen on it."

"Hang it all, dear old boy, have a heart!" protested Sir Montie. "Three to one isn't fair, is it? Especially when the one is a frightfully bad fighter!"

Wallace scowled.

"You can stop all this discussion!" he said sourly. "We wouldn't fight Castleton at any price!"

"Not likely!" said Gulliver, with a sneer. "We don't fight with worms like him!"

"We're a bit too particular!" added Bell.

"Are you?" snapped Arthur dangerously. Slap, slap, slap!

Quick as lightning, he delivered three slaps—on the faces of Wallace, Gulliver and Bell. They were so taken by surprise that they started back, roaring with indignation and humiliation. They had had no chance to avoid those open slaps.

"You—you miserable rotter!" yelled Wallace. "All right! We'll smash you for that!"

"What about it now?" demanded Handforth, turning excitedly to Nipper & Co. "Are you going to stop the fight now?"

"No!" replied Nipper promptly. "Castleton has asked for it—and he deserves all he gets. When one fellow slaps another fellow's face, it means a fight. There's no getting out of it—it's an unwritten law!"

"Begad, rather!"

"The chap must be off his rocker!" said Watson, staring. "We all know that he can't fight. We've seen him! And three to one is simply mad!"

"Let's take them behind the gym., now," said Handforth, with enthusiasm. "There's still about twelve minutes before the brekker bell rings. Plenty of time for a decent mill. Come on—grab them!"

"Keep your hands to yourself!" snarled Wallace. "We don't need any grabbin'! We'll go behind the gym. without any forcin'. We're just as anxious to smash this idiot as you are to see us do it! It won't take us a couple of minutes!"

"You mean a couple of seconds!" said Gulliver savagely. "Two swipes, and he'll be howlin' for mercy!"

They all went out in a body. Fullwood, Russell, De Valerie, and several others encountered them on the way, and joined the

throng. Then Buster Boots, Bob Christine, Percy Bray, and several other Modern House Fourth-Formers scented a fight, and joined up. Armstrong and his crowd came along from the East House, followed by Reggie Pitt and Jack Grey and several other West House Removites.

A fight was always calculated to draw a crowd as though by magic.

And a fight of this sort was unusually novel. Castleton, the cad, was fighting Wallace & Co.! And everybody knew that Castleton couldn't fight for toffee!

When the news went round that Castleton had actually asked for this trouble—that he had slapped the faces of Wallace & Co.—there was even greater wonderment. Some fellows habitually went round looking for trouble, but to ask for it in this manner was most unusual.

Arthur himself was feeling elated. He was aware of a great, surging triumph within him. He glowed all over. It was quite likely that these three fellows would beat him—in fact, it was only to be expected. But at least he would give a good show. He would do something to retrieve Alan's name. For it was becoming quite clear to Arthur that Alan had made an idiot of himself in some previous fight. He couldn't ask for details—since he was supposed to know them.

"Now then!" said Handforth, when they reached a secluded spot behind the gymnasium. "Strip, you chaps!"

"Strip, be hanged!" retorted Wallace.

"Take off your jackets and collars——"

"We'll do nothing of the sort!" interrupted Wallace. "Do you think we're goin' to make a real fight of this? Not likely! We'll finish Castleton in less than half a round!"

"Why trouble about rounds at all?" asked Gulliver. "The thing'll be over within twenty seconds!"

"Might as well do it properly!" retorted Handforth. "Castleton is stripping, anyhow!"

"He needs to!" sneered Wallace.

"Time!" said Nipper. "Let's get it over quickly."

Arthur sailed in. He was just as anxious as Nipper was to "get it over quickly," and in the first few seconds he surprised the natives! For it was patent to everybody that here was a different Castleton. Here was a fellow who knew boxing inside out! In his very first movement there was an intangible evidence of that.

And Wallace & Co. were suddenly filled with vague alarm!

wholeheartedly on Castleton's side. If they had stopped to think, they would have told themselves that Castleton and his three opponents were birds of a feather. But the fact that three were against one made them naturally sympathetic with the one.

The fight had been regarded as a farce from the very start.

The juniors had only come along just to see the fun—to see Castleton knocked into a cocked hat during the first minute. Nobody had much of an opinion regarding Wallace & Co.'s fighting ability. But everybody knew that Castleton was far inferior to the cads of Study A. And when he had offered to take the three of them on at once—well, it looked very much like insanity.

But it wasn't!

For, amazingly enough, Castleton was holding his own! And, not only holding his own against these three opponents, but positively making rings round them. That was the staggering part of the whole business.

In point of fact, Arthur Castleton was a splendid boxer. Hadn't he won the championship for three years in succession at Walsing Grammar School? And Walsing wasn't an infants' kindergarten, either!

Arthur's prowess as a fighter was much above the normal, and Ernest Lawrence, of the Modern House, who was watching, waxed enthusiastic. Lawrence was one of the finest boxers at St. Frank's, and what he didn't know about the noble art was scarcely worth learning. Indeed, Lawrence had more than once appeared in the professional ring, and had acquitted himself with great success. So he was a good judge of form.

"There's something uncanny about this!" he declared. "The man's a marvel! Just look at his science! And his footwork! Why, by Jingo—— Oh, pretty! Topping Castleton—topping!"

"Don't talk to him!" said Boots. "The man's in Coventry!"

"I don't care whether he's in Timbuctoo!" shouted Lawrence. "He's a great boxer!"

Nipper, Reggie Pitt, and others glanced at one another in dumb surprise. Without the slightest question, Castleton was a great boxer, as Lawrence had said.

For he was proving it with every movement.

And, if the audience was surprised, Wallace & Co. were startled in the extreme. For they had taken on this "rotten boxer" in the belief that they could knock him sideways during the first ten seconds. But, unhappily, Castleton was knocking them sideways—and backwards, and every other way!

They came at him with sudden savage rushes. They made concerted attempts to get through his defence, and floor him. But he dealt with all their blows with the greatest ease. It seemed impossible to get past his guard. It was like an impregnable barrier. No matter how they punched, no matter how they thrust, it was all useless.

Arthur was like a flash of lightning, his fists were darting here and there, and there

CHAPTER 14.

The Victor!



Y George! Look at that!"

"Well, I'm blessed!"

"Go it, Castleton!"

"Oh, well hit! Good man!"

In spite of themselves, the juniors were

was a smile of pure enjoyment on his face. And it was a very likeable smile, too. It was the smile of a sportsman—which was not at all surprising, since Arthur himself was a sportsman from his crown to his toes.

A tremendous enthusiasm was worked up in the audience.

It didn't matter to them whether this fellow was a despicable cad or not—it didn't matter what his past misdeeds had been. Here he was, fighting three fellows at once, and he was more than holding his own! Schoolboys can always be trusted to show an appreciation of good boxing, and they showed it now. Many of Alan's past faults were forgotten during this little episode.

"Go it, Castleton!"

"Good gad! The man's more than holding his own!" said Archie Glenthorne. "I mean, something of a jolly old surprise, what? A dashed dark horse, and all that sort of stuff!"

"Dark isn't the word!" roared Handforth. "The fellow's an absolute miracle!"

"Time!" sang out Nipper.

Arthur fell back, dropping his hands. And Wallace & Co., backing away, found themselves looking at one another in anxious bewilderment.

"Jolly good, Castleton!" said Handforth heartily. "What the dickens has come over you? Where did you learn to box like that? Why didn't you show us this form before?"

Arthur was unable to answer these questions. But he gave Handforth such a smile that the leader of Study D completely thawed.

"There's nothing much in fighting these fellows," said Arthur quietly. "Still, I'm glad of the opportunity. I want to smash them if I can. Their faces annoy me! And their habits annoy me still more!"

"Well, I'm blessed!"

"The man's completely changed!" said Reggie Pitt, scratching his head. "There's something different about his personality, too! What on earth can it mean?"

"Don't ask me!" said Jack Grey.

The fact was, Arthur's winning way had served him well again. Everybody was puzzled and mystified. They couldn't make head or tail of this startling change in Castleton's character. Hitherto, he had been a cad, a worm, and everything else that was unspeakable. Now he was proving himself to be the very opposite. But even Nipper, with all his shrewdness, did not imagine for a moment that this fellow in front of them was another Castleton altogether! It was a thing that nobody could think of.

"Time!" said Nipper briskly.

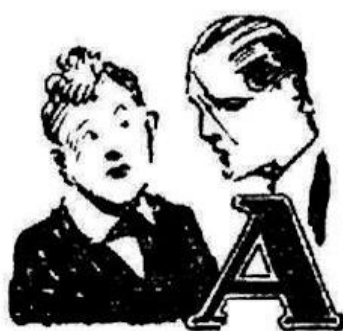
And in that round Arthur Castleton won the fight. He could easily have won it in the first round—but he shrank from the sensation of beating three chaps in the first round. A thing like that would be too sudden altogether. But he couldn't let it go beyond the second round.

Wallace & Co. attacked savagely—desperately. And in their anxiety to floor their opponent, they gave him openings for the

three smashing blows that he desired. One after the other they went down—dazed by that sledge-hammer fist of Arthur's. They sprawled all over the grass, gasping and moaning. Gulliver and Bell were soon dealt with—even a small tap was liable to knock them out. But Wallace was a tougher proposition, and it required a real uppercut—a driving blow—to effectively deal with him.

But there they were—the three—counted out! And Castleton was not even marked!

The crowd talked excitedly. Had they misjudged this fellow? And then came the spectre of Castleton's previous record. What were they to think?



CHAPTER 15.

Enough for Willy Handforth!

AFTER breakfast, Arthur managed to escape from the West House quickly, and he made his way towards the bicycle shed.

He knew that Alan had a machine, and he wanted to get it out and to go for a spin. His one anxiety, just at the moment, was to be alone—to think.

A wonderful change had already taken place.

At breakfast-time he had found himself being stared at by all eyes. He was the one topic of conversation. For his victory over Wallace & Co. had spread like wildfire. Everybody was talking about his prowess as a boxer. Everybody was wondering where he had learned his art. For only recently he had shown himself to be no boxer at all! What could be the explanation of this mystery?

Quite a number of juniors were ignoring the fact that Arthur was in "Coventry," and were disposed to speak to him. His victory over Wallace & Co. had given him a new standing. The very fact that he had "broken" with the cads proved that he was changing. But the change was so sudden that lots of juniors shook their heads, and said that it was too good to be true. And they were liable to ask lots of awkward questions.

So Arthur wanted to be alone.

He reached the bicycle shed, and found it quite empty, save for a Third-Former. This Third-Former was none other than Willy Handforth. He glanced up and frowned as he saw Castleton coming in.

"Oh, it's you!" he said coldly.

Willy had had practically no association with Alan, but he had heard all about his doings, and he had taken it for granted that Alan was no good. And as he couldn't know that he was now face to face with Arthur, he gave him a very straight look.

"You'd better keep away from my pets, Castleton," he said shortly.



The ball hurtled from Arthur Castleton's boot like a bullet, rising as it went goalwards. Handforth made a wild leap for it, but he had no chance. The leather entered just at the corner, and fell at the back of the net. "Oh, good shot, Castleton!" yelled the juniors round the touchlines.

"Why?" asked Arthur. "Are they savage?"

Willy stared.

"Trying to be funny?" he asked stiffly. "No, they're not savage, you rotter! But a fellow with your reputation can't be any good to animals. So keep away from them!"

"All right!" said Arthur quietly.

He understood, and he searched for Alan's bicycle without saying another word. But before he could locate the machine, there was a little patter of tiny feet, and he beheld a small monkey next to him. Marmaduke was having a close look at this newcomer. It was quite possible that Marmaduke knew a lot more than Willy himself. At any rate, he immediately recognised Arthur as a friend. And when Marmaduke found a friend, he had a way of expressing himself very boisterously.

With a chirrup of glee, the little monkey leapt upon Arthur's shoulder and sat there, chattering gaily. He plucked at Arthur's cap, pulled it off, and chattered afresh.

"That's all right, old man!" laughed Arthur.

Marmaduke hopped round on to Arthur's other shoulder, and his expressions of delight were so vociferous that Willy stood quite still, staring in wonder.

He stared even more a moment later, for Priscilla, the parrot, fluttered from a beam and perched on Arthur's other shoulder. Marmaduke was gleefully expressing himself meanwhile.

"What-ho!" observed Priscilla, in a raucous voice. "How goes it, old son?"

Arthur laughed.

"Fine, thanks!" he replied gravely. "And how are you this morning?"

"Cave!" said Priscilla, in an inconsequential way. "Any more grub knocking about?"

"Frightfully sorry, but I don't happen to have any grub on me at the moment," said Arthur, with a chuckle. "But I'll remember to bring some next time."

"Fathead!" said Priscilla ungraciously.

Arthur glanced round at the open-eyed Willy.

"Awfully sorry," he said apologetically. "You asked me to keep away from your pets, but they jumped up on my shoulders without any invitation. I don't know quite what to do with them."

"Go and eat coke!" said Priscilla gaily. "Who'll have another sardine?"

Willy Handforth removed his cap and scratched his head.

"Well, I'm blowed!" he observed frankly.

Marmaduke hopped to the ground, raced round Arthur's feet once or twice, and then gave a leap at his waistcoat, clinging there and grinning up into Arthur's face with such obvious delight that Arthur put out his hand and tickled Marmaduke's ear.

"Chuck it!" said Priscilla. "I want five bob!"

