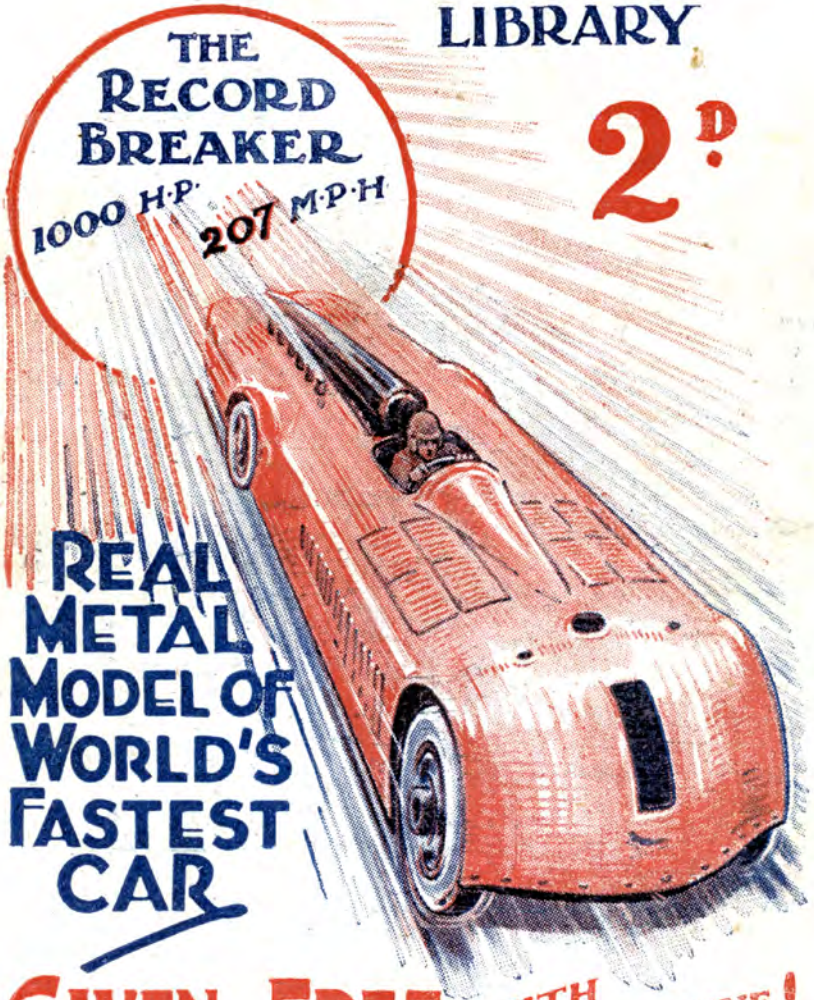
THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY

2d

THE RECORD BREAKER

1000 H.P. 207 M.P.H.



REAL METAL MODEL OF WORLD'S FASTEST CAR

GIVEN FREE WITH THIS ISSUE!

New Series No. 92. OUT ON WEDNESDAY. November 26th, 1927.

The sight of the unhappy Mr. Pycraft, wallowing in the pit of mud, caused Handforth and his two chums to laugh uproariously. "By George! This is rich!" chuckled Handy. The three juniors would not have laughed so heartily had they known what was to be the outcome of this incident, however!

The First Story of a Grand New Series!

HANDFORTH'S BARRING-OUT!

By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

Accused of something he hasn't done—sentenced to a flogging! No wonder Edward Oswald Handforth gets his back up. Handforth's pals, too, are just as indignant, and they're not too slow to rally round when Handforth suggests a barring-out!

CHAPTER 1.

His Favourite Pastime!

"THIS," said Handforth, "is just to be going on with!"

Crash!

The full weight of Handforth's shoulder was behind that punch, and David Merrell, of the East House, went over with a thud and a roar.

"And this," continued Handforth, "is just for luck!"

Biff!

Marriott, howling wildly, failed to dodge in time, and joined Merrell on the ground. But they were both up again a second later, intent upon putting a long, long distance between themselves and Edward Oswald Handforth, the volcanic leader of Study D in the Ancient House at St. Frank's.

They were near the shrubbery, in the corner of the Triangle, and Handforth had only gone there by the sheerest accident. He had, in fact, heard suspicious sounds, and his investigating mind had compelled him to turn his steps in that direction. And now the two caddish Fourth-Formers were in a bad way.

"You—you dangerous lunatic!" gasped Merrell savagely. "Who told you to come here, interfering? Why can't you mind your own business, Handforth?"

"I'm not going to argue!" roared Handforth. "Put up your hands, you cads!"

They not only refused to put up their hands, but they made another attempt to escape. Handforth, however, was in one of his angriest moods. He grabbed Merrell by the shoulder, and swung

This issue contains a handsome
COLOURED METAL MODEL
of the 1,000 h.p.
SUNBEAM CAR
which brought a world's record to Great Britain.
(On page 13 you will find full directions for folding the model.)

him round. At the same moment, he seized Marriott, and brought the precious pair together. When Handforth chose, he could be very forceful.

"Now!" he said fiercely. "Now, you despicable rotters, I'm going to punish you properly!"

"Lemme go!" howled Merrell wildly. "I won't fight you, you—you bully!"

There was something incongruous in Merrell's words. For he was a clumsy, awkward fellow with a burly figure. His features were altogether unpleasant, and his close-set eyes revealed a mean, petty nature. Merrell was strong in muscle, but weak in intellect, and he was a bully by nature. His boon companion, Frederick Marriott—who shared Study No. 15 with him in the East House—was a weedy sort of youngster, with characterless features and a receding chin. He was now scared out of his wits.

"I'm going to punish you chaps properly!" repeated Handforth, his eyes blazing with indignation and rage. "You contemptible rotters! You cruel, crawling hounds! Take that, Merrell! Yes, by George, and you can take this, Marriott!"

Crash! Biff!

There was no escaping from Handforth's whirlwind punches. He was famous for his fighting qualities—scrapping, indeed, was his favourite pastime—but it was seldom that Edward Oswald was so furious as this. It was seldom that he hit out with such determined vigour.

The result was a foregone conclusion.

Merrell and Marriott were hopelessly beaten. In desperation, they attempted to put up some sort of fight—when they realised that escape was impossible, Merrell went for Handforth with whirling fists. And Marriott tried to do a little fancy kicking. But these caddish efforts were useless. Handforth was invincible against such unskilled fighters as these.

It was a half-holiday, and approaching tea-time. The day was chilly and blustery, and not many fellows were out of doors. So this little scene was quite a private one, and no other St. Frank's fellows had been attracted by the roars from the victims.

Not that these roars altogether escaped notice.

For Mr. Horace Pycraft, the master of the Fourth Form, had just come in through the gateway. He paused as he heard mysterious sounds emanating from the shrubbery Any other master, in all probability, would have walked on—deaf to such significant sounds. But Mr. Pycraft was notoriously inquisitive. Nothing delighted him better than to interfere in matters that did not concern him. And now he scented prey.

He compressed his lips, and marched towards the shrubbery. As it happened, he could not have arrived at a more dramatic moment. For, as he burst through the bushes, he came upon the little scene just as Handforth had completed the "slaughter." Edward Oswald was standing over his two victims, breathing hard, and urging them to get up and to take some more.

But Merrell and Marriott had had enough. In fact, they had had far too much for their liking. They were both literally laid out.

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

Handforth twirled round, and eyed the Form-master without the slightest apprehension.

"Handforth!" gasped Mr. Pycraft. "What have you done?"

Handforth grunted.

"Can't you see, sir?" he asked, nodding towards the luckless pair, and rubbing his hands together as though they were contaminated. "I've made mincemeat of 'em—and it serves the beggars right!"

Mr. Horace Pycraft was thoroughly staggered. He hardly knew what to say. He turned to the other two juniors, and inspected them. Indeed, he hardly knew who they were. The pair were sitting up, groaning and making other strange sounds. Mr. Pycraft could only see a pair of grotesque caricatures of human faces.

For both the East House juniors were in possession of prize black eyes. Their noses were bleeding, their lips were cut, and their ears were puffy and swollen.

Altogether, Handforth had made a very thorough job of it, and he was eyeing his handiwork with the air of a skilled craftsman who has well and truly done his job.

CHAPTER 2.

No Explanation!

MR. PYCRAFT recovered his breath after a moment, and he agitatedly adjusted his glasses.

"Who — who are these boys?" he inquired. "Who are these unfortunate youths?"

"Young hooligans, you mean, sir!" said Handforth gruffly. "They haven't had half what they deserve!"

"Upon my word!" ejaculated Mr. Pycraft, thoroughly startled.

He peered at the hapless ones more closely. Then he gave a violent start.

"Is—is that you, Merrell?" he asked, in horror.

"Yes, sir!" groaned Merrell. "Oh, crumbs! I'm nearly dead!"

"I—I think I'm smashed in pieces, sir," said Marriott thickly, between his swollen lips.

"Two of my own boys!" said Mr. Pycraft breathlessly. "Good heavens! This—this is monstrous! Two of my own boys!"

"You're welcome to 'em, sir!" said Handforth, with disdain.

"Handforth!" shouted Mr. Pycraft shrilly. "These boys belong to the Fourth Form! They are boys of my own class!"

"Are they, sir?" said Handforth. "I'm

surprised to hear you admit that you're in the same class as they are! In my opinion, they aren't fit to mix with hogs!"

"How—how dare you?" thundered Mr. Pycraft.

"No offence, sir—I didn't mean you!" said Handforth. "I was talking about these fellows."

"Have you done this?" demanded Mr. Pycraft, waving an eloquent hand towards the battered pair.

"Yes, sir," said Handforth proudly. "I'm not quite satisfied with Merrell's left eye—it's not closed enough—but otherwise he's pretty well decorated."

"You—you unmitigated young rascal!" shouted Mr Pycraft, in amazement. "You young hooligan! How dare you? Handforth, how dare you?"

Handforth looked at the Fourth Form-master in astonishment.

"How dare I what, sir?" he asked.

"You stand there, and you tell me that you are guilty of battering these two boys about!" gasped Mr Pycraft. "I am shocked! I am inexpressibly startled! You have assaulted two of my boys in the most atrocious manner. What have you to say, Handforth?"

"Nothing, sir."

"What do you mean—nothing?"

"I mean that I haven't anything to say, sir."

"You—you impertinent young scamp!" shouted Mr. Pycraft. "How dare you answer me like that? I demand an explanation at once. Do you hear me, sir—at once! Why have you assaulted these two unhappy boys?"

"I haven't assaulted them, sir," said Handforth, losing his patience. "I've only punished them."

"Punished them?" repeated Mr. Pycraft. "For what?"

"It's no good asking me, sir," replied Handforth gruffly. "You'd better ask them!"

By this time Merrell and Marriott were upon their feet. It is to be feared that they made the very worst of their injuries. They were considerably battered, it is true, but there was scarcely any reason for them to stagger to and fro, and to sway giddily as they groped at one another for support. They knew Mr. Pycraft, and they knew that they could rely upon him to take sides with them.

"Don't—don't take any notice of him, sir!" panted Merrell. "He attacked us without any provocation!"

"Yes, sir!" wailed Marriott. "We—we didn't do a thing!"

Handforth glared at them.

"Didn't do a thing?" he repeated incredulously.

"We didn't touch you!" roared Merrell. "Marriott and I were here, as peaceful as you like—and then you charged at us. Do you deny it?"

"Of course I don't deny it!" snorted Handforth. "I charged at you because you were acting like a couple of young blackguards——"

"You came for us without any reason!" interrupted Merrell with suspicious haste.

"Enough!" broke in Mr Pycraft. "Handforth, you have admitted that you attacked these two boys without provocation. They did not interfere with you, and they did not attack you. You were the aggressor. Do you admit that?"

"Of course I do!" said Handforth indignantly. "I was the aggressor—and I'd be the agressor again in the same circumstances. These two rotters——"

"Don't take any notice of him, sir!" urged Merrell. "You know what a firebrand Handforth is. He's always wanting to fight somebody! And this afternoon he picked on us!"

"And now look at us!" wailed Marriott. "We shan't be fit to be seen for weeks!"

"All the better!" said Handforth. "I'm only sorry that I didn't mark you more!"

Mr. Pycraft turned upon him like a whirlwind.

"Be silent!" he said angrily. "Handforth, there is only one possible thing for me to do. You must come to the Headmaster this very minute! I shall see that you are drastically punished!"

"Hold on, sir!" said Handforth, looking obstinate. "I went for these chaps because they were acting in a very rotten way. I only punished them."

"What were they doing?" demanded Mr. Pycraft sharply.

"I told you before that I can't say anything more, sir," replied Handforth. "But if you ask them——"

"We didn't do anything, sir!" broke in Merrell and Marriott, in one voice.

"You—you liars!" roared Handforth hotly. "You contemptible hounds! I'll—I'll——"

"Handforth!" screamed Mr. Pycraft. "I have had enough! It is perfectly obvious to me that your attack was, indeed, unprovoked. Come with me at once to the headmaster. Yes, Merrell, you, too! And you, Marriott! All three of you must come!"

"Like—like this, sir?" gasped Merrell.

"Yes—like that!" snapped Mr. Pycraft. "I want the headmaster to see exactly how Handforth has battered you. Then, perhaps, his punishment will be adequate!"

CHAPTER 3.

On The Carpet!

EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH looked stubborn.

"Am I to understand, sir, that you're going to take me to the Head?" he asked.

"Yes, Handforth—that is what you *are* to understand," retorted the master of the

Fourth. "Never have I known a boy to commit such an outrageous act of hooliganism!"

"Just a minute, sir—just a minute!" said Handforth grimly. "Aren't you just a little bit hasty? I know that these fellows belong to your Form—and the Fourth has my sympathy."

"I refuse to listen——"

"But I can give you my word, sir, that they haven't received half the punishment they deserve!" went on Handforth relentlessly "I'm not going to tell you what they were doing—because that would be sneaking. But it's not my habit to tell lies, and I hope you can take my word for it that I smashed them up because they jolly well deserved to be smashed up! I've never known such a dirty, despicable, cowardly trick——"

"It's not true, sir!" shouted Merrell desperately.

Both he and Marriott breathed a sigh of relief when they heard that Handforth was not going to give them away. Obviously, they had done something particularly bad, for, until a moment ago, they had been very sick with apprehension. Now they had become quite bold. They knew that they could rely upon Edward Oswald to refrain from sneaking. Handforth had many faults—very many faults—but he was as straight as a die.

"I cannot waste any further time with you, Handforth," said Mr. Pycraft coldly. "However, I will give you one further chance. What were these boys doing, that you felt compelled to treat them so brutally?"

"I can't explain, sir," growled Handforth. "I told you that before. I'm not a sneak!"

"Enough!" said Mr. Pycraft harshly. "It is quite apparent to me, Handforth, that you are merely attempting to throw dust into my eyes. Your habit of fighting is well known, and I can only conclude that you attacked these unfortunate boys without any provocation whatever. They merely happened to be Fourth-Formers, and so you saw an opportunity of indulging your animal savagery."

"By George!" roared Handforth. "You silly—I—I mean—— You don't know what you're talking about, sir!" he burst out. "These chaps are a couple of rotters! Everybody knows it! You're their Form-master, and you know it, too!"

Mr. Pycraft did know it—but he preferred not to acknowledge it at this moment. He had never liked Handforth very much, and he was not going to allow this chance of getting him punished to slip out of his fingers.

"Come with me!" he said curtly. "I will not hear another word!"

And, about five minutes later, Dr. Malcolm Stafford, the Head of St. Frank's, was dumbfounded to see Mr. Pycraft enter his study, escorting two of the most battered schoolboys that the Head could ever remember seeing. Merrell and Marriott had not been allowed to wipe their faces, even. They were sorry sights, in all truth. Their eyes were practically closed, and turning a livid hue. Their noses were swollen and bleeding, and their lips were gashed. They bore traces of very hard fighting.

Handforth, on the other hand, was hardly marked. He had been delivering all the punishment. Merrell and Marriott had spent the whole of their time in attempting to defend themselves—and they had failed dismally.

"Good gracious, Mr. Pycraft!" ejaculated the Head, starting to his feet. "What—what is the meaning of this?"

"I regret, sir, the necessity of bringing these boys to you in such a condition—but I deemed it essential," said Mr. Pycraft, his voice cold and unpleasant. "I have to report Handforth for hooliganism!"

"Rats!" said Handforth hotly. "These chaps are the hooligans——"

"Did you say—ahem!—'Rats!' to me, Handforth?" gasped Mr. Pycraft.

"I—I didn't mean—— Oh, you make a chap say things like that!" growled Handforth, glaring. "I don't see why the Head should have been disturbed——"

"Silence!" interrupted Dr. Stafford hotly.

"But look here, sir——"

"Silence!" thundered the Head.

He adjusted his pince-nez, inspected Merrell and Marriott with great distaste, and then turned to Mr. Pycraft.

"Kindly explain what this means, Mr. Pycraft!" he said sharply.

"It is very simple, sir," said the Form-master. "I was crossing the Triangle when I heard peculiar sounds from the shrubbery. Going there, I found these two unfortunate boys—boys belonging to my own Form—lying prone on the ground and moaning. Handforth was standing over them in a fighting attitude. The inference, of course, was obvious."

Dr. Stafford turned to Handforth.

"What have you to say, Handforth?" he asked angrily. "Do you admit that you caused these—these injuries?"

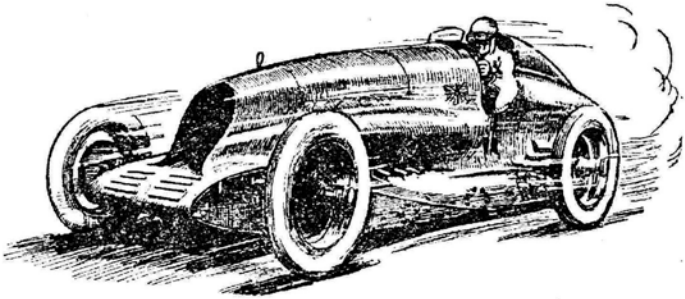
"They're not injuries, sir," said Handforth, with a contemptuous look at the pair. "We don't call a black eye an injury in the Remove! These chaps will be right again in a day or two, worse luck!"

"Handforth!" shouted the Head. "Are you glorying in your brutal handiwork?"

"Yes, sir—I am!" retorted Handforth promptly. "These chaps deserved it, and I gave it to them! If I caught them at the same game again, I'd thrash them even more soundly."

"There can be no excuse for such brutal fighting as this," said the Head curtly. "However, I will give you an opportunity of explaining, Handforth. Why did you attack these boys in such a ferocious manner?"

ANOTHER MAGNIFICENT FREE GIFT NEXT WEEK, BOYS! A METAL MODEL OF MALCOLM CAMPBELL'S MIGHTY "BLUE-BIRD"!



This was the car in which Captain Malcolm Campbell travelled at nearly 180 miles an hour on Pendine Sands. And next week's issue will contain a correctly coloured metal model of this mighty monster! Something not to be missed, eh? Something for which there is sure to be a great demand. If you want to make sure of obtaining it, get your newsagent to

ORDER YOUR NEXT WEEK'S "NELSON LEE LIBRARY" IN ADVANCE!

"I can't answer that question, sir," said Handforth gruffly. "You'd better ask them what they were doing!"

The Head turned to the pair.

"Merrell!" he said. "What does Handforth mean?"

"We—we don't know, sir!" said Merrell desperately. "Marriott and I were only just having a lark in the shrubbery. We didn't even know that Handforth was there until he swooped down upon us and started punching. We didn't speak to him—we didn't call him names, or anything! He just attacked us!"

"Why, you—you——" began Handforth, looking at the two Fourth-Formers incredulously.

"I have heard sufficient!" interrupted the Head. "Handforth, whatever these boys were doing—whatever fancied offence they were committing—you had absolutely no right to take the law into your own hands and to attack them so brutally. I shall cane you. I shall give you a very severe thrashing. Merrell and Marriott, you will go to your House at once and report to the matron. I am sorry, my boys, that you have been so injured—but you may be quite assured that this young rascal will be soundly punished. You may go."

And Merrell and Marriott escaped from the Head's study, exchanging glances of malicious triumph as they went.

CHAPTER 4.

Handforth Explains!

"THERE he is!" said Church, of the Remove.

"But what's he doing in Inner Court?" asked McClure. "He seems to be coming from the Head's house. I'll bet he's been in trouble!"

"Oh, that's a cert," said Church. "Whenever he escapes from us, he always gets into some sort of scrape. Poor old Handy! He needs looking after like a baby!"

Fortunately, Handforth did not hear these remarks which his faithful chums of Study D were uttering. They were in the Triangle looking through Big Arch into Inner Court. It was tea-time and Church and McClure had prepared everything in Study D. They had been looking for their leader for the past five or ten minutes.

"My hat!" said Church, with a start. "I believe he's had a swishing!"

"What!"

"Look at the way he's tucking his hands under his arms!" went on Church. "That's it! He's just had a six-hander from the Head!"

Handforth came through the archway, and did not appear to see his chums. Not until they tugged at his arms did he notice them.

"Did you get it hot, old man?" asked Church sympathetically.

"Four on each hand—terrific swipes, too," said Handforth in a thick voice. "I think the Head's getting stronger!"

He exhibited his puffy palms, and his chums were all sympathy. Not that Handforth wanted any. He waved them aside.

"Oh, dry up!" he growled. "I don't want you to fuss round me, you fatheads! I should hope I can stand a few swipes. It's Pycraft's fault—the old rotter!"

"But what has Mr. Pycraft done?"

"The interfering old busybody!" roared Handforth recklessly. "If he had had any sense he would have known that I was only doing a duty. But he's an ill-natured rotter—and he always likes getting chaps into trouble. By George! I'll make him sit up one of these days!"

