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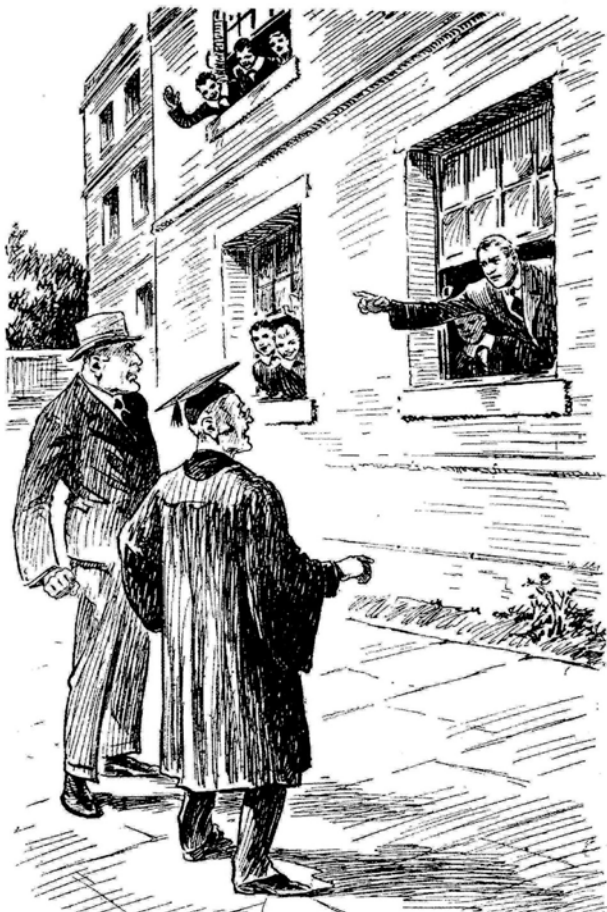
STICKING IT OUT!

A grand long complete "barring-out" yarn, featuring the Boys of St. Frank's.

New Series No. 85.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

December 17th, 1927.



"I want you to know that I am supporting these rebels!" shouted Sir Edward Handforth, amid cheers from the juniors. The headmaster and General Fairfax looked flabbergasted. They had expected Sir Edward to take away his rebellious son; instead, it seemed that he had joined the rebels himself!

*Sir Edward Handforth—Rebel!**Adventure—Fights—Fun—Thrills!*

By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

A Barring-Out without any grub is hardly an attractive prospect, but the Rebels of St. Frank's have got heaps of resource, and after a number of stirring encounters with General Carfax—the old soldier who fondly thinks he can quell this schoolboy rebellion—they get heaps of grub! So the war between the General and Nipper & Co. wages afresh.—Ed.

CHAPTER I.

The Rebels of St. Frank's!

EVERYBODY in the Modern House dining-hall at St. Frank's looked at Fatty Little in shocked surprise, not unmixed with consternation.

"Say that again, Fatty!" exclaimed Reggie Pitt at last.

"You heard me!" growled Fatty.

"I believe I did—but I want to make sure," replied Pitt.

"There's no more grub!" said Fatty Little briefly.

"Ominous words, my brethren!" murmured Reggie, shaking his head. "Fatal words, forsooth!"

"Chuck it, Reggie!" growled Handforth, of the Remove. "This isn't a time for joking! Look here, Fatty, what do you mean—there's no more grub?"

"Exactly what I say," replied Fatty Little sadly.

"Do you mean to tell me that this breakfast is the last food in the whole House?" asked Edward Oswald Handforth, gazing

at a few remnants of food on the table in a forlorn kind of way. "Isn't there anything left in the store-rooms?"

"Nothing!" replied Fatty. "We've all been on short rations since tea-time yesterday, and I've eked out the grub as far as I could. But I can't get blood out of a stone. It's up to you chaps to conjure up some wheeze. Grub's necessary. We can't carry on a rebellion without food."

Handforth nodded sagely.

"That's quite right," he admitted. "Didn't somebody once say that an army walks on its stomach? It's all rot, of course—because how the dickens could anybody walk on his stomach?"

"It all depends upon whose stomach you're talking about," remarked Pitt. "I've seen you walking on somebody's stomach before now, Handy!"

"Don't be funny!" frowned Handforth. "We've got to face this problem. Fatty is the chief cook, and he reports that there's no grub left. It's a serious situation. How are we going to get some supplies? What about lunch? What about tea? What about

supper? We shan't get through the day unless we have some food supplies."

"It'll do us good to fast for a day or two," remarked Timothy Tucker, of the West House. "I trust you will remember, my good friends, that fasting is a very beneficial habit. There is nothing more cleansing to the system than three or four days' abstinence from all foodstuffs. I have long urged—"

"Kill him, somebody!" interrupted Handforth. "Take him away, and quietly drop him down a crack in the floor!"

"Really, my dear sir—" began T. T. protestingly.

"Never mind, Tucker!" chuckled Nipper. "We shall probably have to adopt your scheme, after all. There's one thing about fasting—it's much easier when there's no food about."

Fatty Little started.

"Great pancakes!" he gasped, staring. "You—you're not suggesting that we shan't get any more grub? Why, I was relying on you fellows to make a raid, or something, and to get some more supplies. We can't go on like this!"

"Leave it to us," said Handforth gruffly. "We're the leaders of this rebellion, and we'll provide everything that's necessary. Let's go and talk it over, you fellows."

Two or three minutes later Handforth and Nipper and several others were gathered at one of the upper windows, overlooking the old Triangle of St. Frank's. They were all serious and concerned.

They had every reason to be serious, too. It was a fine, crisp December morning, and the sun was shining outside. But all these juniors—the entire Lower School at St. Frank's—were bottled up in the Modern House. The barring-out had been in progress for several days now, and the rebels were continuing their victorious resistance. But they were beginning to get worried.

For two whole days nothing had happened.

Neither the headmaster nor General Christopher Carfax had taken any action. General Carfax was a Governor of the school, and he had come to St. Frank's on purpose to quell the revolt. Only the Remove had been in the rebellion at that time, and the general's effort had resulted in the Fourth and the Third joining the insurrection. But since then nothing of note had happened.

It was becoming increasingly evident that the Head and General Carfax, in conjunction, had decided to give the rebels a good length of rope.

The idea, possibly, was to let them exhaust their food supplies, and then go hungry. Hunger would make them capitulate in a very short time. Healthy schoolboys are not very keen on fighting when their stomachs are empty.

And so the rebel leaders were very anxious.

They were all determined to carry on this barring-out until they gained the victory. The Christmas vacation would start within

a week, and much could happen in the meantime.

All the same, there was no denying that this problem was a grave one. Food could not be easily procured. If any raiding force ventured out from the Modern House, there was a distinct probability that that same raiding force would be seized and held. And that wouldn't do the other rebels any good at all.

"Nothing happened yesterday, and nothing happened the day before yesterday," said Handforth, as he stood staring glumly out of the window. "And now, by the look of things, nothing's going to happen to-day, either! I'm getting fed up with all this inactivity! What's the good of us having our barricades in position? What's the good of all this ammunition we've prepared? Why should we have guards at every window, watching day and night?"

"Don't worry, Handy," said Nipper. "Something will happen before long. We must get food to-day, for example—and that'll mean action. And I rather fancy that the Head will make some sort of move, too. He won't allow three days to go by without doing anything. But let's concentrate on this grub problem. How are we going to get some food?"

The other rebel leaders put their heads together, and thought deeply. Not that there was much result. For, to tell the truth, there seemed to be no solution to the problem.

The cupboards and store-rooms of the Modern House were empty—for there were over a hundred hungry rebels to feed at every meal. With this house barricaded and barred there was no exit, and no entrance. All ordinary supplies had ceased automatically. What was to be done?

As it happened, an answer to this particular problem came from an unexpected quarter!

CHAPTER 2.

An Unexpected Visitor!



OW would it be to make a sudden raid on the East House?" asked Handforth abruptly.

"Afraid we couldn't do it, old man," replied Nipper, shaking his head.

"Why not?"

"Too risky."

"Too risky be blowed!" said Handforth. "Nothing venture, nothing win! If about twenty of us went across, we should find something worth taking, I'll bet!"

"That's not the point," put in Reggie Pitt. "If twenty of us went, two or three might be collared, and then they would be used as hostages. In fact, they would probably be sacked on the spot. No, Handy, it's not worth the candle. We'd better go hungry."

"I wish I knew what the Head was up to," said Nipper, frowning. "There's something rummy going on, my sons. I believe that the Head and General Carfax have been putting their heads together, and they're just waiting. They've prepared something, and they mean to strike soon."

"What can they do?" demanded Handforth. "Our barricades are so strong that they'll never drive us out of the—"

"I don't think there'll be any actual fighting," put in Nipper. "It's too undignified—too drastic. Besides, the general's had a lesson already. He knows that it only makes us worse if he starts a scrap. I think that this new stunt will be more subtle. It's as clear as daylight, anyhow, that the Head doesn't mean to knuckle under."

"And we shan't knuckle under, either," said Church. "We'll keep it up until Christmas!"

"Rather!" agreed Handforth. "We'll stick it out as long as the Head—and longer! We're in the right all the time—we're justified in this rebellion, and we'll keep it up. As for the food problem, we can easily think of something. Just leave me alone for ten minutes, and I'll get out a big wheeze."

The others smiled. They knew what to expect from the celebrated Edward Oswald Handforth. His wheeze would turn out to be some impossible project that could never be accomplished. Handforth was a wonderful fellow for thinking out elaborate unworkable ideas. He was about the most impracticable chap in the Remove.

"The main essential in a barring-out is to have plenty of food supplies," said Nipper thoughtfully. "Of course, we had to grab the Modern House in a hurry—in the middle of a battle. We were lucky to have any food at all. But it's gone now, and we must think of something—"

"Hallo!" interrupted McClure. "There's a car just come in the gateway."

The other juniors looked out of the window, which stood wide open. It was an upper window, and quite safe from any possible attack. The juniors leaned out, and watched the big limousine as it glided silently down the Triangle, towards Big Arch. Evidently, it was on its way to the Head's house. And then, suddenly, Handforth gave a violent start.

"By George!" he gasped. "Look who's driving!"

The other juniors looked.

"Don't know him!" said Reggie Pitt. "Never seen him before in my life!"

"It's my pater's chauffeur!" said Handforth excitedly. "Yes, look! My pater's inside the car! Can't you see him?"

"So it is!" said Church, with a start. "It's Sir Edward Handforth himself! And—my hat! Doesn't he look wild?"

The car went out of sight, and the juniors, craning their heads, watched it disappear through Big Arch. Then they turned and stared at one another.

"This," said Nipper, "looks significant."

"I'll bet it is significant!" said Reggie Pitt.

"My pater!" muttered Handforth, worried and troubled. "What the dickens is he doing here? Who told him to come? Just like my pater to come butting in—"

"I thought there was something on the move," said Nipper grimly. "So this is the game, is it? They've brought your pater here, Handy! They probably think that

he'll be able to do something. You won't be able to defy your own father, you know!"

Handforth's jaw became aggressive.

"Won't I?" he said gruffly. "It'll be pretty rotten if I have to oppose him, but I'm not going to let the Remove down—or the Fourth or the Third, either! I mean to stand up for my rights!"

"Good man!" said Fullwood. "All the same, Handy, the situation looks like being awkward."

Handforth made no reply. He knew well

enough that it would be awkward. His father was a Tartar! And what did this visit mean? What could it mean—but trouble?

Willy Handforth came up, smiling. Somehow, the sight of his minor made Handforth frown more heavily than ever.

"What the dickens are you grinning at, you young Cheshire cat?" he demanded. "You won't grin when I tell you that my pater's here!"

"He's my pater, too!" said Willy coolly. "And I knew it, anyhow. That's why I'm smiling."

"I'm blessed if I can see anything funny in it!" growled Handforth. "You know what the pater is! He'll only cause a lot of commotion! I never knew such a man as the pater. Always making a fuss—always roaring at people!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The other juniors couldn't help roaring with laughter.

"Now we know who you take after, old man!" grinned Reggie Pitt.

LOOK OUT FOR
NEXT WEEK'S
Special
Christmas
Number
Boys—It's the Goods!

"You silly ass!" shouted Handforth, turning red.

"Never mind—you're a good sort!" chuckled Nipper. "And your father's a good sort, too, Handy. He's proved that before now. Haven't we all been in your house? Haven't we all been your guests? There's nothing wrong with Sir Edward!"

Handforth grunted.

"He's all right when he's in a good temper," he admitted. "But when he's wild—he's—he's— Oh, my goodness! I don't mind defying the Head and General Carfax, or any of the masters. But when it comes to the pater—"

"Leave him to me!" said Willy coolly. "I shall know what to do with him when the right time comes. You know I can always wangle the pater, Ted!"

Handforth drew a deep breath.

"Yes, I believe you can," he said. "It's a bit uncanny, and I can never understand it—but you're always able to get round the old boy somehow. I can't do it—although I've tried scores of times."

"It's only knack!" chuckled Willy. "The trouble with you, Ted, is that you're not tactful enough. The pater's one of the most reasonable chaps under the sun if you only rub him the right way."

But Handforth would not be consoled. The unexpected advent of his father filled him with dismay!



CHAPTER 3.

In the Headmaster's Study!

WHEN Sir Edward Handforth was ushered into the Head's private sanctum, he found two gentlemen there. One was Dr. Malcolm Stafford himself, and the other was General Christopher Carfax, D.S.O., J.P., D.L.

"I am glad that you have come, Sir Edward," said the Head gratefully. "Let me introduce General Carfax—one of our governors. General Carfax, this is Sir Edward Handforth, the father of the unfortunate boy who has been causing all this trouble."

They shook hands, and Sir Edward was looking very grim and aggressive. There was a startling similarity between him and his son. Both had the same big, clumsy frame. Both had the same aggressive jaw, the same glaring expression. Edward Oswald was the very spit of his father. Willy, in all probability, took more after his mother.

"Now, what's all this I hear Dr. Stafford?" asked Sir Edward gruffly, as he set his legs apart, and took up a forceful attitude. "My son has been causing trouble—eh? I want to hear the details!"

"Won't you be seated, Sir Edward?" asked the Head mildly.

"Thank you, no—I'd rather stand!" retorted Sir Edward.

He glared at General Carfax, as though resentful of the latter's presence. The general was an enormous man—well over six feet in height, and proportionately broad. But just at present the general was looking rather subdued. He had met with no great success at St. Frank's, although he had come to the school full of fiery bluster. But the rebels had taken a great deal of the fighting out of him.

"We were hoping, Sir Edward, that you would have come yesterday," began Dr. Stafford. "The matter is very urgent—"

"I was in Scotland, on business," interrupted Sir Edward. "I thought I explained that in my telegram—"

"You did—you did!" said the Head. "We quite understand, Sir Edward; but, at the same time, this delay has been unfortunate. We want to get the unhappy business over as quickly as possible. As I explained to you in my letter, I am very anxious that you should take your elder son away. It is with very great regret that I must report to you that he has been expelled from the school in disgrace."

Sir Edward compressed his lips.

"I shall want to hear the details of this, sir!" he snapped. "I will have you know that my son is an honourable boy, and I shall want a very good explanation from you. Yes, by George! Edward is very obstinate sometimes, and very stubborn and trying. But he is the soul of honour!"

"I am not questioning the moral character of your son, Sir Edward," replied the Head quietly. "His misdemeanour now is one that merely concerns the school rules and regulations. As you know, he is the ringleader in a most serious rebellion."

"Why did he rebel in the first place?" asked Sir Edward coldly.

"The facts, after all, are quite simple," said the Head. "Before this unhappy rebellion started, Mr. Pycraft—one of our masters—had occasion to bring Handforth to me for punishment. He had been fighting with two or three of the other boys. Indeed, he had battered them about most cruelly, and I caned him."

"I dare say he deserved it," nodded Sir Edward. "I have given the young rascal many a punishment on my own account!"

"Your son was heard to utter threats against Mr. Pycraft that same day," continued the Head. "The very next morning a most unfortunate incident occurred. Mr. Pycraft fell headlong into a pit of mud, as he was taking his morning walk. And I regret to inform you, Sir Edward, that your son came out of the trees, and laughed uproariously at Mr. Pycraft's discomfiture. He, and his two study-mates had dug a deep pit at a spot they knew Mr. Pycraft would walk over. My only course was to flog him—and this time more severely."

"In the circumstances, I suppose you were perfectly justified," said Sir Edward angrily.

"The young rascal! I cannot understand him doing such a thing, because Edward has never been vindictive in spirit."

"The case has been definitely proved," said the Head. "Mr. Pycraft made the accusation himself, and he was on the spot, remember. He was the unfortunate gentleman who suffered. Well, my object was to give your son a public flogging. But, to my amazement, he broke away from me on the school platform, and rushed to his own study in the Ancient House. There, with two of his friends, he barred and barricaded the door, and defied all of us."

For a moment a smile flitted across Sir Edward's face.

"Good lad!" he muttered. "That's the spirit—Ahem!" he added hastily. "Most disgraceful! So he did that, did he? He barred himself into his own study and defied you?"

"And from that small beginning, this great rebellion has resulted," said the Head, with concern. "The entire Remove Form supported your son, and rebelled in sympathy. Then the Fourth Form and the Third Form followed. The entire junior school is now in rebellion; it has barricaded itself into the Modern House, and is keeping up this ridiculous farce. It is time it all ended, Sir Edward. I need hardly tell you that your son has been the ringleader throughout. I have no alternative but to expel him from this school. I cannot keep a boy here who is so indifferent to discipline—who so flagrantly flouts my authority."

Sir Edward's eyes were blazing.

"You are quite right," he said gruffly. "I have no quarrel with you, Dr. Stafford. My son has acted in the most disgraceful manner, and I shall see to it that he will receive full punishment. You want me to take him away—eh?"

"That is my fervent wish," said the Head. "He has defied me, and he has defied General Carfax. But you are his father, and he will hardly dare to disobey your commands."

"Let him try to," said Sir Edward aggressively. "Let him attempt to defy me!"

CHAPTER 4.

Sir Edward Means Business!

GENERAL CARFAX grunted.

"If I know anything of that boy, he'll defy you, Sir



Edward, even though you are his father!" he said. "A reprehensible young rascal—nothing more, nothing less! An impudent young puppy! Yes, by cracky! An impudent young puppy!"

Sir Edward started.

"Are you referring to my son, sir?" he demanded, with a glare.

"Yes, sir, I am," retorted the general.

"Your son is worse than all the other boys

put together. Look at the trouble he has caused here—look at all the commotion. The sooner you take that young rascal away, the better for everybody in this establishment!"

For a moment it seemed that Sir Edward would flare up, but he held himself in check with an effort.