"You want what?" grinned Arthur.



The ball hurtled from Arthur Castleton's bo wild leap for it, but he had no chance. The "Oh, good shot, Castleton!"

"Five bob, Ted, and no messing about!" said Priscilla sternly.

Willy Handforth chuckled.

He came down the shed, and looked at Arthur in a very straight, candid fashion. There was never any half-measures about Willy. He suddenly extended his hand and grinned.

"Shake!" he invited cordially.

"Eh?" said Arthur.

"Shake, Castleton!" said Willy.

Arthur put out his hand, and they shook.

"Sorry I misjudged you," went on Willy.

"Please accept my apologies, Castleton."

Arthur felt rather bewildered.

"But—but I don't understand!" he replied.

"Don't you?" asked Willy. "Look at Marmaduke!"

"Marmaduke?"

"My monkey," nodded Willy. "Look at him!"

Arthur looked. Marmaduke was on his shoulder again, and he was nestling close against his ear, crooning with delight. And Priscilla, on the other shoulder, was investigating a section of her anatomy beneath the left wing. It was evidently a very intimate



g as it went goalwards. Handforth made a at the corner, and fell at the back of the net. lers round the touchlines.

research, for as Arthur glanced at her, she cocked an eye at him.

"Go and eat coke!" she said gruffly.

"There you are!" said Willy, nodding. "Priscilla is just the same as old Marmy. They've both taken to you like a duck takes to water. This is the first time you've met my pets, isn't it, Castleton?"

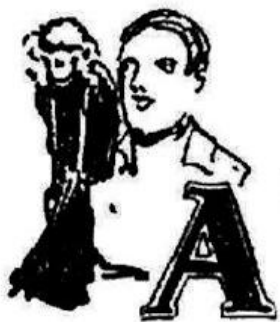
"Well, yes," admitted Arthur.

"Well, my pets know a sportsman when they see one," nodded Willy coolly. "If they say so—then everything is O.K.! A friend of theirs, Castleton, is a friend of mine."

And Arthur Castleton understood.

CHAPTER 16.

A Curious Change!



ARTHUR flushed somewhat under Willy's frank scrutiny.

"Yes, my pets always know," went on Willy.

"I can only assume that the chaps have made a bloomer somewhere. We're friends,

Castleton—and I don't care who knows it. Of course, I'm taking it for granted that you're willing to be friends."

"Yes, rather!" replied Arthur promptly.

"I hate being enemies with anyone."

"That's all right, then," said Willy cheerfully. "When you've finished with old Marmy, I'll put him up in his cage again. I've been cleaning it out. Would you like to have a look at Rupert?"

"Rupert?"

"Yes, and Septimus—and Sebastian!"

"More of your pets, I suppose?" asked Arthur, with a smile.

"Yes, here's old Septimus the Squirrel," said Willy. "And here's Rupert the Rat. And——"

"Hallo!" said a new voice. "What on earth——"

Nipper came in, with Boz prancing round him. Boz was his little spaniel, and he had just been out for his morning frisk. Willy stopped speaking, and watched Boz with interest. Willy had great faith in the sagacity of animals—and he knew perfectly well that animals could pick out a sportsman much sooner than any human being. If an animal took to a fellow, then Willy regarded him as true blue. And there was a great deal of truth in Willy's point of view.

"You seem to be getting on well together," said Nipper, staring.

"Yes," said Arthur. "We've just been—Oh, I'm sorry!" he added, colouring. "I thought you were speaking to me for a moment."

"So, I was," said Nipper.

"But I'm in Coventry."

"H'm! I suppose you are," said Nipper. "All the same——"

He broke off, watching Boz. For Boz had suddenly commenced prancing round Arthur, and was barking joyously. He had given one or two preliminary sniffs—cautious sniffs. These had evidently satisfied him, for he was now doing everything in his power to let Arthur know that he was friendly, and in the mood for a game. There were no half-and-half measures about Boz. He either growled at a chap and hung back, with his tail between his legs—or he barked with joy, and pranced round and round.

"There you are!" said Willy, with a nod. "I thought old Boz would act like that! He's come to the same conclusion as Marmaduke and Priscilla. Pretty clear evidence, eh?"

"Evidence of what?" asked Nipper.

"Oh, cheese it!" protested Willy. "Do you think old Boz would make friends with Castleton like this if Castleton was a rotter? I'd like to have you know, Nipper, that Castleton is one of my pals!"

Arthur smiled in that wonderful way of his.

"Yes, we've just made friends," he explained.

"So I see," said Nipper slowly.

He was aware of a dull feeling of added

surprise. There was really something very attractive about that smile of Arthur's. His whole personality, too, exuded something intangibly likeable. What on earth had come over this chap? Previously, he had been so detestable. Now he was exactly the opposite. In all his actions, and in every word he uttered, he was proving that he was filled with decent instincts. Nipper was frankly puzzled.

The behaviour of Boz was significant, too. Boz hated and detested Wallace & Co. If any of those fellows came near him, he growled and showed his teeth. And here he was, making the most friendly overtures towards Castleton—and Castleton had been even more disreputable than Wallace & Co.! There was something here that seemed beyond explanation.

"What have you done to yourself lately, Castleton?" asked Nipper bluntly.

"Nothing," replied Arthur, with perfect truth. "At least, I don't think so."

"It doesn't matter what you think—I know there's a tremendous change," said Nipper. "And when Boz takes to you like this, I am inclined to agree with Willy. You can't fool animals. Their instinct tells them on the spot. You're a queer chap, Castleton. I'm jiggered if I quite know what to make of you."

He went out very thoughtfully, and as his footsteps died away Arthur gave a deep sigh.

"What was that for?" asked Willy, as he busied himself with Priscilla's cage.

Arthur started.

"What was what for?" he asked.

"That sigh!"

"Oh, sorry," said Arthur, flushing slightly. "I was thinking about—about—"

"About what?"

"Only footer," said Arthur, with truth. "I'm barred from the team, aren't I?"

He had heard, the previous evening, that Alan had played for the West House once, and had been ordered off the field. That information had given Arthur a very nasty pang. He was a keen footballer himself, and it rather hurt him when he realised that he would not be able to play any games at St. Frank's. True, he was only there for two or three days, but he would have dearly loved an opportunity.

Willy was looking at him in that same curious way.

"Barred from the team, eh?" he said slowly. "Yes, I heard something about it. Why? They accused you of fouling, didn't they? H'm! I think they must have made a mistake."

Arthur flashed.

"I don't think so!" he muttered, remembering what he had heard about Alan.

"Rats!" said Willy. "They must have made a mistake! You needn't worry about playing, if it comes to that. Why not turn out for the Third?"

"What do you mean—turn out for the Third?" he asked eagerly.

"Well, if you're so keen on the game, you can play in the Third forward line, if you like," invited Willy genially. "You play inside-right, don't you?"

"Yes, but—"

"That's all serene, then," nodded Willy. "You're perfectly welcome."

"Thanks awfully—but—but how can you give me permission like this?" asked Arthur.

"How?" repeated Willy. "Aren't I the skipper of the Third Form Eleven? You'll play? Good man! Then that's settled."



CHAPTER 17.

Willy's Surprise!

WILLY HANDFORTH relied blindly on the judgment of his pets. Without asking any questions, or without going into any details of Castleton's past, he was quite satisfied that this fellow was all serene! And if he wanted a game of football, and the Remove wouldn't give him one—well, the Third was open! That was Willy's simple way of looking at it.

"This is awfully good of you, Handforth minor!" said Arthur, with gratitude. "I didn't know the Third played the Remove—I didn't think it was usual."

"It isn't usual," replied Willy calmly. "And those Remove chaps will probably have a fit when I suggest it. But I feel like giving them a bit of a surprise. If they won't let you play for the Remove—well, you'll have to play against the Remove! Then perhaps they'll realise your value!"

"Oh, rot!" said Arthur, flushing. "I'm not much of a footballer."

"We'll see about that," replied Willy, with a nod. "Well, so-long, old son—see you after lessons. In the meantime, I'll fix up that game."

He strolled out, and Arthur decided not to go for his spin, after all. He was feeling much better now—much happier. There was only one thought which brought a pang to his mind.

What was Alan doing?

Alan, of course, was at St. Jim's now—in Arthur's shoes. And while Arthur was repairing Alan's reputation at St. Frank's, it seemed highly probable that Alan was ruining Arthur's at St. Jim's!

Arthur shrugged his shoulders, and accepted the position philosophically. He was doing good here, anyway—and he was beginning to feel glad that he had come. And if Alan did his name harm at St. Jim's—well, he would easily be able to put things right when he got back.

Willy found Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon waiting for him just round the angle of the Ancient House. They looked at him rather wrathfully.

"Were you speaking to Castleton just now?" asked Chubby Heath.

"Yes. Why?"

"Oh, nothing—only you're not so particular as you used to be," replied Chubby tartly. "I suppose you know that Castleton is a rotter, don't you?"

"I don't know anything of the sort!" replied Willy.

"Why, you ass, he's a rank outsider!" said Juicy Lemon, staring. "He's been sent to Coventry by the Remove, and——"

"The Remove is dotty!" interrupted Willy. "The Remove is off its rocker! It's a pity they don't know a good man when they see him!"

"A good man!" gasped his chums in one voice.

"Yes!" said Willy. "There's nothing wrong with Castleton. My pets have proved that."

"Your pets?" yelled Chubby Heath.

"Exactly!"

"But—but you don't judge a chap by what your pets do, do you?"

"There's no better way of judging," replied Willy. "And I don't want to hear any more of this rot, either. I've invited Castleton to play footer for the Third, and I'm now going to fix up a match against the Remove!"

He left his chums fanning themselves. He had given them two surprises. It was startling enough to learn that Castleton had been invited to play for the Third—but it was even more startling to hear that the Third was to play a match against the Remove!

Willy went straight to Nipper, and found him on the Ancient House steps, chatting with Handforth, Fullwood, Reggie Pitt, and one or two others. Curiously enough they, too, were talking about football.

"Just the subject I was going to broach," said Willy coolly, as he joined them. "Can I have a word with you, Nipper?"

"Speak on, youth!" said Nipper.

"You're the junior skipper, and I challenge you to a match this afternoon," said Willy carelessly. "How is it? Can I look upon it as fixed?"

He found many pairs of eyes glaring at him.

"You want a match with the Remove?" said Handforth, in amazement.

"Yes!"

"Then you must be dotty!" said his major tartly. "Do you think we'd play with kids?"

"If you don't play, I shall take it for granted that you're afraid to meet us," said Willy coolly. "Of course, it won't be a proper game—there isn't time after lessons. My idea is to have an hour's play—thirty minutes each way. How's that? And the Third guarantees to give you a jolly good game."

Nipper chuckled.

"What do you say, you chaps?" he asked. "There's nothing fixed for this afternoon, except some practice. And even a game

with the Third is better than a kick-about."

"Might as well," grinned Reggie Pitt. "It'll be rather a lark to see how many goals we can score. At a rough estimate, I should imagine we'll win by about twenty-five goals to nil!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You're quite right about that estimate being rough!" said Willy, with a nod. "It is rough—very rough! You'd better play your full team, or you might not even win at all! The Third isn't such a bad crowd at football!"

"Well, we'll give you this game, young fellow-me-lad," said Nipper, with a chuckle. "You deserve it for your nerve. We'll turn out immediately after lessons, eh? All right—that's fixed."

Willy went off, happy. He generally had cheek enough for anything, and he had secured this much more easily than he had anticipated.

He reported to Arthur shortly afterwards.

"It's all right, old son," he said cheerfully. "The match is fixed, and you'll turn out for the Third."

And, when afternoon lessons were over, Arthur Castleton donned the Third's colours, and came on to the field with the rest of the fag team.

The Removites were already on the field, and there were many shouts when Arthur was seen in the Third Form Eleven. They were shouts of surprise—and shouts of anger.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Handforth, staring. "Is that Castleton wearing the Third's colours?"

"Yes, by Jove!" said Pitt. "He's turning out for the Third! So this was why Willy challenged us! What the dickens is the young fathead up to?"

"Goodness knows!" replied Nipper, frowning. "But I rather think he's gone too far this time!"



CHAPTER 18.

Playing the Game.

JUST a minute, Willy!"

Nipper uttered that remark, and Willy Handforth turned. He found that Nipper was looking

very grave.

"What's the matter?" asked Willy.

"Did you invite Castleton to play for your side?" asked Nipper.

"Yes. What of it?"

"I don't think you ought to have put him in, that's all," replied Nipper quietly.

"Rats!" said Willy. "You fellows haven't given him a proper chance. That's obvious—because I know for a fact that he's a decent fellow."

Arthur was standing within earshot, and his ears and his cheeks were burning. He was feeling sorry, now, that he had accepted Willy's invitation. He had not anticipated anything like this.

"It's all very well for you to play these tricks, Willy, but they won't do," went on Nipper. "You know what happened the last time Castleton played, don't you? He was ordered off the field by the referee!"

"I don't care about last time," said Willy. "Castleton is in my team, and I'm the skipper. He's playing inside-right, and it's like your nerve to criticise my selection! I'm not saying anything about your men, am I?"

"That sort of tone won't do, young 'un," said Nipper gruffly. "You know jolly well that the cases are different. I'll have a word with Castleton, anyhow."

He looked at Arthur, and his face was still grave.