Church and McClure looked at their leader anxiously.

"Cheese it, Handy!" said Mac, with a glance round. "Not so loud, old son!"

"Somebody might hear you!" said Church.

"What do I care!" bellowed Handforth. "I tell you that old Pycraft is an interfering nosey-parker! What's more, I'm jolly well going to have my own back on him!"

"Cave!" gasped McClure. "Go easy, Handy!"

"I won't go easy!" thundered Handforth. "When I get the chance I'm going to make Mr. Pycraft wish he'd never been born! I'm going to have my revenge on him——"

"Handforth!"

Edward Oswald spun round as Mr. Pycraft's rasping voice came to his ears. The Fourth Form master had just come through Big Arch, accompanied by Kenmore and Sinclair, of the Sixth. These two seniors were a pair of the worst cads in the East House—in the whole school, for that matter. The fact that Mr. Pycraft toadied to them proved his character. They were rich—and Mr. Pycraft winked his eyes at many of their faults.

"Handforth!" he shouted. "How dare you? Kenmore! Sinclair! Did you hear this boy? Actually threatening me! Actually talking of revenge!"

"Cheeky young sweep!" said Kenmore hotly.

"Better take him before the Head again, sir," suggested Sinclair.

"No, I will not do that," said Mr. Pycraft. "But I will tell Handforth that if he utters such words again I shall certainly report him to the Head."

Handforth was walking away—pretending not to have heard; Church and McClure, feeling that their place was by their leader's side, accompanied him. A few other fellows had been attracted by the loud talking, and when Handforth & Co. found themselves inside the Ancient House lobby, they were surrounded by Nipper, Tregellis-West, Watson, De Valerie, Fullwood, and several more. They were all politely curious. In fact, some of them were impolitely curious.

"What's it all about, Handy?" asked Nipper. "What have you got your knife into Pycraft for?"

"He lugged me before the Head—and the Head gave me four swishes on each hand!" replied Handforth aggressively. "It was Pycraft's fault—the old beast!"

"But how was it his fault!" asked Fullwood. "What did he find you doing?"

"Nothing!"

"Yes, but——"

"Well, nothing much!" amended Handforth indignantly. "I was in the shrubbery, and I had just laid out Merrell and Marriott. I'd blacked all their eyes, made their noses bleed, and generally made them look like gargoyles. When Mr. Pycraft came up they were lying on the ground, groaning."

"And this is what you call nothing?" asked Church aghast.

"Well, it's nothing to what those two East House cads deserved!" said Handforth hotly. "Do you know what I found them doing?"

"Goodness knows!" said Fullwood. "Plotting to blow up the school?"

"Don't be an ass!" said Handforth, frowning. "This is no joking matter. Those two rotters had got hold of an injured cat—a poor beast that had been run over by a bicycle, or a car, or something."

Handforth's audience at once became silent and listened intently.

"Yes, a poor little injured cat—hardly any bigger than a kitten," went on Handforth, his voice quivering with rage. "And there it was, the poor thing, with its tail injured and bleeding—and those beasts had had the caddishness to tie a can to it!"

"To the injured tail?" asked Nipper quietly.

"Yes," said Handforth, his eyes flashing, "and that wasn't all, either! They were chucking stones at it!"

"The cads!"

"Stoning it!" roared Handforth. "Well, what do you think I did? I released the poor little beggar, and it scampered off. Then I went for Merrell and Marriott, and laid them out. I gave them the biggest hiding they've ever had in all their lives!"

"Good man!" said Nipper heartily.

"Hear, hear!"

"Good old Handy!"

"And then Mr. Pycraft butted in, and hauled me before the Head!" said Handforth indignantly.

"But didn't you explain why you had smashed up these chaps?" asked Fullwood.

"Of course not," said Handforth. "How could I? I'm not a sneak!"

"Yes, but it explains why the Head swished you," said Nipper quietly. "All the same, old man, you have our sympathy. You did the right thing, and we admire

" Good 'gracious ! " ejaculated the Headmaster, as he saw the battered wrecks that were Merrell and Marriott. " Handforth is responsible for this ! " explained Mr. Pycraft harshly. " I have to report him for hooliganism ! "

you for it. Good old Handy—always on the mark!"

And when the news spread throughout the Remove, there was scarcely a fellow who did not extend his support to Edward Oswald Handforth!

CHAPTER 5.

A Question of Revenge!

TEA was almost over in Study D when a brisk tap sounded on the door, and Willy Handforth entered.

The volatile young leader of the Third was looking unusually grave.

"How are the hands, Ted, old son?" he asked earnestly.

"Never mind my hands!" growled his major. "They're all right!"

"Sore, eh?" said Willy, nodding. "I know! I've had some!"

"I wish you'd drop the giddy subject!" growled Handforth. "Forget it, you young ass!"

"I just came along to give you my sympathy——"

"I don't want any sympathy!" roared Handforth. "Great guns! Do you think I can't take a few swishes without crumpling up? I'll take a swishing with any chap—providing I deserve it. But I didn't deserve it this time, and old Pycraft ought to be boiled! If he had had any sense he would have known that Merrell and Marriott were up to some dirty trickery, and he would have——"

"You can't expect any kind of justice from Pycraft," interrupted Willy. "He's got a down on you Ted—and on me, too, if it comes to that. Pycraft is down on all the decent chaps. Blow him! I just came along to tell you that I've located that poor cat."

"Oh!" said the chums of Study D, looking at Willy with interest.

"Yes," went on the Third-Former. "As soon as I heard about the affair, I rounded up the Third and set them searching. Some of the young rotters didn't like it, but I forced them. When it comes to a serious matter the Third always obeys. Anyhow, that cat was found, and now I've got it with all my pets, and I'm nursing it back to health."

"Good man!" said Handforth warmly. "In some ways, Willy, you're quite a decent sort of kid."

"Thanks!" grinned Willy. "Anyhow I thought you'd like to know. I found the mark where those cads had tied a string round the poor little beggar's tail—and there were one or two bruises, too, where the stones had hit it. The mean, contemptible brutes! You didn't punish them half enough, Ted!"

"I know I didn't!" agreed Handforth. "But old Pycraft came interfering——"

"Yes, it was a pity," said Willy. "Well, Ted, you can always rely upon the Third to back you up. It wouldn't be a bad idea to go for Marriott and Merrell, and to make them confess. Then the Head would realise, perhaps, that you were justified in thrashing them. Not that it would be much good

now. The affair's over and done with. Let it drop."

Willy, with a nod, then went out. He was passionately fond of animals, and anybody who ill-treated a dumb creature was Willy's enemy for good. It was characteristic of him to find that injured cat and to attend to its hurts.

Handforth looked thoughtful after his minor had gone.

"That's not a bad idea, you know," he said slowly. "About forcing Merrell and Marriott to go to the Head and confess. I think we ought to do something about it."

"Oh, let it rest, Handy!" said Church. "You smashed them up and you made them understand that they can't do that sort of thing with impunity. And making them confess to the Head won't heal your hands any the quicker. Better let it slide!"

"Well, perhaps so," admitted Handforth. "But I'd like to get even with Pycraft!"

At just about that same time, Merrell and Marriott were talking together in Study No. 15 of the East House. Snipe shared that study with them, but Snipe was out for the evening, and the other two were glad.

"We ought to get even with Handforth before we go away!" Merrell was saying. "The beast! Look how he's smashed us up! Are we going off without making him pay?"

"The Head flogged him," said Marriott.

"That wasn't a flogging; it was only an ordinary swishing," growled Merrell. "Besides, that's not the kind of satisfaction I want. I want to see him really flogged before the whole school—or sacked, or something. There ought to be a way of doing it, too."

They were thoughtful for some minutes. Both of them had repaired as much of the damage as possible, but they were still looking very, very much the worse for wear. Their black eyes were so pronounced that it was only with difficulty that they could see clearly.

Their noses had returned to the normal size, and there were no smears of blood on their faces. But they were both so sore that they could hardly move without groaning with agony. Undoubtedly the pair had received the thrashing of their lives, and they had deserved every punch that Handforth had delivered.

"We'd better steer clear of Handforth!" said Marriott, after a while. "You know what those Remove chaps are. If we do anything against Handforth, Nipper and all the others will only rout us out, and——"

"Rats!" interrupted Merrell. "There won't be time. My idea is to get Handforth into a trap of some kind to-morrow morning. And we shall be gone within the hour. You know we're catching the first train after breakfast."

"By Jingo—yes!" said Marriott, with a gleam in his eyes. "That's right! You mean—get our revenge on Handforth, and then clear out?"

"Exactly," said Merrell. "If there are any inquiries, we shan't be in them, because we shall be away from the school. And, if we can only wangle things all right with our people, we shan't come back until after the Christmas vac., and everything will be blown over by then. Rather a brainy idea—what?"

"I should say it is!" said Marriott admiringly. "You're a deep beggar Merrell."

It so happened that Merrell's sister was getting married that week, and it was to be a very fashionable society wedding. Indeed, Merrell's people were very high in the social scale—and, if it came to that, so were Marriott's. Both of them were snobs of the worst order

And as Marriott was Merrell's best chum, he had naturally been invited to the wedding, too. The pair were going off to London on the following morning, and would not come back to St. Frank's for over ten days or a fortnight—perhaps not until after Christmas. Merrell's father had made a special arrangement with the Head. But only a few fellows in the Fourth knew of this, for Merrell and Marriott had very few friends. The Remove indeed, knew nothing about it whatever.

"Handforth was saying that he was going to have his own back on Pycraft," remarked Marriott, after a thoughtful pause. "In fact, he was threatening old Pycraft so loudly that everybody heard him. Even Pycraft came along and heard those threats."

Merrell's eyes suddenly blazed with excitement.

"That's it!" he said eagerly. "By gad! That's the line for us to work on, old man!"

"What do you mean?"

"Why, it'll be easy!" said Merrell, taking a deep breath. "Handforth has threatened to get his own back on Pycraft! Well, we ought to be able to fake up something without any trouble at all! We want to get Handforth into a scrape, don't we—so that he'll either be flogged or sacked?"

"Yes, but——"

"Then we can go straight ahead!" said Merrell cunningly. "It's Handforth we're after—and if we can only make old Pycraft suffer at the same time, all the better. Pycraft's a beast, and Handforth's another beast! We'll make them both squirm, and we'll arrange it so that Handforth'll get all the punishment!"

CHAPTER 6.

The "Dare"!

"HALLO!" said Handforth, "What's this?"

"Looks like a letter," said Church.

"Yes, but who the dickens put it in the study here, on the table?" asked Handforth in surprise. "Letters are generally put in the

rack. And this one didn't come by post, either."

The inseparable three had just entered their study in search of a football. It was early morning, and Handforth & Co. had thought it would give them a good appetite for breakfast if they punted a football about for twenty minutes. Not that they really needed anything to give an edge to their appetites.

"I wonder who it can be from?" asked Handforth, as he turned the letter over. "It's so rummy—shoving it here, on the table!"

The envelope was quite a plain one, and it was addressed in pencil to "E. O. Handforth." The writing was a mere scrawl.

Handforth placed a thumb under the flap, and tore the envelope open. He withdrew half a sheet of notepaper, on which were written a number of other words, and then gave a bellow of rage.

"Well, of all the nerve!" he shouted angrily.

"Who's it from?" asked Church and McClure in one voice.

"That cad Merrell!"

"What!"

"Read it!" said Handforth fiercely. "Or, better still, I'll read it out. Listen to this 'How are your hands this morning? Still sore, I hope. You're a very bold sort of chap, aren't you? Anyhow, I *dare* you to be hiding in the shrubbery at exactly a quarter-past eight this morning. And this applies to Church and McClure, too. I dare the three of you to hide yourselves in the shrubbery.—DAVID MERRELL.' Why, the—the——"

"There's something fishy about it!" said McClure promptly.

"Of course there is!" agreed Church.

"What do you mean—fishy?" demanded Handforth, looking up. "D'you think I'm going to let these cads have the laugh over us? By George! They've dared us to be in the shrubbery at a quarter-past eight!"

"It's nearly ten-past eight now!" said Church. "But look here, Handy, you'd better go easy. I shouldn't take any notice of that note, if I were you."

"But—but it's a 'dare'!" said Handforth, staring.

"I know that, but you're not going to be spoofed, are you?" asked Church anxiously. "You know what those East House cads are. They're as bad as Gulliver and Bell—even worse."

"A lot worse," said McClure. "Gulliver and Bell are practically innocuous nowadays. Since Wallace and Forrest went they've been as mild as lambs."

"We're not talking about Gulliver and Bell," frowned Handforth. "Merrell has dared us to be hiding in the shrubbery at a quarter-past eight. We'll go there——"

"Don't!" urged Church "It'll be a trap!"

"Eh?" said Handforth, with a start. "A trap?"

"Of course," said Church. "They know what a fellow you are, Handy, for scrapping. I expect Merrell and Marriott and a lot of those other rotters will be waiting there, and they'll pounce on us as soon as we appear."

"Let them pounce!" said Handforth fiercely. "Who cares? If it comes to a fight, we can give a good account of ourselves, can't we? We'll show those idiots that——"

"Wouldn't it be a lot better to ignore the whole thing?" asked McClure. "Anyhow, it would be a lot more dignified."

But Edward Oswald Handforth was getting excited. He read the note through again, and breathed fire.

It is quite certain that David Merrell would never have dared to send that note had he been staying on at St. Frank's. But he knew very well that he was going away directly after breakfast, and so he was taking a chance. The fact that he and Marriott were catching the morning train made Merrell very bold. If there were any inquiries afterwards—well, Merrell would be out of the way. That was the manner in which he looked at it. It was so simple, too—so easy.

And the plotters of the East House had gauged Handforth's character to a nicety.

"We'll go!" said Edward Oswald firmly. "Come along, you chaps—we've just got time to get into the shrubbery before the quarter strikes."

"But—but we shall walk right into the trap!" protested McClure.

"Rats! We're going!"

"Look here, Handy——"

"I don't want any more objections, Walter Church!" said Handforth coldly. "Merrell has dared us—and that's enough. By George! D'you think we're going to refuse a 'dare' from these East House rotters?"

Church and McClure paused. After all, it was a very difficult matter. They couldn't very well refuse that dare. The Fourth-Formers would laugh at them for weeks afterwards.

"Of course it's a trap!" said Handforth coolly. "I'm not such a fool that I can't see that! Merrell and a dozen of his beastly pals are waiting for us, I expect, in ambush. They hope to wipe us up. But, my sons, they'll find that they've made a little bloomer! We three can deal with a dozen of those East House rotters with ease! So, instead of Merrell getting the laugh over us, we shall get the laugh over him! Come on—there's only just time!"

"Oh, well, if you really think——"

"Rot! There's no time to think!" said Handforth swiftly. "Come on—the school clock will chime in half a tick, and if we're not there to answer this 'dare' Merrell will spread it all over the school in less than half an hour. Come on!"

The chums of Study D hurried out—exactly as David Merrell had expected. What was more, Handforth had left that note of Merrell's on the study table. And Merrell had counted upon this, too! It seemed quite a small point—but it was really a big one!

CHAPTER 7.

Not What They Expected!

"FUNNY!" said Handforth, with a puzzled frown.

The school clock had chimed out the quarter-past nearly five minutes ago, and the shrubbery was still silent and deserted. Only the three lurking figures were there—the figures of Handforth and Church and McClure.

They had entered their concealment just before the clock had chimed, so they had accepted Merrell's "dare," and were ready for anything that might happen. But the anticipated attack had not come. There had been no sign of Merrell or any of his associates. So far as Handforth & Co. could see, they had the shrubbery entirely to themselves.

"It isn't funny, Handy," said Church. "We can see what Merrell's game is now. The rotter just did it to fool us."

"Yes, but where would be the sense of that?" demanded Handforth. "I know that Merrell is several kinds of a chump, but he wouldn't do an idiotic thing of that sort!"

"Well, what else can it mean?" asked McClure. "None of those East House chaps are here, and they don't seem to be coming, either. We'd better be getting out."

"Not yet!" said Handforth, frowning. "We'll wait another few minutes, just to see what happens. We're hiding in the shrubbery, just as Merrell dared us, and we'll stop here——"

"Go easy!" whispered Church. "Somebody coming!"

"By George!" murmured Handforth. "I knew it!"

They waited, crouching low amidst the evergreens.

"Rats!" muttered Church, after a few moments. "It's only old Pycraft!"

Handforth drew a deep breath.

"Poking his nose in again, eh?" he said darkly. "The interfering old rotter——"

"I rather think you're doing him an injustice this time, Handy," interrupted Mac. "Pycraft always takes this morning walk of his before breakfast. It's a kind of rite with him. He always goes up and down the Triangle about three times, and then walks along this shrubbery path as far as the ruins. It's a sort of fetish with him, I suppose. He's always the same—every morning—wet or fine. Haven't you seen him?"

"Now you come to mention it, I have," whispered Handforth. "Oh, well, he'll soon be gone."

They had no wish to be seen there by Mr. Horace Pycraft, so they crouched low. He went by almost within arm's-reach of the three juniors, and then continued his way along the secluded path.

But he had hardly taken three steps beyond this spot when—crash!

Handforth & Co. had a clear view of the entire catastrophe. It seemed to them that Mr. Pycraft suddenly vanished into the solid earth. He went clean through the ground, and uttered a wild, despairing howl as he plunged downwards. There were many splashes of black, sticky mud.

"Help!" screamed Mr. Pycraft wildly.

Handforth and Church and McClure were startled—amazed. They could not possibly see how this thing had happened, and they did not know why it had happened! As yet, they were not aware of the true cunning of David Merrell's plot.

But one thing was clear to them during those few tense seconds that followed Mr. Pycraft's plunge. A kind of pit had been specially prepared in that secluded shrubbery patch. Somebody had dug a deep hole, and had covered the top with a false surface, so trickily devised that it looked like the solid ground. As a matter of fact, a piece of old trellis had been used, and a few scattered, dead leaves and some sifted earth had completed the deception.

Mr. Pycraft had stepped full upon that piece of frail trellis, and he had collapsed at the knees and sprawled down into that pit. And there he was, howling for help, and so frightened that he was like a man demented.

But he need not have been so alarmed. The pit, after all, was only about three feet deep, and it was filled almost to the brim with a particularly awful kind of mud. This mud was almost liquid, and the more Mr. Pycraft tried to get out, the muddier he became.

Handforth & Co., in spite of themselves, found it impossible to remain in their concealment. They came out, and at the first sight of Mr. Pycraft, Edward Oswald burst into a yell of laughter.

"Oh, corks!" he shouted. "Look at him!"

"I say, Handy, chuck it!" said Church, in alarm. "There's something fishy about this—something that we——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Handforth.

And even his chums were compelled to laugh with him. Perhaps it was heartless of them—for Mr. Pycraft was in a dreadful condition. But then Mr. Pycraft was a man whom everybody hated.

"By George! This is pretty rich!" grinned Handforth, as he stood on the edge of the pit. "Hard lines, Mr. Pycraft! You'll need a bath after this!"

"Help!" babbled the master of the Fourth. "Handforth! You—you young rascal! Help me out of this! I shall be drowned!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Handforth & Co. yelled with laughter at Mr. Pycraft's ridiculous fear. It was very unwise of them to give vent to their mirth in this way, but they simply couldn't help it. The spectacle of Mr. Pycraft wallowing in that mud—almost up to his neck at times—was so exquisitely funny that they roared.

It was just the very thing that they could

appreciate to the full. Handforth was amused. He had wanted to get his own back on Mr. Pycraft, and now the trick had been done.

"I say!" said Church, with a sudden start. "I'll bet Merrell prepared that giddy trap for us, Handy!"

"Of course!" said Handforth, with another shout of laughter. "That's why he told us to come into the shrubbery! And now Mr. Pycraft has caught it instead! Pretty rich, eh?"

But even now Handforth did not suspect the true duplicity of David Merrell's plot!

CHAPTER 8.

Decidedly Awkward!

IF the chums of Study D had had time to think, they would have known that this trap had not been set for them. For they had been "dared" to hide in the shrubbery, and that pit had been dug some little distance beyond the thick bushes. Merrell had known well enough that the chums of Study D would conceal themselves amongst those bushes long before they got to the pit. No, they had been tricked there for quite another reason.

They would soon find out what that reason was!

Footsteps sounded, and then Kenmore and Sinclair, of the Sixth—the two rotters of the East House—came into view. Before Handforth & Co. could make any attempt to escape, they were seized and held.

"You young scoundrels!" said Simon Kenmore savagely. "What's the meaning of this?"

"Hi, leggo!" shouted Handforth. "What do you mean?"

"You'll suffer for this, my lad!" said Kenmore darkly. "Good heavens! An assault upon a master! This'll mean the sack for you, Handforth!"

"But—but——"

"Yes, yes—hold him!" screamed Mr. Pycraft. "Handforth is responsible! He deliberately set this trap for me, Kenmore, and then he and his chums concealed themselves amongst the bushes so that they could witness my discomfiture!"

"But—but——" began Church, aghast.

"The least you can say, the better!" interrupted Kenmore harshly. "You needn't try to excuse yourselves, you young hooligans! Sinclair and I saw you come into these bushes, and the whole thing is as clear as daylight."

"Oh, corks!" murmured McClure. "Now I can understand! We've been trapped, Handy—absolutely trapped!"

"But—but——" began Handforth blankly.

"These boys have deliberately assaulted me!" shrieked Mr. Pycraft. "Kenmore! Sinclair! Help me out of this! Do you hear me, you fools? Help me out of this!"