"Yes, I suppose you are right," he said, between his teeth. "If Edward has been causing all this trouble, he deserves drastic punishment. His next school will be of a very different character to St. Frank's. He has had his chance here, and he has thrown it away. The boy shall be made to suffer as he deserves!"

"And you will take your son home at once?" asked the Head anxiously.

"At once—this morning," said Sir Edward harshly.

"Then it is hardly necessary for me to tell you, Sir Edward, how grieved I am," said the Head quietly. "Your other son is in this rebellion, too, but I shall not punish him. He has been led away, I am sure, by his older companions."

"That is no excuse," growled Sir Edward. "Willy has plenty of commonsense. Indeed, I've frequently suspected that Willy is even more capable than Edward. But I will grant that Edward is the most impulsive—the most reckless."

"It hurts me that this boy should be forced to leave the school under a cloud," continued the headmaster. "But you will realise, Sir Edward, that it will be better for all concerned after he has gone. He is the ringleader of the rebellion, and there can be little doubt that the whole affair will collapse as soon as Handforth is taken away. It is quite possible that some of the boys will maintain a certain amount of resistance, but I am sure that the heart will be taken out of them when your son has left. It is a most important matter, and I only hope that you will be successful."

Sir Edward raised his eyebrows.

"What do you mean by that, sir?" he asked.

"I mean, Sir Edward, that I fear resistance," replied the Head. "It is more than probable that your son will refuse to leave the Modern House."

"Refuse to obey my orders?" said Sir Edward in amazement. "But I am his father!"

"The boy is in such an excited condition that he may defy you, to your very face," said the Head. "I sincerely trust that he will not be so misguided."

"Let him try it!" said Sir Edward aggressively. "By George! I will go into that building, and I will drag him out by the scruff of his neck! Defiance to his own father, eh? No, sir! No, Dr. Stafford! Edward will never dare to treat me in that way. Quite apart from daring, I am sure that he would not be so disrespectful. Edward has many faults, but disrespect to his parents is not one of them."

The Head rose to his feet.

"I am exceedingly sorry, Sir Edward, that this interview has been so painful," he said. "I realise that you will be relieved to have it over. So, with your permission, I will accompany you to the Modern House now, and—"

"Please do not disturb yourself," interrupted Sir Edward. "I can find the Modern House for myself, thank you. In fact, I know which is the Modern House. I ought to—seeing that I was educated in this school myself! There have been many alterations since then, but the Modern House remains unchanged. I will return to you later, Dr. Stafford, and I will bring my son with me. Before he goes, I shall insist upon a confession from him—in your hearing."

"Will that be necessary?" asked the Head, pained.

"I deem it highly necessary," replied Sir Edward. "My son, too, shall apologise. He has treated you with defiance, and he shall express his regret."

Sir Edward, coldly furious, then went out of the Head's study. His face was pale, and his eyes were glittering. Exactly the same as his son, he could be very cool in times of anger. He could be very violent, too. But this was one of his cold, dangerous moods.

Edward Oswald was never afraid of his father when the latter was in a blustering, loud-voiced mood. But he was very much afraid of him at such a time as this—when his father was pale and calm.

Truth to tell, Sir Edward was hurt. He was deeply grieved. He had hoped for much from his son—he had wanted Edward to make a good name for himself at St. Frank's, and to go up to the Varsity in later years with an honourable record. But now all that was ruined—all that was crashed. Edward Oswald's career was blighted completely. A boy who has been expelled in disgrace from a public school has a black mark against his name for ever more. It was not merely a disgrace for himself—but a disgrace to his family. Small wonder that Sir Edward Handforth was furious. Small wonder that he was weighed down with grief.

He passed out of the Head's House, and walked slowly across Inner Court, towards Big Arch. His footsteps were steady, but they were slow. He was thinking—he was planning out exactly what he should do when he came face to face with his son. He was afraid that he would be violent—that he would lay rough hands upon Edward Oswald—and he was trying to steel himself for the coming ordeal. He did not want to do anything unbecoming in the eyes of all the other boys. But Sir Edward knew that he had a violent temper, and he was walking slowly now so that he could cool down.

He would take Edward away, with scarcely a word. Later, in the car, he would lecture him, and then, at home—

Sir Edward gritted his teeth, and his jaw came out aggressively. When he got the boy home, he would deal with him thoroughly!



CHAPTER 5.

Willy Takes a Hand!

"JUST a minute, dad!"

Sir Edward Handforth halted abruptly. He spun round, and then he beheld Willy.

Willy was crouching behind some bushes, near Big Arch, hidden from any possible observer. Sir Edward frowned upon his younger son.

"What are you doing there, William?" he asked. "Come out here, young man!"

"I'd rather not, dad," said Willy. "I might be spotted, you know—and I'm one of the rebels."

"Good gracious, so you are!" said his father. "You young good-for-nothing! What do you mean by it? What do you mean by supporting Edward in this preposterous rebellion?"

"If it's all the same to you, dad, I'd rather you came over here," said Willy anxiously. "I want to have a word with you in private. It's important, too. I sneaked out on purpose so that I could waylay you. I had an idea that you would come along by yourself, and I took the chance. I'm generally right in things like that."

Sir Edward hesitated for a moment. Then he made up his mind. It might be a good idea to have a few words with Willy—just to prepare the way for the other event. Besides, Sir Edward had an idea that he wouldn't be able to shake his younger son off. Willy had an extraordinary way with him, and he was just as successful with his own father as with other people. There was a curious sort of magnetism in Willy's personality—at all events, it was something intangible, something which could not be described.

Sir Edward thrust his way into the bushes, and followed his small son until they found themselves in a secluded little spot, hidden away from all prying eyes. There were many evergreens round them, and they afforded complete shelter.

"This is fine!" said Willy cheerily. "Well, dad, light one of your cigars, and make yourself at home. I want to keep you here for about ten minutes or a quarter of an hour—and I'm going to do most of the talking."

"We'll see about that, young man!" said Sir Edward gruffly. "You're going to try to excuse your brother, eh? Well, it won't do! I know all about it. I know everything!"

"You mean, dad, you think you do," said Willy.

"Why, by George! What on earth—"

"Steady dad—keep cool!" urged Willy. "I'll bet the Head has asked you to come to the Modern House, yank Ted out, and cart him off home?"

"As a matter of fact, that is exactly what I mean to do!"



Handforth gave a gasp of alarm as he saw the limousine which had just glided into the Triangle. "By jove!" he said. "My pater's inside the car!" "And doesn't he look wild!" put in Church anxiously.

"I thought so!" said Willy, with a shake of his head. "Mind you, I'm not saying anything against Dr. Stafford—but he's all wrong. He thinks he's right, I dare say, but it's Mr. Pycraft's fault. Old Pycraft is a beast!"

"Whatever Mr. Pycraft's character, your brother had absolutely no right to assault him!" frowned his father. "So do not attempt to excuse—"

"Just a minute, dad!" interrupted Willy coolly. "I want to talk to you for ten minutes, so that I can tell you the truth. I know you don't want to listen to me, but you like being just, don't you?"

"Look here, Willy—"

"You'd just hate to do anything unjust, wouldn't you, dad?" went on Willy. "You'd never forgive yourself if you punished poor old Ted for something he didn't do. And I'm telling you now—straight from the shoulder—that Ted was absolutely justified in holding this rebellion. Why, do you think all these Remove fellows would have backed him up if he had been guilty? Do you think the Fourth and the Third would have joined in the rebellion, too? Not likely! We're supporting Ted because we know that he's innocent!"

Sir Edward looked at his younger son rather eagerly.

"You seem very certain of this, Willy!" he exclaimed. "I'd like to believe that Edward is really innocent."

"Then you will believe it soon, dad," nodded Willy. "Just listen to me. Put your ears back, and pay attention. I took a big chance to come out and waylay you like this, but you'll say that I did the right thing by the time I've finished. Now I'll go right back to the very start. But you needn't look so worried—I shan't go into the full details."

"I want the full details," said his father glaring. "Come along, young man—look alive!"

"Well, to begin with, the whole trouble started with a couple of rotters named Marriott and Merrell," said Willy. "Ted came upon them quite unexpectedly, and he found them torturing a poor little kitten. Torturing it, dad, in the most heartless way. Well, what do you suppose that Ted did?"

"I hope he thrashed the young rascals!" said Sir Edward aggressively.

"He did!" replied Willy. "He knocked

the stuffing out of them properly. He blacked their eyes, made their noses bleed, and gave them such a thrashing that they were both laid flat."

"Good lad—good lad!" said Sir Edward. "I hate to see animals being tortured. I hate it. Well, go on—go on!"

"Well, it so happened that Mr. Pycraft came along, and found Ted just after he had floored these two cads," went on Willy. "Mr. Pycraft lugged Ted to the Head's study, and poor old Ted was caned. Of course, he couldn't say anything about the cat, because it would have been sneaking. So the Head swished him for knocking those two chaps about. And Ted, like a chump, went about breathing vengeance on old Pycraft."

"I don't blame him," said Sir Edward gruffly.

"Well, Merrell and Marriott were furious with Ted because he bashed them about like that," continued Willy. "So the next morning they set a trap. You see, they knew all about Mr. Pycraft's special every morning walk, and they dug a pit for him, just near the shrubbery, and filled it with mud, and covered the top with a piece of trellis-work, or something, so that it looked like the solid ground. Old Pycraft came along, and sloshed into it."

"But—but the headmaster told me——"

"Just a minute, dad," interrupted Willy. "Merrell and Marriott sent Ted a letter, daring him to be in the shrubbery at a certain hour that morning. Well, of course, Ted thought it was a joke of some sort, and he went there—like a chump. But it was all a trick. Mr. Pycraft fell into that pit, and then Ted appeared, so old Pycraft immediately jumped to the conclusion that Ted was the culprit. So off he was lugged to the Head again, and this time he was booked for a public flogging."

"Upon my word!" said Sir Edward.

"Well, Ted didn't see it," went on Willy. "He thought it was a bit thick, so instead of taking that flogging he rebelled, went to his own study, and barred himself in. And there you have the whole thing in a nutshell!"

replied Willy. "It was all a rotten trap. Naturally, Ted protested his innocence, but the Head wouldn't believe him."

"Why not?" demanded Sir Edward fiercely. "Why not? My son isn't in the habit of telling lies!"

"I know that, dad," replied Willy. "But it did look a bit black, didn't it? I don't blame the Head at all. Old Pycraft himself believes that Ted did it—and we can't altogether blame Pycraft, either. There was the pit, and Ted had been boasting that he would get even with Pycraft. When he fell into that mud Ted came out and laughed at him. Naturally, Pycraft thought that Ted was the culprit."

"And what of these two boys who are really guilty?" demanded Sir Edward. "Good gracious! You don't mean to say that they are here, and that they refuse to admit their guilt?"

"Those two chaps are a couple of tricky young blackguards," said Willy darkly. "Nipper and a crowd of other chaps went to them immediately after Ted had started his barring-out, and they forced them to go to the headmaster, so that they could confess. But instead of confessing, the rotters told a whole string of lies, and made things twice as bad. They made the whole case look as black as ink against Ted."

"But couldn't Edward refute these lying statements?"

"The trouble is, those two chaps went off home," said Willy. "That's the crux of the whole giddy matter."

"Went off home—before the end of term?"

"Yes," said Willy. "Merrell's sister is getting married, or something. I don't know the exact details. Anyhow, they had permission to go home, and to stay away for about a week. So, you see, this rebellion has been going on in the meantime. Those rotters are away from the school, and we haven't been able to get at them. The truth won't come out until they get back."

Sir Edward was beginning to see daylight clearer and clearer.

"Just one moment, Willy—just a moment," he said. "Why couldn't you tell this to the headmaster?"

Willy looked at his father reproachfully.

"Do you want me to be a sneak, dad?" he asked.

"Eh? Oh, I see—I see!" said Sir Edward. "If'n! Perhaps you're right! Good boy—good boy. I dislike people who tell tales. Yes, I see the difficulty; I understand the position now."

"Ted wouldn't sneak, naturally," said Willy. "And none of the other fellows like to talk against these two chaps while they're away from the school. But as soon as they come back they're going to be collared and forced to go to the Head. This time they'll have to confess the real truth. And that, of course, will exonerate Ted completely. In fact, it will show Dr. Stafford that Ted was justified in rebelling. So, if there's any

CHAPTER 6.

Convincing Evidence!

IR EDWARD drew a deep breath.

"Let me think this over," he said, his whole manner changing.

ing. "Edward, you say, was tricked into going into that shrubbery?"

"Of course he was, dad."

"He didn't know anything about that pit that had been prepared for Mr. Py—Py, whatever his name is?"

"Ted hadn't the faintest idea of it,"



justice in this world, the Head will have to pardon everybody, and then we shall be all serene."

"You say that these two boys are expected back within a day or two?"

"Why, of course," replied Willy. "They ought to be here to-morrow or the next day."

"H'm! I see," said Sir Edward thoughtfully.

"You're in a bit of a fix, I suppose, dad?" went on Willy. "You've told the Head that you'll take Ted away to-day."

"I have certainly given the headmaster to understand that I shall take Edward home and give him a severe punishment," said Sir Edward frowning. "But then, of course, I did not understand the real position. I must go and see Edward at once. Poor lad! I don't blame him for standing up for his rights. There is nothing more detestable than injustice, even when it is the result of a plot. The headmaster should have known that my son is incapable of lying, or of any discreditable action. Edward is a very impulsive boy, and he is sometimes a trial. But he is always honest and truthful."

At first Sir Edward Handforth had been reluctant to listen to Willy's story. But Willy had told it in such a straightforward manner, and it was so eloquent of the absolute truth, that Sir Edward was completely convinced. He knew, too, that neither of his sons would tell him a lie. Sir Edward was proud of his two boys—with just cause.

In many ways they were a trial. During the holidays, indeed, Sir Edward was frequently half driven out of his mind. But deep down in his heart he loved his two sons very deeply. And the knowledge that Edward Oswald had been expelled unjustly sent his blood to boiling point. Yes, Edward Oswald had been expelled. Dr. Stafford had said so, had told him that the boy was to leave St. Frank's in disgrace. And that would mean a blot on his whole career.

Sir Edward went feverish at the thought.

"Take me to Edward at once," he said, gripping Willy by the shoulder. "So they want to expel him, do they? They want to send him away from this school in disgrace, eh? We'll see about it, young man. Yes, by George, we'll see about it!"



CHAPTER 7.

On Their Side:

NOBODY seen Willy?"

Edward Oswald

Handforth asked that question in anxious tones. He was going

about the Modern House; upstairs and downstairs, along the passages, into the studies

and other rooms. But nobody had seen Willy.

"Can't make it out!" frowned Handforth. "The young beggar was here half an hour ago, and now he's gone."

"Why worry?" asked Church.

"Because I'm afraid he's gone off to meet the pater," said Handforth anxiously. "He might get collared, and—"

"Don't you concern yourself about Willy," chuckled McClure. "He isn't collared so easily at that. You know what a young eel he is. He's safe enough—and if he's going to speak to your pater, all the better. Willy has a way with him."

A hail came from upstairs.

"Hi, Handy!" came Fullwood's voice.

"Your pater's coming!"

"Oh, corks!" said Handforth, with a start.

"Better come up to the window!" called Fullwood.

"All right—I'll be there in a tick!" sang out Handforth.

But he made no effort to move. He stood there, staring straight in front of him, his eyes anxious, his whole face haggard.

"Better go!" suggested Church.

"I'm trying to think what I can say to him!" muttered Handforth. "I can't defy my own pater, you know. It's awful! Why the dickens did he come? He's going to mess up everything. Supposing he demands to be admitted—what then?"

"Well, there's no reason why he shouldn't be admitted," said McClure. "He can't drive us out singlehanded, can he? And as long as you don't defy him, Handy, you'll be safe enough."

"Oh, all right—we shall have to chance it," said Handforth concernedly. "But the pater's one of the best, you know, and I should hate to do anything to annoy him. He's a bit unreasonable, and he's pretty hot-tempered, too—but he's the best old boy in the world, really."

They went upstairs, and found all the available windows crowded with interested rebels. A space was made for Handforth as he came up. He leaned out, and was just in time to see him father mounting the steps of the Modern House below. Sir Edward found the doors closed, and when he hammered there was no response. At least, none from just inside the door.

"Hallo, pater!" sang out Handforth, in a husky voice.

Sir Edward looked up.

"Open this door, Edward!" he said sternly.

"What for, pater?" asked Handforth.

"You're not going to take me away, are you?"

"Open this door, young man!" commanded his father.

"Oh, crumbs!" muttered Handforth. "If—if you insist—"

"I am insisting now!" roared Sir Edward.

Handforth withdrew, and looked desperately at the other juniors.

"What the dickens are we going to do?" he muttered feverishly. "You know what my

pater is—as unreasonable as the very dickens! For two pins he'll lug me out, shove me in that car, and carry me off home! I'm expelled, you know. The Head told us that long ago. What an awful frost if I'm taken away, and—"

"Don't you worry," said Nipper. "We won't let your father take you away. We'll admit him, just to hear what he has to say, but when he tries to take you, and you agree to go—as, of course, you'll have to—we'll chip in. We'll collar you, and keep you here by force."

"Oh, thank goodness!" said Handforth. "That'll make it safe for me. And, mind you, it's entirely your own idea—I wouldn't dream of disobeying my own pater like that. I've got pretty strong views on that sort of thing. I think every chap ought to heed his parents, and—"

"Yes, yes—we know all about that!" smiled Nipper. "Well, anyway, we'll look after you when your pater comes in."

They went downstairs in a crowd, and Handforth could not conceal his anxiety. Until the arrival of his father he had been utterly carefree. He had revelled in this rebellion. But he had a horror of defying his father. At home he would annoy Sir Edward with impunity. He would pester him night and day—he would make his parents' life a sheer misery without realising it. But in no circumstances would he deliberately and maliciously disobey them.

The barricades were removed, and the great doors of the Modern House were flung open.

"Come in, Sir Edward!" sang out Nipper. "But be quick, won't you? We don't want the enemy to get in! You've got to remember that this is an armed fortress."

Sir Edward strode in, the expression on his face still grim and forbidding.

"Young rascals!" he said, glaring round. "So that's what you're doing, is it? Setting yourselves up against the authority of the school? And all because of my son! He is the ringleader!"

"Sorry, Sir Edward, but I'm the fellow who has been leading these rebels," replied Nipper.

"Rot!" roared Handforth. "I'm the leader!"

"Then you admit it, Edward?" thundered his father.

"Yes, pater!" said Handforth defiantly. "You've come to take me away, haven't you? I've been sacked in disgrace! But it's not true. I've done nothing that I'm ashamed of! I've done nothing—"

Sir Edward suddenly burst into a roar of laughter, and clapped Handforth on the back.