"Castleton, we don't want any of your old tricks," went on Nipper. "We had enough of them the other day—when you turned out for the West House!"

"I—I— Yes!" said Arthur, in a low voice.

He had flushed to the roots of his hair, and most of the juniors near him were feeling very uncomfortable.

"If you ask me," said Handforth, "I'm jolly pleased with Willy for giving this chap another chance! I'm blessed if I can understand it, but I believe we were a bit too hasty with him. He seems so jolly decent now. Not, of course, that he'll ever score while I'm in the Remove goal!"

Arthur looked straight at Nipper.

"I give you my word of honour," he said quietly, "that I won't foul in this game."

"That's all right!" said Nipper. "You needn't—"

"If I fouled in the previous game, I am very sorry, and I deeply regret it," went on Arthur. "Perhaps I was a cad—perhaps I was several kinds of a blackguard. And perhaps I'm beginning to learn sense now. Who knows? Anyhow, you needn't worry about this game. I'll play cleanly."

Nothing more was said, but all the members of the Remove Eleven regarded Arthur Castleton in a curious way. They simply couldn't understand him. Once again he had expressed his regret—he had voiced his sorrow. And he had done it with such obvious sincerity that it was impossible to disbelieve him. It was impossible to imagine that he was pulling their legs—that he was a bluffer. Never before had they seen such earnestness as they saw in this new Castleton. He had changed completely!

And they thought so still more after the game had started.

Arthur himself was filled with a new burning resolve.

Here was another task for him. Alan had misbehaved himself on the football field—had fouled—and had been sent off by the referee. As a footballer he was held in scorn and con-

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tempt. It was Arthur's task to repair that matter—to retrieve Alan's name.

And so he was very grateful to Willy for having given him this opportunity. He knew well enough that he would never have played for the Remove; for having fouled once he would not have had the chance to foul again.

In a way, Arthur had to thank Marmaduke and Priscilla for his present position. For it was Willy's pets who had done the trick.

Arthur grimly resolved to play the game, and to play it for all he was worth. He was eager and anxious to score a goal for the Third to justify Willy in having selected him.

There were only a few fellows round the ropes. It was a fine afternoon, and the sun was shining, but the wind was cold and biting. There was nothing of particular interest in this game to attract the Remove or the Fourth. A good number of Third-Formers were in evidence, but they hardly counted. The game was only a farce, anyhow. The Third was bound to be whacked by a tremendous lot of goals. That was the way everybody looked at it.

But Nipper knew well enough that the Third was not to be sneezed at. Under Willy's guidance the fags were playing really good football. Now and again perhaps when they got excited, they were liable to bunch up into scrums as though they were playing Rugby; but Willy managed to keep them well under control in the main.

And it wasn't long before the Remove players received a big surprise.

For Castleton not only revealed excellent form as a forward, but he proved himself to be unselfish and sporting in every one of his movements. Two or three times within the first five or six minutes he had an opening to score, but unselfishly passed the ball to Willy, who was playing centre-forward. And Willy took great pleasure in potting at his major between the Remove sticks.

"Don't leave it to me so much, old man," muttered Willy, after a while, as he found himself running near Arthur. "Next time you get a good chance to score—go for it! Don't bother about me. We want goals, old man. Think what a victory it'll be if we can whack the Remove!"

Before the first half was ten minutes old a curious phenomenon had taken place.

Fellows were coming up to the ropes continuously, and they were soon shouting and cheering. This game had suddenly taken on an aspect of importance. For curiously enough the Remove was finding it very difficult to get past the Third's defence. And there was Arthur Castleton, too. Castleton was playing like a good 'un. Castleton was playing the game. Never a sign of a foul, never a mis-kick! His ball control was glorious to watch, and his runs down the centre of the field, tricking opponent after opponent, were a feature of the game.

This was another Castleton indeed!

Previously he had proved himself to be a wash-out on the footer field. But now he

was coming out strongly. He was showing that he possessed as much prowess at this game as any member of the regular Junior Eleven.



CHAPTER 19.

A Staggerer!

GOAL!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It had been a very simple goal—a gift.

Dicky Jones and Tommy Hobbs, the Third Form backs, had had a little misunderstanding, and Reggie Pitt had run clean through, Owen minor, the Third Form goalie, coming out to meet him. And the way in which Reggie had made a ring round Owen minor had caused the great laugh from the ropes.

"Never mind!" said Willy. "We'll have our revenge soon!"

"Don't you believe it," said one of the other Third-Formers. "We shall be a laughing-stock over this game. They'll simply walk all over us!"

Willy glared.

"If you've got that spirit, my lad, it's very probable that they might!" he replied tartly. "We're playing to win, understand!"

And very soon after that the crowd undoubtedly got a staggerer. For one of the Third Form half-backs, tapping the ball forward, gave Arthur Castleton a glorious opportunity. In a flash he had the leather at his feet, and then he was off.

"Shoot!" yelled Willy. "You're on-side, old man! Don't trouble about passing! Shoot!"

But McClure, one of the Remove backs, was rushing up. He was barring Arthur's progress.

"It's all right," said Handforth, grinning to the spectators behind the nets. "Just you watch Mac rob him of the ball."

"It's quite likely the rotter will foul him," said somebody in the crowd.

But Arthur, with the utmost coolness in the world, stopped dead in his tracks, and tapped the ball a yard or two to his left. McClure rushed past, and then Arthur went on again. Two other Remove men were running at him, but he steadied himself.

"Shoot!" shrieked Willy.

And Arthur Castleton shot. There was something deadly in that kick of his. It hurtled from his boot like a bullet, rising as it went goalwards. Handforth made a wild leap for it, but he had no chance. The leather entered just at the corner and fell at the back of the net.

"Goal!"

"Oh, ripping shot!"

"Oh, good shot, Castleton!"

And, indeed, it had been one of the finest shots that the juniors had seen that season. Handforth picked himself up, and stared dazedly at the ball.

"How the dickens did that happen?" he asked blankly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good man, Castleton!" said Nipper warmly as he looked at Arthur. "That was a great shot of yours!"

"But I'm playing against you," smiled Arthur.

"That doesn't matter," said Nipper with a chuckle. "The more goals you can score the better we shall be pleased. Any fellow who can beat Handy is a ripping forward. And the next time perhaps you won't be playing for the Third."

"By Jove!" murmured Arthur. "You mean that?"

"If you keep up this form, old man, you'll have another chance in the Remove," replied Nipper. "I don't pretend to understand what this change in you means, but it's a pretty staggering change."

Arthur wondered, as he recommenced playing, if he was wise in playing at all. Perhaps the fellows would begin to jump to the truth. Obviously Alan had been a very detestable character at St. Frank's, and the alteration was so abrupt that everybody was talking.

This present match, of course, was only a friendly sort of game, and a curtailed game at that. But it was a very astonishing affair for all that.

For the Third Formers, encouraged by that equalising goal, concentrated hard on defence, and although the Remove tried hard, they only scored another goal.

But Arthur, for the Third, scored two more! It was a humiliating fact, but a fact nevertheless, that when the two teams left the field the Third were the winners. But nobody begrudged them their victory.

"Well done, you fags!" said Nipper heartily.

"Rats!" grinned Willy. "You mean well done Castleton! He scored the goals for us, and he kept the forward-line together. You Remove chaps must be dotty! Fancy not playing a man like that! One of the cleanest footballers I ever saw."

"True words, O youth of wisdom!" said Reggie Pitt, nodding. "Perhaps we were blind until now. Anyhow, you seem to have discovered Castleton's true worth. He played a lovely game this afternoon, and clean from start to finish."

"Well done, Castleton!"

"Good man!"

"Yes, and every one of those three shots were unstoppable," said Handforth defensively. "Why, a First Division man couldn't have dealt with them. They were like cannon-balls!"

"Good old Castleton!"

What a change! The fellows were standing round congratulating Arthur warmly. They felt that he was redeeming himself. Little did they imagine that it was Arthur redeeming Alan.

"You aren't the same chap as you were, Castleton," declared Buster Boots without

realising that he was saying the literal truth. "You're absolutely changed!"

And when Arthur escaped, he went into the West House and changed, glowing with health and happiness. He had been cheered! The fellows had actually cheered him! Within the space of twenty-four hours—even less—he had brought about a complete alteration in the attitude of his Form fellows. Even that punishment of the previous evening had been forgotten. He was no longer in Coventry—by mutual consent. Nobody had said anything, but they were all speaking to him as though he had never been sentenced to Coventry at all.

He was getting on famously.

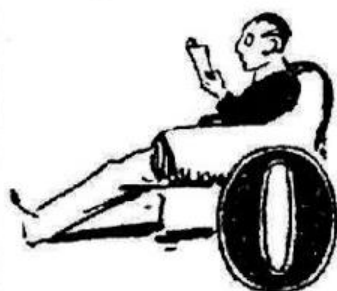
He came down after changing, and went to his study. He entered in an absent-minded mood, glowing with the thoughts that were in his mind. And Lord Pippinton, who was at the table, looked round hurriedly and his face went extremely red.

"Oh—ah!" he said confusedly. "I mean, rather!"

"Sorry if I'm intruding," said Arthur, hesitating in the doorway.

"Not at all," replied old Pippy with haste. "Oh, no! You want to come in, what? Rather! Walk in, old man! So that, I mean, is that!"

His manner was very peculiar, his actions still more peculiar. Never had Arthur seen a fellow so absolutely confused.



CHAPTER 20.

The Mysterious Letter!

OBVIOUSLY old Pippy wanted to be alone.

That fact was absolutely evident. And Arthur, with a smile and a nod, turned towards the door again.

"All right," he said. "I'll come in later."

He went out, and closed the door. Although he had smiled, he was feeling just a little unhappy. Lord Pippinton, it seemed, had not responded to his slight overtures. Arthur had not made any great attempt to be friendly with Lord Pippinton—but, on the other hand, he had done nothing to alienate his study mate. But Pippy was a very simple youth; he nearly always went about in a sort of trance, and he had probably noticed no difference in Castleton.

He was certainly very pleased to see the door close, and to find himself alone again.

"Deuced awkward!" he muttered, in a bewildered kind of way. "I mean, all this secrecy!"

He picked up a letter from the table. He had been reading it as Arthur had come in—reading it for about the tenth time that day. It had arrived by the mid-day post, and old Pippy had been very worried ever since.

It was signed by a Mr. Christopher Hadow, and old Pippy knew that this



"Interfering young puppy!" snarled the gaunt man and, seizing hold of Castleton and Lord Pippinton, he pushed them both into the bog—from the clinging depths of which it would be impossible for them to escape!

gentleman was his father's lawyer. It was quite brief, and there was no address upon it. Lord Pippinton, reading it, saw these words:

"My dear Clarence,—Your father has asked me to have a word with you in private—and the matter in hand is so excessively important that I am reluctant to come to the school, for fear of causing comment. Therefore, I want you to meet me near the old farm buildings between St. Frank's and Edgemore, after your lessons for the day are over. Say, at about six o'clock.

"You cannot mistake the way. You must leave St. Frank's by the senior playing-fields, and then take the footpath which leads to Edgemore. After leaving the playing-fields, you cross a stile, and the footpath is before you. I shall be expecting you shortly after six. Do not fail me.

"There is one other very important thing. Burn this letter as soon as you have read it. I cannot explain the matter now, but I will repeat that it is vitally urgent.

Your father insists upon me taking this course.

"CHRISTOPHER HADDOW."

Lord Pippinton put the letter down again. "Over the senior playing-fields," he murmured. "Now, let me see. Oh, yes, rather! Big Side, I suppose? The absolute thing! And then along the jolly old footpath! All the same, it's rummy. Very rummy. In fact, jolly rummy!"

In all St. Frank's, there was no more simple youth than Lord Pippinton. Archie Glenthorne was a tower of brain-power compared to old Pippy.

And there was nothing else for it but for him to go. That, of course, was the obvious thing to do. He couldn't understand what on earth it meant, but he believed that Mr. Haddow would explain things when they met.

It never occurred to Lord Pippinton that it was most peculiar for the family lawyer to communicate with him in this way—and to request a meeting on a lonely footpath at dusk.

He threw the letter into the fire, agitated

by the fact that quarter-past six had just struck. It was getting very dusky outside—and some heavy banks of cloud overhead did not help matters.

Lord Pippinton went out, donned his overcoat, and then set forth.

Nobody saw him go, since all the fellows were indoors. He wandered off towards Big Side, and crossed the playing-fields in a thoughtful mood. He found the stile all right, and then went along the footpath. He had ceased to wonder why he was being fetched out here. He only knew that it was a deucedly uncomfortable business. A few drops of rain were falling now, and there was every indication that more rain was to come.

The footpath went quite near to the river in one place, and the surface was very muddy. It was so muddy that Lord Pippinton found himself ankle-deep in the wretched stuff before long. Progress was very slow—very bad from every point of view.

But he did not turn back.

He had been asked to come—and he was coming. To old Pippy's simple mind, there was nothing else for it. And then, abruptly—without the slightest warning—he found himself floundering in a veritable sea of mud. The footpath was like a bog under his feet. It was no longer solid, no longer a mere muddy path, but a morass.

"Oh, I say!" protested old Pippy, in distress.

He had no idea of danger. He merely thought he was getting himself into a nasty mess. But when he tried to extricate himself he found, to his vague dismay, that he could not do so. He was sinking deeper and deeper, and when he tried to withdraw his legs from that awful bog, they only went down further. Already, he was in that sinister mud nearly to his middle. And the more he struggled the greater grew its grip!