Much as Kenmore and Sinclair hated getting themselves muddy, they were compelled to obey. They went on their hands and knees on the edge of the pit, and assisted Mr. Pycraft out. They were in an awful state by the time they had done, but, compared to Mr. Pycraft, they were spotless. The Form-master was in a shocking condition. He was dripping with thick mud from head to foot, and almost unrecognisable.

And he was so angry that he was like a man demented. He shook both of his fists at Handforth, and splashes of mud flew far and wide.

"You young hooligan!" shouted Mr. Pycraft. "You dangerous young——"

"Hold on!" interrupted Handforth. "I didn't do this!"

"How dare you deny it!" screamed Mr. Pycraft.

"I deny it because I didn't do it!" retorted Handforth hotly. "By George! You don't think I'd lay a trap like this for a master, do you? It's all a mistake—that booby trap was intended for us! Some of the fellows got it all ready, and then——"

"Enough!" interrupted Mr. Pycraft excitedly. "I am amazed, Handforth, that you should dare to offer such a paltry excuse. Kenmore, I call upon you to witness that these boys are responsible for my condition."

"Of course they are, sir," said Kenmore. "It's obvious."

"Yesterday, Handforth was threatening me!" went on Mr. Pycraft. "You heard him, Kenmore—you distinctly heard him!"

"I did!" agreed Kenmore. "And now we've caught the young rascals red-handed, sir. There can't be any escape for them. Both Sinclair and I saw these three juniors come into the shrubbery."

"Of course we did," nodded Sinclair. "And they naturally came here so that they could watch the result of their handiwork. They wanted to see you drop into that pit, sir."

"Exactly!" snarled Mr. Pycraft. "The outrageous young reprobates! If there is

HOW TO FOLD YOUR FREE GIFT!

First bend the tail well back, and fold the sides well under; next fold the front down and press over lugs, and then fix the tail lugs over the side pieces; finally push up driver's head.

any justice in this world, they will be expelled from the school!"

Handforth was looking utterly startled.

"But—but you're all wrong!" he gasped. "We only came here because we were dared to do so! We thought it was a jape of some kind, and we were prepared——"

"Lying won't do you any good!" interrupted Kenmore roughly.

"Are you calling me a liar?" roared Handforth.

"Steady, you young idiot!" snapped Kenmore. "Nothing that you can say will alter the thing. You were caught red-handed, and that's good enough."

Church and McClure were pale with apprehension. They could see clearly that they had been led into a trap. It was all perfectly obvious to them now—now that it was too late!

Merrell had dared them to come into the shrubbery so that they would be on hand when Mr. Pycraft fell into that pit! And naturally, they would get the blame! It was a simple enough scheme, but cunning to a degree! It was well worthy of Bernard Forrest's best.

"We're in a mess, Handy!" muttered Church. "This is going to be jolly serious——"

"Hold on!" said Handforth darkly. "I've got that note from Merrell, and that will be good enough! It'll prove that we didn't come out here to——" Handforth broke off, as he was feeling through his pockets. "I must have left that giddy note on the study table," he went on, frowning. "Rats!"

And at just that very moment, David Merrell and Frederick Marriott were shaking hands near the wall of the East House. They had been watching closely, and they knew exactly what had been happening. They had heard Mr. Pycraft's shouts for help, and they knew that their plot had succeeded.

"Well, they're in the cart now, old man!" grinned Merrell. "Rather a brain-wave on my part, wasn't it, to give the tip to Kenmore?"

"Rather!" said Marriott. "Kenmore doesn't suspect anything, and when you told him that Handforth & Co. had gone into the shrubbery he went there at once, collecting Sinclair on the way. Nothing could have happened better. We can't even be suspected."

They chuckled with glee.

"And we shall be off by the morning train in about an hour," went on Marriott complacently. "I must say Merrell, that you're a deep bounder! Killing two birds with one stone, eh? We've made old Pycraft squirm—and those three Remove cads will probably get the sack! I say, what about that note?"

"Don't worry about the note!" said Merrell coolly. "I popped into Study D five minutes ago, and there it was on the table—just as I had expected."

"You've destroyed it, haven't you?"

"Of course I have!" said Merrell. "I wouldn't keep a thing like that—it's the only piece of evidence. If Handforth & Co. get out of this mess they'll be a trio of magicians!"

CHAPTER 9.

More Trouble

"GOOD gad!"

Archie Glenthorne, of the Remove, came to a halt in the Triangle, and his face was a study in consternation. He had just caught sight of Mr. Pycraft, as the latter was emerging from the shrubbery—and Archie was horrified.

"I mean to say, who, or rather, what is it?" he asked feebly. "Odds nightmares and apparitions! Seldom have I seen such a foul and frightful spectacle! I mean, what?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

From all sides of the Triangle, subdued laughter went up. Mr. Pycraft was obtaining no sympathy from the juniors. Wherever it was safe for them to do so, they cackled. In their eyes, this was a particularly pleasing spectacle.

Two or three other prefects had joined Mr. Pycraft now, and Handforth & Co. were practically hemmed in. There was no escape for them. They were being hustled across the Triangle towards Big Arch, and Mr. Pycraft was determined to take immediate action. Just as he had done on the previous day, he was taking Handforth straight to the Head. But this was a far more serious charge. Yesterday, Handforth had merely been fighting, but to-day he was accused of assaulting a master. It was a very grave business.

"Kenmore, you go ahead and bring Dr. Stafford out upon his doorstep!" Mr. Pycraft was saying. "I cannot possibly enter his House in this dreadful condition. I only want Dr. Stafford to see me, so that he will appreciate the full extent of this young rascal's ruffianism."

"I'll go, sir," said Kenmore readily.

"But look here!" roared Handforth. "I didn't know anything about it! Neither Church nor McClure nor I——"

"Silence!" shouted Mr. Pycraft. "Not another word, Handforth!"

"Yes, you'd better dry up!" said Carlile, of the Sixth. "I always knew you were a reckless young idiot, Handforth, but you've gone a bit beyond the mark this time!"

"Why, you don't think I did it, do you?" asked Handforth, staring.

"Don't be a young ass!" growled Carlile. "Why deny it?"

Two or three minutes later, Dr. Stafford was nearly startled out of his wits. He had been brought out of his house by Kenmore, who had given a brief account of what had happened, and the Head, thoroughly aroused

Mr. Pycraft danced about excitedly, causing blobs of mud to fly in all directions. "These boys"—indicating Handforth, Church, and McClure—"laid a deliberate trap for me!" he shouted, addressing the amazed Headmaster. "They should be expelled from the school!"

had sallied out. He beheld Mr. Pycraft with consternation.

"Dear me!" he ejaculated. "Is—is that really you, Mr. Pycraft?"

"It is, sir!" snarled the Form-master. "I have been deliberately assaulted——"

"Really, Mr. Pycraft, it would have been better if you had gone straight to your own House," said the Head, in distress. "I cannot see that any good can come of you making a—a public exhibition of yourself."

"I wanted you to see my condition, sir!" shouted Mr. Pycraft. "These—these young ruffians——"

"It was quite unnecessary for you to come before me, Mr Pycraft," interrupted the Head. "I could have taken your word. Please go at once and make yourself presentable."

Mr. Pycraft danced about excitedly, dropping blobs of mud all round him.

"These boys laid a deliberate trap for me!" he shouted. "They should be expelled from the school! I demand that they should be sent away! Indeed, I have a good mind to inform the police——"

"Please keep your head, Mr. Pycraft," interrupted Dr. Stafford. "There is no need for you to exaggerate the offence. It is serious enough, but to talk of the police is ridiculous. These three boys shall be flogged—publicly! I will attend to them immediately after prayers, in Big Hall!"

"But we didn't do it, sir!" shouted Handforth indignantly. "We didn't——"

"If you have anything to say, Handforth, I will hear it in Big Hall!" interrupted Dr. Stafford coldly. "For the present, you may go."

"But—but——"

"Go, Handforth!" ordered the Head.

And the chums of Study D, hot and flustered, were compelled to leave. Dr. Stafford, of course, was doing the right thing; he did not want to have any scene outside his house. He evidently meant to obtain all the facts before he went into Big Hall, and then he would be able to deal with the situation as it merited.

In the Triangle, Handforth & Co. were soon surrounded by a crowd of Remove fellows, and they were all asking for information. Many of them, indeed were using the frankest possible language.

"A crazy thing to do!" Fullwood was saying. "Hang it, Handforth, you might have known what would happen! You can't play tricks like that on Mr. Pycraft without suffering! You'll be lucky if you don't get the sack!"

"Rather!"

"These three idiots must have been off their rockers!"

Handforth & Co. stared round at the juniors.

"But—but you don't think that we did it, do you?" yelled Church.

"Didn't you do it?" asked Nipper.

"Oh, don't be an ass!" frowned Handforth. "Of course we didn't! It was a trap! Those cads, Merrell and Marriott, got it up—especially for our benefit!"

"What!"

"Of course they did!" said Handforth. "I smashed them up yesterday, and I expect they did this to get their revenge on us. You don't think that we dug that pit in the shrubbery, do you?"

"Well, it looks like it," said De Valerie dubiously.

Handforth glared.

"I don't care what it looks like!" he retorted. "We didn't know anything about it until we went to the shrubbery. You can take my word for it, can't you?"

"Of course we can, old man," said Nipper, nodding. "You may be several kinds of an ass, Handy, but we all know that you wouldn't tell a lot of whoppers to excuse yourself."

"Begad, rather!"

"Absolutely, old chappie!"

"Handy's word is his bond!"

All the Removites were agreed on that point.

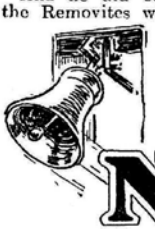
"But why did you go into the shrubbery?" asked Nipper curiously.

"Because of that 'dare' from Merrell," replied Handforth indignantly. "Of course, it was a trap—and we knew it was a trap, too! But we didn't think, for a second, that it was such a filthy, dirty trick as all this!"

"Do you mean that Merrell dared you to do something?" asked Nipper.

"Yes, of course," said Handforth. "It won't take me two minutes to explain the circumstances."

And he did so—much to the interest of the Removites who were crowding round.



CHAPTER 10.

In Big Hall!

NIPPER nodded thoughtfully when Handforth had finished.

"Yes, it's a plot right enough," he said grimly. "And a pretty unpleasant plot, too, Handy! I'm afraid you fellows are in a nasty mess."

"But the Head can't punish us!" protested Handforth. "We didn't do it!"

"And yet the evidence is absolutely right against you," replied Nipper. "The trouble is, you can't sneak—you can't tell the real truth about the affair. Let's hope the Head won't punish you on circumstantial evidence alone. You'd better fetch that note, and keep it by you in case of emergency."

"Yes, that's a good idea," said Church. "I'll run and fetch it."

He hurried off, and the others excitedly discussed the situation. It was quite apparent that Handforth & Co. had been victimised by the East House rotters. These Removites knew that Handforth was always truthful, and they accepted his story without question.

It was Merrell and Marriott who had dug that pit—probably after lights-out the previous night, or in the small hours of the morning. They knew Mr. Pycraft always went for the same walk every morning before breakfast, and they had felt sure that Mr. Pycraft would drop into the pit. And they had tricked Handforth & Co. to hiding in the shrubbery, so that they would get the blame.

Church came back, looking worried.

"It's not there!" he said. "You must have put that note into your pocket, Handy. It's nowhere in the study!"

Handforth frantically searched his pockets.

"I haven't got it!" he said, with a start. "Besides, I remember leaving it on the table!"

"Well, it's not there now!" said Church.

"Hold on!" put in Fullwood keenly. "Now you come to mention it, I remember that Merrell was hanging about in the West Square some little time ago. I wondered what he was doing——"

"He went into my study, and pinched that note!" roared Handforth.

"Yes, and he's destroyed it by this time!" put in Nipper. "He's destroyed the only piece of evidence there was. The cunning rotter!"

"But we can prove that he was hanging about the Ancient House!" said Handforth excitedly. "That'll be good enough won't it?"

"I'm afraid it won't," replied Nipper. "In fact, it's no proof at all. There's no reason why Merrell shouldn't go into the West Square if he likes, and nobody saw him actually go into Study D. There's only your word for it, you fellows, that the note actually came—and the Head won't believe a story like that. On the face of it, it seems a bit thick, doesn't it?"

"Oh, my goodness!" said Handforth blankly.

"I never suspected Merrell of such cunning," said Reggie Pitt of the West House. "I say, what a deep bounder! Of course, he and Marriott did this to have their revenge on Handforth. He smashed them yesterday, and so they've faked up this affair."

Clang—clang!

It was the bell, and there was no time for any further conversation. But everybody in the Remove was staunchly behind Handforth & Co. Everybody knew that these three had been tricked, and they accepted Handforth's story without question. But they had an uncomfortable idea that the headmaster would take a very different view.

Everything went as usual during prayers, but instead of the school being dismissed immediately afterwards, the Head appeared upon the platform, and his expression was one of great gravity.

"I have a very unpleasant duty to perform this morning," said Dr. Stafford, with obvious reluctance. "Three boys of the junior school have been guilty of very scandalous conduct, and I intend to punish them here and now. Handforth and Church and McClure, of the Remove Form, will stand out!"

The chums of Study D obeyed, all of them looking flushed.

"Come up upon the platform!" ordered the Head coldly.

They obeyed, and it was noticed that many members of the Fourth Form gave them angry looks. The Removites, on the other hand, were full of concern. Mr. Pycraft was on the platform, and he was now looking himself again. But he was pretending to be very unwell.

"What have you three boys to say in answer to this grave charge?" asked Dr. Stafford curtly, as the three juniors faced him. "A pit of mud was prepared for Mr. Pycraft this morning and it was prepared in such a spot that there could be no question as to the intention Every boy knows that Mr. Pycraft takes his morning walk along the shrubbery path."

"That's true, sir," said Handforth, "but we didn't——"

"Silence, Handforth!" commanded the Head "You three boys were lurking amongst the bushes at the very moment of this outrage. When Mr. Pycraft fell into the pit you came forward, and deliberately laughed at him."

"Yes, we laughed, sir," admitted Handforth. "But he looked so funny!"

A titter went up from the school, and Dr Stafford frowned

"Silence!" he commanded. "How dare you say a thing like that, Handforth? Yesterday, you were heard to utter threats against Mr. Pycraft. There are several witnesses who have assured me of your conduct. Indeed, Mr Pycraft himself overheard you saying that you would revenge yourself upon him for what happened yesterday."

"I know it sounds pretty bad, sir," said Handforth. "but we're not guilty. We didn't know anything about that pit."

"Handforth!" said the Head sternly. "Do you think you will do yourself any good by this denial?"

"I'm only telling the truth sir!"

"And we agree with him, sir!" said Church and McClure stoutly

"I am sorry to see this organised obstinacy on your part," said the Head angrily. "If you did not go to the shrubbery for the purpose of seeing Mr. Pycraft fall into this prepared pit why did you go there?"

"We—we——" Handforth paused. "We thought it was a jape, sir," he went on. "We didn't know anything about Mr. Pycraft. We didn't even suspect——"

"That is enough, Handforth," interrupted the Head, his voice icy "I am greatly pained that you should add falsehood to your other misbehaviour. Were it not for your excellent record, I should have no other course but to expel you from this school in disgrace."

"Really, sir, the boy should be expelled in any case, sir," said Mr. Pycraft indignantly. "I am the one who suffered at his hands——"

"I shall be obliged, Mr. Pycraft, if you will allow me to deal with this matter in my own way," said the Head, with dignity. "Handforth, you will be flogged in front of the whole school. Church and McClure will be caned—but in the privacy of my own study. You are the ringleader, Handforth, and a public flogging is the only adequate punishment that I can administer!"

CHAPTER 11.

Handforth's Defiance!

EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH was hot and red with excitement.

His hands were still tender and sore from yesterday's caning. In his own view, he hadn't deserved that caning—since he had only punished Merrell and Marriott for their despicable conduct in regard to the unfortunate cat. The Remove knew, too, that Handforth had been punished undeservedly.

And now he was to be publicly flogged—for something he had not done!

Any other junior, perhaps, would have submitted. But Handforth was different. He became terrifically excited as he stood there facing Dr. Stafford. He had been trapped by those two cads of the East House, and here he was, about to receive the worst punishment—next to expulsion—that a junior boy could have.

Handforth saw no reason why he should submit. He was stubborn, he was obstinate, and he was about the most reckless fellow in the Remove.

"Look here, sir, you'd better go easy!" he panted desperately.

"Silence!"

"I won't be silent!" roared Handforth. "You caned me yesterday, and I didn't deserve it! I was only punishing those two rotters for some particular caddishness of theirs And now I'm blessed if I'm going to take a flogging for something I didn't do! I don't tell lies, sir—I'm not in the habit of telling whoppers! I give you my word that I don't know anything about that pit. I didn't set any trap for Mr. Pycraft! And Church and McClure are just as innocent as I am! If there's any fairness in you, you'll hold an inquiry and get to the real truth! If you flog me, and cane Church and McClure, it'll be a rank injustice!"

The school held its breath. Such an outburst as this on the platform of Big Hall was almost unprecedented Dr. Stafford was

simply aghast. He hardly knew what to say for a moment or two. Handforth was standing there defiantly facing him, bold and reckless.

The Head became very angry. Nobody could blame him for the attitude he had adopted. The evidence was perfectly clear—absolutely conclusive. From first to last, everything pointed to the fact that Handforth & Co. were guilty. There was not a single loophole of escape for them.

If Handforth had told the truth about that note from Merrell, there might have been an inquiry; if Handforth had told the story of the unfortunate cat, the Head would possibly have delayed this flogging. But it was not in Handforth's nature to sneak, and he could only hope that Dr. Stafford would hold a full and searching inquiry.

But the Head saw no reason for this. The evidence was conclusive, and any denial from Handforth was futile. So now, in face of Handforth's attitude, the Head became highly incensed

"I can only assume, Handforth that you are too excited to realise the true nature of your conduct," he said. "Remember that I am your headmaster, and that I will not submit to this insolence."

"I don't mean to be insolent, sir!" said Handforth fiercely. "All I want is justice!"

"The evidence——"

"You can't go by the evidence, sir!" roared Handforth. "I tell you there's been some trickery. I don't know anything about that pit, and I'm not going to be flogged! No, by George! I'm blessed if I'm going to be flogged for something I didn't do!"

"Are you daring to defy me, boy?" shouted the Head.

"No, sir!" panted Handforth. "I respect you too much to defy you!"

"But, good gracious, you're doing it!"

"I don't mean it in any disrespectful way, sir," said Handforth fiercely. "But I don't see why I should submit to a flogging when I haven't done anything to warrant it. You're going to punish me for attacking Mr. Pycraft—for assaulting him—but I didn't do it! Neither did Church nor McClure! It's all a misunderstanding!"

Mr Pycraft came forward, white with anger.

"Really, sir, are you going to let this impudent boy over-rule you?" he asked shrilly. "The evidence is absolutely conclusive. Kenmore and Sinclair can corroborate my own statement. These three boys were hiding in the shrubbery—waiting to see me plunge into the mud. It is a terrible affair—and I really consider that Handforth should be expelled from the school. I am not vindictive, but ——"

"Please, Mr. Pycraft," said the Head coldly.

The Fourth Form master dried up, startled by the Head's tone.

"Have you quite finished your tirade, Handforth?" asked the Head frigidly. "This sort of thing has done you no good, and I am heartily ashamed of you. I know that you are an excitable boy, and I know that you are reckless. Therefore I am disposed to overlook this outrageous outburst. But I shall stand no more of it."

"You're not going to flog me, are you, sir?" demanded Handforth thickly.

"I have already told you what your sentence is to be——"

"All right!" shouted Handforth recklessly. "I'm not going to be flogged—and that's flat! You caned me yesterday, and I didn't deserve it! I don't mean to be impertinent, sir, but I'm going to stand up for my rights! Come on, Mac—come on Church!"

And before the astounded Church and McClure could know what Handforth was about, he seized them by the shoulders and rushed them off the platform. Nobody thought of interfering. In fact, masters and prefects were so utterly startled that they could only stand and stare.

"Handy!" gasped Church. "You're mad!"

"Chuck it, you crazy lunatic!" said McClure. "You'll only make things worse."

"We're going to stand up for our rights!" roared Handforth. "Come on—out of here!"

To the amazement of the whole school, and the stupefaction of Dr. Stafford, Handforth & Co. burst through the nearest doorway and vanished from sight. The incident was unprecedented in the whole history of St. Frank's.

Three junior schoolboys had defied the headmaster in front of the entire school!

CHAPTER 12.

Handy's Barring-out!

BIG HALL awoke from its momentary stupor directly after Handforth & Co. had vanished. As the big door swung to behind them, the school seemed to come to its senses again, and a loud murmur of excited comment broke out from all ranks.

The seniors seemed to be as much dumbfounded as the juniors. But their emotion was really different. The senior school was shocked—scandalised that such a thing as this could have happened.

But the Removites, almost to a man, were wildly excited over Handforth's action. They were scared for him—for this would almost certainly mean expulsion—but they admired him for his pluck and determination. They knew that he was not guilty, and they were wholly on his side.

The Fourth Form were not quite so sure, and it was not to be expected that Handforth should get much sympathy from them, for, after all, the Fourth-Formers were the rivals of the Remove.

The Third was simply and purely excited because there was a sensation. Anything sensational always appealed to the fags, and they regarded Handforth as a sportsman because he had provided this wonderful piece of excitement.

"Silence, there!" shouted Fenton of the Sixth. "No talking, you juniors! Silence!"

"Silence!" echoed the other prefects.

The headmaster, on the platform, recovered from his helplessness.

"The school will remain here!" he ordered angrily. "Fenton—Morrow! Go at once and fetch these three boys back You had better take two or three other prefects with you—and do not return until you have caught them."