"Good boy, Edward—good lad!" he said heartily. "I'm proud of you, my son!"

"What?" gasped Handforth, clutching at Church and McClure

"I congratulate you upon your strength of will!" continued Sir Edward. "Gad, you're the kind of son any father can be proud of! These people want to expel you,

eh? And you're innocent? Stick to it, Edward—stick to it, my boy, and you'll win! I'm on your side!"

Handforth nearly collapsed.

"Oh, crumbs!" he breathed happily.

"And—and I thought that you'd come here to take me away, pater!"



CHAPTER 8.

A Shock For the Head!

ALL the other juniors were staring in astonishment.

"Willy!" said Nipper abruptly.

"Eh?" ejaculated Edward Oswald Handforth.

"Your minor!" said Nipper. "Of course, he's seen Sir Edward, and he's told him—"

"A jolly good guess, old man!" grinned Willy, arriving breathlessly. "I've just managed to get in—by one of the back windows. I unbarricaded it on purpose before I went out. Well, is everything all right, Ted?"

"The pater has just congratulated me!" gasped Handforth.

"Yes, Edward," said his father. "It was Willy who gave me the full details of the case. I know the truth now—I know about those two rascally boys who are at present away from the school. And I may as well tell you at once that I intend to support you in this rebellion. I'm going to stay here until the whole thing is over—until those boys are back, and until they have confessed their guilt!"

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Sir Edward!"

"Just like Handy himself!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Everybody was laughing and cheering, and Sir Edward himself was now smiling all over his face. Truth to tell, he was very much of a boy at times, and he was fairly reveling in his present experience. Convinced that Edward Oswald was innocent, he was entering whole-heartedly into the spirit of the rebellion.

The juniors, of course, were more than delighted on their own account. An ally such as Sir Edward Handforth was a tremendous help to them. Hitherto they had been entirely unsupported, but to have Sir Edward in their midst, and to have him on their side, was of inestimable value.

"I say, this is pretty vich, you know!" grinned Reggie Pitt. "The Head brought Sir Edward here so that the rebellion should be stopped—and now Handy's pater has joined us!"

"Rich isn't the word!" chuckled Fullwood. "It's a scream!"

"But it's Willy's doing!" put in Nipper. "If it hadn't been for Willy, I don't suppose Sir Edward would have listened to the truth.

You know what a hasty sort he is. Willy's about the only fellow on earth who could have made him listen!"

"By jingo, I believe you're right!" grinned Pitt. "When you come to think of it, Willy is a bit of a marvel."

"He's a genius," said Nipper. "There's no end to that kid's trickiness!"

"Trickiness or not, he's made of the right stuff," said Church. "The best of it is, he's only told his father the perfect truth. We're on safe ground all the time, because old Handy is innocent. When the Head is fully convinced, he'll have to knuckle under—he'll have to admit that this rebellion was justified. Just wait until Merrell and Marriott come back—then the bomb will be exploded!"

A sudden commotion sounded further along the upper corridor, and somebody shouted that the headmaster and General Carfax had appeared in view. They had just entered the Triangle, and were coming towards the Modern House. There was nobody else with them, for the seniors and masters were in the class-rooms—the school, of course, still carrying on in the usual way.

"The Head's outside, Sir Edward!" said Pitt, going up to Handforth's pater. "I dare say he wants a word with you, if you can spare it."

Sir Edward spun round.

"If it comes to that, I'd like a word with the headmaster!" he said grimly. "Where is he? Bring him here!"

All the juniors grinned.

"The Head isn't on our visiting list at present, sir," chuckled Pitt. "I'm afraid you'll have to talk to him through the window."

Sir Edward strode to the nearest open window, and leaned out. Just at that moment, General Carfax and the Head came opposite, and gazed up. They were both looking very much relieved—and for the first time for days their expressions were reposeful. They could see the end of the rebellion already. Once Handforth had been taken away, the other rebels would lose heart.

"Just a minute, Dr. Stafford!" roared Sir Edward. "There's something I want to tell you—and I am a man who believes in speaking straight from the shoulder!"

"Really, Sir Edward, I do not quite understand," said the Head, surprised at Sir Edward's tone.

"Then you'll understand in another moment, sir!" shouted Handforth senior. "I want you to know that I'm supporting these boys!"

The Head recoiled slightly.

"I—I beg your pardon, Sir Edward?" he ejaculated.

"You'd try to expel my son, would you?" bellowed Sir Edward. "Just try it on—let me see you do it!"

"But—but—"

"My son is innocent, and I am not going to have him expelled from this school in disgrace! I'll fight you through every court in the land! I'll take it to the House of Lords!

Yes," by George, I don't care what it costs me! You're not going to ruin my son's career on a false charge! He was justified in holding this rebellion, and I'm proud of all these boys for standing by him! Good luck to them all!"

The unfortunate Head was flabbergasted. He was dumfounded. General Carfax was no less astounded. This was the very last thing they had expected. They had come here to see Sir Edward drag his son out, and to take him off home. Instead of that, it appeared that Sir Edward himself had joined the rebels!

It was such a startling event that the Headmaster felt dizzy.

When was this dreadful affair to finish? Everybody who came in contact with the rebels seemed to join them! First the Remove had mutinied—then the Third—then the Fourth! And now the father of the ring-leader had thrown in his lot with these mutinous schoolboys! It was the biggest shock of all, for the headmaster realised that now the rebellion was stronger than ever!



CHAPTER 9.

Solving the Food Problem

DR. STAFFORD pulled himself together with difficulty. "Really, Sir Edward, I—I am startled in the extreme!" he exclaimed. "You cannot mean what you say! You cannot possibly—"

"But I do mean it!" interrupted Sir Edward. "My son is innocent of that charge, and I won't allow you to expel him!"

"You—you won't allow it?"

"No, sir—I won't!" thundered Sir Edward. "It is a disgraceful business from first to last—a discredit to this fine old school. I have heard his story, and I am convinced that you have made a colossal blunder. The boy is absolutely guiltless."

"But—but—"

"And unless you pardon him forthwith, and allow all these other boys to resume their normal positions in the school, I shall help these boys in their rebellion!" continued Sir Edward stoutly.

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Sir Edward!"

"Three cheers for Handy's pater!"

"Hurrah!"

"How dare you, sir!" thundered General Carfax furiously. "By gad! Do you realise what you are doing? Insubordination! You are inciting these boys—"

"They needed no inciting!" interrupted Sir Edward. "And when the cause is a just one, I am on the side of that cause. There is a very simple remedy. My son must be pardoned— No, by George! Not pardoned! For the very act of pardoning im-

plies that he is guilty. He must be completely exonerated, and all these other boys must be unpunished, since they have been fighting in the cause of Right!"

"Hurrah!"

All the rebels cheered lustily, and the headmaster, believing that Sir Edward had taken leave of his senses, decided that no good purpose could be served by continuing the argument. Certainly, he was not going to pardon Handforth, or excuse these other rebels. All should be punished as they deserved. Sir Edward was famous for his impulsiveness, and it was perfectly obvious that he had now fallen a victim to the persuasions of his sons.

"Dad, you're a brick!" chuckled Handforth enthusiastically; after the Head and General Carfax had gone. "Oh, I say, what a sportsman! Aren't you chaps jealous of me? I'll bet you haven't got paters like mine!"

"Don't be ridiculous, Edward!" frowned his father. "What nonsense! I hope that all these boys have fathers who are ready to uphold their sons against an act of injustice! Perhaps I am more forceful than other fathers—but forcefulness is one of my codes. A man seldom gets anywhere in this world unless he possesses pluck and determination—mostly determination. And it is just the same with boys. The boy who weakly gives in is a coward. The boy who plods on, surmounting all obstacles, is simply and solely a worker. He gets there by reason of his determination."

Sir Edward suddenly coughed.

"But this won't do—I'm not here to lecture you!" he went on, chuckling. "You'll begin to wish I'd never come, eh? Anyhow, boys, I'm with you—heart and soul! They're not going to expel my son, and they're not going to punish any of you, either. I'll see to it! Leave it entirely to me!"

"We will, sir!" chorused the delighted rebels.

"And now," continued Sir Edward, glancing at his watch, "what about lunch? I would have you know that I started from London very early this morning, and I only snatched—"

He paused as he saw the dismayed expression on the faces of all the rebels.

"Anything wrong?" he asked.

"I'm afraid so, sir," said Nipper ruefully. "The fact is, we're without food."

"Good gracious!" ejaculated Sir Edward. "Without food? Boys—without food! Is such a thing possible?"

"We finished up the last scraps at breakfast time, sir," explained Reggie Pitt. "You see, we haven't been able to get any grub from outside sources, and it was the one serious problem we were discussing before you came. We don't know how to get a fresh supply. We've exhausted all the stocks in the store-room, and—"

Sir Edward burst into a roar of laughter.

"That's all right—that's all right!" he interrupted. "Say no more about it! If it's food you want, you'll have it."

"But—but how?" asked Handforth breathlessly. "How can you do it, pater?"

"Well, I'm a rebel, I suppose," chuckled his father. "But let them try to capture me if I venture out! I'll go straight into Bannington at once, and I'll bring back a car-load of food! Yes, by George, and I'll be back again within the hour."

"Hurrah!"

"Handy's pater is going to bring the grub!"

"Three cheers for Handy's pater!"

The Modern House echoed with cheers from cellar to roof. All those juniors who knew Sir Edward had always liked him for his bluff heartiness, and his generous nature. They all knew who Handy took after. Handy would give away his last penny—and would think nothing of it; in a way, Sir Edward was just the same. He was generous to a degree, and the prospect of going to Bannington, and buying a car-load of food, appealed to him immensely.

And so, amid further cheering, Sir Edward was allowed to go past the guards at the main door, and he strode out into the Triangle, his shoulders set, his chin squared. He had made up his mind to support this rebellion, and nothing would shift him now. He was just as obstinate as his son. He was as stubborn as a mule, and once an idea got into his head, it stuck there.

As it happened, the Head was pacing about Inner Court when Sir Edward came through to get his car. Dr. Stafford came up hurriedly, his face full of anxiety and worry.

"Sir Edward, I beg of you to reconsider this hasty decision of yours," said Dr. Stafford earnestly. "I assure you that you are making a mistake. Your son is guilty, and he has been expelled—"

"My son has not been expelled!" interrupted Sir Edward gruffly. "He still belongs to this school—and I'll stand by him through thick and thin. How dare you, sir? How dare you attempt to expel an innocent boy?"



CHAPTER 10.

News of Merrell!

HERE was something about Sir Edward's attitude that quite startled the kindly old Head. Now and again Dr. Stafford wondered, vaguely, if he were all wrong in his beliefs. He had wanted to assure himself that Handforth was guiltless at the very first, but the evidence had been too conclusive. Mr. Pycraft had definitely indicated Handforth as the culprit, and Mr. Pycraft had been the sufferer. Moreover, every atom of the other evidence pointed to Handforth's guilt. No, the Head could not believe that he had made a mistake.

"I can only assume, Sir Edward, that your son has been influencing you," he said re-

gretfully. "I am exceedingly sorry that you should take up this attitude. It will only complicate matters in the most distressing fashion."

"As far as I can see, sir, it will not complicate matters in the least!" retorted Sir Edward. "The issue is quite plain. My son is innocent, and I intend to stand by him. I shall support these rebels to the bitter end!"

"But are you not returning to London, Sir Edward?"

"I am not!" said Handy's pater. "If you want to know the truth, Dr. Stafford, I am about to——" He paused, and compressed his lips. "No, I do not think I shall tell you what I am about to do," he added gruffly. "It is quite possible that you might not approve. Not that it really matters. When you are in a more reasonable frame of mind, Dr. Stafford, I shall be delighted to interview you. But while you persist in this ridiculous charge against my son I must decline any further conversations."

Sir Edward then strode off, as dogged and as stubborn as ever.

And when, a few moments later, his car glided past the Modern House on its way out, a rousing cheer went up from the rebels. That car was on its way to fetch a supply of food, and everybody was happy. Never had the rebels been so highly elated as they were now. They could see the end of their troubles in sight. With Sir Edward Handforth on their side, their position was strengthened tremendously.

"We shall be all right now, you fellows," said Nipper genially. "With a big supply of grub, we shall be able to hold out until Merrell and Marriott come back to the school. They're bound to be here within a few days——"

"A few days!" echoed Buster Boots. "I thought they might be here to-morrow."

"Well, it's possible, of course, but we mustn't be too sure," replied Nipper. "Not that it really matters."

"Of course it doesn't matter," said Handforth. "What do we care? If the rebellion lasts another week, it'll be all right. Merrell and Marriott are bound to come back sooner or later, and——" Handforth broke off, and found himself staring at Snipe, of the East House. "What's up with you, Snipe?" added Handforth aggressively. "What are you sneering about?"

"He wasn't sneering," said Armstrong. "He was trying to smile! He always looks like that when he smiles!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Enoch Snipe shrank away. He was a most unpleasant junior at the best of times, and he had only joined in the rebellion because he had had no other choice. All the juniors were in it, and he was naturally included. As it happened, he shared Study No. 15 in the East House with Merrell and Marriott at ordinary times. So, naturally, he was rather looked upon with suspicion now—since Mer-

rell and Marriott had been the cause of all this trouble.

"I—I wasn't smiling!" he said hastily. "I don't know what you mean, Handforth!"

"You had a rummy look on your face when I was talking about Merrell and Marriott coming back," said Handforth suspiciously. "I believe you know something, you rotter! You're supposed to be their chum, aren't you?"

"I—I don't know anything about them at all!" said Snipe desperately. "At least, I'm not going to tell you——"

"We'd better grab him and make him tell the truth," said Nipper grimly. "Now you come to mention it, I've noticed something rummy about Snipe for the past day or two. Now and again I've caught him grinning to himself—as though he were enjoying some private joke. I'll bet it's about Merrell and Marriott!"

"Is it?" demanded Handforth, seizing Snipe by the shoulder.

"Nun—no!" faltered Snipe. "I—I mean, I do know something, but I'm not going to tell—— I don't know anything at all! Leave me alone! Please, Handforth, you're hurting me!"

He cringed, and Handforth let go of him as though he were a hot brick.

"My hat!" said Edward Oswald disgustedly. "You always make me feel as though I were touching a centipede, or a beetle, or something! But we're going to get the truth out of you, you rotter! What do you know?"

"Nothing, I tell you!" howled Snipe, as the juniors collected round him aggressively. "I tell you I don't know anything. It's not fair to——"

"Now then!" said Armstrong fiercely. "Come on—be smart with it!"

He turned to the other fellows.

"You leave this worm to me!" he went on. "I know how to deal with Snipe—he's in my House, and I know all his little tricks. I'll make him speak. Come on, Snipe, you insect! What do you know about Merrell and Marriott?"

Snipe suddenly looked defiant.

"Yes, I do know something!" he shouted shrilly. "But I'm not going to tell you chaps! It's a private matter between Merrell and me! And you're not going to make me tell you any more. I won't discuss my private affairs with you chaps!"

They pressed round him more aggressively than ever.

"It can't be private business if it deals with Merrell and Marriott," said Handforth grimly. "We're all interested in Merrell and Marriott. They are the two rotters who lied about me before they sneaked off from St. Frank's. So you can stop all that blather about the matter being private, Snipe! Are you going to tell us the truth, or shall we bump you up and down the passage?"

"I—I won't say a thing!" howled Snipe wildly.

He was seized, whirled off his feet, and the juniors prepared for the punishment.

CHAPTER 11.

Staggering News!



ENOCH SNIPE gave a wild howl.

"Lemme go!" he hooted. "I—I'll speak!"

"I thought that would do the trick!" grinned Armstrong. "He's a bigger funk than Teddy Long!"

"Never mind about Teddy Long," said Handforth. "We want to know what Snipe was grinning at just now, and what he knows about Merrell and Marriott. Come along, Snipe—out with it!"

Snipe was set upon his feet, and he cringed away.

"All right—give me time, please!" he panted. "It's—it's nothing much. I—I had a letter from Merrell, that's all."

"A letter from Merrell?" repeated Nipper sharply. "When?"

"The other day."

"What do you mean—the other day?"

"Well, the day you fellows seized the Modern House as a stronghold," replied Snipe. "That letter came by the afternoon post, and—and I've been chuckling over it ever since because you fellows seem to think that Merrell and Marriott are coming back."

"They are coming back, aren't they?" demanded Handforth.

Snipe smirked.

"Not if they can help it!" he replied. "Merrell says that he's trying to persuade his parents to send him to another school!"

"What!"

"And Marriott's doing the same!" went on Snipe. "That's why I've been grinning so much. All you fellows think they're coming back, and they're not!"

"Not coming back!" shouted Pitt. "Then—then we shan't be able to force them to confess!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Where's that letter, Snipe?" demanded Armstrong fiercely.

"I—I burnt it!" faltered Snipe.

"Hold him, you fellows, while I go through his pockets," said Armstrong.

"I—I mean, I've got it in my wallet!" gasped Enoch Snipe. "But it's a private letter, and—"

"Yes, chuck it, you chaps," said Handforth, frowning. "We can't make Snipe read out his private letters!"

"It's no more private than a newspaper!" said Armstrong aggressively. "Anyhow, the circumstances are so exceptional that we're justified in having a look at it. But we won't even do that. We'll make Snipe read it out

to us. If there are any private bits, he can skip 'em. That's fair enough, isn't it?"

"Yes," said Buster Boots. "Go ahead, Snipe! Miss out the private bits, and read us what Merrell says about changing schools."

The juniors knew well enough that there were no "private bits" in that letter, but it was just as well to be on the safe side. They had no wish to pry into Snipe's personal affairs. But this other matter affected them all. For if Merrell and Marriott did not return to St. Frank's, the fat would indeed be in the fire! They were only keeping on this rebellion so that they would be able to force a true confession from those two young rascals.

Snipe produced a soiled letter from his pocket, and unfolded it. He knew that there was no escape—not that he really wanted to escape now. These fellows couldn't do anything to him, and he would probably enjoy their dismay.

"Here it is!" he said, as he looked at the letter. "The first bit's nothing—only about a flutter that Merrell and Marriott had when they got to London. Then there's something about the wedding being postponed, but that's not of interest to you. Here's the bit I mean—'Both Marriott and I are trying to persuade our people to send us to a different school. We're both fed up with St. Frank's. Don't want to come back. We'd much rather go to a place nearer London, where we can see some of the bright lights now and again. I think we shall be able to work it, too. Marriott's people have practically consented already, and I think I can wangle my pater. So we shan't be seeing so much of you, Snipey, old bird. And as for that cad, Handforth—'. Well, the rest doesn't matter."

"Doesn't it?" roared Handforth. "Why, this letter might be evidence."

"Read it out!" ordered Armstrong.