From a tree-top, half a mile distant, a figure was gazing at the scene through a pair of binoculars. Even in the dusk it was possible for this figure to see the struggling form of Lord Pippinton! The view was an excellent one, for there was no tree or bush intervening.

"Now I have got him!" muttered the man with the binoculars. "Splendid—splendid! There will be no trace—nothing to connect me with this tragedy! He came along this footpath merely for a walk, unknown to a soul. There will be no other footprints—no tell-tale evidence. Just a little accident—an unfortunate mishap! Splendid—splendid!"

And the man with those binoculars was the gaunt stranger who had been lurking about St. Frank's so much of late! The queer old man who several times before had attempted to take Lord Pippinton's life! And now, it seemed, his object had been gained!

For the unfortunate schoolboy peer was hopelessly gripped in the bog. His struggles were worse than useless, and when he raised his voice, appealing for help—knowing, at last, that his life was in danger—it carried no

way. There was no house within half-a-mile—no living being near him!

Old Pippy's predicament was dire, indeed!

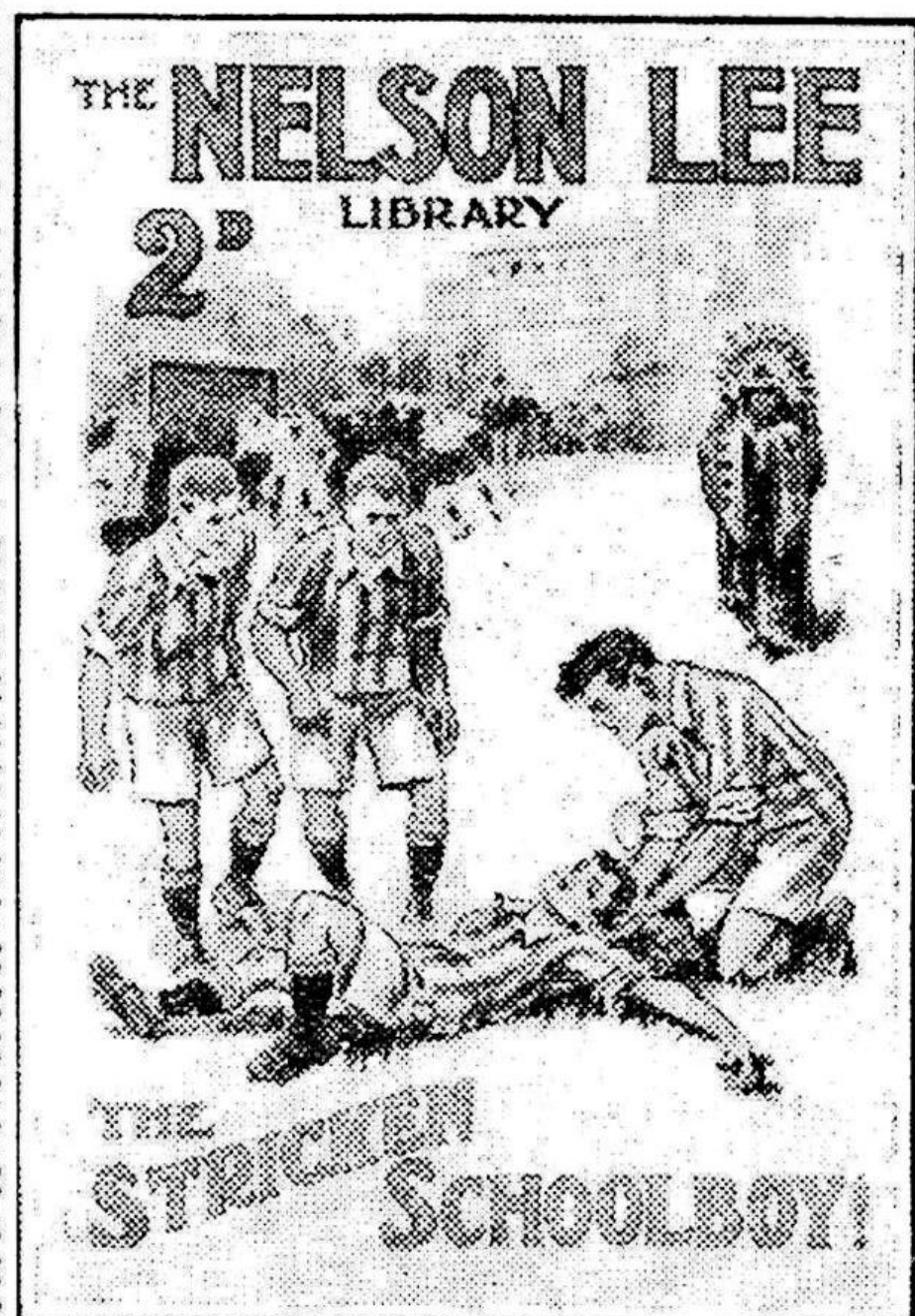


CHAPTER 21.

On Pippy's Trail.

ARTHUR CASTLETON went into Study S, and noted that the room was now empty. Only a quarter of an hour had elapsed, and Arthur had come back to fetch some of his—or, rather, Alan's—books. He

NEXT WEDNESDAY! ~~~~~



wanted to do his prep., and yet, at the same time, he had no desire to turn Lord Pippinton out.

"He's gone!" he murmured. "I wonder why the chap was so startled? If I didn't know him to be such a duffer, I should have thought that he was up to something fishy."

Arthur decided to do his prep. in the study now. He sat down at the table, and then noticed that the fire was getting very low. It was chilly in the room, too. He hadn't switched on the electric light, for there was still sufficient daylight left.

He went to the fireplace, and commenced poking the dying embers. There was some

coal in the box, and, picking out one or two knobs, prepared to throw them on. Then he noticed a paper in the fender—a half-burnt sheet of notepaper, which had evidently fallen out of the grate. It would serve to give a little light to the dying fire.

He picked it up, and, with his thoughts far away, he automatically read a few of the words on the face of it. He didn't really mean to read them, but he did so unconsciously. And one or two of the words impressed him—although, at first, he did not quite realise this. Then he started guiltily.

"Oh, I say, I believe I've been reading one of old Pippy's letters!" he muttered, flushing. "Perhaps that's why he was looking so confused when I came in."

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He had seen the instructions of Mr. Christopher Haddow that the letter should be burnt! He had also seen that Lord Pippinton was to go along the Edgemore footpath, and that the time for meeting was to be about six o'clock. He burnt the paper before he could read any more.

"Rats!" he muttered. "I hate prying into another chap's affairs! No business of mine!"

He made the fire up, and then prepared to go on with his work. But, somehow, he couldn't quite settle down to it. He could hear the rain pattering on the window-panes, and he decided it was time for him to switch

on the electric light. But before doing so, he hesitated.

He was rather anxious to get on good terms with Lord Pippinton. After all, the fellow was his study-mate, and he had evidently formed a very bad opinion of Alan. If possible, Arthur wanted to eradicate that opinion. It occurred to him that it might be a good thing for him to wander idly along that Edgemore footpath, and to "accidentally" meet Lord Pippinton on his way back. In that way they would have a chance of talking together, and perhaps Arthur might be able to show Old Pippy that he was a perfectly harmless sort of chap. It really hurt Arthur to be on bad terms with anybody, and Pippy was such an innocent sort of fellow that it seemed a shame that there should be any bad blood between them.

He made up his mind on the spot, and left the study. The whole thing was purely accidental—sheer chance—and Arthur would have been surprised if he had known how much depended upon this simple action of his.

He went to the cloak-room, donned his overcoat, and then prepared to go out. Reggie Pitt came dashing in at that moment.

"You're not going out, are you?" he asked, in surprise.

"Just for a little stroll," said Arthur.

"My dear ass, it's raining!"

"Rain won't hurt me," smiled Arthur. "Besides, I want to meet old Pippy. I think he's gone out somewhere, and—and— Well, I want to get friendly with him, if I can."

Pitt gave him a straight look.

"You beat me, Castleton!" he said frankly. "Somehow, I can't help believing you. You're so completely changed to what you were."

"That's what the others tell me," said Arthur quietly.

"I don't wonder at it; we're all noticing it," replied Pitt. "Well, go out, if you want to, and good luck to you!"

"I want to go along the Edgemore footpath," said Arthur. "I don't seem to remember which way it is. Across Big Side, isn't it?"

He realised that he would have to go carefully. Of course, he was supposed to know the St. Frank's geography pretty well. But, in reality, he hardly knew anything about it.

"The Edgemore footpath?" said Reggie, with a frown. "You mustn't go that way, you chump!"

"Why not?"

"What do you mean—why not?" said Reggie, staring. "You know about the Edgemore footpath, don't you?"

"Know about it?"

"My only hat!" said Pitt. "What the dickens is the matter with your memory? What did Mr. Stokes tell us two days ago?"

Arthur, who hadn't been here two days ago, pretended to look thoughtful. He realised that he had hit upon one of those little snags that he had been in constant fear of.

"I—I don't seem to remember," he replied.

"Then you ought to remember!" said Pitt sternly. "A man was nearly killed on that Edgemore footpath on Monday—dragged down by the bog. That part of the path has been under water, and it's the most dangerous place in the whole district. They're talking about putting up a fence, but you know what these local councils are! By the time they put the fence up the place will be safe again!"

"A bog?" repeated Arthur, with a start. "But—but you don't mean——"

"Of course I mean it!" interrupted Pitt. "The man was dragged down, and very nearly killed. If he hadn't been as strong as a horse, he would never have got free. A chap of your size couldn't possibly do it. Once you were caught in that bog, you'd be dragged down, and——"

"But—but Lord Pippinton has gone along that footpath!" shouted Arthur, in great alarm.

"What!"

"At least, I believe so!" continued Arthur. "He didn't say so, but—but—— Look here, I'd better not wait! If Pippinton's in danger, I shall have to go and see what can be done!"

And, without another word, Arthur brushed past the astonished Reggie Pitt, and ran down the West House steps. For a second he paused in confusion, having forgotten in which direction Big Side lay. Then he ran up the Triangle, slipped round the angle of the Ancient House, and made off towards Big Side. A great fear had gripped his heart. Somebody had made an appointment with Lord Pippinton along that footpath—obviously unaware of its treacherous condition. The only thing to do was to get there as quickly as possible, and to satisfy himself that old Pippy wasn't in any danger!



CHAPTER 22.

Just in Time!

THE rain was coming down in earnest as Arthur ran along the Edgemore footpath, but he hardly noticed it. He was looking for Lord Pippinton. Everything was very bleak out here. In that evening light, the fields and the meadows looked desolate and even sinister. The clouds were massing overhead, and a wind was springing up.

Arthur did not quite know why, but he had a feeling of great alarm within him. He was tremendously perturbed. He had some foreboding of deadly peril.

Perhaps he was all wrong. Perhaps he would soon come across Lord Pippinton, and then——

"Help! Help!"

Vaguely, out of the gloom ahead, came that frantic cry. So faint was it that Arthur, for a moment, thought that his

imagination had played him false. He halted in his tracks, and stood there, panting heavily. There wasn't a living soul in sight. In the distance, he could see the twinkling lights of the school buildings. All around him there was nothing but the desolate countryside.

"Hallo!" he sang out, at the top of his voice. "Who's there?"

Then he listened tensely.

"Help!" came the voice again, borne faintly on the wind. "Oh, I say, help!"

It was the frantic voice of Lord Pippinton—a voice that was feeble with weakness. Without wasting another second, Arthur tore along the path, his feet sinking into the awful mud. He turned a bend, and then came within sight of a stretch where the ground was all boggy and soft. A little distance ahead he could see something in the mire—a small object, on the surface. With a start of horror, Arthur realised that he was looking upon Lord Pippinton's head and shoulders! The unfortunate junior had sunk almost completely, until only his head and shoulders were out of the bog! That dreadful quagmire had drawn him down, and was still tugging tenaciously.

"Pippy!" shouted Arthur.

"Keep back, old thing—keep back!" warned Lord Pippinton in a feeble voice. "You can't get near me—it's all this frightful mud!"

"Hold tight, Pippy!" said Arthur, between his teeth. "We'll soon have you out of there!"

The danger never occurred to him. Here was a fellow human being about to be sucked down into the ghastly morass. There was only one thing to do—go to his rescue!

At first, Arthur dashed recklessly along the path, and only turned back when he realised that, if he was not careful, he would get himself into the same predicament as Pippy.

So he pulled himself back and stood for a moment, horrified. What could he do? How could he reach this unfortunate boy? He was alone—quite alone! And then his eyes fell upon some hurdles which were lying in a disordered heap nearby.

Hurdles!

The very thing. With his feet being dragged into the mire, Arthur sogged across to those hurdles, and seized one of them. It was only with the utmost difficulty that he dragged it away. It required every ounce of his strength, for the hurdle was heavy. But he had compressed his lips, and he was determined to save the unfortunate Pippy.

He did not know that the gaunt stranger had climbed down from that tree, half a mile distant, and that this man was now rushing up, positively mad with fury. For he could see that his victim was about to be rescued! And his rage knew no bounds. After all his trouble—this other boy was to wreck everything!

Arthur, having placed the hurdle in position, crawled over its surface, and he noted with dismay that it was gradually sinking

below the sloppy surface. But, at least, it enabled him to get to Lord Pippinton's side. At the very edge of the hurdle he leaned over and reached for his lordship's hands, which were blue with cold.