"Yes, sir," said Fenton grimly.

Edgar Fenton was the captain of the school, and he had a sneaking sympathy for Handforth For Fenton had a vague sort of idea at the back of his head that Handforth had been speaking the truth. Never had Fenton known Handforth to tell a lie—not a deliberate untruth in order to escape punishment—and so, in spite of the evidence, Fenton felt just a little doubt. But nothing could alter the fact that Handforth had defied the headmaster, and he would have to be brought back.

Meantime, while the school seethed in Big Hall, Handforth & Co. had arrived in the Remove passage. They were at a momentary deadlock. Church and McClure, indeed, were so flushed and excited that they hardly knew what they were doing.

"Oh, you hopeless ass, Handy!" groaned Church breathlessly. "You silly fathead! You've done it now!"

"Done what?" asked Handforth.

"You'll get the sack for this!"

"Rats!" said Handforth. "I should like to know how the Head's going to sack me—or your chaps, either—if we hold a barring-out! By George! That's the idea—it's just come to me! We'll hold a giddy barring-out!"

His chums stared at him in amazement.

"A barring-out?" gurgled McClure, his eyes wide open. "But—but you silly chump! You fatheaded lunatic! You don't suppose that the Remove will support us, do you?"

"I don't care whether they support us or not," continued Handforth. "We'll hold the barring-out just the same!"

"But how can we?" yelled Church.

"Never mind whether we can—we've got to do it!" said Handforth swiftly. "And we mustn't lose any time over it, either! There'll be prefects out here in a couple of ticks—and once we're grabbed, we shall be hauled back to the platform and swished!"

"You'll be sacked!" said McClure desperately.

"Yes—if I'm caught!" replied Handforth, his eyes blazing. "But I'm not going to stand injustice. We didn't do that to old Pycraft, and we're not going to be punished for it. Pycraft jolly well deserved it, and I'm glad he fell into that pit. But we didn't do that job, and so we're not going to be flogged—that's flat!"

"But—but——"

"No arguments!" interrupted Handforth. "Come on—to Study D!"

He whirled his chums along the corridor, and, reaching Study D, they tore inside. Then Handforth slammed the door and locked it. They were only just in the nick of time, too, for heavy footsteps sounded out in the passage, and then came Fenton's voice:

"Handforth!" he shouted. "Handforth! Where are you, you young ass?"

"Shush!" hissed Handforth. "Don't answer!"

There came more footsteps, and then Morrow's voice sounded.

"It's no good looking in here, Fenton," he said. "They've bolted outside, I expect. The hopeless young scamps! They won't do themselves any good by this sort of thing!"

"Hold on!" said Fenton. "I've half an idea that——"

The door-handle of Study D rattled.

"Thought so!" came Fenton's voice. "They're in here! Locked themselves in!"

Handforth found Church and McClure looking at him with startled eyes. What could they do now? The prefects were upon them! Only a locked door stood between them and recapture. The window was no method of escape either, for there were probably other prefects outside, searching.

Only for a moment did the Study D leader hesitate. Then:

"Come on!" muttered Handforth. "Jam the table against the door, and the bookcase, too! We'll make some barricades!"

Church and McClure stared at their chum incredulously.

"But—but what's the idea?" gasped McClure.

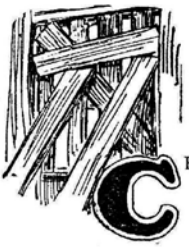
"There's only one idea!" retorted Handforth grimly. "We're barring them out—see? Yes, my sons! We're holding a barring-out of our own—just a little private affair. And we won't give in, either. We'll barricade ourselves in this study, and we'll withstand every attack. No surrender! That's my motto, my lads—no surrender!"

SOMETHING UNUSUAL!

A handsome coloured metal model of Captain Malcolm Campbell's

THREE-TON RACING CAR

will be presented FREE with every copy of next week's bumper issue of "The Nelson Lee Library." Mind you add this unique souvenir to your set, boys!



CHAPTER 13.

Holding the Fort!

CHURCH and McClure were utterly flabbergasted.

They would never have dreamed of taking up an attitude like this. In all probability, no other fellow in the whole of St. Frank's would have thought of it. But Edward Oswald Handforth was a force unto himself. When he got an idea into his head he allowed it to take full possession of him, and he was reckless enough and determined enough to put it into effect.

A barring-out on his own!

It was something novel—something startling. On the face of it, it seemed so utterly hopeless. How could three junior boys defy the authority of the whole school? If a complete Form rebelled there was some chance of success, for the authorities would naturally do everything they possibly could to bring the insurrection to an end. But how could three isolated boys carry on a barring-out successfully? To Church and McClure, the project seemed absolutely insane. But Handforth was full of enthusiasm for it.

"Come on—up with the lino!" he said briskly. "We'll show 'em! By George! We'll prove that they can't mess *us* about!"

"But why should we pull up the lino?" asked Church breathlessly.

"We want some floorboards, of course."

"But what for?"

"Barricades, you ass!" said Handforth. "My hat! What a lot of questions! Haven't you any brains? How can we have barricades unless we get some wood? The table and the bookcases and the chairs will do to jam against the door, but we want to barricade the window too. And the sooner we do it the better."

"Oh, Handy, it's—it's too potty!" urged McClure. "Wouldn't it be better to surrender now——"

"What's that, Arnold McClure?" interrupted Handforth darkly. "Did I hear you say we ought to surrender?"

"Well, old man, in the circumstances——"

"I don't care what the circumstances are!" put in Handforth curtly. "The word 'surrender' doesn't enter into my vocabulary! I don't know the word! We're justified, aren't we? We didn't make that pit for Pycraft to fall into, did we?"

"Well, no——"

"Then we're perfectly justified in holding this barring-out!" said Handforth. "Come on—there's no time for talking!"

Thump, thump, thump!

"Let 'em bang!" said Handforth.

He was like a whirlwind. The lino was torn up, and then, with the aid of the fire-irons, one of the boards was loosened. After this one was freed the others were soon torn up, and one corner of the floor was completely laid bare. The planks were carried across to the window and jammed into position. They were wedged in all sorts of ways, and before the task was half completed two or three prefects had appeared out in the West Square, and were attempting to get through the window.

"Clear off!" roared Handforth. "No admittance."

"Well, I'm hanged!" said Carlile, of the Sixth. "These young idiots are barricading themselves in!"

"You bet we are!" said Handforth.

"Are you crazy?" demanded Reynolds. "You silly young fools! You'll be expelled for this!"

"Then it doesn't matter if we have some fun to start with, does it?" retorted Handforth coolly. "We might as well be hung for sheep as lambs! If we're going to be sacked, we'll do something sensational to begin with. Anyhow, we're holding a barring-out!"

"What?" yelled the prefects.

"Thought I'd surprise you!" said Handforth, nodding. "Come on, Mac—let's have another of those boards. These silly seniors will be trying to force their way in soon."

Handforth's coolness was reflected in his chums. Now that they had definitely committed themselves to this action, they were less excited. They knew that the consequences would be serious when they were forced out. But Handforth had started this barring-out, and they were compelled to support him. They were his staunch chums in all things, and they would never have thought of forsaking him. Never before had he wanted their help so much as he wanted it now.

Thump, thump, thump!

"Handforth!" came Fenton's voice from the other side of the door. "Why don't you come out? You young idiot! You're doing yourself no good by this defiance!"

"We'll see about that!" retorted Handforth. "Awfully sorry, Fenton—but we're not coming out!"

"Then we'll force you out!" shouted Fenton angrily.

"Will you? Just try it on—and see what you'll get!" said Handforth, in an aggressive voice. "No offence to you, Fenton, old man. I admire you—you're one of the best. I don't mean to be disrespectful to you, or to the Head, or to anybody else in the school, but we're not going to take punishment that we don't deserve. The Head wouldn't listen to reason, so we've taken the law into our own hands. That's the whole thing in a nutshell."

"Are you going to open this door or not?"

"We're not!" retorted Handforth.

"I'll give you just twenty seconds——"

"I don't care if you give me twenty

years!" interrupted Handforth. "We've burned our boats now, Fenton, old son! Once you start a barring-out you can't give in. We've defied authority, so we'll keep it up. Later on, perhaps, the Head will come to his senses, and hold a full inquiry. Anyhow, you can hammer on that door until you're bruised. We shan't open it."

And Handforth continued his defensive preparations. The barricades were tightened up, and the boards across the window were made more secure. Church and McClure assisted nobly in this work, and by the time the prefects returned to Big Hall, to announce the startling developments in the situation, Study D was a veritable fortress!

CHAPTER 14.

Nipper Takes Action!

D R. STAFFORD frowned heavily as the prefects came trooping into Big Hall, looking flustered and hot. They were empty-handed. The school looked on breathlessly.

"Well?" demanded the Head. "Where are those three boys?"

"I'm sorry, sir, but they have locked themselves into their own study, and they refuse to come out," reported Fenton. "They have even put the furniture against the door, and have placed barricades in front of the window."

"Good gracious!" ejaculated the Head, aghast.

The school hummed with the sensational news.

"Handforth is very obstinate, sir, and says that he means to hold a barring-out on his own," continued Fenton. "I tried to argue with him——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A roar of laughter arose from the junior ranks, swelled, and was then taken up by the entire school. In spite of themselves, the fellows could not contain their mirth.

"A barring-out!"

"Good gad!"

"Oh, my only sainted aunt!"

"Just like old Handy!"

"Rather! Nobody else in the school would have dared to do it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Head's presence was forgotten for the moment in the general excitement. It was impossible for the school to regard this affair in a serious light. Edward Oswald Handforth had started a barring-out on his own! The ludicrous nature of the situation tickled everybody. How like Handforth! How characteristic of that reckless, stubborn warrior!

"Silence!" shouted Dr. Stafford angrily. "I am amazed, boys, that you should treat this matter with such levity."

The laughter died away.

"This boy—this impudent Handforth—has led his two companions into a perfectly preposterous act of rebellion," continued the Head. "Needless to say, they will be dealt with swiftly and drastically. In the meantime, the school will dismiss. But I must warn you——"

The Head found it impossible to continue. As soon as the school heard the word "dismiss," there was a wild rush for the exits. The juniors, in particular, were altogether too excited to listen to the Head's final remarks. Indeed, the majority of the fellows did not even know that the Head had intended making any further comments. Dr. Stafford, as a matter of fact, had been about to forbid them to have anything to do with the rebels. But it was too late now.

The juniors swarmed out, rushed into the West Square, and into the junior passage of the Ancient House, where they cheered wildly. The Removites were particularly in evidence.

They *knew* that Handforth was innocent. They had heard his account of what had happened that morning. They knew that Merrell and Marriott, of the East House, had tricked the chums of Study D into going into the shubbery. And so they had plenty of sympathy for that indomitable trio. Handforth & Co. did not deserve punishment, and they weren't taking any! They deserved all the support that the Remove could give them!

In Study D, Handforth & Co. were greatly heartened.

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Handy!"

"Stick it out, you chaps—keep it up!"

"You'll win if you only carry on!"

"Hurrah!"

It was heartening, indeed, to hear these shouts of support. Fellows came up to the door and yelled congratulations through the keyhole. Others swarmed round the window and urged Handforth & Co. to "stick it out." As he heard the shouts Edward Oswald became flushed with enthusiasm.

"There you are!" he said to his chums. "What did I tell you? They're with us—the whole giddy Remove! They know that the punishment was unjust, and they're willing to support us. Good men!"

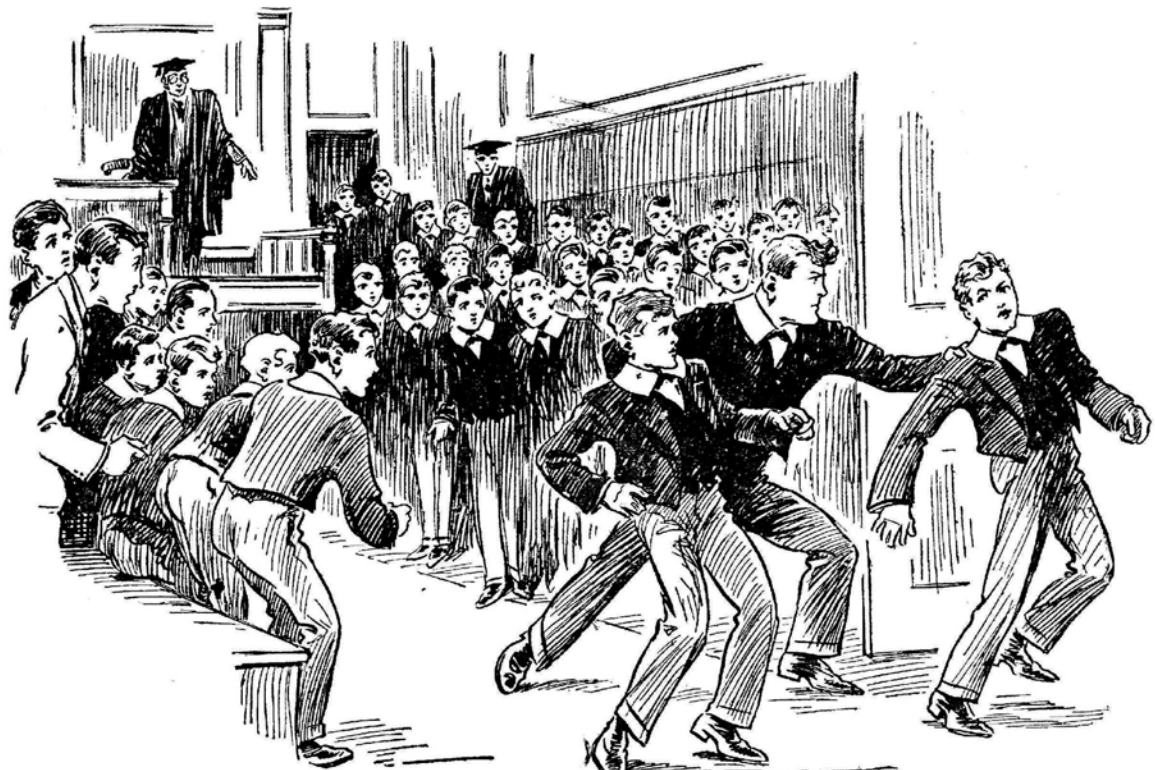
There were several Removites, however, who did not come round Study D cheering. Nipper was one of them—and Nipper, as captain of the Form, was feeling very worried. He had gathered Reggie Pitt, Tommy Watson, Fullwood, De Valerie, and two or three others round him, and he was talking earnestly. They were in the Triangle, whilst most of the others were in the West Square and indoors.

"You're not going to urge Handforth and Co. to surrender, are you?" asked Fullwood doubtfully.

"Not likely!" said Nipper. "I agree with him—I'm on his side!"

"That's good!" said Fullwood, nodding. "I'm glad to hear you say it, Nipper."

"But it seems to me there's only one thing to be done," continued Nipper



"We're going to stand up for our rights!" roared Handforth as, seizing hold of Church and McClure, he rushed them off the platform towards the nearest doorway. They did not intend to be punished for an action they had not committed.

quickly. "Naturally, Handforth and Co. can't hold this barring-out on their own. They'll be beaten in less than an hour. But if we can prove to the Head that Handy was justified in taking the action, he might be exonerated."

"Well, what do you suggest doing?" asked Tommy Watson eagerly.

"My dear chap, there's only one thing," replied Nipper. "We've got to go and find Merrell and Marriott, and force them to confess. We did it with Forrest before he was sacked, and we'll do it with these rotters!"

"Good egg!" said De Valerie. "That ought to do the trick!"

"Rather!" said Nipper. "If those two fellows confess to the Head that they dug that pit for old Pycraft, the Head will know that Handforth and Co. are innocent, and he'll probably pardon them. Come on—no time to lose!"

With one accord, the group of Remove fellows rushed away to the East House. They were lucky, for they found Merrell and Marriott in Study No. 15, just preparing to leave.

The two young rascals of the Fourth were in high feather. They had been congratulating themselves hugely until Handforth had rebelled. Even now they were highly delighted, for it seemed certain to them that Handforth was booked for the sack. Well, it was what he deserved; they had had a splendid revenge!

The fact that they would be responsible for an innocent boy receiving the disgrace of expulsion did not worry them.

"We're as safe as houses!" Merrell was saying. "We're clearing off now—to catch that train"

"Plenty of time yet," said Marriott. "We needn't start for another half an hour."

"That doesn't matter—we'll go now!" interrupted Merrell. "The sooner we're clear away, the better. There can't be any inquiries then. And by the time we come back Handy will have been sacked and everything will have blown over. Come on!"

But as they turned towards the door it burst open, and the Removites swarmed in!

CHAPTER 15.

Under Compulsion.

DAVID MERRELL went a sickly sort of colour as he saw Nipper and the other Removites swarming into the study. Marriott nearly collapsed.

"What—what do you want?" asked Merrell huskily.

He was the instigator of the whole thing, and he knew it. Marriott, after all, had merely been a tool. Marriott had utterly no initiative of his own. Merrell's was the master-mind, although, as a matter of fact, Merrell was a fellow without any pluck or stamina. Face to face with sudden danger, he was liable to crumple up.

"We'd like a word with you, Merrell,"

"We're going to stand up for our rights! rushed them off the platform towards the actic

said Nipper grimly. "No, not you, Marriott—we know what a weakling you are. Merrell's the brain in this study."

"I—I don't know what you're talking about!" stammered Merrell, scared cold. "Why—why should you come to us?"

"Because you're going to obey orders!" replied Nipper. "It was you, Merrell, who dug that pit for Mr. Pycraft."

"I didn't!" shouted Merrell, with such vehemence that he gave himself away.

"Oh, yes, you did!" said Nipper. "The whole thing was a little plot of yours, so you'd better not try to deny it. You sent Handforth a note this morning, didn't you?"

"No, I didn't!" lied Merrell frantically.

"Handforth says that you did, and Church and McClure say so, too," put in Fullwood. "We believe them implicitly, Merrell. And we know that you're a liar, anyhow."

"Look here——" began Merrell hotly

as, seizing hold of Church and McClure, he They did not intend to be punished for an mitted.

"Shut up!" broke in Nipper. "What's the good of keeping this up, Merrell? You were seen hanging about in the West Square this morning, and we know that you dodged into Study D and stole that note back, so that it couldn't be used as evidence."

Merrell looked so startled, and he gave such a gasp of guilt, that no further proof was necessary.

"You fixed this up for old Handy," continued Nipper. "You thought that you would get him into trouble, didn't you? Well, you have! And now you're going to get him out!"

"But—but what can we do?" stuttered Merrell desperately.

He was dreadfully anxious now. It was nearly time for the train—but it would be impossible to get away so long as these Remove fellows detained them. Merrell's cunning brain acted swiftly. The only way to escape—to get away from the school—was to agree to these Remove fellows' demands.

Merrell knew that he and Marriott had their own Housemaster's permission to leave the school that morning—and the Head's sanction, too. So the sooner they could go, the better.

"What—what do you want us to do?" faltered Merrell.

"You'll come with us to the Head's House," replied Nipper relentlessly. "Handforth & Co. have been accused of committing this assault on Mr. Pycraft, and you two fellows are the guilty parties. You're going straight to the Head, and you're going to confess!"

"We won't!" shouted Merrell desperately.

"No fear! We won't confess——"

"You'll either confess, or we'll frog's-march you round the Triangle, we'll make you run the gauntlet, and then——"

"It wasn't my idea!" protested Marriott, almost frightened out of his wits. "It was Merrell who suggested, and—and——"

"You contemptible hound!" snarled Merrell, turning on his crony

"Well, it's not fair that I should be blamed!" panted Marriott. "If anybody confesses, you'll have to, Merrell!"

"Well, that's good enough for us!" said Fullwood, with a nod. "They've confessed, haven't they?"

"It's no good confessing to us," said Nipper. "We knew it all the time—and a confession makes practically no difference. But they've got to go to the Head, and tell him the truth."

"All right—we'll go!" said Merrell suddenly.

Nipper gave him a sharp, suspicious look.

"You've changed your mind pretty quickly, haven't you?" he asked.

"Well, you threatened to frog's-march us and make us run the gauntlet," muttered Merrell sullenly. "A flogging from the Head would be better than that."

"But—but——" began Marriott.

"Shut up!" said Merrell savagely. "We're going—it's the only thing we can do, Marriott! These chaps are determined, and they'll scrag us unless we agree."

"But we shall be detained, and—and——"

"Don't I keep telling you to be quiet?" roared Merrell. "Leave everything to me, you weak fool! I'll do the talking—I'll ac-

cept all the blame!" he added jeeringly. "Can't you see that there's no getting out of it? These fellows know the truth, and we've got to submit. Come on—let's get it over."

The precious pair were marched out into the Triangle, surrounded by the grim-looking Removites. Nipper's action was a good one. It seemed likely that the Study D barring-out would be over almost as soon as it had started, and Handforth & Co. would be triumphant.

"I'm not quite green, Merrell," said Nipper, as he closed in on the East House fellow. "I have my suspicions about you, my lad!"

"What do you mean?" demanded Merrell.

"Well, you agreed rather too quickly," replied Nipper calmly. "Thought you'd be able to scoot off, eh? Thought you'd bunk as soon as we got outside? Nothing doing! We're going to escort you right to the Head's House—and we're going to see you inside! In fact, we'll wait in Inner Court until you come out again!"

"That's the idea!" said Fullwood. "There's nothing like being certain."

Merrell went shaky, and he gave a frightened sob.

"You—you rotters!" he said frantically. "I—I thought—— Oh, it's no good! You've got us properly trapped!"

He spoke in such a hopeless voice that Marriott nearly collapsed on the spot. He had had a feeling that Merrell was playing some sort of game, but now his last hope had gone

CHAPTER 16.