"All right—if you demand it!" said Snipe. "But it's a bit thick, all the same. 'As for that cad, Handforth, I hope he's expelled by this time. We got him into a lovely mess, didn't we? And old Pycraft doesn't suspect a thing—he never dreamed that Marriott and I dug that giddy pit in the shrubbery. Of course, you'll keep mum, won't you? If you don't, you'll die an early death one of these days!'"

A perfect roar went up from the juniors.

"Proof!" shouted Handforth excitedly. "It's the very evidence—"

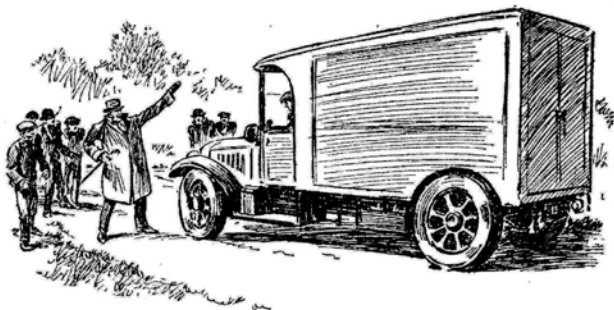
"No, Handy, we can't use it," put in Nipper. "We can't produce a private letter that has been written from Merrell to Snipe. It wouldn't be the thing."

"But it's to save Handy from being sacked!" urged Church.

"Well, we might use it in an extremity," said Nipper. "But there's a better way, perhaps."

"A better way?" repeated Handforth. "What do you mean?"

"Well, I don't know just yet," replied Nipper. "But it struck me that we might do



As the big van approached—the van which contained the rebels' Christmas food supplies—General Carfax, followed by his men, sprang into the road and held up an authoritative hand. "Halt!" he commanded. It was his intention to prevent the supplies from being delivered to the rebels!

something. I shall have to think it over. I'm not quite clear about it yet. And there's something else in that letter, Snipe, that I'd like to hear, if it isn't being inquisitive."

"It is being inquisitive!" retorted Snipe unpleasantly.

"You said something about the wedding being postponed," continued Nipper, quite unperturbed. "Does that mean that those two chaps won't be back for another week or more, even if they're not sent to another school?"

"They won't be back until after Christmas," replied Snipe, with a sneer. "And as for the wedding, it's been postponed until New Year's Day!"

"What!"

"By Jove!" said Nipper grimly. "This business is more serious than we first believed! You'd better let us hear the rest of that letter, Snipe. We've had enough of this fooling about. Come on—let's have it!"

"Yes, out with it, you rotter!"

"Tell us everything, Snipe!"

And the juniors crowded round, determined and stern!

CHAPTER 12.

Handforth's Daring Suggestion!



E

DWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH held out a big hand.

"I'll have that letter, Snipe!" he said

ominously. "We don't trust you!"

"It's mine!" shouted Snipe. "I'm not going to give you—"

"I said I'll have it!" roared Handforth.

"Yes, but—but—"

"Now," thundered the leader of Study D.

"Oh, all right, please!" babbled Snipe, terrified by Handforth's aggressive tone.

"But it's a bit steep—"

"I don't care whether it's steep or not!"

interrupted Handforth. "I'm the leader of this rebellion, and things look pretty rocky. Everything hinges upon Merrell and Marriott coming back to St. Frank's—and, by this letter, it seems that they are planning to keep away for good. We're justified in making full investigations!"

"Hear, hear!"

There were plenty of supporters for Handforth, and he had no scruples in giving the letter his close attention.

"Hallo!" he ejaculated excitedly. "Well, great Scott! Look at this! This letter was posted in Scotland!"

"Good gad!"

"What!"

"Here's the address, clear enough!" went on Handforth. "Some town in Lanarkshire—"

"Yes, that's where some of Marriott's people live," said Snipe. "Marriott told me he was going up there—"

"Dry up!" shouted Handforth. "Let me have a look at this! Yes! Here we are, you chaps! Just listen to this: 'Of course, you'll keep mum, won't you? If you don't—'"

"We've heard that!" interrupted Church.

"Don't butt in!" frowned Handforth. "I don't care whether you've heard it or not. Listen: 'Of course, you'll keep mum, won't you? If you don't, you'll die an early death one of these days! Anyway, we're quite safe up here, in Scotland. A pretty good way away, eh, Snipey? As a matter of fact, our people have made special arrangements with that old codger, the Head. We've got leave to stay away from St. Frank's until

after the Christmas holidays. How's that for a little surprise, my son? Pretty jealous, aren't you?"

"Well, I'm jiggered!" said Reggie Pitt, pursing his lips.

"Hold on—there's more yet!" said Handforth fiercely. "And this is the most important part: 'Of course, we shan't come back to St. Frank's until the new term starts, next year—even if we come back at all, which is jolly doubtful. I think we shall be able to wangle it all right. The nearest we shall get to St. Frank's will be little Oxham, where my people hang out. That's where the wedding reception, and all that tosh, is going to be held. We shan't come down until New Year's Eve—so that we shall be there in time for the wedding on New Year's Day. I'm rather afraid that Christmas will be pretty mouldy up here, but I expect we shall live through it.' There, what do you think of that?" added Handforth, looking up indignantly.

"But I don't see anything particularly startling about it," said Tommy Watson, scratching his head.

"But it is startling, Tommy, old man, all the same," said Nipper. "And it leaves us in a rotten position. Don't you understand? Merrell and Marriott are the only fellows who can definitely prove Handforth's innocence. And until Handy's innocence can be established this barring-out must continue."

"Rather!" agreed Reggie Pitt. "We're never going to give in!"

"Not while we can breathe, old lad!" said Archie Glenthorne stoutly. "Absolutely not! I mean to say, the more we are together, what? Unity is strength, and all that sort of thing!"

"But what does it all mean—exactly?" asked Duncan, puzzled.

"Yes, explain, you chaps!"

There were many juniors who did not quite understand the situation, and there was a hush as Nipper prepared to speak.

"I'll put the thing in a few words," said the Remove captain. "Merrell and Marriott are in Scotland—well beyond our reach. They may not come back to St. Frank's at all—but we do know that they'll be at Little Oxham on New Year's Day. And Little Oxham, remember, is only about five miles from Helmsford. In other words, it's within easy distance of St. Frank's. We might be able to get hold of them when they arrive—"

"But how can we?" broke in De Valerie. "We shan't be here then—we shall be home for Christmas!"

"Shall we?" roared Handforth. "That's just where you're wrong, my son! We shall be here—on the spot!"

"What the dickens—"

"Yes, by George!" roared Edward Oswald. "We'll keep up this barring-out—we'll carry it on right through the Christmas holidays!"

"Oh, my goodness!"

"You silly ass!"

"I say, Handy, chuck it!"

"Go easy, old man!"

"It's the only possible way!" declared Handforth aggressively. "We can't get hold of Merrell and Marriott now, or even during the Christmas holidays. But we know that they'll be near us on New Year's Day. So we'll stay here—we'll keep on this barring-out! That'll show the Head that we're in earnest, won't it?"

"But you're mad!" panted Church, staring amazedly at his leader. "You can't expect all the chaps to sacrifice their Christmas holidays—"

"I expect them to back me up through thick and thin!" interrupted Handforth. "They came into this barring-out with their eyes open, and they know jolly well that it would be a fight to the finish."

"Handforth's right!" said Nipper, looking round. "We all promised to support him—and we've got to carry on! And this idea of remaining over Christmas is a good one!"

"You—you agree?" panted Tommy Watson, staring.

"Yes, I do!" said Nipper. "As Handy says, it'll show the Head that we're in deadly earnest! If we're all willing to give up our Christmas vacation for the sake of old Handy, it'll prove more than anything else that we have right on our side!"

There was a babel of excited voices, and Armstrong, of the East House, gave an expressive grunt.

"But are we all willing to give up our Christmas vacation?" he asked sourly. "I don't think so! I'm not willing, for one!"



CHAPTER 13.

Armstrong Doesn't Agree!

UST a minute!"

John Busterfield Boots, the go-ahead leader of the Fourth, shouldered his way

forward to where Armstrong was standing.

"What's that you said, Armstrong?" he demanded ominously.

"I said that I'm not willing to stay here over the Christmas hols!" replied Armstrong, with a glare. "And I meant what I said, too!"

"And I agree with Armstrong!" broke in Freeman, of the East House.

"And so do I!" said Griffith.

"Steady on—steady on!" said Buster Boots grimly. "Most of you fellows are Fourth-Formers, and this is where I have a word to say. I'm the skipper of the Fourth, and the Fourth pledged itself to support the Remove through thick and thin in this rebellion. Is that a fact, Armstrong?"

"Yes, but—"

"But nothing!" thundered Boots. "Why, you pretend to be the leader of the Fourth in the East House—you call yourself Junior House skipper, don't you?"

"And so I am!" said Armstrong unpleasantly.

"Then I'm ashamed of you!"

"What!"

"You heard what I said!" roared Boots. "I'm ashamed of you, Armstrong! You're willing to support this barring-out as long as it means defiance of the school rules and freedom from lessons. But when it comes to sacrificing the Christmas holidays, you want to back out!"

"Oh, I say!"

"You can say what you like, but you'll be a mouldy sort of cad if you fail now!" said Boots contemptuously. "And that applies to all you others, too!"

The Fourth has pledged itself to support Handforth and the Remove, and I'm going to jolly well see that there aren't any deserters! If Handforth wants us to stick it over Christmas, we'll back him up."

"Hear, hear!" said Bob Christine promptly. "Good man, Boots! I wanted to say all this, but you were first! If it means a bit of sacrifice, it'll prove to Handy that we're really in earnest!"

"This is all very well, but where do we come in?" asked Hubbard, of the Remove. "Dash it all, we always have a jolly time at Christmas! It's the best vacation of the year. We all want to see old Handy pardoned, and all that, but it's a bit thick to expect us to give up our holidays!"

"Hear, hear!" said a number of voices.

Edward Oswald Handforth looked round, and his eyes were blazing.

"All right, you fellows can stand out!" he said. "I don't want any unwilling supporters. Understand? You won't all desert me, I know, and there'll be quite sufficient left to carry on this rebellion. The rest of you can chuck it up, and the sooner you leave here, the better!"

"Seconded!" said Nipper promptly.

"Absolutely, old boy!" nodded Archie Gienthorpe. "Not only seconded, dash it, but carried unanimously! Personally, I'm going to stick to old Handy right to the bitter end!"

"And so are all of us," said Reggie Pitt, nodding. "And when I say all of us, I mean all the sportsmen. The rest don't count."

"Hear, hear!" went up a combined roar.

There was tremendous excitement everywhere, and by this time the majority of the rebels had crowded round and were within hearing. They filled the passages and the rooms, and they sought to get nearer. They wanted to hear what all this discussion was about.

"I say, you know!" protested Fatty Little, in distress. "I want to back you up, Handy—I'm with you through thick and thin. But, by pancakes, what am I going to do about Christmas dinner? What about the plum pudding, the turkey, and all the other good things?"

"That's exactly what I mean!" shouted Armstrong. "If we stay here over Christmas, we shall miss everything! We shan't have any Christmas fun, or any of the

Christmas fare, or anything! Hang it all, Christmas only comes once a year——"

"Your pater's just come back, Handy!" went up a shout from somebody at one of the windows. "My goodness! His car's empty, too! He hasn't brought any grub!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

There was a rush for the windows, and a wave of consternation swept through the rebels when it was seen that Sir Edward's car was indeed empty, save for himself.

This other matter was momentarily shelved. But Nipper and Handforth, and all the other responsible juniors, were quite sure that a large percentage of the rebels would consent to remain at St. Frank's over the Christmas holidays. Only the greedy ones—the selfish ones—would back out.

Sir Edward was admitted, and he came into the stronghold, smiling genially. The barricades were instantly replaced, and a crowd of fellows swarmed round.

"Where's the grub, sir?" went up a chorus.

"Not so fast!" chuckled Sir Edward. "Don't worry, boys! The food is following."

"Thank goodness!" breathed Fatty Little fervently.

"There wasn't room in my car," went on Handforth's pater. "A small van is on its way now, and ought to be here very shortly. I've ordered enough supplies to last you another four or five days. That'll be enough, eh?" he added, rubbing his hands together. "It will see you through until those two young rascals return——"

"But wait a minute, pater!" interrupted Handforth excitedly. "We've discovered something since you went away. Merrell and Marriott aren't coming back until after the Christmas holidays!"

"What!" said Sir Edward. "Not coming back! Good gracious! What on earth——"

"And perhaps they won't come back at all, sir!" went on Edward Oswald. "Anyhow, we've got to stay down here over the holidays, or we shan't have any chance of success."

Sir Edward was looking very bewildered, but Nipper soon put him in possession of the new facts. When he had heard all about that letter, Sir Edward was looking considerably perturbed.

"Upon my soul!" he ejaculated. "So that's how the land lies, is it? Those two young rascals aren't returning until New Year's Eve? And even then they're only coming to a small village about fifteen miles away? H'm! Awkward—confoundedly awkward!"

He rubbed his chin, and then a twinkle came into his eyes.

"Good boys—good boys!" he went on, looking round. "So you've decided to sacrifice your Christmas holidays, have you? You're going to stay on here, and carry on the rebellion! Good! By George, I'm with you! And, what's more, I'll see that you don't go without your Christmas goodies!"

CHAPTER 14.

Sir Edward's Promise I



N excited shout went up from the rebels when they realised the true meaning of Sir Edward's words.

"Then you approve of the wheeze, pater?" asked Handforth breathlessly. "You think we ought to carry on the barring-out over the Christmas holidays?"

"Yes, of course you ought!" replied his father promptly. "Certainly you must carry on the barring-out! What other course is there? You've started it, and you've got to go through with it—until you win!"

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Sir Edward!"

"You're a sportsman, sir!"

"I hope so—I hope I am!" said Sir Edward, nodding. "These two boys won't be back until after the Christmas festivities are over, and that means that you'll have to hang on. All right—all right! I'll back you up, boys, and I'll help you."

There was something very infectious about Sir Edward's enthusiasm. He was every bit as aggressive as his son, and his attitude now caused many of the hesitating juniors to feel rather ashamed of themselves.

"I say, sir," exclaimed Armstrong, pushing forward. "Do you mean that you'll supply us with Christmas puddings, and—"

"Everything!" said Sir Edward. "Why, by George, I don't care what it costs me! I'm with you, boys—and I'm game! I'm not going to let them expel my son in disgrace! And I'll do everything I can to help this rebellion, and to make things comfortable for you. I'll order a huge vanload of Christmas fare—turkeys, hams, plum puddings, oranges, apples, brazil nuts—everything! Pastry galore! Fruit by the hundredweight! You won't be short of anything, boys! Leave it to me!"

"Good old pater!" roared Handforth excitedly.

"Yes, rather!" grinned Willy. "Trust the pater every time—he's a sport all through!"

The excitement was now at fever pitch. Sir Edward's impulsive promise had made all the difference! It was so characteristic of Handforth's father, too. Like his son, he was impulsive—he was generous. Moreover, once he had given his promise, he would stick to it, to the letter. Afterwards, perhaps, he might regret— But, no, that was not likely. Sir Edward's generosity was proverbial, and it did him a world of good to see the eager, excited faces round him. It would be worth every penny of the money that he would be called upon to lay out.

"Well, what about it now?" demanded Handforth, turning to Armstrong and Griffiths and Freeman.

Armstrong had the grace to turn red. "Well, of course, this makes all the difference," he said awkwardly. "If your pater is going to turn up trumps like this, Handy, we'll stick to the bargain, and—"

"There's no 'if' about it," broke in Handforth. "My pater word is his bond! Once he makes a promise, the thing's settled!"

"Yes, we can all be comfortable now," said Willy complacently. "No need to worry, you chaps. And Christmas at St. Frank's, in the middle of a giddy barring-out, will be a novelty!"

"Yes, rather!"

"I wonder what the dickens our people will say?" grinned Reggie Pitt. "I expect there'll be all sorts of trouble. We shall get frantic letters, telling us to come home—"

"There's only one thing to be done," interrupted Nipper. "We shall all have to write home at once, and put the situation plainly. And everybody must let his people know that he's not coming home for the holidays."

"Oh, I don't think there'll be much trouble," said Fullwood. "Most of our parents know about the barring-out already, and they won't be surprised at this new development. And when we explain that Sir Edward Handforth is backing us up, there won't be any objections."

Fullwood had, indeed, touched the vital spot. Sir Edward's championship of the cause was of paramount importance. Other parents would be deeply impressed by Sir Edward's action, and they would probably be willing to let their sons remain on at the school—to fight their own battle to the bitter end.

Not that the fellows gave much thought to the subject just then. They were too excited—they were too elated about the whole prospect.

Christmas at St. Frank's!

It was, indeed, an alluring idea. And there was quite another aspect to the matter, too. When the headmaster and General Carfax discovered that preparations were being made to carry the rebellion over the Christmas holidays, it was quite possible that some sort of compromise would be made. Perhaps the Head would even consider it wise to pardon Handforth, and to allow the rebellion to go unpunished. In that case, everything would be satisfactory. So the juniors were on safe ground, either way.

The situation was piquant. Sir Edward Handforth had been brought here to take his son away, so that the rebellion would collapse. And Sir Edward was preparing to champion the rebellion, so that it could be carried on to victory!

Nobody thought about thanking Willy. And yet, in all truth, this new development had come about owing to Willy's sagacity. But for the Third Former's ruse, Edward Oswald Handforth might have been on his way to London by this time.

But Willy didn't mind. He was happy in the knowledge that he had been of good service, and he was as keen as mustard on carrying on with the barring-out until his major was completely exonerated.

And then, in the midst of all the excitement, somebody shouted out the glad tidings that a covered van had pulled into the Triangle, and was now coming to a stop outside the Modern House. Cheers went up in ever-increasing enthusiasm.

The grub had arrived!



CHAPTER 15.

The Happy Rebels!

FATTY LITTLE automatically took charge of things now. As chief of the food department, it was his job to see the goods safely unloaded. It did Fatty's heart good to see the various assortment of good things as they came in. Sir Edward had evidently thought very carefully when giving his order.

The van was backed right up to the Modern House steps, and then a couple of dozen juniors formed a sort of bodyguard, while others crowded at the windows overhead, armed with peashooters and "bombs." They were ready for any emergency—although there was not much fear that there would be an interruption.

The arrival of the van had been unexpected, and neither the Head nor General Carfax had any force in readiness to attack the rebels' stronghold. And so the unloading went on apace, without interruption.

Sides of bacon were brought in amid fresh cheers—and the new stores included sacks of flour, hundreds of loaves of new bread, many boxes of biscuits, dozens of tins of salmon, sacks of sugar, cases of condensed milk, tea galore, and many other everyday necessities in the food line.