"Hold tight, old man!" said Arthur hoarsely. "Grab me, and just let yourself go—I'll do the rest!"

"Thanks awfully!" muttered old Pippy. "I'm in a frightful mess!"

Inch by inch, Arthur succeeded in getting Pippy extricated. But it was a terrible struggle—and he was in constant danger of being caught in that mire himself. But he was winning. By dint of ceaseless effort, he was winning. And then, at this dramatic period, the stranger came bursting into view.

He was gesticulating wildly, and he jumped on to that hurdle in one gigantic leap—a mad, insane jump.

"Die!" he snarled. "Both of you—both of you!"

Arthur turned, amazed and startled.

"Who are you?" he gasped. "Why don't you help? This poor chap is being sucked under——"

"Yes, and so will you be sucked under!" interrupted the gaunt old man. "Interfering young puppy! Scoundrelly young rascal!"

He was almost incoherent with fury, and to Arthur's horror he was pushed back—pushed into the very heart of the bog, together with the boy he was rescuing! In hopeless confusion they both sank into that mud—and the situation looked desperate indeed.

And then came shouts—many shouts!

In fact, half the Remove arrived on the scene—brought thither by Reggie Pitt, who had acted promptly after Castleton had gone.

"Help!" shouted out Arthur frantically. "There's a madman here! He's trying to kill the pair of us!"

"By George!" roared Handforth. "Did you hear that?"

They had all heard it, and the events of the next few minutes were exciting in the extreme. The stranger turned, shouting and gesticulating. There was something truly awful in his wildness. But it was impossible for him to withstand the onslaught of all these schoolboys. He was bowled over, and held down—in spite of his struggles and his ravings.

Help had come in the nick of time!



CHAPTER 23.

The Return of the Prodigal!

LORD PIPPINTON took Arthur's hand warmly. "You saved my life, Castleton!" he said, with much more feeling than he usually expressed. "In another few minutes I should have been under—and you risked

your own life to save mine. I mean, it was rather splendid!"

"No," said Arthur quietly. "There was nothing in it, Pippy. Please don't——"

"But there was!" insisted Lord Pippinton. "You fellows—all of you—Castleton saved my life. He might have been sucked down himself. And that—that fellow who tried to push us in——"

"Never mind about it now, Pippy," interrupted Reggie Pitt gently. "We saved you in the nick of time, and that old stranger has been taken away. By jingo, you told me once before that that man tried to kill you, didn't you? And I thought you had been dreaming! Do you know who he is?"

"No idea," said old Pippy. "Absolute stranger. I thought I was coming to meet Mr. Haddow—the good old family lawyer—but I suppose it was a mix-up. Or perhaps Mr. Haddow is somewhere else?"

"You poor old innocent!" said Nipper gently. "It was a trick—a trick to trap you, Pippy. But, thanks to Castleton, you're safe."

He turned to Arthur and held out his hand.

"Castleton," he said, "I want bygones to be bygones. We're friends from this minute onwards. Any chap who risks his life to save another is true blue—right down to the marrows!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Good old Castleton!"

Arthur was confused and distressed. The fellows were acclaiming him as a hero. All the previous animosity against him—or, to be more exact, against Alan—had been forgotten. He had proved his worth. And the Remove took him to its heart.

Those minutes had been very exciting. The old stranger had fought like a demon—with amazing strength, considering his age. But at last he had been subdued, and now he was a babbling wreck. He was being taken to the school by a whole crowd of fellows—grimly determined to hand him over to the masters, so that they could communicate with the police.

And Arthur and Lord Pippinton, having been dragged out of the bog, were escorted back to the school, too.

Soon after they had arrived, St. Frank's was ringing with the news. The startling news that Castleton had saved Lord Pippinton's life at the risk of his own! Here was a change, indeed!

"What did I tell you?" was Willy Handforth's remark. "Didn't I say that the chap was made of the right stuff? You can't fool my pets!"

And nobody could deny the truth of Willy Handforth's statement.

While the excitement was still at its height, a passenger got out of the early evening train at Bellton Station. He was a boy of about fifteen—a boy with a haggard face, with anxious eyes, with drawn lips. In a word, he was Alan Castleton.

But what a change there was in the wretched Alan!

His superciliousness had left him—his insolence had gone. He was a subdued and chastened Alan.

His despicable action against his twin brother had tortured him ever since the pair had parted company. His conscience had been causing him the utmost agony. And he was remorseful—so remorseful that he was coming back to St. Frank's to face the music—to confess everything—and to ask for Arthur's forgiveness.

So Alan's caddish action had borne good fruit, after all! For it had brought home to him the weaknesses of his own character—it had shown him up in his true light. For the first time in all his life, Alan Castleton knew what a rotter he was.

And now he had come back, repentant and humble. He *must* see Arthur! He *must* confess!

Nothing else in the whole world mattered. The prodigal had returned, and he was a pitiful figure. Nobody knew what torture he had been through at St. Jim's—nobody, that is, but himself. The only way for him to get relief was to find Arthur, and to beg for his forgiveness. Just at that moment, Alan would take great pleasure in confessing his sins.

He hardly remembered getting into the Triangle. And then, to his surprise, he saw that a big motor-car was there. Inspector Jameson, of Bannington, was on the Ancient House steps, talking to Mr. Nelson Lee. There were two or three police in uniform, too—and a prisoner was with them.

What did it all mean?

"Hallo!" said a voice. "I thought you were indoors, Castleton."

Alan turned with a start, and found himself looking at Armstrong, of the East House. And Armstrong was looking at him very curiously.

"Have you heard?" went on Armstrong, evidently eager to impart some news. "This old chap is dotty—clean off his rocker! It seems that he's been trying to kill Old Pippy for some time."

"Kill Old Pippy?" repeated Alan. "Why?"

He was bewildered and confused.

"Well, you saved his life, so you have a right to know!" replied Armstrong genially.

"Saved his life!" muttered Alan, beneath his breath. "What on earth—"

"It seems that this old chap is the head of a big charity—a spoof charity, by the look of it," went on Armstrong. "I heard Mr. Lee telling the inspector all about it. You see, Pippy is the only heir to the Duke of Walsham, and if he pegged out, and then the old duke died, all the money would go to charity. That's the way of it, I think."

"Oh!" said Alan, without even comprehending.

"Rather a cunning wheeze, wasn't it?" said Armstrong. "Nobody would suspect anything when Pippy died—especially as the fortune was going to charity. But this old man is the head of a huge concern for helping waifs and strays, or something. He's dreamed of building an enormous Home, with special gardens and things, and he wanted the Duke of Walsham's money to do it. They say he's clean off his onion, poor old chap! But fancy trying to kill Lord Pippinton! A bit thick, you know!"

Alan Castleton had not heard a word. He was bewildered and dazed.

CHAPTER 24.

Alan's Vow!



WHAT did it all mean? Alan had only comprehended one thing that Armstrong had said. And that was that he—Alan—was supposed to have saved Lord Pippinton's life!

Every one of Alan's ideas were shattered. He had expected to find Arthur being scorned and persecuted. For Alan knew of the hot reception that had awaited him—and he had believed that his twin brother had borne all the brunt of it, and was still bearing it.

He knew nothing of the recent adventure in the bog, and he took no interest whatever in this queer old stranger, who was being led away by the police. Mechanically, he walked into the West House, and found himself looking at the Hon. Douglas Singleton. Singleton was staring at him in a most startled way—as though he were looking at a ghost.

"But—but I can't understand it!" stammered Singleton. "I left you in the common-room a few seconds ago, Castleton!"

"In the common-room?" said Alan eagerly. "Is Arthur in the common-room?"

Singleton was still staring at him, open-eyed.

"I must be going dotty!" he said, passing a hand over his brow. "Not five seconds ago I saw you—"

Alan passed on, having no interest in the Hon. Douglas' mystification. He went straight to the Junior common-room, and walked in. He would find Arthur there—and, in his present mood, he didn't care a toss whether the other fellows were there or not. Perhaps it was all the better to have a crowd—for Alan felt that he wanted a crowd to be there. He wanted to show everybody that he was repentant. He had been living through tortures, and for the first time in his life he was anxious to do the decent thing.

Just inside the doorway of the common-room he halted—staring in amazement. For

there was Arthur, in the midst of a crowd of admiring fellows, including Handforth, Nipper, and all the principal fellows in the Remove and Fourth! And Arthur was being feted—he was being honoured!

It was a staggering surprise for Alan. For Alan had expected to find Arthur in the very depths.

"Arthur!" he said, in a choking voice.

Arthur looked round, startled and surprised.

"Alan!" he shouted, running forward.

"Great Scott!"

"Am I going dotty, or can I see double?" roared Handforth. "By George! There are two of 'em!"

"Ye gods and little fishes!" said Nipper. "Daylight! My only hat! Why the dickens didn't we have sense enough to think of this before? No wonder Castleton has been so different!"

"You—you mean—twins?" asked Reggie Pitt, with a gasp.

"Obviously!" said Nipper, nodding.

Singleton had come in now, and he was no longer fearful that he had lost his wits. The whole common-room was in an uproar. Everybody was shouting at once.

Alan and Arthur Castleton, seemingly unconscious of the tumult around them, were gripping hands.

"I've come back, Arthur!" Alan was saying, in a low, husky voice. "I couldn't stick it at St. Jim's—I couldn't stand it there! Everybody admires you at St. Jim's—everybody thinks you're wonderful! And I knew what a dirty trick I'd played—I knew what a cad I was!"

"Don't!" muttered Arthur, in deep distress.

"But I've got to tell you!" went on Alan fiercely. "I've done nothing to harm you at St. Jim's, Arthur! I've told everybody there—I've told them the truth! Your name was so good that I couldn't besmudge it. I've been an awful rotter—I've been a cad and a beast—but I'll do my best to make up for it. Can you forgive me, Arthur? Can you forget that rotten trick I played on you?"

"My dear old Alan, I've forgotten it already," he said softly.

Alan Castleton gulped, and turned to the startled crowd.

"There's something I want to say to all you fellows!" he exclaimed steadily. "I played the filthiest trick under the sun when I sent my twin brother back here to face the music. I was afraid to come back, and I tricked Arthur into coming in my place. But I was sorry for it afterwards—I knew

what a shabby trick it was, and it tortured me. Arthur really belongs to St. Jim's, and we changed schools. He's the best fellow under the sun—and I'm lucky to have him for a brother. From now onwards I'll try to be worthy."

"Well spoken, old man," said Reggie Pitt quietly. "You're quite right to be proud of your brother. He's one of the best."

"Rather!" said Handforth enthusiastically. "No wonder we were spoofed! These two chaps look so much alike that I can't tell the difference!"

"I've had my lesson!" said Alan, taking pleasure in the mere fact of confessing his faults. "And I swear to all of you—in front of Arthur—that I'll be different in future. I can't tell you what a lesson I've had—or why it was brought home to me so drastically. But from this minute onwards I'll try to be decent—I'll try to be a sportsman!"

And who could say a word against him after such a frank statement as that? Alan Castleton had come back, and he had asked for forgiveness. He had admitted his faults, and he had sworn that he would start afresh. It was characteristic of the Remove that they took him to their hearts, and decided to let bygones be bygones.

But it was many days before the juniors forgot that dramatic minute, when Alan had walked into the common-room of the West House.

As for Gordon Wallace, it might as well be stated at once that he suddenly developed a great dislike for St. Frank's. Much to the disappointment of Gulliver and Bell, he cleared out shortly afterwards. Nobody quite knew how it came about. Perhaps he wrote to his father—perhaps he told a pack of lies about the old school. Anyhow, St. Frank's was not particularly grieved when Gordon Wallace went back to the River House School.

And Arthur went back to St. Jim's—where he belonged—and everything was now all right. For Arthur had cleared his brother's name, and Alan was doing his best to keep to his promise.

There was every indication that he would really start afresh, and nobody doubted that he had the making of an upright fellow in him—that, in time, he might even become as big a sportsman as Arthur himself. It was in the blood—and there was no reason why it should not reveal itself. Indeed, Alan had already proved that he had courage, for there is no greater courage than that of the fellow who admits his faults, and who sets himself to live them down.

THE END.