David Merrell's Cunning!

"WAIT a minute, Josephine," said Merrell.

They were in the Head's spacious hall, on their way to the dreaded sanctum, and they were being escorted by a neat parlourmaid. She paused, and regarded the two juniors coldly.

"My name isn't Josephine," she said, with a touch of indignation.

"Well, never mind," said Merrell. "I just want to have a word with my pal here."

He drew Marriott aside, and his eyes were glittering rather evilly. They had just come in, and outside, gathered round the porch, were Nipper, Watson, Tregellis-West, Fullwood and the others. They had escorted the East House pair right to the doorway, and had seen them enter—had, indeed, told the parlourmaid to take the pair straight into the Head's presence.

"What—what are we going to do?" faltered Marriott, in a kind of wail.

"Leave it to me, you fool!" muttered Merrell. "Don't look so confoundedly scared! Leave all the talking to me—and don't open your mouth!"

"But—but supposing the Head questions me?"

"Don't answer him," retorted Merrell. "Pretend to be tongue-tied, or something. But leave the talking to me! I'm going to get us out of this hole! And after we've gone, we've got to keep away until after Christmas!"

Marriott opened his eyes wide, but Merrell offered no explanation. The girl was getting impatient, too. They continued on their way to the Head's study, and a moment later they were ushered in.

Dr. Stafford was pacing up and down, his brow black, his whole attitude one of agitation and worry. The defiance of Handforth & Co. had upset him considerably.

"What are you boys doing here?" he demanded, turning on the pair. "How dare you disturb me like this? I gave no orders for you to come——"

"Please, sir, we had to come!" faltered Merrell. "We're being persecuted, sir!"

It was the right word to attract the Head's attention.

"Persecuted?" he repeated sharply. "What do you mean? You are the two boys who were in this study yesterday."

"Yes, sir!" said Merrell, in a shaky voice. "Handforth tried to half kill us yesterday, and you caned him for knocking us about."

"Well?" demanded the Head. "That matter is over now. Has Handforth been threatening you?"

"It's not only Handforth, sir, but lots of these Remove chaps," said Merrell, in a complaining voice. "But Handforth has been the worst, and—and—— But we didn't like to say anything, sir. It's—it's like sneaking. We should never dream of it, only it has become so—so acute."

Dr. Stafford compressed his lips, and sat down. Outside, Nipper and his companions were waiting—fondly under the impression that Merrell and Marriott were confessing! How could they dream that these two young rascals were continuing their treacherous games?

"I do not encourage the practice of informing," said the Head gravely. "But in certain circumstances it becomes necessary I have already received proof that you two boys have been persecuted. Even now you are bearing the marks of yesterday's painful episode."

"Yes, sir," said Merrell desperately. "And we've got permission to leave St. Frank's for a fortnight, sir—as you know. My sister is being married this week——"

"Why, yes!" said the Head. "That is quite true, Merrell! I remember now. Mr.

FOR STUNNING SCHOOL STORIES READ—
THE GEM
Every Wednesday - Price 2d.

Goole was speaking to me on the subject, only a day or two ago. So you are the two boys who have received permission to leave?"

"Yes, sir," said Merrell. "And—and I think Handforth has been jealous. He has been bullying us for weeks—threatening to do all sorts of terrible things. If it comes to that, he has been threatening Mr. Pycraft, too."

"Have you heard Handforth uttering these threats?" asked the Head keenly.

"Why, of course, sir," said Merrell. "Everybody in the lower school knows it. Only yesterday Handforth was going about, saying that he was going to dig that pit for Mr. Pycraft to fall into!"

"Good gracious!" ejaculated the Head.

"Everybody knows it, sir," went on Merrell, recovering his coolness. "They won't say anything, of course—they wouldn't dream of giving him away. You see, sir, Handforth is a terrible bully, and if anybody dared to say anything against him, he would smash them!"

"Upon my word!" said the Head, completely startled.

"But we're forced to speak, sir," continued Merrell. "A lot of these chaps have threatened to keep us at school here—and we're afraid of being molested. And—and it's almost time for our train, too. We didn't know what to do, sir, so we thought we'd come straight to you, and ask for your protection."

Merrell, now that he had started this lying, proceeded to enlarge upon his former statements. He told a whole string of lies—mainly concerning Handforth & Co. He explained that for weeks past Handforth & Co. had been persecuting the pair of them, and that they had gone about in fear of their lives. Yesterday, it seemed, a culminating point had been reached.

The cunning of Merrell's falsehoods was here shown. For the Head had seen Merrell and Marriott himself the previous day, and Handforth had confessed to knocking them about. So it all seemed so obvious—so clear.

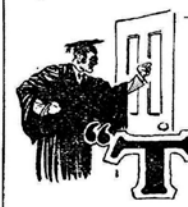
"We want you to help us, sir," concluded Marriott. "We've only just got time to get to the station, even now, and—and these chaps are waiting for us. They want to pounce on us, and throw us in the fountain pool, or something! Life hasn't been worth living lately! Handforth's to blame right from the very start. He's the ringleader in all these bullying affairs! You've been deceived in him, sir—he's one of the worst bullies in the school!"

Dr. Stafford compressed his lips.

"I am glad that you have told me this, my boys," he said grimly. "You had better leave the school by means of the rear way. I will have you escorted safely off the premises, and, indeed, you had better leave in one of my cars. You will then be able to get to the station in plenty of time for your train."

"Thanks awfully, sir," said Merrell.

He shot a triumphant glance at the amazed Marriott. The wheeze had succeeded! Instead of confessing, they had made the case against Handforth ten times as black! And they were safe themselves!



CHAPTER 17.

Very Peculiar

"THEY'RE a long while!" said Tommy Watson impatiently.

"I expect the Head's keeping them," said Nipper. "I don't wonder at it, either. I expect he's pumping them for full details."

"Rather a pity we didn't go with them," said Fullwood.

"We couldn't have done that," said Nipper, shaking his head. "We have forced them to confess. But if we had gone in with them it would have been almost the same thing as sneaking against them. It's a totally different thing when they speak for themselves."

"That's right enough," agreed Fullwood. "But we ought to have made them promise to tell the truth about that poor cat. Then the Head would have known that Handforth was justified yesterday, when he gave them a thrashing."

"It doesn't matter much about that affair now," replied Nipper. "Handforth punished them for torturing the cat. That's over and done with. It'll be quite enough for Merrell and Marriott to confess the truth about that Pycraft affair."

A silence fell upon the juniors. Five minutes passed, and still there were no signs of Merrell and Marriott. The waiting Removites began to get a little impatient.

Then suddenly the door opened, and Dr. Stafford appeared. There was an angry look on the Head's face. He had just become aware of these boys, collected round his doorstep, and a suspicion instantly flashed into his mind. It was a perfectly logical suspicion, too. Merrell and Marriott had complained that they were being persecuted. Here was certain proof of the fact! Numbers of Remove fellows, looking grim and angry, waiting for them to come out! The Head was glad that he had sent them by the rear way, under escort.

Dr. Stafford was a very fair man, and he hated the thought of committing an injustice. But in this present instance there could be no blame attached to him. The whole affair was a grave misunderstanding, brought about by the duplicity of David Merrell.

Merrell had complained that he and Marriott were going about in terror of their skins. And here were these boys, outside, waiting. It was all too obvious.

"What are you boys doing here?" demanded the Head harshly.

"We're waiting for Merrell and Marriott, sir," replied Nipper.

Fatal words! The Head could draw only one conclusion—Nipper himself had directly corroborated Merrell's statement!

"I shall deal with you boys later!" said the Head angrily. "Go away at once! You know well enough that Inner Court is out of bounds."

"But—but——"

"I will not hear a word!" stormed the Head. "I can quite understand that Merrell's complaints were very much justified. It is high time that my eyes were opened to this disgraceful state of affairs!"

The juniors looked at one another in amazement.

"But—but I don't understand, sir!" said Nipper quickly. "We thought——"

"Enough!" interrupted Dr. Stafford. "I will not hear another word!"

"But——"

"You heard me, Hamilton!" thundered the Head.

He walked past, cold with rage. Everything that he had recently heard corroborated the first impression. Handforth was the culprit—Handforth had been bullying Merrell and Marriott, and he had deliberately set that trap for Mr Pycraft. Later, he had lied—he had said that he was not to blame.

So Dr. Stafford's opinion of Edward Oswald Handforth just now was very, very low. If he had had only the word of those two Fourth-Formers to rely upon, he might have hesitated. But he had his own experiences to support that cunning story. Yesterday he had heard Handforth boast that he had knocked Merrell and Marriott about. Mr. Pycraft himself had heard Handforth threatening to have revenge Now, this morning, the Head had seen these boys—very probably sent by Handforth—waiting outside his house, ready to persecute Merrell and Marriott when they came out! It was all so clear—so crystal clear.

So if the Head had had any doubts regarding Handforth & Co, they were now completely removed. He was furious, and he intended taking the strongest possible action.

He went straight to the Ancient House, and the crowds of juniors faded away as he approached. Although the Junior passage had been thronged with fellows a moment earlier, not one was visible when the Head arrived outside the door of Study D. He hammered forcibly upon the door.

"It's no good!" came Handforth's voice. "We're not giving in. You can go and tell the Head that he can eat coke!"

"Handforth!" thundered Dr. Stafford.

"Oh, corks!" came a gasp from Handforth. "Sorry, sir! No disrespect, sir! Only—only a figure of speech!"

"Handforth, I command you to open this door!" said the Head, his voice quivering.

"I wish you wouldn't, sir," said Handforth, with real distress. "I don't want to defy you. It's different with the prefects—I don't mind defying them."

"You will open this door at once!" repeated Dr. Stafford. "You unmitigated young rascal! How dare you set yourself up against the rules and regulations of the school! How dare you Handforth!"

"I'll open the door at once, sir, if you'll promise to hold an inquiry."

"Be silent!" roared Dr. Stafford "I will make no promises—I will make no conditions! You will surrender now—and you will surrender unconditionally!"

Edward Oswald Handforth was in no way frightened.

"I'm sorry sir but you're wrong," he replied stubbornly. "We're not coming out of here until the real culprits have confessed. We didn't build that pit for Mr. Pycraft to fall into—and we'll only come out after you have discovered the real offenders."

"Boy!" thundered the Head. "Are you daring to disobey me?"

"Sorry, sir but it's the only thing to do," replied Handforth "We've started a barring-out, and we'll carry it on. We can't give in now—because you'll probably sack me, and flog Church and Mac. And that wouldn't be fair."

The Head half-turned aside. He did not know what to do He knew that crowds of juniors were within earshot—eagerly listening to every word. He was sorry that Nelson Lee was not on hand. But the Housemaster of the Ancient House was away for a few days—taking a well-earned little holiday. Nelson Lee's idea of a holiday, probably, was to exert his energies on some detective case. But that was neither here nor there.

The Head was painfully aware of the fact that he was making himself look ridiculous. Here he was arguing with a junior schoolboy with a locked door between them! It wouldn't do Handforth was obviously obstinate, and the Head felt helpless.

He turned away, his eyes gleaming with anger his lips compressed in a thin line.

CHAPTER 12.

A Startling Development!

AS the Head went out through the lobby, he came across crowds of juniors, who were all respectfully silent.

"Let me issue a word of warning!" said Dr. Stafford angrily. "Any boy or boys, who hold communication with these three rebels will be severely punished. I forbid any of you to hold conversation with those three young rascals."

There was a silence.

Fenton came up, looking worried and exasperated.

"It's no good, sir—we can't get them out," he said. "They've barricaded themselves in

properly now. It's more serious than I thought."

"You are quite right, Fenton—it is indeed serious," agreed the headmaster. "I want you to prepare notices at once, and to have them posted on every board in the school. Any boy who is seen communicating with these rebels will be reported to me, and his punishment will be drastic. See to it at once, Fenton."

"Yes, sir," said the school captain. "And what about these three juniors in the meantime?"

"I will decide what is to be done very shortly," replied the Head, with dignity.

He walked out—having no idea whatever as to his next line of action. Handforth & Co. had defied him, and he was completely at a loss. The thing was unprecedented. Three junior schoolboys—quite on their own—barricading themselves in their own study! It was a staggering business!

"Just a minute, sir, if I may have a word!"

The Head pulled up short, and found Nipper near him.

"What do you want?" demanded the Head.

"Can you tell me where Merrell and Marriott are, sir?" asked Nipper bluntly.

"I am amazed, Hamilton, that you should have the effrontery to ask me that question!" said the Head. "Merrell has told me of the persecution that has been going on, and I may as well inform you at once that you will not be able to reach them. Merrell and Marriott have left the school."

"Left the school sir!" gasped Nipper.

For a moment he had an idea that the pair had been expelled—as they deserved. But the Head's next words disillusioned him.

"Merrell and Marriott have received permission to attend the wedding of the former's sister," continued Dr. Stafford. "They will be away for nearly a fortnight. I had a statement from them, and it has only served to verify my former suspicions. When Handforth is forced out of that study, he will be expelled in disgrace!"

Dr. Stafford walked on, angrier than ever.

Nipper took a deep breath. He hardly knew what to believe. He was completely staggered by what the Head had been saying. But one thing was perfectly clear to him.

Merrell and Marriott, instead of confessing, had told a string of lies, and had only placed Handforth in a worse position than ever. Now they had left the school—and they were beyond reach!

Full realisation came to Nipper in a flood. No wonder Merrell had been so eager to go to the Head—no wonder he had promised to confess! He had decided to tell a lot of lies, knowing that he would be going away from the school immediately afterwards! Nipper was hot with anger.

He had rather wondered at the Head's black brow as he had gone into the Ancient House. For, at first, Nipper had believed that the Head was going there to tell Handforth that a full inquiry would be made. But just the opposite had happened!

Catching sight of Buster Boots, the skipper of the Fourth Nipper ran across to him.

"Just a word, Buster!" he said breathlessly. "Do you know that Merrell and Marriott have received permission to go home?"

"Why, of course," said John Busterfield Boots. "Everybody's known it on this side for the last day or two. Merrell's sister's getting married, or something, but I don't know the details. Those chaps were never in our set, anyhow. A couple of beastly snobs. Why did you want to know?"

"Oh, nothing—it doesn't matter," replied Nipper.

He ran back to the Remove fellows, and swiftly told them what he had just learned. They were infuriated.

"Then we've been tricked!" said Fullwood, aghast. "Instead of those rotters confessing, they only made things worse!"

"It looks like it" agreed Nipper. "And it's too late to get them back now—they've gone off to London on the morning train!"

"Oh, my goodness!"

"But can't we go to the Head, and tell him?" asked De Valerie excitedly. "We'll explain——"

"Impossible!" interrupted Nipper hotly. "In the first place, it would be sneaking—and in the second place, the Head wouldn't believe us. Those blighters have succeeded in throwing dust in his eyes. The Head's dead against Handforth, and our only policy is to support Handy. He's in the right all along the line, and I'm going to help him all I can!"

"Hear, hear!"

"We'll all help!"

"Rather!"

"And the best thing we can do is to take a supply of food round to Study D before it's too late," went on Nipper quickly. "Food will be the stumbling-block unless we're careful. Handforth evidently means to keep up this barring-out; but he'll be defeated if the prefects are posted round, so that none of us can get near. Come on, you fellows! Now's the time for action!"

Nipper & Co. were thoroughly excited now. Handforth's position, instead of being better, was ten times worse. Merrell and Marriott were to blame! And yet nothing could be done to undeceive the Head! In these circumstances, the only course was to support Handforth & Co. up to the hilt!

Nipper and Tommy Watson and Tregellis-West sped like the wind to the tuck-shop in the corner of the Triangle. They planked down a lot of money—Sir Montie, indeed, laying out ten pounds on the spot.

"Don't bother about any change now, Mrs. Hake!" said Nipper briskly. "Just hand out all the grub you can. Biscuits—sardines—salmon—condensed milk—tea—cakes—bread! Anything in the eatable line—and the more condensed it is, the better! Come along—look lively!"

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Mrs. Hake feebly.

The three juniors did not wait for her to serve them. They grabbed everything they could lay their hands on, and, fully loaded, they rushed round to the West Square.

But it seemed that they were too late already, for a couple of prefects came forward from the window of Study D, and barred their way.

"What's that stuff there?" demanded Kenmore, of the Sixth.

"Biscuits and stuff, by gad!" said Sinclair. "Oh, no, my sons! You're not going to help these rebels like this! Take all that stuff back!"

CHAPTER 19.

Supporting Handy!

EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH gave a whoop of delight.

"Look, you chaps!" he shouted, dragging Church and McClure to the window. "Nipper and those other fellows—loaded with grub! Good luck to 'em! That's the sort of thing I like to see! They're on our side—they're ready to support us!"

"I was wondering how we should get on for grub!" said Church excitedly. "But what's the use? Those prefects are barring the way!"

"Rats!" laughed Handforth. "Nipper won't stand any of that rot!"

Outside, Nipper & Co. were at a disadvantage. They were loaded up, and could not do any swift dodging. Many other Remove fellows, at this identical time, were loading themselves up with food from the Junior studies. There was a great wave of enthusiasm passing over the Remove. Everybody was in favour of helping the valiant trio of Study D.

"Yes, you'll take all that stuff back!" said Kenmore harshly. "Now then—no nonsense!"

"Come on—all together!" roared Nipper

Crash!

He dropped his load and prepared to fight. It was very unusual for Nipper to be as excited as this—but he was just as human as any of the other juniors; he was enraged by the thought that Handforth was being unjustly accused of a thing he had never done.

"Hurrah!" roared Handforth from between the barricades. "Come on, Nipper! Join in the barring-out with us! Come along, you fellows—the more the merrier!"

Nipper suddenly started.

"Yes, by Jove!" he shouted fiercely. "That's it, Montie! That's the idea, Tommy! Come on—let's join the barring-out!"

"Begad! Anythin' you say, old boy!" gasped Tregellis-West

"Look here——" began Kenmore, startled.

But Nipper had grabbed up a good proportion of his load again, and he and the other two juniors, staggering under their burdens, raced for the window of Study C. It was half-open, and they fairly tumbled in, shooting their load right across the floor. The prefect attempted to pull them out, but, after a swift battle, they succeeded in getting in. Shouts were going up from every direction, and large numbers of Removites came round and hustled the prefects away.

Here were the elements of a first-class sensation.

Three other juniors had joined the rebels—and these three included Nipper, the skipper of the Remove! If the rest needed a lead, they had one now!

"The door!" said Nipper breathlessly. "Lock the door, Tommy—and shove the table against it!"

"Oh, my goodness!" gasped Tommy Watson. "Then—then we've joined the barring-out?"

"Yes, we have!" replied Nipper. "Merrell and Marriott have fooled the Head, and he means to sack old Handy! Are we going to stand by and see it? Not likely!"

"Begad, no!" said Sir Montie. "I'm with old Handy all along the line!"

"The more of us in the rebellion, the better chance of a full inquiry," went on Nipper, as he grabbed hold of the bookcase. "Come on—lend a hand with this bookcase! Then we'll pull up the floor, just as Handforth has done. It's a jolly good idea. The stronger the barricades the better we shall be guarded."

Outside, the news was spreading far and wide, travelling like lightning from Form to Form.

The prefects hammered at the door of Study C, and they tried to burst it down. They attempted to get in through the window, too. But Nipper & Co. were ready for them, and there was no admittance. This sensational barring-out was developing with such speed that the rest of the school was left breathless.

Somebody reported this latest phase to the Head—before that unhappy gentleman had been able to formulate any plan for driving Handforth & Co. from their lair. Now three other fellows had joined in the revolt!

The Head was so angry that he hurried straight to the Remove passage in the Ancient House without a second's delay. He could hardly believe that the report was true. But when he got to Study C, the door was locked and there was no admittance.

"Hamilton!" called the Head, his voice cold with fury. "Am I to understand that you and your two companions are defying my authority? Are you joining hands with these other three rebels?"

"Yes, sir," came Nipper's voice through the door.

"I am amazed!" said the Head. "I thought better of you, Hamilton! You are the captain of the Form, and it was your duty to set the other boys a good example. I am shocked—startled—that you should have

"Come on, you chaps!" yelled De Valerie. "Let's join the rebels!" The four juniors wrenched themselves free from the prefects and started running madly towards their studies.

acted so abominably. I greatly regret that Mr. Lee is away at present——"

"I don't see why you should bring my guv'nor into it, sir," said Nipper gruffly. "This is purely a Form affair. I'm supporting Handforth because you were going to flog him—and you told me too, that you meant to expel him from the school."

"And so I do!" fumed the Head.

"Then, sir, I can only say that I'm ready to stand by Handforth to the bitter end!" called Nipper. "I know that he didn't dig that pit for Mr. Pycraft—although I can't prove it. But I'm willing to take his word. And I'm willing to take the word of Church and McClure, too You were going to punish him for something that he didn't do, and ——"

"Enough!" interrupted the Head. "I'll hear no more of this talk, Hamilton! I will give you two minutes to come out of this study with your companions and surrender. If you come at once, I may be disposed to deal with you leniently."

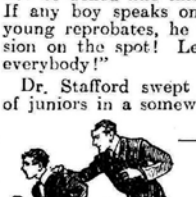
"I am sorry, sir, but we won't come out until you have promised that a full inquiry will be made into the Mr. Pycraft incident. Handforth is not guilty, and——"

"I can see it is quite useless to talk to you!" broke in the Head angrily. "You will suffer for this, Hamilton!"

He turned away, and found a crowd of Removites pressing near.

"Leave this corridor at once!" said the Head angrily. "Any boy who speaks to these rebels—who has any communication with them whatever—will be liable to instant expulsion! Remember that, all of you! I will not be defied like this—I will not be flouted! If any boy speaks one single word to these young reprobates, he will be liable to expulsion on the spot! Let this be a warning to everybody!"

