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# NIPPER SEES IT THROUGH!

A THRILLING INCIDENT FROM THE ROUSING LONG COMPLETE YARN, FEATURING THE BOYS OF ST. FRANK'S, INSIDE.

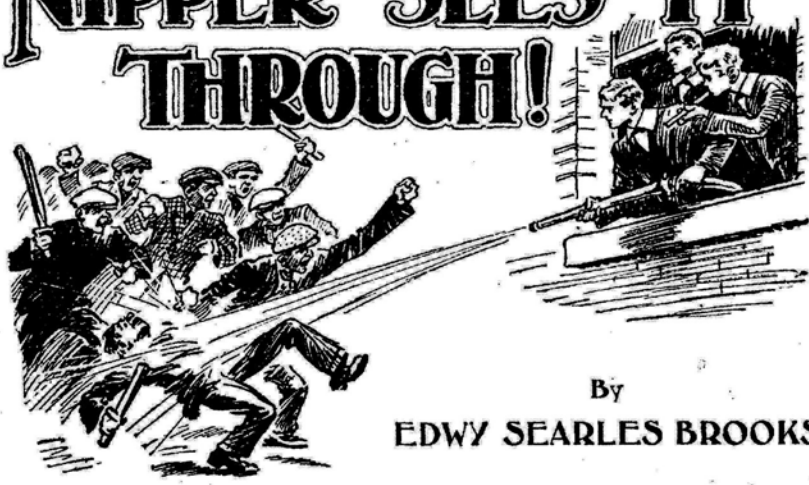
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With a roar the rebels swept down upon the ruffians and overpowered them, while Nipper, Handforth and Reggie Pitt went to the rescue of General Carfax and Bill Stubbs.

**FORCED TO LEAVE THEIR STRONGHOLD!**

# NIPPER SEES IT THROUGH!



By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

The St. Frank's rebels can thank their lucky stars that they've got such a leader as Nipper. They find themselves attacked by a gang of hooligans who employ methods to eject them which are anything but sporting, and matters reach such a critical stage that everything seems lost. But Nipper turns up trumps. How, you will discover when you read this breezy yarn.—Ed.

## CHAPTER 1.

### Handforth's Secret!

"A SECRET?" said Church, of the St. Frank's Remove.

Edward Oswald Handforth tiptoed to the door, listened for a moment, and then turned. His manner was mysterious, and there was an unusual gleam in his eye.

"Yes!" he whispered. "A secret, my sons!"

Church and McClure were not very impressed. Being Handforth's study chums, they knew all his little ways, and it was a habit of his to act mysteriously over the merest trifles. Yet they were compelled to admit that even the celebrated Edward Oswald had been rather more mysterious than usual on this occasion.

He had button-holed them in one of the lower corridors, and had beckoned them on by strange motions—until, at last, he had led them into their own little dormitory, on the first floor. And now they were alone. In all other parts of the rebel stronghold, the St. Frank's juniors were trying to while away the seemingly long and weary hours.

Actually, this building was the Modern House, but just at present it was the rebel fortress. The St. Frank's Junior School had seized it, had barricaded it, and were holding out against General Christopher Carfax, who had come to the old school for the especial purpose of quelling the barring-out.

Unfortunately for the fiery old soldier, the barring-out was still going strong, notwithstanding the fact that the Christmas holidays had intervened, and that the Senior School had gone home.

It was Edward Oswald Handforth who had been responsible for the starting of this revolt. He had been accused of assaulting Mr. Pycraft, the master of the Fourth Form, and rather than take the flogging to which

the Head had sentenced him, he had barricaded himself in Study D, together with Church and McClure.

From that small beginning the rebellion had spread, until now the whole of the Junior School was supporting Handforth. They knew that Handy was not guilty—that Marriott and Merrell, two cads of the Fourth Form, were really responsible—and they were determined to stand by him until such time as Marriott and Merrell confessed to the Head.

Unfortunately these two juniors had obtained special leave of absence, and they would not be back at St. Frank's for some time yet. Indeed, there was a possibility that they would not return at all. Nevertheless, the rebels intended to carry on until the truth of the Pycraft affair was made known to the school authorities.

"Yes, a secret!" said Handforth darkly.

"Well, let's have it!" exclaimed McClure, not without a trace of impatience. "You've been telling us about this secret for the last ten minutes. What is it, anyhow?"

"Yes, cough it up, Handy!" said Church.

Handforth took a deep breath.

"All right!" he said. "But first of all you've got to promise me, faithfully, that you'll keep it to yourselves."

"All right!" said his chums, in one voice.

"You promise?"

"Yes!"

"You promise not to tell another soul?"

"Yes, of course!" said Church and McClure.

"Honest injun?"

"Honest injun!" said the pair wearily.

Handforth looked relieved.

"That's all right, then!" he said, grinning. "I'm going to the village!"