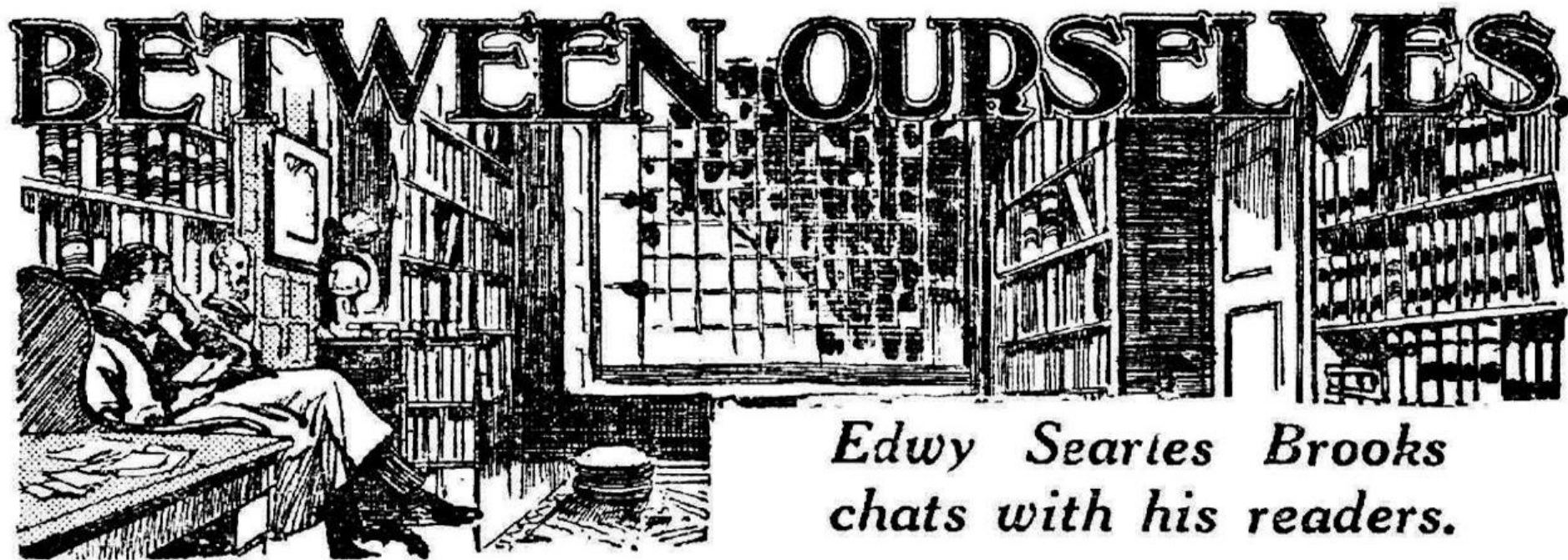
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—FOR NEXT WEDNESDAY!



*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. Letters of very special merit will be distinguished by a star (*) against the sender's name. My photo exchange offer is still open: my autographed photo for yours—but yours first, please.—E.S.B.

SOME of you are probably wondering what happened in regard to the "Big Push" which took place two or three weeks ago. If so, I'm afraid you'll have to keep on wondering—for a few more weeks, at all events. You see, I'm writing this several weeks before the September 17th issue is due to be published. And as I can't see into the future any more than you can, I shall have to wait. It will probably be the beginning of November before I can say anything definite in these columns. You see, the Old Paper goes to press four or five weeks ahead of publication date, and a good many of you, I believe, overlook this important fact. That's why I'm always urging you to be patient, and not to expect to see acknowledgments of your letters for at least five weeks after I have received them. It may be even six or seven weeks, according to the number of letters I have to deal with. Your letters have to await their turn, you know, and sometimes they are put off for two or three weeks, owing to the large numbers of other letters that have been waiting. So don't slang me for neglecting you, or for being a slacker, or anything like that.

* * *

Lionel Elson (Mapperley), "Jo March" (Holloway), Jas. W. D. Asman (Nottingham), "Rossie" (London, N.), Erik Ornerod (Liverpool), Stephen J. Ironfield* (Stockport), Eric Richardson (Hull), Wm. Cragg (Liverpool), Edna and Marie Howlett* (Westcliff-on-Sea), D. V. Derby (Camberwell), C. Brand (Dumfries), Albert Dimock (Walthamstow), A. Pickett (Chester), "Critic" (Portsmouth), Wally Camp* (Edmonton), Flossie R. Fieldhouse (Catford), "Bourgeois"* (Hereford), W. Planner, Jnr. (Battersea), L. Jefferson (Belfast), J. P. W. Hughes (Highgate).

* * *

"Alexis the Mysterious" appeared in No. 221 (Old Series) of Our Paper, and it appeared on August 30th, 1919. I cannot tell

you how many League members there are in Hull, Eric Richardson, but the Chief Officer can probably give you the information you require. As you say, the League is a splendid organisation for bringing boys and girls together from all parts of the world."

* * *

After calling the Congo series "daft," you ask me to print your letter, "Critic." Certainly I will print it, if you want me to—every word of it. You would like others readers to see it, you say. If you will send me your name, and give me permission to print your name and address, together with the letter, you will see it in its entirety in these columns within a few weeks after I have heard from you. I am always agreeable in printing adverse criticism if it is sincere. But I have an idea that a few anonymous writers, such as yourself, who "dare" me to print their letters, are only doing it as a kind of "leg pull." Nothing doing, my lads—unless you give me your full names and addresses.

* * *

Most of your questions, L. Jefferson, are on matters purely editorial. So I should advise you to write to the Editor himself. With regard to question No. 6, Lord Dorrmore and Umlosi were first introduced in "The Ivory Seekers"—No. 105, Old Series, dated June 9th, 1917.

* * *

I should be awfully pleased to hear from your father, J. P. W. Hughes, for he seems to have met me, without me meeting him. I wonder how it happened? Anyhow, this is what you tell me: "I insist that Edwy Searles Brooks is a *nom de plume*, and several people write under that name, for my father knew one of the writers. I don't dare you to announce this letter to the people who read the Best Paper, because I know you will get out of it somehow." Well, I certainly *shall* get out of it, old man. For, as I have said before in these columns, Edwy Searles Brooks is my own

name. Shall I send you my birth certificate to prove it, or will you take my word for it? And whether you believe it or not, every story that has ever appeared under the name "Edwy Searles Brooks" has been written by me. And if you don't like to believe it—well, it won't turn my hair grey!

* * *

Arthur Robinson (East Finchley), Kenneth Petrie* (St. Lambert, Quebec), Eddie Watkins (Christchurch, N.Z.), J. Marshall (Stamford Hill), Muriel Tremayne (Rochdale), Leslie Carter (Birmingham), "A Staunch Supporter" (Farsley, Leeds), E. Savage (Folkestone), Norman Carter (Darlington), Mrs. Winifred Barrow** (Penzance), C. M. Swift (Bognor), F. J. Potter (Biggleswade), Eric Jackson (Seaforth), Harry Gainsford-Payne** (Liverpool), Richard Dunn (Clapton), C. Henderson (Auckland, N.Z.), C. Hepburn* (Aberdeen), Thomas Tomlinson (Poplar), "The Black Trinity" (Plymouth), George Burgess* (Arundel).

* * *

That's a very good idea of yours, Kenneth Petrie, regarding the voting. Your voting, I see, is as follows: 1, Willy Handforth. 2, Edward Oswald Handforth. 3, William Napoleon Browne. 4, Dick Hamilton. 5, Archie Glenthorne. 6, Reggie Pitt. 7, Church. 8, McClure. And your scheme is to give eight points for the first, seven for the second, six for the third, five for the fourth, four for the fifth, three for the sixth, two for the seventh, and one for the eighth. I am repeating this in full, so that other readers shall get the hang of it. Thus, you have given eight points to Willy, and only one to poor old McClure. I have had hundreds and hundreds of letters in response to my invitation, and before long I shall give a result of the voting—and I rather fancy that I shall use your system, and say which character has received the greatest number of points. But don't look out for this for a good few weeks yet. It will take me quite a long time to arrive at the result.

* * *

Thanks for your nice letter, Harry Gainsford-Payne. I am quoting a paragraph of it: "Being a constant reader of 'Between Ourselves,' I have read some criticisms in this page concerning your imaginative literature. This is my answer to these censors. Imagination is the spice of your literature. This, combined with clean and wholesome literature, has made Our Paper a standard paper throughout the world. It is instructive, both morally and practically, instilling us with a spirit of goodwill, keenness, and generosity. It stands out as the best paper there is." I only hope, Harry, that I shall continue to keep up to this mark. I'll do my best, anyhow. The number of the Old Paper in which Cornelius and Nicodemus Trotwood foiled a gang of smugglers is 496 (Old Series),

entitled "The Twins' Terrible Tangle," and dated December 6th, 1924.

* * *

I'll never again believe, C. Hepburn, that Aberdonians are mean. You tell me that you have a kind of club there—and all girls, too—and at the end of each week you buy a NELSON LEE LIBRARY each, and that you also buy any fourpenny books of mine that are being published—also one each—just because you can't wait for one another to finish. Well, it's a libel to say that Aberdonians are mean. Thanks for your enthusiasm. And I'm particularly glad to note that you all "pass them on" when read, as such practical help stamps you as readers of the most valuable kind.

* * *

Irene & Co. first appeared, Thomas Tomlinson, in No. 436 (Old Series), dated October 13th, 1926—"A Rod of Iron."

* * *

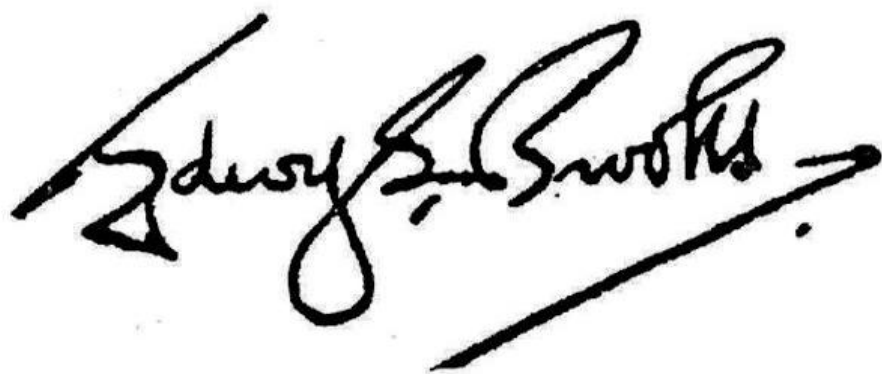
Frank A. Misson (Guernsey), "A Commentator" (Stockwell), Thomas Treadwell** (E.C.2.), James Duncan* (Glass, N.B.), Stanley Edwards, Alec Reid, J. I. R. R., D. G., and H. R. (Edinburgh), A. E. Fletcher, Jr.* (Portsmouth), E. Rubidge (New Cross), J. P. W. Hughes (Highgate), T. Bennett (Darwen), Henry Chas. Brown (Stoke Newington), A. W. Hutson (Newport, Mon.), Reginald Roy Hooks* (Balham), "Sportsman"* (Belfast), Norman Green (Leeds), S. H. Yeo** (Wallasey), "G. E." (Whitecroft-Lydney), J. Marshall* (Stamford Hill), Solomon Arkin (Cape Town), C. S. Raven (Ulverston), Geoff. Johnson (Market Harboro').

* * *

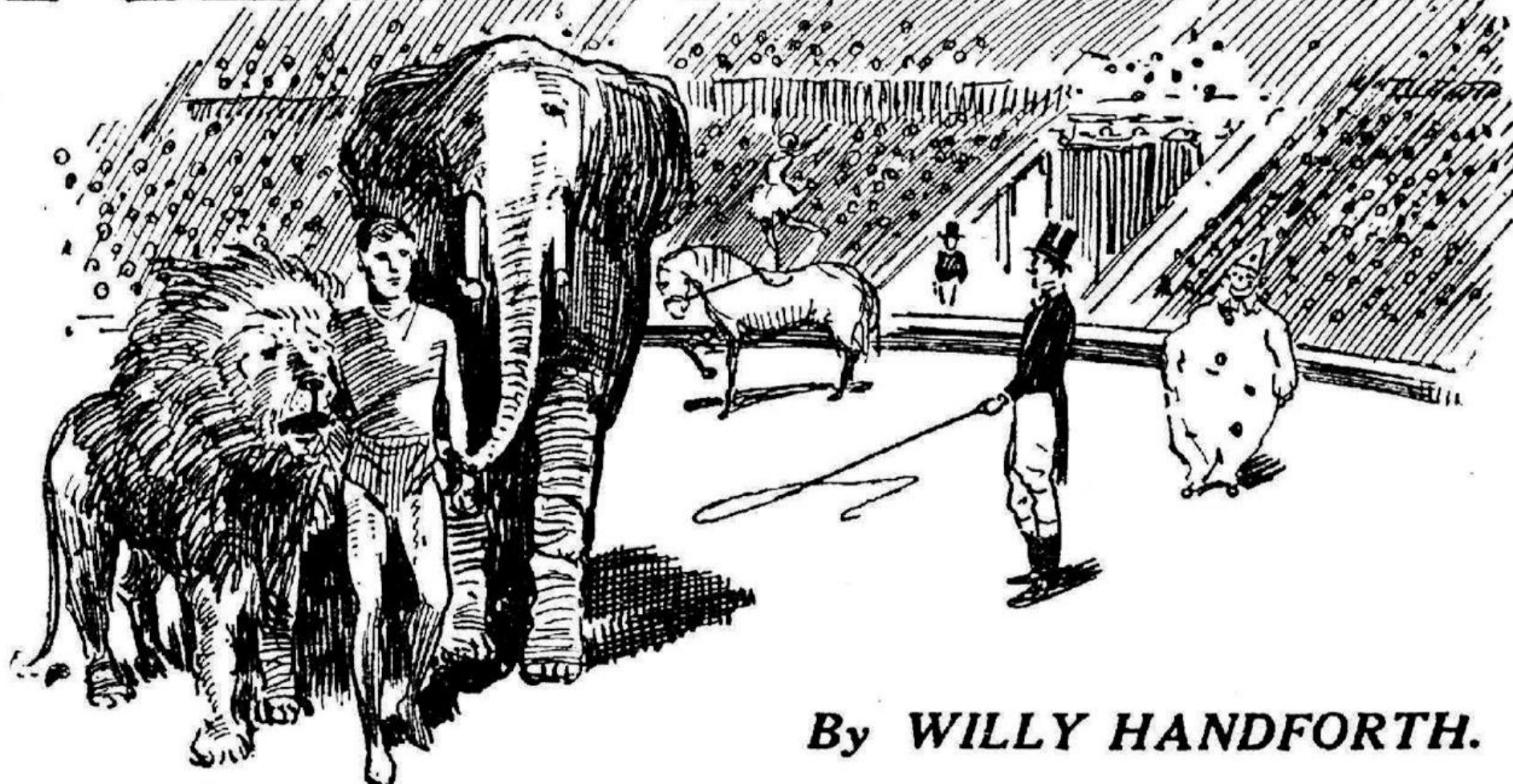
I am quite prepared to reproduce your letter, word for word, Stanley Edwards & Co., if you'll send me your full addresses, so that I can publish these at the same time.