"Of course," said Sir Edward genially, "this is only a small consignment. I know there are a great many mouths to feed, but I did not anticipate the rebellion keeping on for more than three or four days."

"You've done marvels, pater!" said Handforth, taking a deep breath.

"Nonsense!" said his father, waving a hand. "This is nothing! To-morrow, another van will arrive—an enormous van, too! And it will be packed with everything necessary for Christmas— But I won't go into details. I can only promise you that you won't be disappointed. I'll send enough to last for three or four weeks."

"You're a brick, Sir Edward!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Let's have three more cheers for Handy's pater!"

"Hurrah!"

It cannot be denied that Sir Edward was gratified. Like his son, he always basked in limelight. There was nothing he liked better, and he felt that he was amply rewarded for his generosity. It was meat and drink to him to be so popular with these rebels.

At last all the food was in, and the van went on its way, the grinning driver happy with the ten shilling tip that Sir Edward had given him. The barricades were put up again, and the rebels held a dance of triumph, accompanied by many whoopings of joy.

"Well, boys, I shall have to be going," said Sir Edward, chuckling. "I am glad to see you so happy—and my advice to you is to keep your spirits up!"

"We'll do that, sir!"

"Never say 'die'!" went on Sir Edward. "And I thank you all for the way you have supported my son. He's innocent, and we're not going to let these school authorities expel him, eh?"

"Never, sir!"

"Good!" said Sir Edward contentedly. "It was my original plan to stay here for a time, and to see the rebellion ended. But I'm afraid that's not possible now. You're planning to remain here over Christmas, and, unfortunately, I have some pressing engagements, which I cannot possibly get out of."

"Oh, that's a shame, sir!"

"It is!" agreed Sir Edward. "I'd love to remain here. But, on the whole, it's better that you should carry on this rebellion by yourselves. To-morrow the fresh supply of food will arrive—that's a promise. And now I shall go and have a word with the headmaster, and I shall try and make him see reason."

Sir Edward soon went off, well pleased with himself. The rebels cheered heartily as he was let out, and every face was happy.

Fatty Little and an army of assistants had already started on the foodstuffs, and a royal spread was being prepared.

Handforth, serenely joyous, went about the rebel stronghold, slapping fellows on the back, chuckling hugely, and generally celebrating.

"We're all right now, you chaps!" he declared. "Plenty of grub—and tons of Christmas supplies in sight. What do we care if Merrell and Marriott keep away until after the holidays? Huh! With my pater on our side, we can keep up the rebellion until further orders!"

"Yes, rather!" grinned Church. "Your pater's a brick!"

"Haven't I always said so?" retorted Handforth. "He may be a bit impulsive—but that's all to the good. And, mark you, once he gets an idea into his head, it stays there. Steam hammers won't drive it out!"



The men pressed forward, intending to capture Handforth and Nipper. "Rescue, rebels!" yelled Handy. "Foe-shooter squad, forward!" A bunch of figures appeared over the hedge, and a devastating hail of peas went blasting into the ranks of the enemy!

"Now we know where you get your obstinacy from, old son!" murmured Pitt.

"What?" said Handforth, with a frown. "Obstinacy? You silly ass, I suppose you mean firmness?"

"Well, it's the same thing, in a more polite form!" agreed Reggie, with a chuckle. "As far as I can see, Handy, our worries are over. We hold the trump card."

"You bet we do!" said Edward Oswald. "We don't care what the Head does now—and as for General Carfax, he can jolly well rave all he likes! So he came here to put a stop to the rebellion, did he? He came down to St. Frank's to kill the barring-out?"

And Handforth roared with derisive laughter.

He could afford to laugh. All the rebels were now firmly on his side. Those who had hesitated were now as staunch as the rest. For the prospect of Christmas at St. Frank's, in the middle of a barring-out, was alluring. There would be no lack of good things—Sir Edward would see to that.

Even such fellows as Gulliver and Bell and Teddy Long were eager enough to remain at the old school. This was just as well, for if they had raised any objections they would have been promptly seized and battered.

For the Junior School of St. Frank's had pledged itself to support Edward Oswald Handforth all along the rocky path to victory—and there were to be no deserters!



CHAPTER 16.

The Handforth Touch!

R. MALCOLM STAFFORD sat at his desk, frowning and drumming his

finger-tips on his blotting-pad.

"The whole situation is impossible," he declared. "This extraordinary attitude of Sir Edward has upset our calculations. What are we to do, general? I must say that I am completely baffled."

General Carfax grunted.

"Sir Edward is a fool!" he said bluntly. "Yes, and before long he will have reason to regret his folly. Does the man imagine, for one moment, that he can come here and dictate—"

"You must remember, general, that we invited Sir Edward to come," interrupted the Head gently. "And is it altogether surprising that he should support his own son? Perhaps we were wrong in asking him to come here. Certainly, we never imagined that he would adopt this extraordinary atti-

tude. We might as well be frank, and admit that we are helpless."

"But we are not helpless!" boomed General Carfax, coming to a halt in front of the Head, and giving voice like the discharge of a broadside. "No, by gad! We've got to break this rebellion, Dr. Stafford, and we can take no rest until we have gained the victory!"

"Yes, but—"

"Never have I been defeated!" roared the old soldier. "Why, by crackey, do you think I'm going to be defied by a mere handful



The men pressed forward, intending to capture Handforth and Nipper. "Rescue, rebels!" yelled Handy. "Pea-shooter squad, forward!" A bunch of figures appeared over the hedge, and a devastating hail of peas went hissing into the ranks of the enemy!

of impertinent schoolboys? Do you think I'm going to let them ride roughshod over me? No, sir!"

Dr. Stafford compressed his lips.

"There would be more point in your remarks, general, if the boys were not riding roughshod over you," he said quietly. "You came here, as you have repeatedly informed me, to restore law and order. Yet these junior boys are still defying you, and, by all appearances, their position is stronger than ever. Why not call a spade a spade?"

Perhaps the Head took some little pleasure in these remarks General Carfax had affronted him greatly, and the Head was not likely to forget. But he was a man of

honour, with a kindly heart, and he felt no real satisfaction at General Carfax's failure. The Head wanted St. Frank's to be running on its normal course again.

"Sir Edward's interference is unwarrantable!" went on the general fiercely. "Yes, sir—unwarrantable! There is no other word. For days we have been using strategy. We have allowed these rebels to use up their food supplies, and they were almost on the point of surrender. And now Sir Edward comes here, and provides them with another big stock of food. It is disgraceful, and I shall not hesitate to tell him so to his face!"

The general was, indeed, infuriated. He had seen that vanload of food arrive, and the very sight of it had made him turn purple with rage. For it meant that all his

"Well, sir!" barked the old soldier. "I hope you are feeling satisfied with yourself!"

"Quite!" retorted Sir Edward curtly.

"Upon my soul!" roared the general. "Do you realise what you have done, sir? Do you realise that you have defied the authority—"

"Just one moment!" interrupted Sir Edward. "I am perfectly convinced that my son is innocent of the charge that was originally brought against him. This whole rebellion has resulted from that charge. And I have come here to demand the complete exoneration of my son."

The Head rose to his feet.

"I am very much afraid, Sir Edward, that we must decline to submit to this dictation," he said coldly. "Your son is guilty—"

"He is not!" thundered Sir Edward. "You must pardon me for being blunt, sir, but—"

"How dare you, sir?" boomed General Carfax, striding forward and towering over Sir Edward menacingly. "How dare you supply these rebels with fresh food? They will probably be able to carry on now for two or three more days. But the end will be inevitable, nevertheless. Never shall I admit defeat! Sooner or later they will capitulate!"

Sir Edward laughed.

"You think so?" he retorted. "General Fairfax, you have made a big mistake! Yes, by George, an infernally big mistake! Those boys are determined, and so am I! I'm one of the rebels, and we are going to see this affair through. My son is not going to be expelled, and you needn't imagine that their food supplies will give out at the end of two or three days."

"What—what do you mean, Sir Edward?" asked the Head, in alarm.

"I mean that the boys are making every preparation to remain here over Christmas!" said Sir Edward coolly. "Why, the vanload of food that has just arrived is

a mere nothing! To-morrow a bigger van will come—an enormous van! And it will contain plenty of Christmas food!"

"Good gracious!" ejaculated the Head, starting back. "You don't mean—"

"Exactly!" said Sir Edward, thoroughly enjoying the situation. "That's just what I do mean, sir! I am supplying these boys with every necessity for Christmas. They are planning to remain here over the holidays, and as long as you remain obstinate so they will remain in possession of the Modern House. Why don't you give in at once?"

"We will never give in!" thundered General Carfax furiously. "No, never, sir!"



carefully-laid schemes had gone wrong. With fresh food supplies, these rebels would be more defiant than ever.

A knock sounded on the door, and the Head raised his worried eyes.

"Come in!" he called.

The door opened, and Phipps stood there.

"Sir Edward Handforth, sir!" said Phipps imperturbably.

Handforth's pater marched into the study, and the very expression on his face caused Dr. Stafford to feel nervous. But Sir Edward was not looking at the Head—he was glaring at General Carfax. And General Carfax was returning that glare—with interest!

These rebellious schoolboys will never gain a victory over me!"

The air was electrical. General Carfax and Sir Edward Handforth glared at one another furiously. Dr. Stafford stood by, helpless and pained. But whether General Carfax liked to admit it or not, a deadlock had certainly been reached. The rebels were obstinate, and General Carfax was obstinate.

It was to be a fight to the finish, and the issue was as much in doubt as ever!



CHAPTER 17.

Dr. Stafford's Decision!

ALTHOUGH Sir Edward did not realise it, he had made a bad tactical blunder.

His information regarding the forthcoming vanload of Christmas food had been quite gratuitous. It had been unnecessary for him to give any hint in that direction. But Sir Edward was very much like his son—he was very tactless. And he had now placed a weapon in the hands of the enemy which they were liable to use.

"So you see, gentlemen, how useless it is for you to carry on with this farce," Sir Edward said, calming down. "The boys are provided with plenty of food, and I am backing them up all along the line. They are prepared to remain in possession of the Modern House throughout the Christmas holidays, and to carry on this barring-out right into the next term. Why not meet them now? Why not exonerate my son, and pardon the other rebels?"

"Really, I—" began Dr. Stafford hesitatingly.

"Never!" shouted General Carfax, his eyes blazing. "No, by crackey—never! You'll pardon me, Dr. Stafford, but I'm in command now! I won't have any compromise—I won't have any surrender! I came here to quell this insurrection, and quell it I will!"

Sir Edward shrugged his shoulders.

"Very well, General Carfax!" he said. "It's going to be a fight! You will find that we are too strong for you! Yes, I say 'we' deliberately. For I am one of these rebels, and I am heart and soul with the boys. If you want a fight, we'll give you one! I bid you both good-day!"

Handforth's pater nodded curtly, and then strode out of the study. He felt that if he

remained he would become violent, and he did not want to give the headmaster any further pain. Instinctively, Sir Edward felt that Dr. Stafford was genuinely distressed. General Carfax was in command, and the fight was against him.

There was silence in the study after Sir Edward had gone, and the general, looking out of the window, saw the late visitor getting into his limousine. As the car glided off across the Inner Court, the general turned round towards Dr. Stafford.

"He's going!" he said, with a grunt. "Well, he needn't think that he is triumphant. I'm going to smash this rebellion, Dr. Stafford!"

"I only hope that you will be able to do so," said the Head wearily. "I am tired of the whole business, General Carfax. It is making me positively ill."

"In that case, sir, you had better go away!" growled the general. "You will leave me here—and I shall remain until the victory is won. You might just as well go off with all the other masters."

The Head raised his eyebrows.

"All the other masters?" he repeated.

"Yes, sir!" said the general, coming to a dead halt and thrusting his head forward. "I have come to a decision. All the senior boys, and all the masters, are leaving St. Frank's to-day!"

The Head half opened his mouth to speak, but he suddenly compressed his lips. His face had gone just a shade paler.

"Very well, General Carfax," he said quietly. "Since you have come to this decision, I have no alternative but to bend to your will."

The general caught the touch of bitterness in Dr. Stafford's tone.

"You mustn't think, doctor, that I am deliberately dictatorial," he said gruffly. "But I have come here to grapple with this difficulty—"

"I quite understand, sir!" said the Head coldly.

He turned aside, and there was an awkward silence for a moment or two. The Head was, indeed, feeling galled, and in that second he came to a decision, too. Yes, he would go. Since General Carfax had come here to take the reins, he could have them. Dr. Stafford had had enough of this ridiculous situation. As things stood at present, he was a headmaster without any authority, and the whole position was farcical.

Without another word Dr. Stafford went out of the room. General Christopher Carfax shrugged his shoulders as he watched him go. He glared out of the window for a brief space, and then grunted.

"Ridiculous!" he grunted testily. "By crackey, the old boy is offended! Well, it can't be helped—this thing must be done. And there's only one way to deal with these insubordinate young rascals now. They must be taught a sharp lesson—a severe lesson. By gad, I'll make them remember

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(Look out for this cover.)

this outrageous rebellion for the remainder of their days! They will soon know who is the master!"

Within half an hour St. Frank's was buzzing with the latest development.

Orders had gone round that all the seniors were to pack at once, and to leave the school by the evening train. Arrangements were being rushed through rapidly. The various domestic staffs were given short notice, and told to clear out. Every master in the place was granted leave to go off on the Christmas holidays at once.

And so, during the rest of that day, St. Frank's was all a-bustle.

In the rebel camp there was much astonishment at this new move.

"I wonder what the dickens it can mean?" said Nipper, with a puzzled frown. "The school isn't due to break up for the vac. for nearly another week yet. I wonder why the Head has given everybody this extra holiday?"

"It looks as if he's given us up as a bad job," said Handforth, grinning.

"I don't think so," said Nipper. "If you ask me, there's something fishy about this.

And perhaps General Carfax is at the bottom of it, too. We shall have to look out, you chaps. We shall have to be on the alert."

"Why, you don't think the general is planning another attack, do you?" asked Tommy Watson, in surprise. "How can he? All the seniors are going home, and all the masters, too."

"Yes—and the servants as well!" said Sir Montie Tregellis-West, turning from one of the windows. "Begad! There goes Mrs. Poulter, with Mary, Jane and one or two of the other domestics. Dear old boys, it seems to me that we're goin' to have the school to ourselves!"



CHAPTER 18.

No Takers!

BY the time evening had arrived, the last senior had gone—the last master had taken his leave. Every one of the servants had gone, too.

The rebels had taken note of everybody who had passed out of the gates. All the domestic staff had gone away, and master after master had been seen to hustle off.

Many of the seniors had shouted facetious remarks to the rebels as they had passed the windows of the Modern House. But, on the whole, there had been an abundance of good humour. For, to tell the truth, the seniors were grateful to these rebels. It had given them a week's extra holiday, and they were by no means displeased.

After they had gone everything seemed very quiet—very still.

"The calm before the storm," said Nipper, as he stood at one of the windows. "I wonder?"

"No need to wonder, old man," remarked Handforth. "There'll be no storm. Even the Head has gone away. They've given us up as a bad job, I tell you."

"But what about General Carfax?" asked Reggie Pitt. "He hasn't gone away!"

"Well, no," admitted Edward Oswald. "But I expect he will be going—Hallo!" he added with a start. "Here he is!"

A derisive kind of cheer from the rebels standing by many of the other windows of the rebel stronghold brought crowds of juniors hurrying from the passages. Outside,

in the middle of the Triangle, stood General Christopher Carfax.

He looked an enormous figure as he stood there, wrapped up in a great overcoat, and with a heavy muffler round his neck. He was staring upwards at the sea of faces, and his expression was relentless.

"Have you come to make peace, sir?" shouted one of the rebels.

"I have come to give you a final warning!" thundered General Carfax. "Who is your leader? I want to speak to your leader! I do not intend to argue with the rank and file!"

Nipper chuckled.

"I'm the leader, sir!" he sang out cheerily. "Rats!" roared Handforth. "What about me? I'm the commander-in-chief, sir!"

"Just as you like!" grinned Nipper. "What's the difference?"

"You have doubtless seen the departure of all the other boys," said General Carfax, with a wave of his hand towards the big gateway. "They have gone—they have been sent home several days in advance of the customary time. The masters have gone, too."

"Yes, but we're not going, sir," said Handforth cheerfully.

"We shall see—we shall see!" retorted

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General Carfax. "I am determined to bring you all to heel. There has been enough of this nonsense. If you will surrender at once you will all go home for the Christmas holidays, and nothing more will be said of this disgraceful insurrection!"

"What!" went up an excited yell from all the windows.

"Of course," proceeded the general, "the ringleaders will be punished with the utmost severity. Not only will Handforth be expelled from this school, but one or two of the other boys—"

A loud roar of defiance interrupted the remainder of his sentence.

"Never!" shouted the rebels. "No surrender!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Down with injustice!"

"Hurrah!"

General Carfax started back under that prolonged blast.

"Good Heavens!" he shouted. "Why, you—you—" He pulled himself together with an effort. "Silence!" he boomed. "Let me tell you that I have taken up my residence at the Ancient House, so that I can keep my eye continually on you."

"I suppose the Head's house is too far away?" asked Handforth. "If you stayed there, sir, you couldn't watch us, eh? Well, we don't care. We're safe enough in here—and we're going to stay here until the next blue moon if necessary!"

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Handy!"

"We're with you, old man!"

Another roar of defiance went up, and the general soon discovered that it was impossible for him to obtain a hearing. What he had said was quite sufficient. Handforth was to be expelled, and the other ringleaders were to be severely punished. The rebels did not want to hear any more.

With compressed lips, the general turned on his heel and strode off. He went into the Ancient House, slamming the door violently behind him. Another yell went up as he did so—and this time it was a yell of laughter.

"The poor old boy is peeved!" grinned Reggie Pitt. "He's a soldier, and he doesn't like rebellions. But if he thinks he can bring his giddy military tactics into operation here, he's made a first-class blunder. Poor old General Carfax! Won't he sing small later on?"

"I hope so!" said Nipper thoughtfully.

"What do you mean—you hope so?" demanded Handforth.

"Well, I don't quite like the way things are going," replied Nipper. "There was a rummy-looking gleam in the general's eyes. I believe he's got something up his sleeve."

"I daresay he has—his arm!" retorted Handforth sarcastically. "Rats! I don't believe that General Carfax can do anything. Why, we're absolutely safe here. We're barricaded in, and we've got tons of ammunition, plenty of food, and a good water

supply—everything in fact. What have we got to be afraid of?"

And all the other rebels enthusiastically agreed with Handforth that the situation was entirely satisfactory.



CHAPTER 19.

What the Look-out Saw!

ED-TIME, you fellows," said Nipper briskly.

"What-ho! I mean to say, absolutely!"

yawned Archie Glenthorne. "Forty of the best, what? Kindly lead me to the sheet department, laddies!"