Dr. Stafford swept off, leaving the crowd of juniors in a somewhat scared condition.



CHAPTER 20.

Drastic Action

THE bell for morning lessons rang almost immediately afterwards, and a kind of subdued peace settled over the school. The six rebels were allowed to remain in their studies, and now there were no prefects outside. Handforth & Co. and Nipper & Co. did not fail to take advantage of this opportunity. They consolidated their defences in every possible way

No further communication had been made with them by any of the other juniors. That threat of expulsion had had a signal effect. But lessons that morning were a pure farce. The whole Junior School was on tenterhooks, and everybody was wondering what was happening to the six mutineers.

In Study C Nipper & Co. were taking a well-earned rest after working hard for a full hour.

"Well, we've done it now," Tommy Watson was saying. "We've thrown in our

lot with Handy, and I suppose we've got to stick it out."

"We couldn't do anything else," said Nipper quietly. "I don't support Handy's mad projects as a rule, but this one was different. He was going to be flogged—and probably sacked—and I thought it was up to me to show him that we were on his side. An ounce of help, you know, is worth a ton of pity."

"But how can we help?" asked Watson doubtfully.

"My dear chap, we're helping now," replied Nipper. "The very fact that we've rebelled is enough. It's bound to bring the matter to a head much more quickly."

"I don't want to be a wet blanket, dear old boy, but isn't it a bit frightful, holding a barrin'-out in these studies?" asked Sir Montie. "Begad! It isn't what you can call a really strong position."

Nipper nodded.

"I agree," he said. "But yet, what else could we do, Montie? It was impossible for us to get into Study D, with Handforth & Co., and so we barricaded ourselves in our own room. There's no need to worry; we're safe enough here for the time being. Later on, perhaps, we can think of some method of strengthening our position, although I don't see that we can do much more!"

"Well, we've got some grub, anyhow," said Tommy Watson. "It's not much, but it'll do to be going on with. Which reminds me, Montie, there's a lot of your change in Mrs. Hake's tuck-shop."

"Never mind, dear old fellow; she'll look after it," said Sir Montie. "I'm thinkin' about Handforth and those other two fellows. How can we pass some of this food on to them?"

"We can't," said Nipper. "But I expect they'll get some supplies from the other fellows. This rebellion isn't over yet. In fact, it's hardly started. You mark my words!"

There was great truth in Nipper's prophecy.

For, during the morning interval, another startling incident took place. The juniors were no sooner released from the class-rooms than they came swarming into the West Square, and they stood staring at the two barricaded windows. Others went into the Remove passage, and cautiously approached. Three or four juniors, indeed, approached without any caution at all. De Valerie and Somerton, of Study G, went right up to Handforth's door, and at the same time Burton and Dodd hammered at the door of Study C.

"Getting on all right in there?" asked Jerry cheerily. "Want any help?"

"We're all right, thanks!" came Nipper's voice. "We're pretty strongly entrenched, and we can stand any amount of attacks."

"Souse my scuppers!" said Tom Burton, with enthusiasm. "Keep to this course, shipmates! There may be one or two storms, but you'll weather them all right!"

"You bet we shall!" came a roar from Handforth's study. "Why don't some of you chaps join in? The more the merrier!"

"We'll join in if there's any need to," said De Valerie promptly. "But we might as well let things go on as they are——"

"Just a minute, you youngsters!" said Fenton, of the Sixth.

He came round the angle of the Remove passage, accompanied by six or seven other prefects. They were all looking in a grim mood.

"Stop!" shouted Fenton. "Yes, you four

NEXT WEDNESDAY!

—De Valerie, Somerton, Burton, and Dodd! You were talking with these rebels!"

"What about it?" asked De Valerie defiantly.

"Don't you know what the headmaster ordered?"

"Oh, we can't be bothered——"

"We'll see about that!" said Fenton angrily. "The Head said that anybody who talked with the rebels was liable to be expelled. You'll all come along with me—to the Head's study!"

"Not likely!" roared Jerry Dodd. "We all agree with Handforth and Nipper. We're with them——"

"But in a couple of minutes you'll be with

the Head!" interrupted Morrow gruffly. "Come along!"

And the four juniors, much to their consternation, were seized by the prefects, whirled outside, and rushed off to the Head's house. It was quite evident that the prefects were determined to take drastic action. There was not a minute's delay. The four culprits were taken straight into Dr. Stafford's presence, and he heard the charge against them with a grim expression on his face.

"You know what your punishment is liable to be?" he asked coldly.

"We don't see why we shouldn't speak with those chaps, sir," said De Valerie stubbornly.

"You are aware, all of you, that expulsion is the reward for disobeying my orders!"

"Oh but—but——"

"Enough!" interrupted the Head sternly. "Fenton, take them away, and have them placed in the punishment-room!"

The four juniors turned rather pale. They did not know that the Head was acting in this way with a deliberate purpose. He had not actually said that they were expelled, but his words had been very, very significant. As a matter of fact, the Head did not mean to expel them at all, but he thought that the rest of the juniors would be so scared that they would take no part in the rebellion. The other rebels, when they heard about it might possibly knuckle under, too

"You—you mean that we're sacked, sir?" asked Somerton blankly.

"You have heard what I have just said," replied Dr. Stafford. "Fenton, take them away. They can be sent home later in the day—when I give the order."

And the four startled juniors were taken out.

Sacked!

That was the thought that was in all their minds. They did not suspect, for a moment, that the headmaster had been bluffing.

But Dr. Stafford was soon to find that his ruse was to recoil on his own head!

SECOND WONDERFUL FREE GIFT!

A Coloured Metal Model of Malcolm Campbell's Monster

"BLUE-BIRD."

Having seen the first Free Gift, you are now, of course, all eagerly awaiting the second which is to be presented with next week's issue.

This, if anything, is even more imposing than the first, and, together with your model of the 1,000 h.p. Sunbeam, it will be the envy of all your pals who are non-readers of the Old Paper. You'd better give them the tip about this series of wonderful Free Gifts before it's too late.

So don't forget, boys. Look out for the handsome metal model of Captain Malcolm Campbell's famous "BLUE-BIRD," presented FREE in next week's bumper number—and to save disappointment ORDER YOUR COPY IN ADVANCE!

"THE REMOVE REBELLION!"

Matters move with a rush in the second superb yarn of our grand "barring-out" series. Don't miss it, boys!

"SONS OF SPEED!"

Another smashing instalment of Alfred Edgar's full-of-thrills motor racing serial.

ORDER IN ADVANCE!

CHAPTER 21.

The More The Merrier

"SACKED!"

The word went round like wildfire. Long before the ill-fated four had got across Inner Court, the whole junior school was talking about this latest development. Four fellows sacked—just for talking to the rebels! It was a terribly drastic business!

"I hope this will be a lesson to the other young scamps!" said Frinton, one of the prefects who were escorting the helpless quartette. "I'm glad to see the Head so firm."

"There's nothing like it!" agreed Kenmore savagely. "It'll teach these young sweeps a stern lesson. The sooner they're cleared out of the school, the better!"

"Yes, they'll probably be sent off by the afternoon train," said Frinton.

"Oh, my hat!" muttered De Valerie.

"But—but it's not fair!" burst out Somerton. "We've done nothing—at least, nothing to deserve the sack!"

"You heard what the Head said!" exclaimed Frinton. "The only way to put this rebellion down is to deal drastically with the whole lot of you."

"The best thing we can do, messmates, is to set all sail, and steer for port!" shouted Tom Burton excitedly. "Swab me! Why shouldn't we join the mutiny?"

"That's enough, you young ass!" said Frinton, frowning.

"Avast there!" roared the Bo'sun. "If we're going to be dismissed the ship, we might as well have some fun on board first! Come on, my hearties! Why should we be sent ashore this afternoon? Let's stick to the old ship, and join the other mutineers!"

Burton was very excited, and on such occasions he generally indulged in quite a lot of

nautical terms. But the other three knew exactly what he was talking about. The idea was a big one—a stupendous one.

They believed that they had been officially expelled. True, the Head had not said so in actual words, but he had given that impression. He had intended the juniors to think that they were sacked, and for the rest of the school to think so, too.

But Dr Stafford had never anticipated the outcome.

If they were going to be sacked in any case, why shouldn't they join the rebels now? They couldn't receive any worse punishment, whatever happened! And the more rebels there were, the more chance of victory!

"Yes!" shouted De Valerie "Come on, you chaps! Let's break free now!"

"Hurrah!"

They had nearly reached Big Arch, and, with a sudden wrench, De Valerie succeeded in getting himself free. Somerton struggled hard, and he also managed to elude his captors.

"All right, shipmates!" bellowed Tom Burton. "We're with you!"

"Rather!" shouted Jerry Dodd. "We're all cobbers together in this!"

The prefects were taken completely unawares.

"You—you silly young idiots!" yelled Frinton. "This isn't going to do you any good——"

"Rats!"

"Come on, you chaps!"

In another moment the four were off—running like hares into the Triangle. The prefects gave chase, painfully conscious of the fact that they looked very undignified, and they had no chance, anyhow, of outrunning these agile juniors.

"Make way!" shouted De Valerie, as he ran. "Clear off those steps, you chaps! We're bolting for the studies! We've rebelled!"

"Hurrah!"

"Good luck, old chap!"

"Oh, my hat! More rebels!"

Tearing indoors, De Valerie and Somerton succeeded in reaching Study G; they rushed in, slammed the door and locked it. At the same time, Burton and Dodd ran into Study F, and found Jarrow there. Jarrow was the third junior who shared that study—and he was now a rebel automatically!

"Come on—quick!" gasped Jerry Dodd "The prefects are on us! Help to barricade the door—and the window!"

"But—but I'm not a rebel!" protested Hubert Jarrow mildly. "I am taking no part in this——"

"Yes, you are!" interrupted Burton. "Look lively, you lubber! There's no time for you to get ashore now!"

"Really, this is most disconcerting!" said Jarrow, in distress. "I had no intention of joining the rebellion In fact, I regard all rebellions with suspicion."

"Never mind about that now—help with the barricades!" said Jerry Dodd breathlessly. "Come on—give a heave with this table!"

"If you fellows are so insistent, I suppose I must help," said Jarrow resignedly. "At the same time, I must protest. I do not want you to imagine that I am in favour of this defiance. I have always found that defiance is very unsatisfactory. It generally leads to trouble. And it is always so easy to get into trouble. There are quite enough troubles in this world, without asking for more with both hands. But since you say we need all hands to the pump, let us work with a will. It is really surprising what the will can do once it——"

"Cheese it, you gramophone!" interrupted Dodd. "My only hat! Fancy being bottled up with this chap for hours and days! Why on earth were you in here, Jarrow?"

"Really, Dodd, it is my study, is it not?" asked Jarrow. "I only came in here to——"

"Yes, yes—that's all right!" said Jerry hastily. "You needn't tell us why you came. Help us pull up this lino, then we can get at some of the floorboards. Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, they say. The other chaps have torn up the floorboards, so we'll do the same thing. It's a great wheeze!"

Within twenty minutes the two studies were thoroughly barricaded and protected. Slowly, but surely, the rebellion was spreading! There were now four studies in defiance of authority—and all of them were on the same side of the Remove passage.

CHAPTER 22.

The Worries of Archie!

"I MEAN to say, Phipps, dashed awk., and all that," remarked Archie Glenthorne. "A trifle embarrassing, what?"

"I must admit, sir, that the situation is somewhat delicate," said Phipps gravely.

"Oh, rather!" agreed Archie. "But, dash it, delicate! I mean, a somewhat feeble term, Phipps! If you ask me, the good old position is positively scaly. Mouldy in the extreme, I mean to say!"

Archie Glenthorne was greatly upset. The peace of his study was completely destroyed, and Archie lived for peace. His greatest delight was to come to his study, to spread himself upon the lounge, and to feel that all was right with the world.

But just now it was impossible to feel that all was right with the world. Because it wasn't right. All was decidedly wrong. Archie's little world, in fact, was topsy-turvy.

He was in the very midst of the war zone! Although he sympathised with the rebels, he was no rebel himself—for the simple reason

that it was altogether too strenuous to hold a barring-out.

"I rather think it's up to you, Phipps, laddie, to suggest something," said Archie, as he feebly stirred his tea. "I mean to say, rebels to the right, and rebels to the left, and all that sort of rot! That is, so to speak, here we are, positively surrounded with the dear chappies! What, I mean, is to be done?"

It was teatime now, and the barring-out was still going strong. But the Head and the prefects had been very inactive during the afternoon. No attempts had been made to approach the rebels, and nothing had been done to drive them out of their stronghold. It was becoming more and more evident that the headmaster meant to starve them out.

Prefects were watching both ends of the junior passage. The passage itself had not been placed out of bounds, for most of the studies were still occupied by peaceful, unrebellious juniors. There might have been considerable trouble if such a drastic step had been taken, too.

Prefects had been posted in the corridor, so that none of the outside juniors could communicate with the mutineers.

Outside, in the West Square, there were other prefects—also watching. And nobody had dared to go near—after what had happened to De Valerie and the other three.

Archie Glenthorne felt particularly conspicuous, for he was in the very midst of the tumult. Studies C and D on one side of him were barricaded—and Studies F and G were also barricaded. All these five studies were in the same row. Study E was sandwiched in between these other four.

"I mean, it's so dashed frightful," complained Archie. "A chappie can't come to his dashed study without being eyed with suspicion by sundry prefects, Phipps. What do you suggest?"

"Really, sir, I can suggest nothing," replied Phipps.

"Oh, come, come!" protested Archie, adjusting his monocle, and inspecting Phipps in wonder. "I mean to say, come! You don't mean that, Phipps! It's not like you to be devoid of the good old wheezes."

"I mean, Master Archie, that there is really nothing I can suggest," replied Phipps. "You are perfectly secure in this study, and as long as you hold no communication with the rebels, you will not be interfered with."

"No, that's true," agreed Archie. "In fact, it's absolutely authentic, Phipps. But, dash it, I rather want to interfere with the rebels."

Phipps made no comment, but waited. He was Archie Glenthorne's valet—and, incidentally, he performed certain duties for the Head in the capacity of butler. But Phipps made a point of always being at Archie's beck and call at tea-time. Even in the present trying circumstances, Phipps was on hand.

"It rather strikes the young master that it is up to us, Phipps, to help these worthy merchants," continued Archie, indicating the walls on either side of him. "I mean, just beyond these dashed bricks, various good chappies are holding the forts, what? And it seems to strike the old bean that they'll get somewhat peckish sooner or later."

"Yes, that is undoubtedly true, sir," said Phipps solemnly. "I have no doubt that these young gentlemen will become very hungry later on in the evening."

"But is there no method of smuggling food to them, Phipps?" asked Archie. "I thought perhaps that you might be able to suggest—— Of course, I quite realise that it must be strictly sub-rosa, and all that sort of stuff. I mean, you being more or less a part of the Head's household. Still, a chappie of your tact——"

"I would venture to suggest, sir, that it is quite impracticable to take food to the rebels openly," said Phipps. "There are too many prefects watching—and the risks would be very pronounced. I understand that many of your Form-fellows are much exercised in mind over the matter."

"Oh, rather," said Archie. "You see, Phipps, practically all the dear old lads are in full sympathy with the strikers. That is to say, the rebels. But it's so dashed risky to fraternise with them, what with these pickets, and all that sort of thing."

Phipps cocked a thoughtful eye over towards the fireplace cupboard. Then he looked at the cupboard on the other side of the room, and a rather dreamy expression came into his eye.

"I would only remind you, sir, that each of these studies in this row are provided with two cupboards—one against each dividing wall," he said casually. "In other words, all these cupboards are back to back."

"Oh, you mean, back to back?" said Archie, concentrating deeply.

"Exactly, sir," said Phipps. "I would also remind you that the wall at the back of each cupboard is very thin—merely a kind of partition. Is there anything further you would require, sir?"

Archie was looking very startled.

"Good gad!" he gasped. "You—you mean ——"

"If you don't mind, sir, I will now clear away," said Phipps smoothly.

He busied himself with the tea things—while Archie Glenthorne became so flushed with excitement that he looked positively red.

CHAPTER 23.

Many Guests ..

ALF BRENT stared.

"This evening?"

"Absolutely, old top!"

"A feed?" he said wonderingly

"Absolutely twice, laddie!"

"In this study?"

"Absolutely with ornamental fittings!" said Archie enthusiastically. "That, Alf, old bird, is positively the wheeze!"

"But, my dear chap, you must be off your rocker!" said Brent. "Why on earth hold a feed to-night, in the midst of all this tumult? Can't you wait until the excitement had died down a bit?"

"I am frightfully afraid, old boy, that the attic department is somewhat weak," said Archie, shaking his head. "Be good enough to open the windows and allow a little fresh air to blow in. Kindly remove the cobwebs, Alf!"

"But, my dear chap——"

"The scheme," said Archie, "is simple. At my invitation, sundry bold spirits will foregather in this study for a priceless feed this evening. As many, I mean to say, as we can tuck in. Sixteen, perhaps—or twenty, at a pinch. And, naturally, there will be grub for all; in fact, grub in excess."

"Yes, but——"

"I would remind you, old chestnut, that each study along this row is provided, by kindly builders, with two cupboards—one against each dividing wall," went on Archie dreamily. "And these cupboards, I may add, are back to back. In other words, laddie, there's nothing but a dashed partition at the back of each cupboard. I trust that you are now obtaining a glimmering of the good old stunt?"

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Alf Brent. "You—you mean——"

"Exactly and absolutely!" beamed Archie. "In other words, old cheese, absolutely and exactly!"

"Great Scott!"

"Precisely!" said Archie. "You see, a mere gentle shove, and a chappie can push down this partition, and there you are! I mean, absolutely into the next study, amongst the good old rebels! And the same on both sides, if you catch the trend!"

"Then—then all these partitions can be broken down?" gasped Brent. "You mean that there can be inter-communication between all these five studies—and our own study will be a kind of secret door through which we can pass the supplies?"

"That's the general idea," nodded Archie complacently. "I mean, hence the suggested feed. Naturally, the guests will be warned in advance that none of the foodstuff is to be actually touched. But I rather think that they will willingly be martyrs for the occasion. Anything, as it were, to fool the good old prefects."

Alf gazed at Archie with great admiration.

"But how did you think of this?" he asked wonderingly.

"As a matter of absolute fact—since it is impossible for me to tell a lie—I didn't think of the dashed scheme at all," said Archie frankly. "It was Phipps who——"

"Why, of course," said Alf. "Good old Phipps! I might have known it! He's always full of brainy ideas! But I hardly thought that he would help us in this business! Splendid old Phipps! Go up one!"

"As a matter of fact, I rather think that Phipps can go up half a dozen!" said Archie. "And now, Alf, old sportsman, how about burrowing through into the rebel stronghold? I rather thought it was your job."

Brent was thoroughly excited, and he lost no time in getting busy. He took the precaution of locking the door first, in case somebody should come butting in—one of the prefects, perhaps.

"By Jove!" he said, turning an excited face round. "It's only plaster—just lath and plaster!"

After one or two heavy heaves with the poker, he succeeded in pushing a hole through that fragile partition, and once a small hole had been made, the rest was comparatively easy. Before ten minutes had elapsed, Brent was forcing his body through the gap. He burst open the doors of Study D cupboard, and Handforth & Co. started round with expressions of alarm.

"It's all right!" gasped Alf. "I'm a friend!"

"By George!" panted Handforth. "We wondered what that rummy noise was—and we didn't know where it was coming from, either! But how the dickens——"

"Why, he's forced a way through from Archie's study!" ejaculated Church. "Don't you see? He's broken through the wall!"

"Oh, my hat!"

Handforth & Co. were not only surprised, but they were delighted. They were all hungry, and they had been wondering how they would get on. Hurriedly Alf explained Archie's scheme.

"So Archie's going to hold a big feed, eh?" said Handforth, with enthusiasm.

"By Jove! This isn't an idea—it's a brain-storm!"

Alf grinned, and was soon back in Study E, with Archie. In less than half an hour all those partitions had been broken down, and the rebel studies were in intercommunication with one another—Archie Glenthorne's study acting as a kind of neutral zone. There were great possibilities in the idea—wonderful possibilities.

Later on in the evening, after the word had been passed round to fifteen of sixteen trusted supporters, big preparations for the feed were afoot.

Fellows came along the Remove passage, carrying heavy parcels, and the watching prefects became more and more suspicious.

But they could do nothing—since these juniors made not the slightest attempt to get into touch with the rebels. They all went into Archie Glenthorne's study—and Archie was no rebel.

All the same, the prefects decided that an investigation was very necessary!

CHAPTER 24.

Very Suspicious!

WILSON, of the Sixth, frowned.

"Looks fishy!" he said bluntly.

"Very fishy!" agreed Conroy major.

These two prefects were on duty at the end of the Remove corridor.

"I rather think we ought to go along to Glenthorne's study and have a look in," said Wilson. "There's some talk of a feast there, isn't there?"

"So they say," replied Conroy major. "Plenty of juniors have gone in, anyhow."

"Carrying food, too," said Wilson. "I believe they're going to trick us somehow—raise an alarm, or something—and, while we're tricked into going away, they mean to pass this food to these young beggars in the other studies. That's the wheeze!"

"But we shan't fall for it," said Conroy.

The junior passage was fairly quiet now, although a considerable din was coming from Study E. Wilson and Conroy walked along the passage and met Fenton, who was coming from the other direction.

"Just had a report from the Square," said Fenton. "Two or three prefects are on guard out there, and they say that the blind is drawn in Study E, but nobody has attempted to come out. What do you make of it?"