* * *

Your friend was quite right, S. H. Yeo. If he had been a St. Frank's fellow he *would* have been shipwrecked on that little voyage. And why not? Why does that incident show me that my stories are ridiculed? How would you like it if I took the St. Frank's fellows on a sea trip, and described the weather as glorious all the way, without a storm, or without a shipwreck? Hang it, what would there be for me to write about? I should get letters by the hundred, saying that the story was tame. Yes, old man, you can regard me as a friend who will advise, help, and cheer you up. I want all readers to look upon me in that way.



PRIDE O' THE CIRCUS!



By **WILLY HANDFORTH.**

This thrilling story of circus life has been written by Willy Handforth. It is exactly as he wrote it, save that small errors in punctuation and spelling have been corrected by the Editor.

WHAT HAS ALREADY HAPPENED:

Our hero, Tom Hamilton, has run away from his cruel stepfather, Jasper Jelks, and he is now happy because Old Sam Boggs, the proprietor of Boggannini's Gigantic Circus, has given him a job. Tom has already earned the enmity of Silas Snoops, the lion tamer, and Chunga, the elephant trainer. These rotters are determined to drive our hero out

of the Circus. Tom has just earned ten pounds by riding Bert the Bronco, and Signor Boggannini is congratulating him, when a shout comes from the ring. With utter horror, it is seen that a great tiger has escaped from his cage, and is loose amongst the audience!

NOW READ ON.

Our Hero's Magic Touch!

AS Tom ran into the ring, and saw the great tiger leaping into the audience, he felt his heart beating a fierce tattoo against his ribs.

It was a tense, dramatic moment.

There was the great tiger, in mid-air—and the whole tent was filled with the shrieks and screams of the audience. There was not a moment to be lost, or hundreds of lives might be sacrificed. Once there was a stampede, nothing could save the great tent from being wrecked. It would probably collapse on the heads of these frantic people.

The tiger was a terrific beast—one of the biggest and fiercest animals that had ever come out of India.

Panic was everywhere. Even the ringmaster seemed rooted to the spot with horror. And the tiger, roaring terribly, was even then leaping into the audience.

Like a flash, our hero streaked forward. With one grab, Tom seized the whip from the nerve-

less fingers of the ringmaster. Then he sped across the ring, and arrived behind the tiger just as the brute was on the point of springing.

Slash!

The whip cracked round the tiger's back, and the thong stung him. The tiger spun round, snarling, and showing all his great teeth.

"Go back, boy!" shouted somebody. "You'll be killed!"

"Never!" cried Tom fearlessly. "Keep calm! There is nothing to be afraid of!"

The tiger, snarling viciously, gave a leap into the air, and sprang at his tormentor. In that moment, the audience expected to see Tom mauled and killed before their eyes. But the tiger suddenly came to a halt; his ears fell back, and he crouched there, at Tom's feet—showing every sign of submission!

"That's better!" said Tom, bending down and patting the tiger on the head. "You shouldn't get so excited, my lad! Back to your cage!" he added sternly. "Come on—follow me!"

It was as unexpected as it was amazing.

The audience stood looking on in dumbfounded silence, watching this drama. For the tiger, without hesitation, followed Tom. He trotted at Tom's heels like a faithful dog. There was something uncanny in this scene.

But the audience didn't know! Nobody knew, in fact, of the magical influence our hero had with all animals. One word from him, and they crumpled up. His power over animals was complete. They seemed to know that he was their master—their friend. They always obeyed him. And thus our hero never had any fear of animals.

"Now then, Timothy—in with you!" said Tom, as he held the cage door open. "And don't let's have any more of this nonsense, either!"

The audience listened with bated breath, for this scene was as dramatic as it was unexpected. The tiger calmly and meekly went back into his cage, and Tom closed the door with a clang. Then, with a smile on his cheery face, he waved a hand towards the people.

"It's all right—take your seats again!" he sang out. "The show will now go on. There's nothing to be scared about."

"Hurrah!"

"Well done, young 'un!"

"That kid's a marvel!"

Signor Boggannini, striding into the ring, clapped Tom on the back, and his face was glowing with joy.

"My Heavens, and I thought the whole show was about to be wrecked, with the loss of hundreds of lives!" said the big boss, in a hoarse voice. "Boy, you are worth your weight in gold!"

"Oh, no, sir!" said our hero, flushing deeply with joy.

"From this minute onwards, you shall receive a greater salary than any of my performers!" went on Signor Boggannini. "Your name shall be starred upon the top of the bills, and everywhere we go you will be hailed as the Greatest Wonder of the Age!"

Tom had no words to say, and he listened in a dull fashion as the audience cheered itself hoarse.

He went out of the ring in a kind of bewildered dream, and he failed to see the sinister figure of Silas Snoops lurking in the shadows. And Silas Snoops had an evil expression on his face, and his eyes were glittering with demoniac hatred!

Our Hero's Narrow Escape!

SMILER, the clown, turned a couple of somersaults out of pure joy as he went over to his own Caravan. The show had just finished and by now everybody had gone home.

Tom was with Smiler, and never had he felt so happy.

"Good boy—good lad!" said Smiler, as he assumed an upright position. "You're coming to have supper with me in my caravan. In future, Tom, my caravan is yours."

"It's too good of you, Mr. Smiler," said our hero, flushing.

"Rats!" said the clown. "And don't call me 'Mister.' I'm just 'Smiler' to my pals—see?"

They went into the caravan, and Tom looked round with a glow of joy. Everything was very cosy in there. The lamp was burning cheerfully, and the little fire, at the end of the caravan, was glowing with much warmth.

"And now," said Smiler, "supper!"

"Can't I help?" asked Tom.

Soon they were both busily preparing their meal. The circus did not move on until the morrow, for this town was a big one, and the circus was booked for a three-day stand.

That supper was one which Tom long remembered.

While Smiler fried the sausages, Tom busied himself with opening a tin of sardines, and cutting a great pile of bread and butter. He opened all sorts of bags, and took out doughnuts and cream buns, seed cakes, jam tarts and other delicacies in the pastry line too numerous to mention!

At last, our hero sat down to his supper, and Smiler enjoyed himself immensely—just by watching Tom eat. For Tom hadn't had much all day, and he was ravenously hungry. It was a ripping meal, and when it was over, and after the things had been washed up, our hero and his new friend prepared for bed.

"Do you think the boss meant what he said about starring me, Smiler?" asked Tom, as he undressed.

"Of course he meant it!" replied the clown. "The boss is a man of his word! One of the best, Tom! It's your marvellous way with animals that has impressed him. You're made, young 'un!"

"But I've done nothing!" protested Tom.

"Rats!" said Smiler. "You go to sleep, my lad—and to-morrow you'll find yourself famous!"

It all seemed like a dream to our hero as he snuggled down into the blankets, and prepared for sleep. But sleep wouldn't come. He was so excited that he could only lay there, listening to the buffeting of the wind as it blustered round the caravan.

Presently another sound came. Smiler began snoring, and Tom found it more than ever impossible to sleep.

And so the hours passed.

It was well after midnight, when the whole circus camp was asleep and quiet, that Tom heard a strange sound.

Click—click!

He sat up, his heart beating like a sledgehammer within him. Somebody was at the

(Continued on next page.)

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 glee! 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.

(Continued from previous page.)

window! Like a flash, Tom's thoughts sped to Silas Snoops.

Click—click!

There it came again—louder this time. Tom raised himself in bed, and he could see the moonbeams streaming in through the little window. And then, as he watched, he saw the window slowly and mysteriously opening!

But not for an instant was our hero at a loss. He slipped from between the sheets, and hastily prepared a bundle of bolsters and pillows and blankets. Chuckling grimly, he placed this on the bed, and then crouched back against the wall, near the little fireplace. Breathlessly he waited.

Suddenly, the window was darkened by a figure. Even in the gloom Tom recognised the figure of Silas Snoops, the lion tamer! The arch-villain had come to this caravan, bent on grim mischief!

"Ah-ha!" hissed Silas Snoops. "Now I have got you, you young rat!"

He lifted the bundle of bolsters and things from the bed, and stealthily pulled it through the open window. Outside stood Chunga, the elephant trainer. The Hindu was looking as villainous as his companion, and his eyes rolled ominously in the moonlight.

"We've got him, Chunga!" hissed Silas Snoops. "Take him, Chunga! Take him, and drop him to the bottom of the river! See that the stone is well fixed, so that he cannot possibly come to the surface again!"

"Sahib, I obey!" murmured Chunga.

Just then a mocking laugh came from the window, and Silas Snoops started violently.

"What—what was that?" he gasped, backing away.

"I heard every word you said!" cried Tom, his voice filled with scorn. "You scoundrel, Silas Snoops! So you planned to throw me to the bottom of the river, did you? Take warning! If you try any more of these tricks, I shall tell the police!"

Silas Snoops slunk away—his heart throbbing with vicious chagrin. Chunga had already disappeared, frightened out of his wits. It was indeed an unexpected, dramatic surprise! Never had these two villains expected their victim to elude them in this way!

And Tom, contemptuous of the pair, closed the window, and got back into bed.

Our Hero Shows His Prowess!

IN the morning, Tom awoke with a clear head, and with joy in his heart.

The sun was shining brilliantly, and the great circus tent and the caravans were looking gay. This was the life that Tom had always longed for. He was a part of the circus—and, according to Signor Boggannini, the greatest star!

It all seemed like a dream.

As soon as breakfast was over, the big boss came up to Tom and caught him by the shoulder.

"This way, kid!" he said genially. "I want you in the ring!"

"In the ring?" repeated our hero. "Why, sir?"

"I want you to show me what you can do," said Sam Boggs. "I know that you're pretty marvellous with animals, but I want to try you on Bert the Bronco again. If you're good enough, I'll star you up as a big turn. You and the bronco will give a special show of your own. But, mind you, it all depends on how you shape!"

Tom's heart beat joyously. He did not doubt how he would shape! He knew what he could do with that wonderful bronco, and out of the sheer happiness of the moment he turned three marvellous double somersaults—right in front of Signor Boggannini's eyes. Smiler was there, too,

and Smiler paused in his tracks, startled and staggered. For Smiler had always believed himself to be the best somersaulter in the circus.

"My eye!" said Smiler, staring.

"Boy!" roared Signor Boggannini. "Do that again!"

"Yes, sir!" cried our hero.

And he did it again. Over and over he went. Three marvellous double somersaults—then, at the conclusion, he rose into the air, and went over and over and over—three times! A treble somersault! He landed on his feet as lightly as a feather, and twirled round, grinning.

"Well I'm hanged!" said the big boss.

"The boy isn't merely a marvel," muttered Smiler, passing a hand over his dazed eyes. "He's a miracle!"

Deep in his heart, Tom was enjoying this scene. He knew that he had caused a sensation. Not one word had he spoken of his prowess—but that was just like our hero. He was not the kind of fellow to boast of what he could do. But he had always longed to be in a circus, and so he had trained himself. For years and years he had been practising these tricks.

"Boy, what's all this?" demanded Signor Boggannini. "You've been in a circus before, haven't you?"

"Never, sir!" replied our hero.

"Then you ought to have been!" said Sam Boggs gruffly. "And why haven't you? What have you been doing all the time?"

"I've only just left school, sir," replied Tom simply. "My stepfather always tried to beat me if I turned somersaults, or did any tricks when he was near. He wouldn't let me amuse myself like that. He was afraid that I should break a leg, or an arm—and then he would have to pay the doctor's bill!"

"Well, come into the ring!" said the big boss. "It seems to me, Smiler, that this boy is the greatest wonder of the age! Not only can he quell savage animals, but he can turn somersaults even better than you can!"

"It's true, boss!" said Smiler. "And I don't mind admitting it, either. My bones aren't so young as they were—my muscles aren't so elastic. Good luck to the boy!"

They passed into the ring, and Bert the Bronco was brought out. Tom leapt on his back; and went riding round and round the ring with gay enjoyment.

His heart was leaping wildly. Old Sam Boggs wanted him to show what he could do! Very well—he would show him!

Tom suddenly turned upside down, as he was riding. It was a marvellous feat. There, on his hands, he rode round the ring on Bert's back! And, not only this, but he walked up and down, turned round, and stood on one hand. It was the most marvellous balancing feat that the big boss had ever seen—and he had been in the circus business for forty-five years!

"Bravo!" said Signor Boggannini, with enthusiasm. "Boy, you're better than ever I expected!"

"I can do some more tricks yet, sir!" said our hero, flushing with pleasure.