It was late in the evening now, and the big dining-hall of the Modern House was crowded. Most of the rebels were there, having recently finished supper. It was warm and cosy, and the lights were glowing in a cheerful way.

"No need to have guards to-night, I suppose?" asked Doyle, of the West House. "Everything's quiet, and—"

"Everything may be quiet, but this garri-son goes on in just the same way as usual," interrupted Nipper. "You all know your duties, you chaps. You know your watches, and we'll take it in relays, as we've done before. A third of us must keep on the alert throughout the night."

"But, my dear chap, what on earth for?" asked Stapleton. "General Carfax is in the place alone. There's nothing to be afraid of."

"At the same time, it doesn't cost anything to be cautious," said Nipper. "I believe that General Carfax has got some sort of plan in his mind, and we want to be fully on the alert. Who are the two fellows for the Tower?"

Before long the rebels were sorting themselves out. Two juniors went right up into the top of the Modern House Tower, and there they kept a sharp look-out. It was cold work, too, for the night was freezingly bitter, with an east wind, and with a touch of snow in the air.

As it happened, the precautions were unnecessary, for the night passed quietly and uneventfully.

Not a sign came from the Ancient House.

And when morning dawned the weary rebels on watch went below, glad enough to get into bed. The majority rose, ready for the new day.

"I told you there was no need for any guards," said the Hon. Douglas Singleton, with a grin. "It was all bluff on the general's part."

"Looks like it," grinned Bob Christine, of the Fourth. "Well, what about breakfast? Where's the Fatty Little?"

"Busy in the kitchens, of course," said Hubbard. "Where did you expect him to

be? Oh, my hat! Did you catch that whiff of frying bacon?"

Before long, the rebels were feasting joyously. This was the kind of life they liked. No masters—no authority. They could eat as much as they liked at every meal, and there were no questions asked. Plenty of foodstuffs—and more on the way!

"Wonder what time that van will arrive?" said Handforth, after breakfast had been disposed of. "The pater didn't give any particular time, but I expect it'll turn up during the morning."

"Give them a chance!" said Nipper, with a smile. "According to your father, Handy, he was going to give a whacking order, and it'll take some time to get it packed up. We shall be lucky if the goods are delivered to-day at all!"

And the other juniors held the same view. The only diversion during the morning was the appearance of General Carfax. He came out of the Ancient House, overcoated and muffled. Without giving a single glance towards the rebel stronghold, he made off towards the gates, and let himself out. Then he closed and locked the gates behind him, and vanished.

"Now, I wonder what that means?" said Reggie Pitt, looking at the other juniors near him.

"Why, the general's gone, of course," replied Handforth. "He's got fed up with us—and he's followed the example of all the others. We're left in undisputed possession of St. Frank's, you chaps!"

"Hurrah!"

There were many conjectures. Most of the fellows came to the conclusion that General Carfax had changed his mind during the night, and had gone off home. Nipper and a few others believed that the general would return, later in the day. They held the view that the old soldier had gone out in order to make some preparations.

"The general hasn't gone for good," said Nipper. "That's impossible—simply because it's too good to be true. Things like that don't happen."

"And you still think that we ought to keep an extra special watch?" asked Christine, with a chuckle.

"Yes—I do!" replied Nipper. "General Carfax is a wily old bird. I'm absolutely certain that he's up to something deep."

Most of the others laughed, and there were a good many sarcastic remarks. These were repeated as the morning advanced, and still nothing happened. Indeed, mid-day arrived, and St. Frank's remained utterly deserted, except for the overcrowded Modern House. Not a soul was seen for hours, and nobody came.

By the time the next meal had been disposed of, some of the rebels were beginning to feel just a little uncertain. They didn't quite like this inactivity. Perhaps there was something behind it, after all.

There were discussions and arguments in all corners of the building. The senior Common-

room and the junior Common-room were thronged; the dining-hall and all the studies were filled with Removites and Fourth Formers and fags—arguing on the one all-important subject.

Had they been left to themselves—or was General Carfax about to lead an attack of some kind?

Some of the fellows believed that the general had gone off in order to gather a big army of assistants. Perhaps they would be back during the afternoon, and perhaps there would be a regular battle. The rebels were rather hoping that this would be the case. They wanted something exciting now.

Then, just when the discussions were beginning to flag, a new excitement arose.

Shouts came from the Tower, and the look-outs triumphantly reported that an enormous covered lorry was making its way laboriously up the lane. Everybody knew what that lorry contained!

"Good egg!" shouted Handforth, with enthusiasm. "The grub!"

"Hurrah!"

"The Christmas supplies!"

The rebels cheered again and again—with all their doubts finally set at rest. Sir Edward Handforth had been as good as his word—and everything was all serene!



CHAPTER 20.

The General's Dramatic Move!

GENERAL CARFAX uttered a grunt of satisfaction.

"Now then, men—be ready!" he said

curtly. "I don't suppose there'll be any fighting—but you'd better be prepared."

"Trust us, sir!" said several voices.

The general was standing just against the stile in Belton Lane, and hovering among the trees of the wood were a number of burly-looking men. They were not ruffians, by any means—but respectable men from Bannington. The general had been over to fetch them that morning, and here, in the wood, they had been lurking for a good many hours.

But at last the moment for action had come.

For round the bend in the lane, two or three hundred yards distant, an enormous covered motor-lorry had appeared. It was bound for St. Frank's, and it contained the rebels' food supplies.

"Now we'll see!" muttered the general, with grim satisfaction. "Yes, by crackey, now we'll see who's master!"

His face was flushed, and his eyes were gleaming. Those men with him could see the excitement in the general's eyes, and they were rather amused. They knew exactly why they had come, and the whole affair struck them as being humorous. They were to



Handforth, Nipper and Buster Boots seized hold of General Carfax, whirled him round and then sent him hurtling into the air. Splash! The general descended into the thick muddy ditch which bordered one side of the lane!

seize the food supplies of the St. Frank's rebels, and they were being paid well for this trivial task. In all probability, they would not be needed, but they would receive their money, just the same.

This ambush, if the truth must be told, was the fruit of Sir Edward Handforth's incautious words on the previous day. He had told General Carfax of his plan for supplying the boys with Christmas food, and the general, being a strategist, had acted upon that information.

In one blow, he could subdue the rebellion!

And that blow would not be struck at the rebels, but at this harmless lorry! Once turn the food supplies back, and the harrangue would collapse like a pricked toy-balloon. There wasn't the slightest shadow of doubt on that point.

A few of the rebels, no doubt, would stick to Handforth, but the majority would desert the stronghold like rats leaving a sinking ship. General Carfax knew something of human nature, and he was quite convinced that all these schoolboys would not remain at St. Frank's if there was no prospect of food. They would not be willing to go on short rations at such a time of the year as this.

No, they would go home—where they could have fun and jollity and heaps of good things. The rank and file were only sticking to Handforth now because they believed that

they would have a superabundance of Christmas delicacies.

And, sad to relate, there was a great deal of truth in General Carfax's viewpoint.

The big lorry came lumbering on its way up the lane, its engine roaring noisily, for the load was a very heavy one. Sir Edward, as the juniors had expected, had been lavish.

"Now, men!" said General Carfax briskly.

The next moment a dozen figures sprang out from the trees, barring the way. General Carfax was in advance, and he held up an authoritative hand.

"Halt!" he commanded.

The lorry driver, completely surprised, applied his brakes, and brought the big van to a standstill. He and another man who sat beside him gazed at these enemies with uneasy surprise.

"What's the trouble, sir?" asked the driver.

"Are you carrying a load of foodstuffs to St. Frank's College?" demanded General Carfax curtly.

"Why, yes, sir," said the man. "My orders is to deliver the goods at the Modern House. I understand there'll be a number of boys there, ready to help me to unload."

"I am very sorry," said the general, "but you must not go to St. Frank's with that lorry."

"Look here, sir, what's the game?" asked the driver suspiciously. "I've got my orders to deliver—"

"I cannot help your orders!" barked the general. "I am General Carfax, and it may interest you to know that I am one of the governors of St. Frank's College. I forbid you to go near the school with that consignment of food!"

The lorry driver looked blank.

"Can't you see what it means, Bill?" said the driver's companion. "Them boys are in rebellion, or somethin', an' the idea is to stop the food gettin' to 'em. What are we goin' to do now?"

"Do?" said Bill, the driver. "We're goin' to deliver this stuff! I've had my orders from the gub'nor, an' I'm going to carry 'em out!"

And he prepared to get his lorry into motion again. But the general strode up, his face red with anger.

"Stop!" he shouted. "How dare you! I have told you who I am, and I have ordered you to—"

"I can't help that, sir!" said the driver bluntly. "I've had my orders from my boss, and he's the one who counts with me!"

"You impertinent rascal!" thundered the general. "You will turn that lorry round and return home. And let me tell you this, my friend!" he added, with a wave of his hand towards his assistants. "If you refuse to obey these orders, I shall force you to take your lorry away. These men here will—"

"Oh, so that's the game, is it?" said the driver. "Going to use force? Well, I'm blowed! And I thought you was a respectable gent, too!"

Bill's companion was looking rather scared. "It's no good, mate, we've got to do as what this gent says!" he said. "We can't have no fightin', can we? There's a dozen of 'em against us two. Maybe we'd best turn round an' go back. We can tell the gub'nor what's happened, an' he'll 'ave to square things with the school."

The driver, after another glance at those determined-looking men, gave an expressive grunt and nodded.

"All right, sir!" he said, glaring at the general. "You've won! We'll turn round an' go back home!"

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either. They were beginning to think that the Christmas grub wasn't coming!"

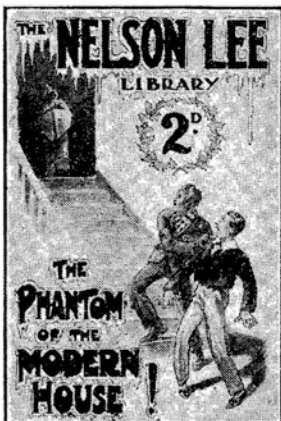
The two look-outs were Reggie Pitt and Solomon Levi of the West House. From their position they could see the van clearly as it laboured up the lane.

There was a magnificent view from the top of this tower, and the countryside for miles around could be clearly seen. The lane was like a winding thread, with the big mass of Belton Wood on one side, and the rolling meadows on the other.

"There's somebody in the lane," remarked Levi, after a few moments. "Why, by my life! Look there! It's General Carfax!"

"Yes, and there are a lot of other men,

NEXT WEDNESDAY!



CHAPTER 21.

A Shock for the Rebels!

ET'S give a cheer for Handy's pater!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Altogether!"

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Sir Edward!"

The rebels were excited and joyous. The big lorry-load of Christmas food was in sight, and the last lingering doubts had been set at rest.

Up in the tower, where the two look-outs were standing, the sounds of the cheering came up in waves.

"The chaps are getting excited," chuckled one of the look-outs. "I don't wonder at it,

too!" said Pitt, with a sudden note of suspicion in his voice. "Great Scott! I wonder

He broke off, and a kind of gulp sounded in his throat.

"The loafer!" panted Levi. "You—you mean—"

"What else?" asked Reggie intently. "Nipper was right. General Carfax is up to another of his strategic moves. And, by Jingo, unless we act quickly, we shall be beaten!"

"But they're not attacking us!" ejaculated Levi.

"Yes, they are—indirectly," replied Reggie. "The general and his men have



stopped the food supply—and their plan is to turn it back!"

"Crumbs!" said Solomon, aghast.

"And you, know what will happen then!" said Reggie grimly. "Without any Christmas rations, the bulk of the chaps will knuckle under. They won't stay on here, at St. Frank's, without any Christmas grub! The whole barring-out will fizzle out, and there'll only be a handful of us left. Something's got to be done—with a capital D!"

Without another word, Reggie Pitt raced down from the top of the tower into one of the upper corridors, yelling at the top of his voice as he went. Juniors came from all

"Great Scott!"

"In another five minutes the van'll be on its way back to Bannington!" said Pitt. "What are we going to do? Are we going to stay in here and allow—"

"No fear!" bellowed Handforth excitedly. "Hi, hi! Now, then, the Remove! Volunteers wanted!"

"Yes, but what's the game?" gasped Church.

"Handy's right!" roared Nipper. "We've got to make a rally! We've got to dash out, grab that van, and bring it up to the school! If all that Christmas tuck is turned back, we shall be diddled!"

The joy and jubilation of a few minutes ago had now turned to acute consternation. But there were plenty of volunteers. Thoroughly excited, the juniors surged round, eager to accompany Handforth and Nipper out on this raid. The vanload of Christmas fare was in sight, and the rebels had no intention of letting it slip out of their fingers.

In less than a minute fully thirty of the juniors were ready, and they were a motley crowd, consisting of Third-Formers, Fourth-Formers and Removites. Indeed, the whole garrison would have rushed out if Nipper had not kept his head, and ordered those rebels not required to remain behind.

He placed Reggie Pitt in command of these, and urged him to be ready for any emergency. Perhaps an attack was being contemplated—perhaps General Carfax had other plans in mind, too. The rebels could not be too careful!

"All right, buzz on!" said Pitt briskly. "I'll look after the fort! And don't you fellows come back without that grub!"

"We'll bring it, even if we have to carry the giddy van on our shoulders!" promised Handforth aggressively.

"Hurrah!"

The barricades had already been torn down from the main entrance, and the rescue party went rushing out into the open. They were all armed with pea-shooters, and they also carried a number of "bombs"—paper bags, filled with soot and flour, and such like.

As they went surging round the Modern House, making a bee-line for Bellton Lane, General Carfax was congratulating himself upon his astuteness. He did not imagine for one moment that the rebels were aware of this dramatic development.

The general had deliberately chosen this spot for his purpose—and with excellent reason.

The lane just here was quiet, there being no cottages within sight. If the general had taken up his stand on the other side of Bellton he might have found it necessary to stop lorry after lorry, for there was a good deal of traffic on the main Bannington road.

But here, in this lane, there could be no mistake. This big lorry was the only one that had appeared during the whole day, and the general had made no mistake.

GRAND CHRISTMAS NUMBER!

"THE PHANTOM OF THE MODERN HOUSE!"

Christmas with the rebels!

They have an exciting and a nerve-racking time, too. What with the appearance of a phantom monk, the sound of mysterious music, and the tolling of a death-bell, the majority of the rebels get the "wind up" properly—so much so that they want to desert their stronghold! Nipper and his "lieutenants" are faced with a difficult situation, and they are at their wits' end to know what to do.

This grand special Christmas yarn is the best of the series so far—a story everybody will enjoy. Don't miss it!

"SONS OF SPEED!"

Another smashing instalment of Alfred Edgar's popular serial.

Also many other special Christmas features.

ORDER IN ADVANCE!

quarters, surging round and asking what the trouble was.

"Trouble enough!" yelled Pitt. "I say, Nipper—Handy—Fullwood! Come here, all of you!"

"What the dickens—" began Handforth.

"The van has been stopped!" said Reggie, with deadly calmness.

"What!"

"General Carfax and about a dozen men have barred the way across the lane, and they've stopped the van!" said Pitt. "You know what it means, you chaps. They're keeping our food supplies from us—our Christmas rations!"

"Oh, my goodness!"

But he had overlooked the all-important fact that this section of road was visible from the Modern House Tower.

The big lorry was now manoeuvring to turn. The lane was narrow, and the driver had been compelled to proceed for twenty or thirty yards, until he reached a gateway into which he could reverse. He was now in the act of turning his lumbering vehicle.

And General Carfax watched with gloating eyes.



CHAPTER 22.

To the Rescue!

"JUST a minute, you chaps!"

It was Nipper who gave that warning.

The rebel force was streaming across the meadows, taking a short cut to the lane. Nipper, who was in advance, had suddenly halted, and now he was facing the breathless juniors.

"Don't waste time!" panted Handforth.

"We can't wait—"

"Keep cool, old man," urged Nipper. "It's all right—the van is still there. We can hear the roar of the engine quite clearly. The driver hasn't got the thing reversed yet. Now, we want to make some kind of combined attack. No sense in rushing on to the scene like a rabble. Let's do it properly."

"Hear, hear!" said Buster Boots approvingly.

"Yes, but—"

"Everything depends upon this, Handy," went on Nipper. "And we don't want to make any mistake about it. I propose that you and I go forward in advance of the others, and then we'll tell General Carfax that the van must complete its journey. We'll warn him that we're ready to take drastic action if necessary."

"Good!" agreed Handforth. "That's the stuff! I'm with you, old son! Come on!"

"The rest of you hang behind, and keep as quiet as possible," said Nipper, glancing at the other excited rebels. "And remember—no violence unless we're provoked!"

A moment later Nipper and Handforth were streaking across the meadow, and they broke through the hedge noisily. The other rebels came running up; they crouched down behind the hedge, unseen. They were ready to spring out at the right time.

"Good-afternoon, General Carfax!" said Nipper briskly, as he sprang down into the road.

The general spun round, startled.

"By crackey!" he boomed. "Of all the infernal impudence— Boy, what is the meaning of this?"

"I think this vanload of stuff has been ordered by Handforth's father, sir," said Nipper. "I expect it has been paid for, too—and it is to be delivered to the Modern House at St. Frank's. We've come along to see

that delivery is made, according to instructions."

"You impertinent young puppy!" thundered the general, red with rage. "How dare you? Let me tell you that this vanload of food is going back—"

"I don't think so, sir!" interrupted Handforth aggressively. "You thought you had sprung a surprise on us, eh? Well, we're not quite asleep, sir; our look-outs spotted your game. I say, driver!" he added, looking at the man. "Have you had instructions to deliver all that stuff to the Modern House?"

"Yes, young gent," said the driver, scratching his head. "But we've been ordered to turn back—"

"Don't take any notice of those orders," said Handforth. "Go ahead, and deliver the stuff!"

"Good Heavens!" roared General Carfax. "Do you think for one moment, you young rascal, that I will stand this nonsense? Men! Seize these two boys and hold them! Hold them firmly—"

"You'd better go easy, sir!" warned Nipper. "If your men attack us, we can't be answerable for the consequences!"

The general bellowed like an enraged bull.

"Do you hear me?" he shouted, turning to his men. "Seize them!"

The men came hurrying forward, while the lorry-driver and his mate watched with interest and astonishment.

"Rescue, rebels!" yelled Handforth. "Now, then—let fly! Pea-shooter squad, forward!"

As General Carfax's men came rushing up, a couple of dozen figures suddenly appeared over the hedge, and a devastating hail of peas went hissing into the ranks of the enemy.

"Hurrah!"

Within twenty seconds a pitched battle was in progress. After that one volley of peas the juniors leapt over the hedge, and engaged in a grim hand-to-hand tussle.

It was the only possible way.