"Very suspicious," said Wilson. "But I'm hanged if I know what these kids are up to."

"It may be an ordinary feed, of course," said Fenton dubiously. "I don't like to interfere if there's no cause."

"Still, we'd better have a look," said Conroy major.

They went to the door of Study E, and Fenton tapped.

"Absolutely!" sang out Archie Glenthorne. "Come in, laddies! Everybody welcome, as it were! The more the merrier!"

Fenton opened the door and looked in.

"Great Scott!" he ejaculated.

The study was packed to suffocation. Reggie Pitt and his crowd from the West House were there in force.

The table itself was stacked with food, and the feed was evidently just about to start.

"Welcome, laddie!" beamed Archie Glenthorne. "You've come to join us, what? Kindly make room for Fenton!"

"That's all right," said Fenton. "I don't want to join this feed. I want to warn you not to try and pass any of this food to Handforth or Nipper, or any of the others."

"But how can we?" asked Pitt, in surprise. "There's no chance of that with you prefects watching the passage and the windows."

"All right—but don't try any tricks," said Fenton.

He nodded, and went out.

"I don't know what to make of it," he said, as he went down the passage with Biggleswade. "I think we'd better keep our eyes open."

Wilson and Conroy major, at the other end of the passage, were just as alert. During the next half-hour there was much noise from Study E. Plates clattered, and knives and forks were rattled. Then, at last, the guests came out, brushing crumbs from their persons and wiping their mouths in a satisfied way. They all dispersed peacefully.

"I'm going to have a look in that study," said Conroy, with more suspicion than ever. "I believe the grub's still there."

"I shouldn't be surprised," said Wilson. "That's about the idea! They've tried to fool us, and, when everything's quiet, they'll do their best to smuggle the food to these rebels. Come on, let's investigate now."

They hurried forward, and broke into Study E abruptly without announcing their arrival. But then they came to a sudden halt.

Archie Glenthorne was lying back on the lounge, supremely contented. Alf Brent was nibbling a final biscuit, and the table was a mere caricature of its former self.

It was full of empty plates; it was covered with crumbs and odds and ends of food. There were dirty dishes and dirty knives and forks everywhere. Both cupboards stood wide open, revealing empty shelves.

In fact, they were so inviting that the prefects never thought of making a close investigation. Had they done so, they might have found that the back of each cupboard was merely a sheet of paper, stretched across the broken gap!

But the evidence of the table was sufficient. All the food was gone, and there seemed little doubt that it had gone into the interiors of the guests who had departed.

Looking disappointed, the prefects went out, and, as the door closed, Alf Brent let out a big sigh of relief.

"Phew!" he murmured. "I thought, for half a tick, that they were going to look into those cupboards!"

"The evidence was somewhat too strong for them, old lad," said Archie complacently. "Not a sign of the good old grub, I mean to say. Pretty obvious, what?"

Alf Brent grinned.

"Obvious, yes—but wide of the mark!" he said cheerfully. "Good luck to the rebels! At this rate they can hold out until Christmas!"

And on both sides of Archie Glenthorne's study the Remove rebels were feeding royally. Every scrap of that feast had been passed through—had been passed along to all the rebel studies. The authorities had been tricked, and Edward Oswald Handforth and his valiant supporters were fully determined to carry on this barring-out until the Head came to his senses!

It was neck or nothing now—and they were out for victory!

THE END.

(Next week's long complete yarn is entitled: "THE REMOVE REBELLION!" And don't forget that every copy will contain another wonderful Free Gift!)

THE WORLD'S WONDER CAR!

All about this week's splendid Free Gift.

Quicker Than Thought!

UNLESS some "miracle" happens, the 1,000 horse-power British Sunbeam car with which Major H. O. D. Segrave made history is likely for a very long time to retain the proud title of "the world's wonder-car."

Designed to reach a speed of 200 miles an hour, it actually reached 207, beating the then world's speed record by 35 miles an hour! This has well been called quicker-than-thought motoring, for thought itself is a slow-coach compared with that Sunbeam performance. A famous scientist has pointed out the real meaning of this comparison by means of the following illustration. Supposing you decide to pick up a pencil from desk or table. Between the thought and the action there is a difference in time of rather less than half a second. In that fraction of time Major Segrave's Sunbeam covered *forty-seven yards!*

So that any mechanical movement which he wished to make during that nightmare drive was certain to be about fifty yards late each time, which means that he had to think about fifty yards ahead! But it was impossible, at that terrific speed, for Major Segrave to see anything closer than six hundred feet ahead!

Twenty Four Cylinders!

The top of this monster Sunbeam is only 3 feet 10 inches above the ground, and the ground-clearance is only seven inches. The wheel-base measures 11 feet 9 inches, and the track 5 feet 2 inches. The car's queer shape is designed to cut out wind resistance as far as possible. It is equipped with two 500 horse-power engines, each having twelve cylinders. One engine is at the rear end, the other at the front.

The front engine is started up first. It is equipped with a metal bottle containing compressed air which, as it is released, turns the forward engine over, which automatically starts the rear engine when the clutch is let in. Then the two engines run smoothly together, their running speeds being evened up by means of the engine revolution indicators on the dashboard.

That dashboard is an amazing affair, for on it there are twenty-eight instruments—six oil pressure gauges, nine magneto switches, three radiator thermometers, four engine revolution counters, four cam-shaft oil pressure gauges, and two air compression gauges. In addition there are three clutches to operate!

Four Gallons of Petrol a Minute!

The front engine radiator is in the "nose" of the chassis, the rear engine radiator behind the air cowls at the rear of the driver's cockpit, with a twenty-eight gallon petrol tank at the rear of all—an allowance of four gallons per minute!

The tyres, of the finest possible manufacture, would not last out for more than about a mile if this Sunbeam racer were driven on an ordinary concrete road. A sand surface is more kindly—hence one of the reasons for the selection of Daytona Beach.

Another reason, of course, was the wonderfully straight run the beach afforded. This was very necessary, for two miles were needed to work up maximum speed, a hundred miles per hour being reached within a few seconds of starting up the engines! The three speed gears give speeds of 90, 150 and 220 miles an hour respectively, and after the brakes are applied it takes four miles in which to come to a stop.

Terrific Wind Pressure!

Not the least of the great dangers which Major Segrave so coolly faced with this car was the tremendous wind force naturally attendant on a speed of 207 miles an hour. At that rate the wind, if it hit the driver, would knock him unconscious—hence the provision of a steel windscoop (an ordinary screen could not possibly stand the strain) to fling the roaring wind safely over the driver's head.

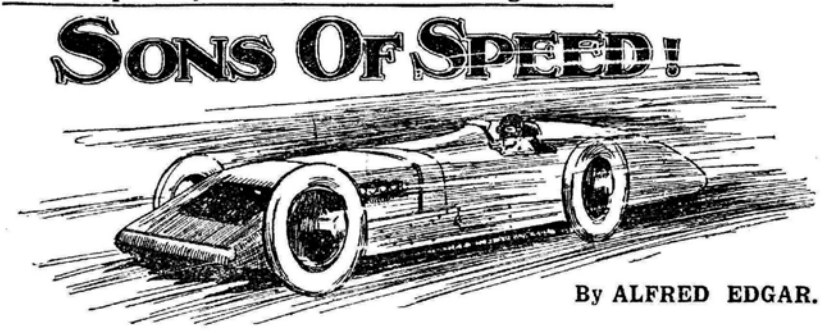
That record-breaking spin was the monster Sunbeam's last run, except for a short "exhibition" sprint on Brooklands track. Having done her duty, this 57 hundredweight car went back into the Sunbeam works, at Wolverhampton, where it was made, for mechanics and scientists to learn the lessons of the almost incredible strains placed on every square inch of its make-up.

In the event, however, of this car's speed record being broken, it is the opinion of her designers that, with certain modifications and further tuning, her speed could be considerably increased. The monster Sunbeam may yet be seen, therefore, entering the lists, with Major Segrave again driving to retain the speed record of the world for Old England.

Don't Forget, Boys, there's a Ripping Model of Malcolm Campbell's Famous "Blue-Bird" Speed Car in Next Week's Issue!

First Chapters of a New, Vivid Motor Racing Serial!

SONS OF SPEED!



By ALFRED EDGAR.

Two hundred and fifty miles an hour—phew, that's going some, but Bill Barry—you'll soon make his acquaintance—doesn't seem to think it's anything really out of the ordinary, for Bill's speed mad and a mad speed man!

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Midnight Test!

THE yellow light of a distant street lamp glimmered on the lean, keen features of the boy who stood in front of the little door in the high brick wall. At the end of the street, the clock in a church tower was chiming the last strokes of midnight.

As he waited for the chimes to die away, he stared at the white-lettered words painted on the narrow door: "KENT CARS. Strictly private."

The last of the twelve strokes faded into the quiet of the night, then he rapped sharply three times on the door. There came the shuffle of booted feet from the other side, and a voice growled:

"Who's that?"

"Dick Barry," answered the boy.

A heavy bolt grated in its socket, the door was opened a little way and a face peered out, surveying Dick for a moment or so before the door was pulled back until there was just room for him to step through. Immediately he was inside, the door slammed and the bolt crashed home again.

There were three men standing by the door, and each of them gripped in his hand a short, thick iron bar. The trio were muffled against the chill of the night air, but their faces showed grim and resolute.

"Answer up quick if anybody challenges you on the way to the shed, Dick," said the man who had opened the door. "The boys are hitting first an' askin' questions afterwards. One of 'em saw Lynch in the town to-night!"

"Lynch, eh?" and Dick whistled softly. "Well, he won't stand much chance if he gets a crack on the head from one of those!" and he grinned at the weapons the watchmen carried. "Has my brother Bill arrived yet?"

"Been here an hour," the man answered. "You'd better look slippy if you don't want to miss the test. Wish I could see it!"

"I'll let you know if it goes off all right!" Dick said cheerily, then he moved off towards the scattered buildings of the motor-works.

The three men stood watching as his lithe, sinewy figure disappeared into the darkness.

"Good kid that," one of them grunted. "He'll be as fine a racing driver as his brother, one o' these days!"

Every entrance to the works was being guarded by groups of three men. Most of them were mechanics who had already done a day's hard work, but they kept their vigil willingly because no intruders were wanted in the Kent Car works that night.

Lightless buildings loomed out of the darkness as Dick walked on. He passed little heaps of rusted rubble and scrap iron. Once he all but fell over a stack of discarded frames, and a few yards farther on he was again challenged by two men, who allowed him to pass when they saw who he was.

Dick turned a corner. A brick building showed ahead, and out of the windows streamed the blue-white beams of powerful electric lights. They made great splashes of light on the ground, but between them was absolute darkness.

Dick was five yards from the big doorway leading into the shed when a strong flash-lamp shone out, the brilliant ray focussing blindingly on his face.

"All right, Dick—come on!" called a voice, and the man who spoke reached behind to open the door of the shed. As Dick moved forward, he saw that a man had been posted on each corner of this shed, so that none could approach it without being observed.

A moment later, Dick stood blinking in the searing light inside the building, and the door closed behind him.

For a space he remained where he stood, staring with wide eyes at the reason for the close guarding of the Kent works that night.

The Face in the Flame!

IN the very centre of the test shed, full under the concentrated glare of the electrics, there was a concrete "bed." Bolted to an iron framework set deeply in the concrete, was a great engine. Its polished metal shimmered in the powerful light, and at the front the squat, finned bulk of a super-charger jutted forward—like the jaw of some blindly-brutal monster.

This engine was to be built into a car which, it was hoped, would do two hundred and fifty miles an hour—over four miles a minute! A speed never yet attained by anything that runs on wheels!

And Bill Barry, Dick's brother, was to pilot the car on its record-smashing attempt.

There were many reasons why no one other than thoroughly trusted mechanics in the Kent Car works should see this mighty engine undergo its test. The most potent of these reasons was Mark Lynch, the speedman who drove Ince Eight racing cars.

Kent Cars and the Ince Eights were deadly rivals, and the latter were also building a machine designed to break all records. For years the Kent and the Ince machines had been fighting on the world's speedways, and now Kent cars were driven to the wall.

They were fighting in the last ditch, and almost their one hope was centred in the gleaming, shining mass of metal on the test bed. If this car could beat the Ince machine in its attempt on the world's record for speed, the fortunes of Kent cars would be automatically restored, because breaking the record would bring orders for cars, and orders are the life-blood of a motor firm.

When Dick reached the shed, oily-fisted mechanics were busy on the engine, making it ready. Standing at one side was his brother Bill.

Now Dick, young though he was, acted as mechanic for his brother during Bill's races with the ordinary Kent speedsters—cars which took part in the various Grand Prix races held, mainly, on the Continent. Just now, they were in the last stages of preparation for the Italian Grand Prix, which would be run off on the Monza Speedway, near Milan, in Italy.

That afternoon Dick and Bill had driven up from Brooklands, where the Kent racing machines were standing ready for their final test runs before being taken to Italy.

Bill was half as big again as his young brother. His face had been wind-slashed and sun-tanned until it was as ruddy brown as mahogany. His jaw was square, and his lips could set to very grim lines, although usually, his face was one big, reckless grin. Just now, he was unsmiling and quietly watchful.

At one side of the concrete bed there was a strange compact-looking machine which would register the power of the great engine when it was started. One end of this machine bore big dials and gauges in a cluster, beneath which were set the controls of the engine.

By the gleaming bank of dials stood a man whose hair was quite grey. His face was pale, and from out the pallid skin there glittered two eyes that were steely blue. This man had long, white, slender hands, and there was about him an air of quiet power and strength.

His name was Jason Kent. The mechanics called him "Professor" Kent, and he was as scientifically minded as any real professor. It was he who had designed Kent cars, and the engine before him was his latest creation.

"All ready, sir!" A mechanic snapped the words through the quiet tension in the shed, then stepped away from the machine.

"Right! Switch out all lights except the one above these dials," said the professor, and his voice was strangely low and clear. "Has Dick come yet, Bill?"

"I'm here, sir!" called Dick, and he stepped forward.

"Oh, good. I didn't notice you come in. I wanted you to see this, my boy. You know what you are watching, don't you? I'm trying to get power by science rather than brute strength. If I can get twelve thousand revolutions a minute out of this engine, I shall have done what I want. Nobody has got more than eight thousand yet," and he smiled a little.

Dick heard the click of rods as the controls were set, while all the lights snapped off except the one above the professor's head.

"Ready!" he called. "Start her up!"

One of the mechanics reached for a big, black-handled switch which controlled the electric starting apparatus. He hesitated a moment, then he crashed the switch down. There came the clash of engaging teeth, a fierce whirring that reached crescendo, and then the mighty engine woke to life with a thunderous roar.

The mechanic jerked the switch upwards, and for long minutes the shed was filled with the bellow of the great engine as it was warmed up. From where he stood, Dick could see the dials and the professor's keen face as he watched them. The brilliant light poured down on gently-flicking needles, and on the big dial which registered the speed of the engine.

For a long while the broad, black needle stayed steady, then the professor's lips tightened, and he began to move a glittering nickle lever on which his right hand rested. Dick saw the big needle begin to swing upwards, the thunderous roar of the engine increased.

Twin exhaust pipes ran to a long hole in the wall, carrying the burnt gasses to the open air. The bellow of the exhausts surged to shattering sound, and from their blackened mouths there seared long tongues of lurid flame.

The speed of the engine grew and grew, until the very walls seemed to shudder under its fierce roar. Dick could hear the supercharger's note rising in a shrill piercing whine that seemed to pierce his brain.

He saw his brother bending forward towards the engine, his eyes alight and his lips curving to a grim, exultant smile as he heard the terrible voice of the engine that, in a little while, would carry him over the earth at two hundred and fifty miles an hour.

The big black needle swept around the dial, and Dick watched it fascinatedly. The professor's eyes were narrowed pin-points of blue light as the engine neared its peak, with yard-long flames striking now from the exhausts.

The noise grew, until the whole earth seemed to be compassed by a crashing welter of tearing sound—and then something went wrong!

A blurred roar woke in the note of the engine. One exhaust broke its even bellow, and Dick glanced at it. He saw starry streaks of white-hot flame slide through the livid red; he heard the professor shout something. A shrill, menacing sound came from the engine, a chuttering clatter and, instantly, the fierce roar died down as the professor snapped his control lever over.

Dick saw the blaze from the exhausts sink. Momentarily the flame spurted anew, and, in that instant he saw the face!

There was a man at the side of the long hole in the wall, his features livid in the glare. His hair-shrouded eyes were just slits as he watched, and on his thin lips there was a sneering grin.

"Lynch!" gasped Dick. "It's Lynch!"

A moment later the face vanished as the engine slowed and the mouths of the exhausts ceased to spit flame. For an instant, Dick remained where he stood.

Lynch, his brother's rival, was in the works and had watched the test. He was grinning because he knew that the mighty engine had failed! He had got into the works—got past the guarding watchmen!

With a shout that went unheard in the sound of the dying engine, Dick leaped for the door. As he whipped it open and dashed outside, he saw that the watchmen who should have been guarding it were all looking through one of the windows. They were watching the test, instead of watching for spies! That showed how Lynch had got to the shed!

Dick slammed the door behind him, then went racing round the corner of the shed. As he turned it, he saw the thick-set figure of the

rival speedman go racing across a splash of light from a window.

With another shout, Dick tore after him.

The Speed-Mad Speedman!

AS Dick ran, he heard, from behind him, a watchman's whistle blow shrilly, then he was cramming speed to his feet as Lynch doubled round a corner, and went streaking for the distant wall which marked the limit of the Kent Car works.

The Ince Eight speedman was wide-shouldered and strong and fast on his feet—but he wasn't as fast as Dick During every winter, Dick turned out on the wing for the works' football team, and he was the fastest winger that the Kent Swifts had ever had.

He gained on Lynch hand over fist, and came up with the man just as the fellow reached the foot of the wall. The speedman heard the tread of the boy's flying feet on the cindered earth, and he turned as Dick came up. From the direction of the shed, four armed watchmen were racing, now not thirty yards away.

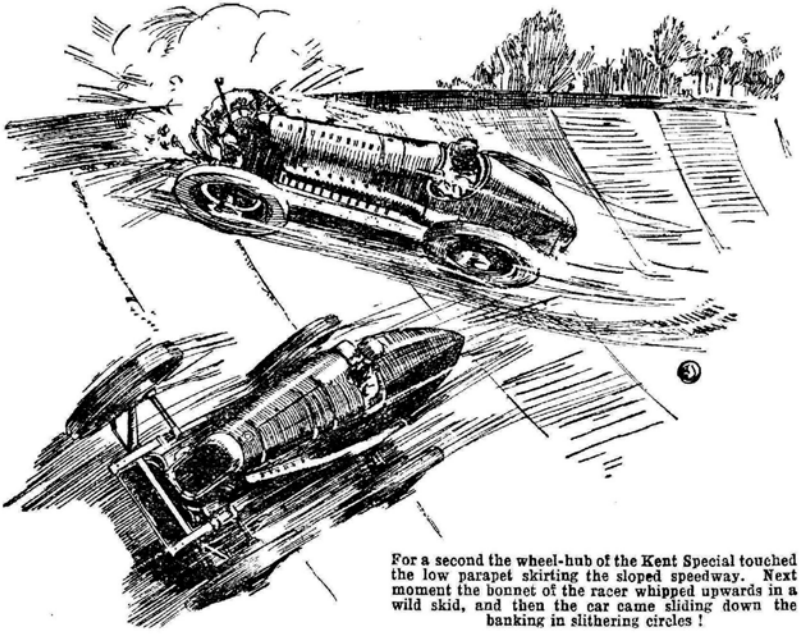
With a grunt that was half a snarl, Lynch leaped at Dick. The boy ducked, and he brought his right fist round with all his strength at the dim-seen face. His bunched knuckles rammed home between the man's eyes, stopping his rush dead and staggering him sideways.

He recovered on the instant, and rocked at the boy with his fists lashing madly. Dick felt punches crack home to his ribs, and one smacked to the side of his head with a force that made his brain ring. He fought back, hitting with all his strength; but he, boy as he was, couldn't match the powerful muscles with which Lynch could hold a hurtling racer to the track at a hundred and thirty miles an hour!

Lynch found his jaw with a terrific left and, as the boy staggered, crashed him to the ground with a tearing right that felt to Dick as though it had broken half his ribs. He hit the ground in a smother of scattered cinders, but he was trying to get up even as he fell.

He saw Lynch leap to a pile of worn-out tyres that stood at the foot of the wall. An instant after, and the man was vaulting over the top—then the watchmen came running up and went scrambling after him.

Dick got up, staggered to the pile of tyres and clawed his way to the top of the wall. He glimpsed a car standing with no lights fifty yards down the lane outside. Lynch was leaping into the seat as Dick saw it, and a moment after the starter whirred. There came the roar of the engine, the crash of hastily-meshed gears—and then the machine was roaring into the night, with the nearest of the running watchmen a full twenty yards behind!



For a second the wheel-hub of the Kent Special touched the low parapet skirting the sloped speedway. Next moment the bonnet of the racer whipped upwards in a wild skid, and then the car came sliding down the banking in slithering circles!

Dick heard more men running behind him, and he turned as he dropped back from the wall. He saw his brother coming up with two more watchmen.

"It was Lynch!" Dick gasped. "He was looking through the hole by the exhaust pipes. He's got away in a car!"

"Of course he's got away!" Bill growled coolly. "You can't catch crafty fellows like him very easy. Hallo, did he set about you? Are you hurt?"

"No, I'm all right!" Dick exclaimed. "But can't we get a machine and chase him! He was spying on us!"

"What's the good of chasing him?" Bill asked, in his gruff way. "He's a mile or more

away by now. He didn't get away with anything but what he saw, an' that won't do him much good! Let's get back to the shed. Your nose is bleeding, isn't it?"