And he proceeded to do a few. As Bert the Bronco passed beneath one of the trapezes, Tom gave a great spring and, like a feather, he landed on the trapeze bar, and swung himself over.

Up and down went the trapeze, gathering momentum. And then, at the last moment, Tom released his grip. He came down like a whirling wheel, spinning so much that it was almost impossible to tell which were his arms and which were his legs. He had timed his descent to a nicety, for he landed on Bert's back again, and went riding round, as cool and self-possessed as though he had done nothing out of the ordinary.

Over in one corner of the big tent stood Silas Snoops—looking on. The eyes of the villain were glittering with fresh hatred.

"Boy, get off that bronco!" ordered Signor Boggannini. "Where have I been all these years to miss a young marvel like you?"

"It only shows, boss!" said Smiler, shaking his head. "It only shows! Before many weeks have passed, this youngster will be known as the Pride o' the Circus!"

Our Hero's New Peril!

IT seemed to our Tom that he was living in a dream.

He had never thought much of his own prowess. True, there was no false modesty about him. He knew that he could turn somersaults, and that he could do all sorts of things on the trapeze. But he had never thought that a real circus proprietor would think much of these little tricks of his.

And yet here was Signor Boggannini aghast at them. Here was the big boss, looking at him as though he were some peculiar kind of monstrosity, instead of being an ordinary healthy English boy. Tom's modesty was true modesty, and he was filled with astonishment that Sam Boggs should be so enthusiastic about him.

"And do you really mean, sir, that you are going to star me?" he asked breathlessly.

"Star you!" shouted Signor Boggannini, clapping our hero on the back. "Do you hear him, Smiler?"

"Yes, sir?" grinned Smiler. "The kid's too innocent to live!"

"Yes, Tom, I am going to star you," said the boss, turning to our hero again. "In fact, you're so thundering good that I'm going to give you two turns—and you'll start your performance in the ring this very night!"

"Oh!" gasped Tom.

"You'll come on first as the great bronco buster from the Western plains!" went on Sam Boggs. "I'll have you dressed up in the regular Western costume—leather chaps, red shirt, neckerchief, and wide-brimmed hat. You'll look the part to a tee, young 'un!"

"Oh, it's too good to be true!" murmured Tom joyfully.

"Afterwards, in the second part of the show, you will come on as the Youngest Animal Trainer on Earth!" went on the circus proprietor. "You'll go into the tiger's cage, and put it through some of its tricks. And then you'll make the elephants obey your will! I can't afford to waste your talents, my boy!"

"You ought to pay him well, boss!" said Smiler, wagging a finger at Signor Boggannini.

"Don't you worry, Smiler—I'll pay him handsomely!" said the boss. "In fact, I have already

decided to give this boy twice as much as I'm giving Snoops, the lion-tamer! Snoops has been the star of my circus up till now, but from this minute, Tom is the star!"

And Silas Snoops, who was still lurking in the shadows of the tent, ground his teeth with rage.

"I'm going to have special bills printed right away!" continued the boss. "Your name, Tom, will be at the top—in great red letters! Snoops will be put lower down—because he is nobody now!"

As Tom walked away, happy with delirious joy, Silas Snoops followed him, his eyes glittering with rage, his heart black with hatred. More than ever he was determined to get rid of this boy—this youngster who had usurped his position.

A sudden gleam came into Silas Snoops' eyes as he saw Tom go into Smiler's caravan. He had noticed something that caused his black heart to leap within him. Smiler's caravan was standing on a sloping hillside of grass. Far down the slope, several hundred yards away, the river flowed. It was a deep, swift river, with treacherous currents. There was no wall—no barrier.

And in that second, Silas Snoops thought of a diabolical scheme!

Stealthily he moved forward towards the caravan, and his eyes were gleaming with hatred and with deadly purpose.

Meanwhile Tom, knowing nothing of this, was sitting down on one of the little lounges in his caravan. He was staring straight in front of him, so happy that he felt that he must be dreaming.

Suddenly the door was closed with a crash, and Tom heard the key turned in the lock. He leapt to his feet with a cry of alarm.

"Who's that?" he cried.

"Ha, ha," came a gloating cry in Snoops' voice.

"Now I've got you, my lad!"

And there was something in Snoops' tone that caused Tom's blood to turn to ice in his veins.

The next moment the caravan gave a sickly lurch. Snoops had pulled away the block from the wheel, and at the same moment he put all his weight against the caravan. It swung forward, and turned slightly; then, with ever gathering speed, it went hurtling down that grassy hillside!

Shouts of horror arose from everybody. Not a soul had seen Silas Snoops doing that dastardly deed, and he shouted with horror, too—just to fool the others.

And there was the caravan, tearing down towards the swollen river—shooting onwards with the speed of a meteor, with our hero helplessly locked inside!

(Silas Snoops is several kinds of a rotter, isn't he? But in next week's instalment you'll see how our hero foils the villain's dastardly plan.—WILLY.)

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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.

Forming a Zoo.

H. M. Green, 56, Boston Place, Dorset Square, Marylebone, London, N.W.1, has a big project in view. He and his chums are starting a kind of Zoo, and he asks for a letter from any reader who has for sale the following animals:

1 pair Guinea Pigs (black if possible).

1 Doe Angora Rabbit.

Pigeons.

Retriever Dog for Mascot.

This correspondent is running a smart little club, 48 strong, and they had a first-rate fortnight out camping in the Dunmow district.

Nipper & Co. on the Stage.

A Streatham reader proposes a play about Nipper & Co. He says this would be a fine idea in every way, as many schools would be glad to act it. There is something in the notion, and I am passing the brain-wave on to Mr. Brooks.

Cycle Racing.

"Sid" (Glos.) asks me whether tricycles are coming in. Very much so. The new racing tricycle, with its twenty-one miles p.h. and over, is being talked about a lot. It is likely to figure very prominently as time goes on.

Cycle Tests.

Here is another cycling query. J. B. (Bromsgrove) inquires about the food, etc., of competitors in the long distance championships, such as the runs to Bath, Liverpool, and York. Every six or seven miles the racers find supplies. There is no stop. One man runs alongside and hands up a slab of rice pudding; another has a flask of hot tea; another puts bananas and grapes into the pockets of the champion, while at fixed stages a wet sponge is pressed into the hand of the cyclist so that he can wipe off the dust from his face as he pedals on.

Shyness.

An overseas correspondent complains of his shyness. He has few chums, and whatever he does he feels handicapped by that unhappy feeling of deficiency, of not being able to take his part in conversation or make a success of meeting other people. In this case the trouble springs, I think, from over-work; anyway, the sufferer is a bit run down. Some new interest, say a good hobby, with

exercise in the open air, should sweep away the worrying, nervous feeling.

A Map of St. Frank's.

Terence Sullivan writes from Tufnell Park in this strain: "I met Mr. Brooks soon after I returned from Australia last time—I am just going back to Aussie—and, being terrifically enthusiastic about his stories, I at once decided to let him have it hot and strong. In other words, I determined to write to him every week. I started carping on the fact that he had promised to have a map of St. Frank's and district published about three years ago, and he's not done it yet. . . . Well, there you are!" After this, I intend to have a heart-to-heart talk with E. S. B. on this subject.

A Footpath Finder.

"Curly" (Crewkerne) sends along a very interesting letter about his tramping holiday. He went mostly by footpaths, and he found he could get pretty well anywhere that way. I am glad he made the discovery. It is a fact that there are footpaths all over England. These are often cut off by a road, but the track can be picked up the other side.

A Change of Career.

A Manchester chum wants to go to sea. He is twenty, and seems to be doing quite well in his job in a shop, earning good money. But there is this call of the sea that has come to him. I do not think there is anything in it. My correspondent has had no training—in fact, knows nothing about the sea—and any ordinary shipmaster would turn him down. It might be different if there were some special offer. My advice is to stick like glue to the excellent post he has got.

CORRESPONDENTS WANTED.

Chas. O'Neill, Boys' Home of Montreal, 741, Mountain Street, Montreal, Canada,

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.

wishes to hear from readers anywhere interested in exchanging stamps. Will answer all letters.

Doric Hendricks, Church Street, Riversdale, Cape Province, **South Africa**, wishes to correspond with readers interested in boxing.

James C. Brown, 45, Blignant Street, Bloemfontein, Orange State, **South Africa**, wishes to correspond with readers anywhere, especially those interested in photography and chemistry.

Kenneth Rawson, 55, Carter Street, Burnley, Lanes., wishes to correspond with readers anywhere; all letters answered.

H. Bell, 22, Otto Terrace, **Sunderland**, has back numbers N.L.L. to dispose of—Nos. 393-550.

John Bowie Baird, 51, Dudley Road, Whal-

ley Range, **Manchester**, wants back numbers, new series N.L.L. from No. 1 to No. 44.

League Member No. 6915, 9, Steiner Street, **Accrington**, Lanes., wants to hear from readers in his district, also from the nearest O.O.

Reginald B. Huggett, 35, Dartnell Road, **Addiscombe**, wishes to correspond with readers, especially those overseas; every letter answered.

Leslie Hudson, 109, Rook Lane, Dudley Hill, **Bradford**, wishes to correspond with readers in Australia.

Archibald McCulloch, 97, Drumoyne Road, So. Govan, **Glasgow**, wishes to form a cycling club in his district, and would like to hear from readers round Govan. He also wants to hear from a Brisbane reader.

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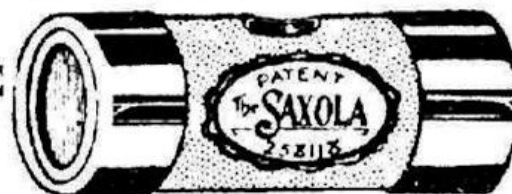
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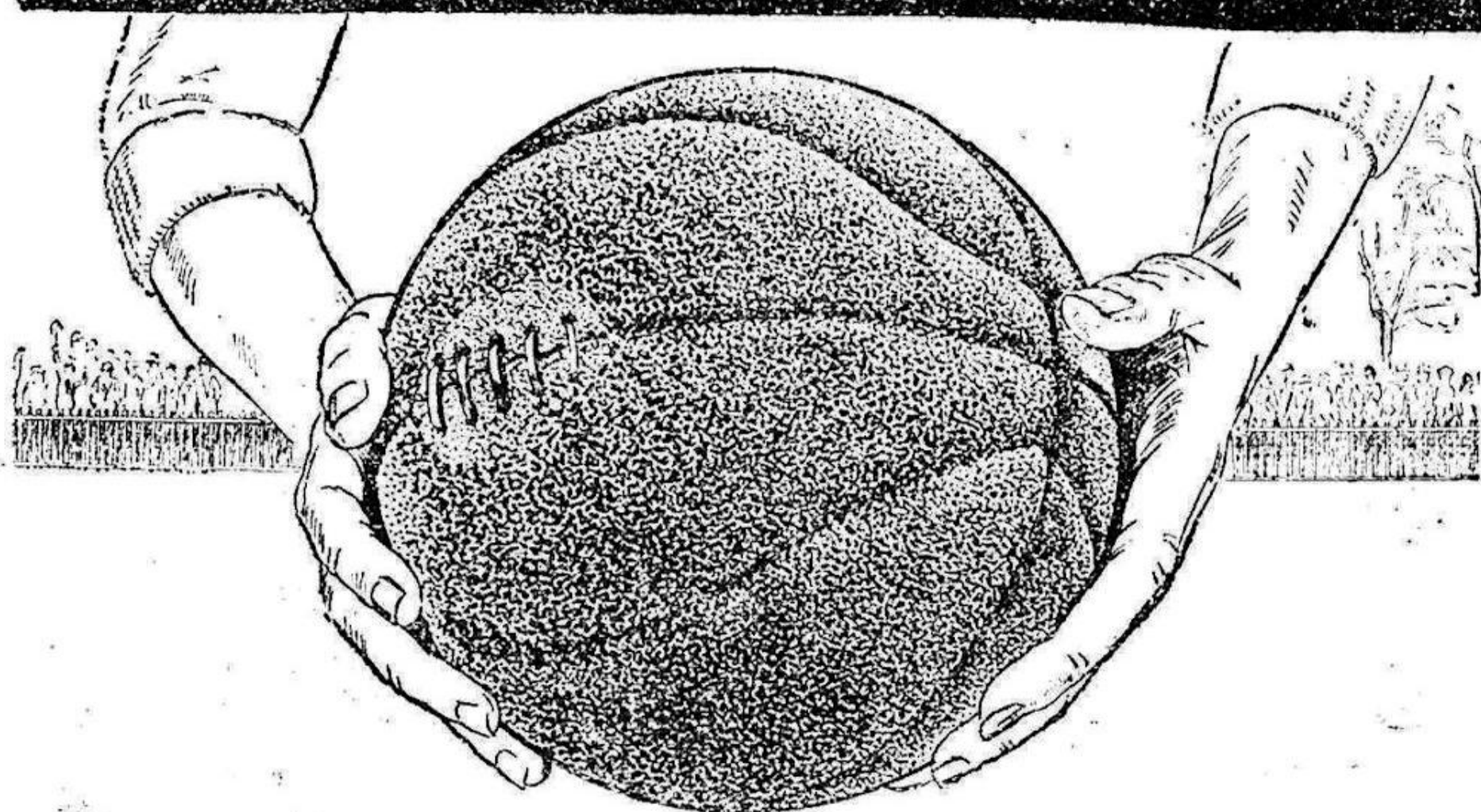
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