This was no time for half-measures, and the boys were so determined that they were invincible. Indeed, there was not much of a fight when it came to the point. The general's men were not hooligans—they were not prepared for such a scrap as this, either—and although they put up a stout resistance at first, the juniors were soon all over them.

"How dare you?" raved General Carfax, dancing up and down with rage. "Don't let them get the better of you, men! Remember that I am paying you well!"

"We want our Christmas grub—and we're going to have it!" roared Handforth. "Take that, my lad!"

Biff!

One of the general's men went reeling back, struck by Handforth's fist. Never before had the leader of Study D been so aggressive. He was enjoying this scrap tremendously. There had been a period of inactivity, and Handforth liked nothing better than a good fight. He was now releas-

ing some of his pent-up energy, and it must be confessed that the rest of the juniors were almost equally eager.

As for the general, he could see that unless something unexpected happened the battle would go against him.

After all his careful plans, too! Only two or three minutes earlier he had been telling himself that the victory was his. The rebels were defeated—the great barring-out was practically at an end!

And now—

Well, now those juniors were fighting like Trojans, and they were so grim that they were unconquerable.

"By Heaven! We'll see about this!" boomed the general, running into the fray. "Now, then, you young puppies! We'll see who is the master!"

And the old soldier commenced laying about him to right and to left. He was an enormous man, and his strength was great. During those first two or three moments he did tremendous damage, the juniors falling like ninepins before his whirling fists.

"Buck up, you chaps!" gasped Nipper. "The general's asked for trouble—and we'll give him some!"

"Rather!" roared Handforth. "He has provoked this attack, so he mustn't be surprised at what happens! Come on—all together!"

Handforth, Nipper and Boots made a rush at General Carfax. The next moment the general was seized, whirled round, and he went hurtling into the air.

Splash!

With a dull, plopping sound General Carfax descended into the thick mud of the ditch which bordered one side of the lane!



CHAPTER 23.

All Ready for Christmas!

UNDER normal conditions the juniors would never have laid hands on the old soldier.

But he had certainly asked for it. He had attacked the boys, and they had acted in self-defence. The moment was a critical one, too. The whole success of the rebellion depended upon the delivery of this vanload of Christmas fare.

"Hurrah!"

"We've won, you chaps!" roared Handforth breathlessly. "By George! Where are all the other rotters? Come on—fight it out, blow you!"

But the general's men, having seen the fate of their leader, had no further stomach for the fight. They were retreating, dishevelled and bruised. They had had enough of these fighting juniors!

The mud of the ditch gave a heave, and the next moment General Carfax came to

the surface. He was unrecognisable. Mud was pouring from him in sticky streams, and strange, unintelligible sounds were coming from the upper section of this apparition.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

In spite of themselves, the rebels couldn't help roaring with laughter. They had no sympathy whatever for General Carfax. They regarded this "strategy" of his as a particularly mean sort of trick. He had attempted to stop their supplies, instead of engaging in a real, honest fight. Well, his game had failed, and he had found a whole pile of trouble.

"Now, then, you fellows!" shouted Nipper. "Let's form into a proper escort. We're doing this thing thoroughly, you know. Line up—ten on either side of the lorry. The rest will go in advance, as a special guard."

"Hurrah!"

With great precision, the rebels obeyed the order, and the lorry moved off down the lane with its triumphant escort.

General Carfax, afraid to come out of the ditch for fear the juniors should throw him in again, raised a muddy fist and shook it angrily at the departing juniors.

"Bah!" fumed the general, almost incoherent with rage.

He hesitated a few moments, then scrambled out of the slimy ditch and watched the lorry as it went in the direction of the school. A yell of derision came to his ears, and he writhed inwardly.

He had been beaten again—beaten at the post!

And, dimly, he was at last beginning to realise the determination of these rebels. At first, he had airily declared that he would "kill" the barring-out in next to no time.

These boys were nothing! Hadn't he quelled insurrections of savages? Hadn't he put down rebellions in India? These insubordinate schoolboys wouldn't last a minute after he had taken command!

Such had been the general's convictions when he had first arrived. But he was now beginning to find out his mistake! He couldn't deal with these schoolboys as he had dealt with the savages in some remote corner of the Empire.

Not that he was beaten. Never for a moment would he admit that these boys were the victors. They had gained the advantage for the moment, but he would make them suffer! Yes, by crackey, he would show them who was master!

While the general was fuming with helpless rage, a novel procession came through the gateway of the old school.

First of all came a number of rebels, followed by the heavily-laden motor lorry. Other rebels flanked the vehicle, guarding it closely. Cheer after cheer rang out from the packed windows of the rebel fortress.

"Hurrah!"

"Here comes the Christmas grub!"

"Good old Handy!"

"Down with General Carfax!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The excitement was at fever pitch, and the cheers became truly tremendous when the great lorry backed up to the Modern House, and the business of unloading commenced.

There were plenty of willing helpers.

Indeed, never before had a lorry been unloaded with such speed and expedition. Almost as though by magic, the sacks were brought out, the boxes were swept indoors. The rebels were astonished at the quantity of stuff that came out of that van. They were astonished, too, at Sir Edward Handforth's open-handed generosity.

"By Jove, Handy, your pater has done the thing properly!" said Reggie Pitt gleefully, as he helped. "There's enough stuff here to last us until well into the new term, if necessary!"

"Good old pater!" said Handforth, with gleaming eyes.

"Hear, hear!"

"One of the best!"

All the rebels agreed with that sentiment. They had to thank Sir Edward Handforth for their present invulnerable position. They

had full command of the garrison, and they were now in possession of ample stores.

Great was the jubilation in the garrison. The Christmas supplies were safe, and the determination to carry on this barring-out to victory was stronger than ever.

General Christopher Carfax, coming along Belton Lane towards St. Frank's, a forlorn and muddy-looking figure, listened to the cheering with burning ears.

His ruse had failed. The rebels had food in plenty, and they were firmly entrenched in their stronghold. But General Carfax would not admit, for a second, that he was beaten. His supply of strategy was not yet exhausted.

THE END.

(Look out for next week's **SPECIAL XMAS NUMBER**. This will contain many Christmas features in addition to the grand long complete St. Frank's yarn, entitled: **"THE PHANTOM OF THE MODERN HOUSE!"** Edwy Searles Brooks has put his best into this superb story, and it's just the sort of yarn to put you in the right mood for the coming festive season. **ORDER YOUR COPY NOW**—there's sure to be a big demand for it.)

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Edwy Searles Brooks
chats with our readers.

NOTE.—If any reader writes to me, I shall be pleased to comment upon such remarks as are likely to interest the majority. All letters should be addressed: EDWY SEARLES BROOKS, c/o The Editor, THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, LONDON, E.C.A. Every letter will have my personal attention. Letters of very special merit will be distinguished by a star (*) against the sender's name. My photo exchange offer is still open: my autographed photo for yours—but yours first, please.—E.S.B.

Gertrude Kennedy (Dublin), O. Tucker (Deal), "Appreciative" (Brixton), S. H. Yeo* (Wallasey), Jack Ricketts (Hayle), James Philip Gourlay (Dundee), Terence Sullivan* (Tufnell Park), Gaston F. Coulle (Manchester), "E. O. H." (Brixton), J. Brooder (Rathdowney), Archie Luke (Plymouth), "The Happy Seven" (Norwich), D. Hawkes (Lowestoft), Emslie R. T. Bryan (Chingford), "Dragonslayer" (Sydney, N.S.W.), Albert Hetherington* (Timaru, N.Z.), M. C.* (Cobh), Arthur Clive Foster (Christchurch, N.Z.), George Bruce (Wellington, N.Z.).

I didn't squirm at all when I read your caustic letter, James Philip Gourlay, because you're all wrong—wrong to blazes! No spoof at all goes into these columns. So your criticism didn't touch me up at all. I could afford to laugh at it. You'll live and learn, I expect. You would like some complete-in-one-issue stories, to vary the usual linked-up series. And you think that more than half the readers would agree with you. Well, come on, you readers, let's have some opinions. I'm game for any old thing you like. But if the "eyes" have it, and nothing comes of it for months and months, don't rail at me, J. P. G. You accuse me of securing readers' opinions on such and such a subject, and then doing nothing about it. But these opinions are tabulated and stocked away for future use. These things take time—and sometimes a very long time—to work out. But everything comes to be (or she) who waits. Even that Sectional Map will burst into being one of these fine days.

One of your usual very cheery and very welcome weekly letters is in front of me, Micky Sullivan. (You are, I believe, on the high seas bound for Australia, as I write this. And I've experienced a real sense of loss in not receiving your letters regularly for the time being). I shall have to have a good look round St. Frank's and find out if

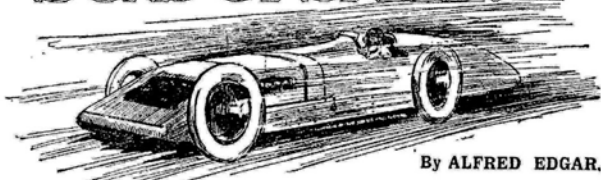
Burnett and Willard are still there. If they are, they seem to have hidden themselves pretty thoroughly of late, don't they? Those two water-colour sketches you sent me (of Holt's Farm and the Old Mill) are fine. Many thanks for them. They're so good that I'm going to hold you to your promise to do me some St. Frank's sketches for my study walls.

"The Happy Seven"—all readers of Our Paper, and you're still "The Happy Seven." Well, that's good, anyway. Of course, your letter was read—and enjoyed—by me, as also is every other letter I receive. I only wish I could reply fully to every letter I receive. As a matter of fact, I haven't the heart to disappoint any of you, much less seven in one go. But if I have a grievance of any account, it is that I'm obliged to disappoint many readers by giving them scant replies—or none at all. But I hope none of you will give up writing me on that account. Your turn will come when you least expect it. And as you had intended writing me a thousand times before, "The Happy Seven," I hope some of the overdue letters—from all the seven of you—will come rolling in now. I'll always jolly well answer every letter I possibly can, and I hope some of yours will be amongst them. My best thanks to all of "The Happy Seven." Your letter cheered me up no end.

About John Willard, M. C., you'd better look at what I've said to Terence Sullivan, above. (I've called him Micky, but it's all the same).

PLAYING WITH DEATH! Leaping and skidding along the speedway like a mad thing roars the Kent racer with Big Bill Barry at the wheel. One error of judgment means, at the speed he is travelling, certain death. No wonder Bill's brother looks on with his heart in his mouth!

SONS OF SPEED!



By ALFRED EDGAR.

HOW THE STORY STARTED:

DICK BARRY is a cheery, iron-nerved boy, whose great ambition is to drive racing cars. He acts as mechanic for his brother—

BIG BILL BARRY, one of the most daring speedmen that ever handled a high-powered car, and who is star driver for Kent racing machines, which have been entered for a big race in Italy. Their great fear is that they may be beaten in the race by—

MARK LYNCH, the daring driver of the rival Ince Eight cars, and in order to get more speed out of the Kent machines, Bill and Dick make them very light, which means that they will be dangerous to drive. After the race, Bill is to make an effort to break all world's records by attaining

a speed of two hundred and fifty miles an hour on a wonderful car being constructed by—

"**PROFESSOR**" **KENT**, designer of Kent cars. At the same time, Mark Lynch's firm is also building a record-breaking monster. Dick goes with his brother to Italy for the race on the Monza Speedway. The race starts, Dick remaining at the replenishment pits with other mechanics because only the driver is allowed in a racing machine. On the first lap, two of the three Kent cars crack up with broken front axles, leaving Bill fighting neck-and-neck with Lynch for the lead. Dick fears that Bill's axle will go as the others have done, and he sees a car crash on the other side of the speedway. Is it Bill?

(Now read on.)

In the Lead!

DICK craned forward. Beyond the trunks of the distant trees he could just discern a spinning shape hurtling to destruction on the inside edge of the great Italian speedway. He saw it strike the trunk of a tree, and high into the air whirled the battered shape of a broken wheel, riven metal catching the sunlight.

An instant after and the whole thing was blotted out by a choking pall of blue smoke, from which the debris streaked high.

Through the horrified gasp of the crowd behind Dick faintly heard the tearing impact of the crash, then he started forward across the track.

Behind him the Kent mechanics shouted in sudden alarm, and in the same moment Dick sighted a blazing red Fiat almost on top of him. He pulled up, feet slithering on

the track, and the roaring machine crashed past a bare yard in front of him. Its thundering wheels slashed grit and stinging stones back into his face, and he stood gasping at the narrowness of his escape.

In his anxiety, Dick had forgotten that racing cars were shooting past every second or so. His one thought was to get to the scene of the crash and find out if it was indeed Bill whom the Speed God had claimed.

For a moment the track was clear, with only the low-built shape of a blue Delage in sight, screaming down the straightway. Dick dashed on, and he heard the Delage thunder past him as he reached the railings opposite. An Italian soldier stood there, his bayonet glittering in the sun as he tried to bar Dick's path.

The boy ducked under the weapon, got his hands to the spikes on top of the railings, and vaulted clean over them ere the

man could turn. He glimpsed officials running towards him and shouting as they came, then he was pushing his way through the spectators beyond the rails, and left all pursuit behind as he plunged into rank upon rank of cars parked at the back of the enclosure.

He reached open ground and went racing on, to be suddenly confronted by another portion of the strangely shaped speedway. The Italian track was shaped like a lozenge in the centre, with an outer circuit running around it, the two portions being connected by a tunnel.

There was a footbridge over this second bit of track, and Dick raced up the steps. From the top he could see, near the cloud of oily smoke, men running wildly to the scene of the smash. On a stretch of road to the right an ambulance was tearing along, a man beside the driver ringing a bell with both hands to clear the way.

Dick plunged off the narrow bridge and raced over the grass. He felt certain that it was Bill who had crashed. It was only by a miracle that the other two cars in the Kent team had escaped disaster when their axles had broken. Bill's car was dangerously light, and at the terrific pace he was setting it was ten chances to one that he had piled himself up.

Dick was hardly conscious of the effort of running as he tore onwards. Another footbridge took him across another leg of the track, then he was in clear view of the crowd gathering about the debris of the wrecked machine.

He plunged into the thick of the mob, using elbows and hands to get through. Because he wore mechanic's overalls and a brassard on his arm, the crowd did not protest; they thought he was someone to do with the car. The ambulance had come up by this time, and Dick glimpsed men getting out a stretcher.

Was it Bill who'd be lying all crumpled up on the grass? Big Bill, with his wide grin and his gruff, rough ways—was it he?

Dick came to the forefront of the crowd. He pushed aside one of the ring of soldiers who had formed a circle around the spot, jumped into the opening behind, and stood staring.

Three men were bending over a form that lay stretched out on the turf. Beyond was the tangled, mangled, oil-smudged shape of the wrecked car, smoking still. It had a battered, wedge-shaped radiator, and beyond it the engine-cover was white.

White! It was a German car—not Bill's machine! It was one of the two Mercedes entered for the race. It wasn't Bill on the grass, all smashed up. It was some poor devil of a German driver—not Bill!

Dick felt himself going shaky in the sudden relief that the knowledge brought, and then his glance was caught by two cars which shot like twin comets along the track beyond the wreck. One was ten yards in

the lead of the other, and that one was a Kent, going like mad!

It was Bill. Dick could see him crouched up behind his grid-guarded wind-shield, his tool-scarred hands clamped on the shifting steering-wheel. And he was yards in front of Lynch—yards in the lead!

The cars whistled past, threshing wheels whirling a thin dust haze from the track, exhausts blaring and the tearing whine of their superchargers shrilling through the roar of the mighty engines.

As they rocketed onwards, the soldier whom Dick had shoved aside grabbed him, growled something in his ear, and then thrust him back into the crowd.

A moment after and Dick was clear of the mob, watching his brother's machine as it thundered round a banked curve, and yelling aloud in excitement and relief as he urged the hurtling car on.

All-in!

IT took Dick a long while to get back to the replenishment-pit, because he kept stopping to watch Bill rock past on various parts of the track.

So long as Bill kept going, Dick knew that he wasn't pulling into the pit for anything. Replenishment-pits are places where cars pull in during the race for repairs, or for fuel and water and oil. They were set in a long line in front of the grandstands, each "pit" being a wired-in enclosure with a plank at the front, on which was stacked tools and spare wheels and other parts likely to be needed in the race.

One mechanic was allotted to each car. No one else, except the driver, was allowed even to lay a finger on it. Dick was attached to Bill's car, and if, by chance, the machine pulled in while Dick was away from the pit, then Bill would have to work on the car by himself.

Realising this after a while, Dick hurried on. He got told off by the other Kent mechanics for going away, but they all realised that he had thought the smashed car to be Bill's, and they soon settled down to watching the race again.

By the time that a quarter of the full distance had been run, Bill was nearly a mile in the lead from Lynch's roaring Ince Eight, and it was then that the Kent racer began to show signs of the terrific strain.

She began to swerve on the straightway in front of the stands. Where the track was rough, she jumped madly. She fought against her driver on the curves, but Bill never slowed. Always he kept the throttle wide and held the lead he had gained over his rival.

But Dick and the rest watched with their hearts in their mouths. The car had been dangerous before it went on to the track because, in Bill's urge for lightness and speed, some parts of it had been weakened.

Those parts were showing up. At any moment, it seemed, something must snap

and bring the car to smoking disaster. And yet she held. Lap after lap Bill screamed round, never easing his pace until half-distance, when the mechanics hung out a signal which told Bill he must come in on the next lap for fresh fuel and to change his wheels all round.

Dick knew that here was his chance to split seconds and help to win the race. The faster he changed the wheels and refueled the machine, the quicker Bill would be able to get his car away.

Dick watched for the racer to come sliding off the banking to the flat. It appeared, and then came streaking down. Dick heard the brake-shoes screaming in the drums, the car skidded a little on an oily patch before another pit, and then came slithering to a halt.

It had barely come to rest when Dick rammed a giant jack under the back axle and crashed the lever down, lifting both wheels clear of the ground. A moment after and he was performing one of the fastest wheel changes that the Italian speedway had ever seen.

Dick had spent hours of practice to be able to do this job in the way it should be done. Copper-headed hammer slammed on the quick-release hub-caps with never a miss, the caps came spinning off, the old wheels with their worn tyres were jerked away, and the new wheels crashed home.

While Dick worked, Bill should have been out of the car, filling up with fuel and water—but he didn't move from the smoking cockpit. Dick noticed it, and he wondered why.

New wheels home, he clawed off the cap of the radiator and slopped the water-pipe in, then did the same for the petrol-tank. He wasted not even the fraction of a second, and at the pits on either side mechanics were open-eyed at his smartness.

A thousand eyes watched him from across the track as he worked, and the folk there marvelled at his speed and his skill. Intent on his job, Dick saw, without really noticing it, that there was dried blood on the sides of Bill's fingers, where they were clamped on the cord-bound rim of the steering-wheel.