Back in the shed, the great engine was quiet. The place reeked from the fumes of burnt oil, and little curls of blued smoke quivered upwards from the polished bulk on the concrete bed. The professor was already at work on the engine, with the two mechanics who had prepared the machine.

"Was that Lynch?" The professor paused in his work. "He got away, I expect!"

"I tried to stop him, sir!" Dick exclaimed. "But he was too strong for me!"

"He would be!" the professor exclaimed. "If he got away then the damage is done, and it's no good worrying over it. It's useless making a fuss when the damage is done. I wanted to keep secret the type of engine we're building for the record, but if he's found out—well, that's all there is to it! I suppose the watch men were too busy looking through the windows to watch out—he'd have guessed that, the crafty devil! I'll have a word with those men later."

Somehow, Dick felt a little disappointed. Neither Bill nor the professor seemed inclined to disturb themselves over Lynch's spying, despite the almost elaborate precautions that the professor had taken to prevent any unauthorised person watching the test. Dick had yet to learn that the pair were astonishingly cool customers; both knew that any pursuit of the man would be hopeless, and that it was useless to trouble further, just then.

But that didn't mean that they intended to forget all about it.

Bill moved towards the engine, while Dick soaked his handkerchief under a cold-water tap and tended his battered nose. He learnt that the professor seemed satisfied with the engine—up to a point. A piston had broken, or something. Dick heard him say:

"It'll be some time before I get her right," the greyhaired man told Bill. "But I'll take the engine down to-night and find out just what went wrong. I'll telephone to you at Brooklands in the morning."

"You ought to have some sleep, sir," Bill grunted to the professor. "Weren't you working all last night on this, and all to-day?"

"Never mind that! You get back to Brooklands and fit your cars for the Italian Grand Prix!" The professor smiled a little. "You know the situation, Bill, and I can't afford to waste any time. Besides, I've learned to do without much sleep. If you're going back to-night, you'd better start now!"

Bill nodded, then the two shook hands, and the gruff speedman turned to his brother. A jerk of the head brought Dick to his side, and the two left the shed, making for a fast-looking car which stood near at hand.

Five minutes later and the machine was rolling out through the main gates, heading southwards for the great British racing track. It was but a matter of three hours since the car had arrived at the works, but during that time Dick had been home. Bill had also paid a flying visit to the little house where their father, himself an old racing driver, lived.

"Well, that's over!" grunted Bill, as the car hummed through the night, his hands on the wheel and his gaze watchful on the road lit by the great, twin beams of the headlights. "The old professor'll work like a nigger until he gets that engine right. He thought she was O.K., else he wouldn't have fetched us up from the track to watch the test. I bet he's disappointed!"

"I wish I could have caught Lynch," Dick answered. "He must have seen everything."

"Don't I keep telling you that doesn't matter?" Bill growled. "Listen, kid, the old professor's got a bee in his bonnet about that record-smasher he's building. You know the firm's in a bad way, don't you? The only reason we're running racing cars is to try and get publicity, and let people know how good Kent cars are. The professor thinks that record-buster will put us on our feet—I don't! It'll certainly help, but it's winning real races that'll pull us out of the dirt."

"I'll drive his two-hundred-and-fifty-mile-an-hour bus for him when it's ready," Bill went on. "But, in the meantime, we've got to win races with the speed machines we've got at Brooklands. If we can do that, it'll put the firm on its feet—then we'll crown everything by collaring the world's speed record with the professor's new machine. That's if the Ince Eights don't put a spoke in our wheel!"

Dick said nothing. Bill wasn't given to talking a lot, and when he did start it was just as well to let him go on while he was in the mood. Presently Bill's growling voice came again:

"That feller Mark Lynch gets on my nerves. He's a good driver, an' all that, but he's as crafty as they come! Whatever happens, Dick, we've got to lick those Ince Eights. They were after us all last racing season, and they're out to smash us this year. I don't know just why they should make a dead set at us, but I think it's because Ince doesn't like the old professor for some reason. Anyway, I don't like Mark Lynch, an' that's enough to make me want to lick him. An' I'll lick him when we get to Monza, by gosh!"

Bill hardly spoke after that during all the long drive back to Brooklands. On the way, Dick thought about the coming race in Italy.

The Ince Eights would be running at Monza. They were also down at Brooklands for a final tuning before they went to Italy.

This was Dick's first year with the Kent racing stable, but long before he had left school he knew almost all there was to know about cars in the ordinary way. Since then Bill himself had trained Dick, and now the speedman wouldn't have anyone else working on his car during a race. He knew he could rely on Dick.

Dick didn't agree with Bill when he said that the old professor had "a bee in his bonnet" over the record smasher. Bill was keen enough on the big car, but he had a still greater interest in the ordinary racing machines. Dick had a feeling that to build a car that would do two hundred and fifty miles an hour would be a greater achievement than winning any amount of ordinary races—and Dick was right.

A Kent mechanic, waiting for their return by the Brooklands gates, let them in, and they ran the car down to some sheds which were set back from the paddock. Some of the mechanics were working late on one of the cars—there were three, and a reserve machine entered for the race at Monza. These men had hot tea waiting. Dick drank some from an old tin mug, and then turned in on a bed that had been made up in a bungalow near at hand.

It was broad daylight when he awoke and sat up to look round him. The other truckle beds in the bungalow were empty, and sun streamed through the windows. Dick could hear the snarl of a muffled exhaust somewhere outside, and when he went to the window he saw that his brother was busy with the racing car which he would drive on the Italian speedway.

Dick ducked his head in a bucket of water, then dressed swiftly. He had no idea of the time, and he was hungry, but he wanted to see what speed Bill did with his racer. Probably the other machines in the team had already

been out. Bill was now about to give his own mount a final run, and Dick knew that he hoped to touch nearly a hundred and forty miles an hour with it.

They called the car a Kent-Special. She was very long and very low with a radiator that sloped backwards, and a tail that swept to a wedge-shape at the rear The car seemed to hang down between its wheels, with the sun gleaming on the fluting of the brake-drums and shining on the smooth, stream-lined body.

The highest part of the car barely reached to Dick's waist. The whole machine seemed to squat on the ground, and there was something vicious and eager in its speed-lines—something cruel. It always made Dick's heart quicken to see his brother, cool and grim and quiet and resolute, making ready to ride.

"Hallo, Dick! Sleep well?" Bill greeted. "Go round to the Railway Straight with some of the boys there, and check my times, will you? I shan't be on the track more than an hour; we'll have some grub together afterwards!"

He slipped into the narrow cockpit as he spoke, and Dick saw him finger the hand-throttle. He looked round and grinned, then called to the mechanics. Four of them jumped to the short tail of the machine, and pushed her forward down a slope into the paddock. As the racer went, somebody yelled to Dick, and he ran to where an ordinary car was standing, with three men in her; one of them was the foreman mechanic, and he had a bundle of coloured flags under his arm.

Dick climbed into the car, and it started off, rolling down to the paddock after Bill's racer As they got clear of the sheds, Dick saw that Bill's machine had stopped, and that he had leaped from it. He was standing over a man who sat in the cockpit of another car—an Ince Eight. The man was Mark Lynch!

Dick could see that Bill was talking quickly to the man, and Lynch was looking up and sneering at him.

"Tellin' him off about last night's job!" the foreman exclaimed in Dick's ear. "There'll be a fight in a minute—Bill's gettin' mad! We'd better——" He broke off as Lynch suddenly sent his car forward, leaving Bill standing. "Best thing he could do!" the foreman said "He's going out on test, too, by the look of it! Got their reserve machine, though!"

Bill ran back to his own car, his face set. It was plain enough that he had been telling the Ince Eight speedman to keep away from the Kent works in the future. Dick saw Bill's car restarted, and a moment later it went roaring across the Brooklands paddock to the track beyond, with Lynch's machine streaking away ahead of it.

The Ince Eight was higher in build than the Kent-Special, with a very narrow radiator and a pointed tail. The car had the slim ugliness of a torpedo; it looked as crafty as the man who was driving it. Out to the track it went, with Bill after it, while the car in which Dick rode ran around into the broad, flat stretch of the Railway Straight.

The speedway at Brooklands is almost oval in shape, and the Railway Straight is the fastest part of the course. It is almost the only straight and flat section, the rest of the track being mainly curved and steeply banked. Here and there along its length are little bays lying back from the concrete of the course, and in one of these the cars pulled up, the mechanics dismounting.

Their job was to time Bill on each lap. Dick had done this job often enough before, and from his pocket he drew a sheet from which he could calculate the car's speed when the mechanics had checked the time on their stop-watches.

"By heck they're travelling!" gasped the foreman, and he nodded over the track to where the two machines were coming off the distant banking The crackling roar of their exhausts slammed to Dick's ears, and, bare seconds later, the two machines flashed into sight on the high banking which levelled out into the Railway Straight.

Dick could see their wheels stamping on the track as they hurtled down towards them. They stormed past, with track-grit slashing in a stinging shower from their threshing tyres and exhausts spanging madly. The stop-watches of the mechanics clicked as they went.

"They're going all out!" the foreman's voice came again, as the machines rocked up the straightaway. "Look at 'em!"

"Bill won't let Lynch beat him, he'll pass him in a bit!" one of the mechanics grinned. "I bet they're lapping at a hundred an' twenty! Had a row in the paddock before they came out, they did, so Bill's ripe to pass him or bust!"

Dick craned to watch the machines and, as he did so, the foreman grumbled uneasily:

"What's Bill want to drive like that for? It ain't goin' to do the car any good. He never gave her time to get warmed up before he put his foot down!"

"I bet he'll pass Lynch, though!" Dick grinned.

"O' course he'll pass him!" the foreman answered. "He'll—— Here they come!"

Once more the two machines ripped towards them. Both were at the peak of their speed now Like coloured meteors, they slammed from the banking to the flat—superchargers screaming, engines roaring, and exhausts crackling heudishly Dick had one moment's glimpse of Lynch's face, and the man was grinning as he crouched behind his cord-bound wheel.

Bill had closed down on his rival and was barely two car-lengths behind. They crashed on down the straight.

"One minute, twenty seconds!" snapped a mechanic, as he looked at his stop-watch. Dick glanced at the sheet he held in his hand.

"That's—— Gosh! They're lapping at over a hundred an' twenty-four miles an hour!" he gasped

"What!" The foreman almost roared the word. "Then Bill's a darned fool t' go like that! He's ——" The man broke off, and suddenly stared at Dick. His voice sunk to a dangerously quiet note as he went on: "I can see the game now. Lynch has got the Ince reserve machine, and it doesn't matter if he cracks it up He's brought it out because he knew Bill was going on to the track—he's setting the pace for him and trying to make him smash up his engine! The cunning fiend!"

Dick gasped, as he realised the truth of what the foreman said. No racing machine ought to be run at the limit of its speed until it has been warmed up. Bill's machine wasn't warm; it had been practically cold when it had left the paddock, and here he was driving all out. Lynch guessed that Bill would chase him and try to pass him, and he was honing that in his eagerness Bill would wreck his engine.

"He's just the mad fool to forget everything but putting it across Lynch!" the foreman gasped. "I'll flag him to slow down next time he comes round," and from the bundle of signa flags under his arm he plucked one that was a flaring yellow.

With the flag in his hand, he stood watching the two cars as they came almost neck and neck off the opposite banking. Dick watched, too, and even though he knew that Bill was acting foolishly, he couldn't but admire him. It was just like old Bill; he wouldn't let anything lick him, even in practice. It was the spirit which won big races!

(*Continued on back page*).

Our Weekly Pow-Wow!

By The Editor.

Free Gift Number One!

YOU chaps are feeling mighty pleased with yourselves this week, I know, for the first topping Free Gift is in your hands. Isn't it just splendid, boys, and aren't you keen to collect the whole set of these famous racing cars? Of course you are! Then don't forget there's another unique model given away next week. But a word of advice; there's going to be a terrific rush to bag these souvenirs, and it's up to all of you to place a regular order with your newsagent for the "Nelson Lee Library" if you want to make absolutely certain of getting *your* Free Gift.

Free Gift Number Two!

In next week's bumper issue, then, you fellows will find a handsome coloured metal model of Captain Malcolm Campbell's world-famed racer which is aptly named "Blue Bird." This giant car is out to beat the terrific speed record set up by the Sunbeam. Our special series of models is the season's sensation, and everybody's talking about them. The models are exquisitely turned out, complete in every particular. It won't do for any reader of the "Nelson Lee Library" to miss one of these splendid prizes. Next week's beautiful model shows you what Captain Malcolm Campbell's three-ton racing car really is. Built to conquer distances and eat up the miles as no car has done yet, every detail about this speed car makes for velocity. In the old legends the enchanted Blue Bird of romance slipped out of sight like magic. This is just what the famous car, which you will see next week in miniature, can do.

Many Different Opinions.

A thoughtful, and I am bound to say, extremely considerate correspondent, writes from Sydney to condole with me concerning the opinions of some readers. "It must," he says, "be depressing after doing a lot of hard work in answering letters, to receive such letters as these. I am very sorry for you, and think you must have a wonderful amount of patience."

That is extremely kind, and I greatly appreciate the expression of sympathy. But patience is just the very thing we all have to cultivate. It is a pretty tender plant, and requires no end of care. I often strike radical differences of opinion in the numerous letters sent to me, and we all know how hard it is to keep calm when opinions are voiced which, anyhow, seem all wrong, lock, stock and barrel. The other fellow seems utterly in the wrong, but he, for his part, is convinced he is right.

In these cases practically the only thing is to compromise and wait for a better understanding—which may come along, who knows, when least expected. And, any old how, difference of opinion should not affect friendship.

Too Old At Sixteen.

It is an old question as to the right age at which to give up reading school yarns, and the subject is taken up with great spirit by a reader chum in Cheshire who smiles like the Cheshire Cat did of old at the bare notion of abandoning his favourite paper because he has passed sixteen.

Of course, the right age when to read a story you are keen on is any old age. You cannot estimate these things by the clock or the calendar. They have precious little to do with time at all. The "Nelson Lee Library" is read by thousands who have long left school behind. The great test of a school or adventure tale is that it should interest everybody.

Does it please YOU? If so, then it is O.K.

CORRESPONDENTS WANTED.

H. Rothwell, 353, Eccles New Road, Weaste, Salford, **Manchester,** wishes to correspond with readers in Manchester.

T. Treadwell, 39f, Sutton Dwellings, Old Street, **London, E.C.2,** wishes to correspond with readers anywhere; all letters answered; ages 18-20.

Charles Vincent Brereton, 50, High Street, **Congleton, Cheshire,** wishes to hear from readers willing to join the committee of an All-Hobbies Club. Members also wanted.

R. B. Stewart, 474, Tollcross Road, Parkhead, **Glasgow, E.,** would be glad to hear from readers interested in the club he has formed.

1927 MECCANO

A new thrill for boys!

This year Meccano is more than ever real engineering in miniature! All the Girders, Plates, Strips and large Wheels are coloured in real engineering colours—green and red. It's wonderfully fascinating to see how much the colours add to the realism of the hundreds of models that can be built with Meccano parts,

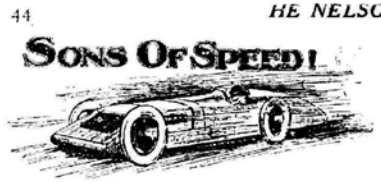
There's a free book, printed in colours, that tells all about the new Meccano. Every boy ought to have a copy of this book. Send a postcard for it to Meccano Ltd., Dept. 12A, Binns Road, Liverpool, giving your own name and address and the names and addresses of three of your chums. Ask for the new Meccano Book in colours.

PRICES OF MECCANO OUTFITS FROM 3/6 TO 370/-.

ALL COLOURED!

Manufactured by

MECCANO LIMITED :: BINNS ROAD :: LIVERPOOL



(*Continued from page* 41.)

Once more the two ripped into sight, with Bill high on the bank and almost level now. Dick heard the mechanics yelling him on, and then Bill seemed to pull still higher on the banking as he shaped to pass his rival.

His off-side tyres skimmed the banking's edge, and the car was canted over at a terrific angle. Side by side, the two machines tore towards the straight. Dick saw Lynch's machine leap on a bump and jerk still nearer Bill's roaring car. The wheel hubs seemed all but to kiss. For the fraction of a second it looked as though the hurtling machines would touch one another; instinctively, Bill pulled away and——

Just at this part of the track there is a low parapet, where the speedway runs over the River Wey. From the end of this parapet there suddenly gouted a dusty spray of broken concrete —Bill's wheel-hubs had hit it!

A giant hand seemed to push the tail of the car downwards on the banked track and it checked, while Lynch's speedster rocked-ahead.

For the fraction of a second, the Kent-Special was broadside, then the bonnet whipped upwards in a wild, terrific skid. It came on in mad, slithering circles, sliding down the track, dust whipping from the screaming wheels as Bill fought to straighten his car.

Sheer down the slope the racer came, completely out of control. Dust founted in a mighty cloud as it reached the foot of the banking. Torn grass and ripped earth gouted upwards, then the car was off the track and on the grass!

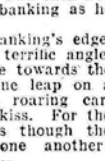
Bushes slashed high. Smoke lifted in a blinding cloud, and, in the heart of it, Dick saw his brother's car bucking and leaping wildly.

"He's—he's killed himself: He's—crashed!"

A mechanic gasped the words in awed tones and then Dick was racing madly for the scene of the wreck!

(Some serial this, eh, boys? Next week's fine long instalment simply teems with thrills, and when you've read it it will leave you breathless.)

2/6 DEPOSIT



secures this superb Cabinet Gramophone or a Table Grand or Giant Horn Instrument. **Nothing More to Pay for One Month.** Carriage Paid. **10 Days' Trial.** No. 605 model **35/-** cash to record buyers. Satisfaction guaranteed or money refunded in full. Write for free art catalogue.

Mead Company (Dept K.2), Sparkbrook, Birmingham.

STAMPS FREE. 25 Unused Colonials to applicants for Approvals. 10,000 Varieties, ½d. to 2d. each. 200 diff. Bt. Cols., 2/9; 100, 1/-.—STAFFORD, 75, King Street, Hammersmith.

HEIGHT INCREASED 5/- Complete Course

3-5 inches in ONE MONTH. Without appliances — drugs — or dieting. **The Famous Clive System Never Fails.** Complete Course 5/- P.O. p. f., or further particulars stamp.—**P. A. Clive, Harrock House, OLWYN BAY, North Wales.**

MAKE YOUR OWN ELECTRIC LIGHT 5/6

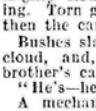
These wonderful Dynamos light brilliantly 4-6-v. Lamps, and are very easy to work. "De Luxe" model, 5/6, post 6d. Delivery by **GREENS (Dept. NL.)** return of post. **14, New Oxford St., London, W.C.1.**

MAGIC TRICKS, etc.—Parcels, 2/6, 5/6. Ventriloquist's Instrument. Invisible. Imitate birds. Price 6d each, 4 for 1/-.—**T. W HARRISON, 239, Pentonville Road, London, N.1.**

CUT THIS OUT

"NELSON LEE" PEN COUPON. VALUE 3d.

Send 3 of these coupons, with only **2/9** (and 2d. stamp) direct to the **FLEET PEN CO., 119, Fleet Street, E.C.4.** By return you will receive a handsome lever self-filling **FLEET FOUNTAIN PEN** with solid gold nib (fine, medium or broad), usually 10/6. Fleet price 4/-, or with 5 coupons only **2/9**. De-Luxe Model 2/- extra.



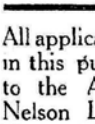
HEIGHT COUNTS in winning success. Height increased—health and physique improved. Wonderful results. Send for particulars and our £100 guarantee to Girvan System, A.M.P., 17 Stroud Green Road, London, N.4.

BOYS WANTED 14 & 18

Opportunities offered in **AUSTRALIA, CANADA,** and **NEW ZEALAND.** The **SALVATION ARMY** grants generous assistance towards training, outfit, etc., to be repaid when settled overseas. The Army exercises efficient commonsense after-care. Conducted Parties. Work guaranteed. Apply **THE MANAGER,** 3, Upper Thames St., London, E.C.4; 12, Pembroke Place, Liverpool; 203, Hope St., Glasgow; or 57a, Upper Arthur St., Belfast.

DON'T BE BULLIED

Send 4d. Stamps for **Two Splendid Lessons in Jujitsu,** the wonderful Japanese Self-Defence, and Handsome Photo Plate of Jap Champions. Take care of yourself; fear no man. You can have MONSTER Illustrated Portion for P.O. 3/9. Send now "YAWARA" (Dept. A.P.), 10, Queensway, Hanworth, Feltham, Middlesex. Practical Tuition London School Daily.



HEIGHT INCREASED and Body Beautifully Developed at Same Time. Write at once for a Free Copy of my splendidly illus. Book. Lengthens short legs. Enclose 2d. stamp. Sent privately.—CARNE INSTITUTE, Lincoln St., Cardiff, S. W. (*Est. over* 20 *yrs.*)

All applications for Advertisement Spaces in this publication should be addressed to the Advertisement Manager. "The Nelson Lee Library," The Fleetway House Farringdon St., London E.C.4

Printed and Published every Wednesday by the Proprietors, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd. The Fleetway House Farringdon Street, London E.C.4. Advertisement Offices: The Fleetway House Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Registered for transmission by Canadian magazine post. Subscription Rates: Inland and Abroad, 11/- per annum, 5/6 for six months. Sole Agents for South Africa: Central News Agency, Limited. Sole Agents for Australia and New Zealand: Messrs Gordon & Gotch Limited; and for Canada: The Imperial News Co. (Canada), Limited.

New Series No. 82 D/R November 26th, 1927.