His face was streaked with oil-smoke and dust, and he hadn't even shifted his goggles as he sat immobile in his seat.

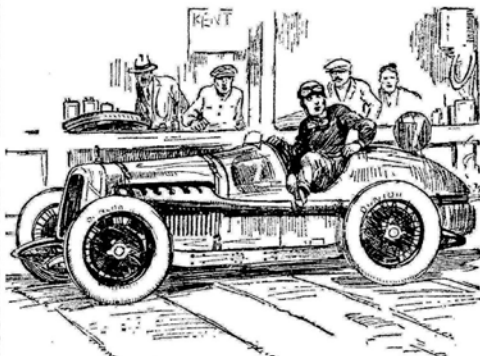
Dick rammed the tank caps home. "Right!" he yelled, and rushed to the tail of the machine.

He heaved there with all his weight, rolling the car forward in a push start until Bill let in the clutch; the engine fired again and the machine roared into the race once more.

Dick watched it go, then turned to the pit. He saw that all the Kent mechanics were staring blankly after the machine, and he heard one of them gasp:

"Did y'r see Bill—he's all in! Couldn't get out o' the car!"

"She's been jumping all over the track an' knocking him sick!" another man exclaimed. "His hands were bleeding where he'd been hangin' on to the wheel. He didn't get out o' the car because he was afraid he'd crack up!"



Dick swung himself into the narrow cockpit, and as he did so he saw one of the race officials rushing up, together with a reserve Kent driver—

Dick stared at them, looking from one man to another. None of them heeded him as he stood there, although from adjacent pits watching men were applauding the swift way he had worked on the car.

They were saying that Bill had been knocked sick by the hurtling machine, that it was too light to sit the track, that he'd never finish the race. And while they talked the car came roaring round again.

Dick watched her jump and skid off the banking. All four wheels bounced clear of the ground as she struck a bump on the straightway, and, as the car dropped back, Dick saw his brother jerked forward, and then his body was thudded against the squab behind him—thudded with a crash that must have shaken him all through!

And this was going on all round the track. Every bump shook him up, every change

from slope to flat meant a jump and a skid. No wonder he hadn't got out of the car, no wonder his hands were skinned by the tough cord chafing them on the steering-wheel.

That brief stop at the pits had let Lynch into the lead, because he had been only a mile behind. But the Ince Eight rival would have to come in soon for replenishments, as Bill had done. Dick watched for Bill to close up to the Ince Eight. But Lynch held his lead, and the fact that Bill didn't gain went to prove that he was losing strength.

With each lap his driving became worse. Twice he skidded in awful fashion, bringing Dick's heart into his mouth. The Kent machine was no longer a car. It was a bucking, leaping, smashing demon—a roaring, crashing devil which at any moment might get out of hand and hurl its strained-faced pilot to destruction.



—But the boy didn't heed them. Bill had had to drop out of the race and Dick was going to take his place!

"Fetch him in!" Dick heard the foreman mechanic yell when three-quarters of the distance had been run. "He'll kill himself if he goes on. Look at that!"

The car skidded off the home banking again, straightened up, and then came hurtling past, snaking down the straight. They hung out the signal for Bill to stop at the pit, but if he saw it he paid no heed. Two more laps he went, then he got into the worst skid of all on the bad patch at the beginning of the straightway.

The car slowed sideways in a front-wheel skid, seemed to skim the fencing, pulled out, and then turned completely round in a mad circle, with a blue Bugatti behind it braking in desperation and barely avoiding the skidding Kent.

The French machine shot past and hurtled on, with Bill's car roaring behind it. He

raced across the track, pulled straight, then came rocking towards the pits. Dick could see him lying half-sideways in the cockpit, then came the screech of brakes as Bill slowed the car. It went past the pit, still slowing, and finally stopped with Dick racing up.

Bill was collapsed over the wheel, engine stopped, and smoke wavering up past the foot-grid. Dick tucked his hands under his brother's shoulders and tried to heave him out. A couple of track marshals leaped to his assistance, jabbering in Italian.

They got Bill out between them, and Dick could see that he was all in. It would be impossible for him to drive on; the car had battered him limp and helpless. For a moment Dick hesitated, then, as the marshals carried Bill away, he slipped the starting-handle out from under the seat.

He raced to the front of the machine and swung the mighty engine with all his strength. It fired almost immediately; he dropped the handle back, and slid over the side of the cockpit.

Behind him he saw men running and shouting. One of the reserve Kent drivers was running up, but Dick didn't stop for him. Bill had started the race, and Dick was going to finish it for him!

He snapped into gear, and the squab thudded his back as he sent the machine away. He was on the banking at the end of the straight, as, with a vicious scream, Lynch's car ripped past him and went ahead—a lap in the lead!

A Race with Death!

DICK had no crash-helmet, but there were spare goggles at one side of the cockpit. He grabbed a pair and slipped them on, then settled to chase the tearing Ince Eight.

He hadn't gone a mile before he discovered why the corded wheel was all blood-stained. The wheel kicked under his hands. The car leaped like a pea on a plate from every jump. It tried to keep straight on when it came to bends, and took all the strength of Dick's arm and shoulder muscles to haul it round.

The thunderous roar of the engine swept back to his ears. From the footgrid there came thick, heavy oil fumes and a rush of hot air that seared his ankles and swept up to his face. Wind screamed past the tiny screen before his eyes, flattening his hair and feeling like streamers of ice against his ears and scalp.

The seat was as hard as iron, hammered flat under the impact of Bill's body, and the squab at the back was just the same. Every bump, every jerk of the leaping car thudded Dick down in the seat, battering him viciously.

A big bump where the track ran under the tunnel almost tore the steering-wheel out of Dick's hands, and he got the car under control again just in time to avoid hitting the tunnel side and smashing himself up.

And ahead of him, drawing steadily away all the time, was Lynch's car.

Dick put his foot down on the accelerator pedal, gave the engine all she'd take, and began to close down. It felt to him now as though the wheels of his machine barely touched the ground—but when they did, it was to thud him down in his seat until he was shaken back to the spine.

He drove without realising what part of the track he was on. The circuit was six miles long, and before he expected it he saw the bunting-decked stands and the colourful line of pits opening up ahead—and Lynch was pulling in for replenishments!

That would give Dick a chance to catch up that lead the man had snatched! He glanced at his own pit as he rocketed past. They were flying a signal for him to come in. Let 'em fly it! He'd always wanted a chance to show that he could drive. He'd got his chance now.

All out, he roared on. He was getting used to the bumps now. He remembered where they came and braced himself to take them. Bill had driven magnificently, and it would be fine if he could cap his brother's effort.

On he went, exulting in the fierce speed. When he came past the stands again, it was to see that Lynch had left his pit and was racing down the straight, with the Kent car pulling up on him hand over fist. The Ince machine hadn't got into its stride yet, and Dick passed him as they hit the bank at the other end.

He was in the lead!

There was a little, metal-guarded mirror let into the top of the scuttle; it enabled him to see what was behind him. He could see Lynch's dark face bent behind the wheel of the hurtling Ince Eight, his dust-covered teeth gritted and his face black from the smoke.

The wheels of his car were kicking on the track, but he didn't seem to be gaining.

On, rocking past car after car. Picking them up, closing down, and then smashing by in a tornado of hurtling sound. One, two, three laps of it—and he saw that they'd taken down the recall signal at the Kent pit! He was holding his lead, and they were going to let him carry on!

Another lap—and then Dick noticed that the Ince Eight had closed up. Dick realised that, unconsciously, he had eased his foot on the accelerator pedal. He opened wide again, and the Ince Eight began to drop back a little.

Another lap. Dick, driving with his teeth gritted, keeping ahead by sheer physical effort.

A racing car is one of the most uncomfortable things in the world, and a man who drives one needs something more than nerve and skill. He has to train for a race with the strictness of a boxer for a big fight, so

that every nerve and muscle is tuned to the pitch of efficiency; just as he has tuned his car.

Big Bill had trained for this race in that way, and he had held the car for three-quarters of the distance before he had cracked up. He wasn't the sort of fellow to give in easily, and he hadn't stopped until the car had smashed him weak and limp.

Dick hadn't trained like that. He was only a boy. He'd got all the courage and grit of his burly brother, but he hadn't the same strength.

On the fifth lap, the Ince Eight closed up again. Dick spurred, to get into a mad skid as the car heaved off a bump, and to have Lynch shoot past him as he straightened out. Dick opened up, saw the grandstands flash past, forgot all the pain and heat as he drew down to the Ince Eight's tail. The mechanics cheered wildly in the Kent pit as they saw him slide past on the banking further along.

He was in front again! Once more the Ince Eight came creeping up.

Dick clenched his teeth and kept ahead. Now the fumes of the engine were coming back until they sickened him. His feet and ankles seemed to be afire from the heat. His muscles were turning to jelly from the pounding of the car. His shoulders and thighs were bruised, and the back of his neck was stiff from the strain of bracing his neck against the wind.

He lost count of laps and distance. Cars kept leaping into his vision like coloured specks on the tapering track ahead. He came up and passed them one by one. Every little while Lynch surged level; each time Dick spurred and left him behind.

It seemed to him that the sky was turning dark. But when he gritted his teeth, it cleared to sunlight again. Twice the track was blotted out by a black mist that swung in front of his eyes, and when he forced it away the second time Lynch shot past and went ahead.

Dick tried to chase him, and sat on his tail with the Ince Eight's exhaust blaring back at him. Then Lynch began to draw away.

There was no feeling in Dick's hands now. His whole body had gone numb, only his feet seemed hot and burning from the terrific heat of the engine.

He made a last effort to overcome his weakness. He was letting Bill down, he told himself; he'd got to go on!

He surged up to his rival on the long banking before the straight. The Kent car crept up until its youthful driver could see the fire that was spitting from the Ince Eight's exhaust. Together they swung round the curve, until Dick saw the straight opening up—and then he hit the big bump as his brother had done before.

(Continued on page 44.)

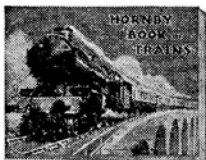
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HOW TO JOIN THE LEAGUE

ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE APPLICATION FORM No. 85.

SECTION

A

READER'S APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP.

I desire to become enrolled as a Member of THE ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE, and to qualify for all such benefits and privileges as are offered to Members of the League. I hereby declare that I have introduced "THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY" and THE ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE to one new reader, whose signature to certify this appears on second form attached hereto. Will you, therefore, kindly forward me Certificate of Enrolment with the Membership Number assigned to me, and Membership Badge.

SECTION

B

MEMBER'S APPLICATION FOR MEDAL AWARDS.

I, Member No..... (give Membership No.), hereby declare that I have introduced one more new reader, whose signature to certify this appears on second form attached hereto. This makes me..... (state number of introductions up to date) introductions to my credit.

SECTION

C

NEW READER'S DECLARATION.

I hereby declare that I have been introduced by (give name of introducer) to this issue of "THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY."

(FULL NAME).....

(ADDRESS).....

INSTRUCTIONS.

INSTRUCTIONS.—Reader Applying for Membership. Cut out TWO complete Application Forms from Two copies of this week's issue of THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY. On one of the forms leave in Section A, crossing out Sections B and C. Then write clearly your full name and address at bottom of form. The second form is for your new reader, who fills in Section C, crosses out Sections A and B, and writes his name and address at bottom of form. Both forms are then pinned together, and sent to the Chief Officer, The St. Frank's League, c/o THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY, Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C.4. **Member Applying for Bronze Medal:** It will be necessary for you to obtain six new readers for this award. For each new reader TWO complete forms, bearing the same number, are needed. On one of the forms fill in Section B, crossing out Sections A and C, and write your name and address at bottom of form. The other form is for your new reader, who fills in Section C, crosses out Sections A and B, and writes his name and address at the bottom of

the form. Now pin both forms together and send them to the Chief Officer, as above. One new reader will then be registered against your name, and when six new readers have been registered, you will be sent the St. Frank's League bronze medal. There is nothing to prevent you from sending in forms for two or more new readers at once, provided that each pair of forms bears the same date and number.

Bronze medallists wishing to qualify for the silver or gold medals can apply in the same way as for the bronze medal, filling in Section B. Every introduction they make will be credited to them, so that when the League reaches the required number of members they can exchange their bronze medal for a silver or gold one, according to the number of introductions with which they are credited.

These Application Forms can be posted for *id.*, providing the envelope is not sealed and no letter is enclosed.

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You are offered free hints on holidays, whether walking, biking or camping.

You can qualify for the various awards by promoting the growth of the League.

If you want help or information on any subject, you will find the Chief Officer ever ready to assist you.



Our Weekly Pow-Wow

By
The Editor.

The London Fire Brigade.

A Sussex reader, who is a messenger in the Lewes Fire Brigade, asks me for information about the London Fire Brigade. The Metropolitan Brigade was formed in 1866. Prior to that time the churchwardens and overseers of every parish had been compelled under an Act passed in 1774, to maintain an engine for putting out fires occurring in their boundaries. In 1888 the London County Council assumed control of the Fire Brigade, which, since 1904, has been styled the London Fire Brigade. The Brigade consists of a chief officer, two divisional officers, and 1,919 officers, firemen, coachmen and pilots. There are 62 land stations, 13 ambulance stations, 3 river stations, and one river repairing depot. The Brigade has 87 motor fire engines and 65 motor escape vans. There are 1,646 street fire-alarm posts. Some idea of the immense work of the Brigade is obtained from the fact that the number of calls on its services during the year ending December 31st, 1925, totalled 7,476. The Brigade is a magnificent body of men, unequalled for bravery and resource, and always ready on the instant to face the deadly peril of the fire fiend.

Plums From Down Under.

It is cheery to run through the Australian mail and find such a top-hole little assortment of compliments. There is a newsagent at King's Park, South Australia, who has plainly stated that the "Nelson Lee Library" is the most popular boys' book that comes his way.

Then there is an encouraging missive from a correspondent who pleasantly calls himself the "Mystery Writer." His postmark is Parramatta. When one gets a mystery letter there is the expectation that the writing will start fading out in a jumpy way, or that missing words will turn up and blink at you when least expected. But there was nothing of all that here. My Parramatta pal kept to the point most praiseworthy, and he said enough to prove that the old paper is the goods out there.

Another supporter at Alderley, Queensland, tells me that there is a club going along in great style in his district.

Not Altogether Happy.

Here is a serious complaint from J. B. (Todmorden), who is employed in a wholesale firm, and has had the misfortune to meet with some unpleasant fellow-workers. There is the typical, loud-voiced, bullying individual who takes far too much on himself. Nobody likes him, as stands to reason. In addition, my chum has to work along with a regular sulky, silent chap. When this fellow does open his mouth it is only to growl.

I am afraid my Todmorden chum will just have to stick it as well as he can, for the world has not been cut to the pattern some of us would have chosen, and pretty well everybody has to put up with rough customers at one time or another. But one jolly old comfortable thing - can be remembered - namely, that good feeling and amiability are catching, and the even-tempered fellow can work a lot of good just by being himself, and showing the other man how the game should be played.

Learning Latin.

A reader up north asks me where he could get a Latin dictionary. He says: "I want to learn something about Latin and such-like things." Well, he can get a Latin lexicon at any booksellers' shop, or he could see one at the Free Library. And I wish him good luck in his ambition. He will find a fair knowledge of Latin of immense help in all manner of ways.

CORRESPONDENTS WANTED.

Eric French, Chesterton Mills, Cambridge, wishes to correspond with readers who are Scouts, especially those overseas.

Boy R. Lee, 365, Mess 20, H.M.S. Marlborough, c/o G.P.O. London, wishes to hear from readers, especially those in Bromley, Kent.

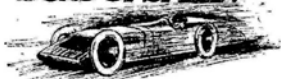
Harold G. Scott, 238, Markhouse Road, Walthamstow, London, E. 17, has back numbers of the N.L.L., both old and new series, for sale.

Fred Clarke, 61, Church Street, St. Peter's, Broadstairs, Kent, wishes to correspond with readers interested in Natural History and pets; he also wants to join a club and to buy or exchange N.L.L., old series.

Doric Hendricks, Church Street, Riversdale, Cape Province, South Africa, wants to hear from readers interested in his football club.

(Continued overleaf.)

SONS OF SPEED!



(Continued from page 40.)

The front wheels struck and the car leaped high. Dick heard the tearing whirr of the rear wheels, then they struck the ground again—slithering sideways. He saw Lynch streaking ahead, and the palings at the side of the track seemed to slash at him.

He saw men running wildly from the spot, as he wrenched on the wheel to straighten up. The car answered—then the tail skidded round. He had a whirling glimpse of stands—flags—bunting—faces, all merged to a spinning blur.

The fence showed up in front of him again, with the car rocking at it. He tried to pull on the steering-wheel, but he hadn't the strength to shift it. He stood on the brake-pedal—heard the brake-shoes screeching—then the front of the car hit the fence! Broken woodwork flew in a scattered shower, dust heaved up, and he felt the car sliding sideways, cauting over.

Something struck his unprotected head, and then oblivion swamped his brain!

(Is Dick seriously injured or will he be able to continue in the race? If he doesn't Lynch will win—and you can bet Dick won't allow that if it can possibly be avoided. Don't miss next week's grand instalment, boys.)

CORRESPONDENTS WANTED

(Continued from previous page.)

Israel Herr, P.O. Box 3116, Johannesburg, Transvaal, South Africa, wishes to form a cricket club for members 18 years and over. He also wishes to hear from readers who have N.L.L. before No. 130 for sale.

Leslie A. Kessler, 48, Havelock Road, Brighton, wishes to correspond with readers in Hong Kong, Cape of Good Hope, and Venezuela, who are interested in stamp collecting; he has N.L.L. new series—old numbers up to 74—for sale.

Sidney W. Le Roux, P.O. Box 109, King William's Town, South Africa, would like to hear from readers, and he especially wants back numbers of the N.L.L.

Eric Meakin, 21, Bristol Road, Ilkeston, Derbyshire, wishes to correspond with readers anywhere on sports and topics in general; all letters answered.

E. Wills, 18, Baker Street, Weston-super-Mare, Somersetshire, would like to hear from readers in Australia, America, South Africa and England. All letters answered.

Charles V. Breckon, 50, High Street, Congleton, Cheshire, would like to correspond with readers in United States, Spain, Mexico, India and the Gold Coast. All letters answered.

Ted Garton, 7, East View, Great Harwood, nr. Blackburn, Lancs., wishes to hear from readers anywhere.

Harry MacMahon, 50, Long Street, West Broken Hill, N.S.W., Australia, wants to hear from readers in Hawaii, Honolulu, Suva, and other places in the Pacific. All letters promptly answered.

26 DEPOSIT

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