"What?"

"You heard what I said!" declared Handforth coolly.

"But—but——"

"I'm going to the village, my lads."

"And is this—is this the secret?" demanded Church, in an indignant voice.

"Yes!"

"Great Scott!" said McClure. "Do you mean to say that you've been so jolly mysterious over a thing like that?"

"I needed to be mysterious," replied Handforth. "I know what you chaps are! For two pins, you would have gone to Nipper, or Pitt, or some of the others, and told them that I'd made up my mind to go to the village. And then the fatheads would have piled on me, and prevented me from going!"

Church and McClure looked thoroughly startled now.

"Why, you—you tricky bounder!" said McClure, aghast. "You've made us promise not to tell anybody!"

"Exactly!" grinned Handforth. "I'm fed up with all this inactivity. I don't mind admitting that I'm restless. Nothing's happened for two or three days, and I want some exercise. So I'm going to the village, to—to buy some stamps!"

"Stamps?" repeated Church, staring. "What do you want stamps for?"

"Never mind what I want them for," growled Handforth. "I'm going to get some! I'm going to the post-office. Absolutely nothing has happened since Gulliver and those other cads were booted out for being traitors. They've gone home now—and good riddance to them!"

"Yes, but why on earth do you want to go to the village?" asked Church. "It's—it's so idiotic! We can't be far from victory now. General Carfax has given up the fight, by the look of things——"

"Don't you believe it!" said Handforth. "The general is a master of strategy—at least, he thinks he is—and I'll bet my boots that he's preparing another big scheme. The fact is, I thought I might be able to get a clue or two, if I went out to the village!" he added carelessly. "I thought about doing some scouting work, you know."

Church and McClure were now thoroughly alarmed.

"You mustn't go, Handy!" urged Church. "Why, if Nipper knew about it, he'd call all the other rebels, and he'd squash you flat! He'd lock you in a cupboard—or in one of the cellars—until you came to your senses!"

"That's why I made you chaps promise to keep the secret!" nodded Handforth.

"But you're mad!" yelled McClure. "Look here, Handy, you're the ringleader of this barring-out——"

"And as the ringleader, I can do as I jolly well like!" interrupted Handforth aggressively. "Nipper's had the nerve to set himself up as the leader, but that's all rot!"

"It isn't rot! Nipper's the best leader of anybody," said McClure. "It's owing to his cool-headedness that we've carried on for so long. Without him, General Carfax would have whacked us long ago!"

"But you're the chap who started all the trouble," put in Church. "They wanted to expel you for something you didn't do, Handy, and so you kicked. All the rest of us supported you, and we'll keep on supporting you. But what's going to happen if you get collared?"

"I shan't get collared!" said Handforth coldly.



## CHAPTER 2.

### As Good As His Word!

CHURCH and McClure looked at one another desperately—and then they looked at Handforth ferociously.

"You—you tricky bounder!" said Church, in a thick voice. "You made us promise not to tell any of the others, and now we've got to keep to it!"

"Rather neat, wasn't it?" said Handforth, with a grin.

"But there's one thing we didn't promise!" said McClure grimly. "We didn't promise that we wouldn't come with you! And we *are* coming with you!"

"I'm not sure that I want you!" frowned Handforth. "You'll only get into trouble if you come."

"And you'll get into trouble if we don't come!" said Church tartly. "In fact, that's why we're coming—to keep our eyes on you, Handy! My dear chap, why can't you be sensible? Why can't you give up this——"

"That's enough!" interrupted Handforth, holding up his hand. "We don't want any arguments! I've said I'm going—and I'm going!"

"My dear chap, try to think, just for a minute!" urged McClure. "Handy, you mustn't go! You know as well as I do that General Carfax has got all sorts of men posted about, watching. And if you're collared, everything will go west! You're the fellow that General Carfax wants! You're the one who's been officially expelled, and we're all supporting you. We're all barring-out because of the injustice of it—because we believe in you. But if you're captured, you'll be sacked like a shot, and then there'll be nothing else to carry on for. Can't you realise the idiocy of it?"

"No, I can't!" said Handforth gruffly. "And if you're calling me an idiot, my son, I'll jolly soon dot you on the nose!"

Church and McClure gave it up. In their excitement and anxiety they had used wrong tactics. At any other time, perhaps, they would have acted differently But to urge Handforth not to go was the surest way of making him go.

If they had expressed indifference, it was quite probable that he would have forsaken the whole project. Edward Oswald Handforth was like that. He was perverse—he was obstinate. But, at the same time, he was very human.

Being a healthy boy—a boy, moreover, who loved activity and exercise—the recent stagnation had made him desperate.

There had been nothing but idleness for days. The rebel fortress had been left severely alone by General Carfax. Hardly a soul had been seen in the Triangle, or in the other sections of the school property. It was holiday-time, and the New Year had only just arrived.

In this quiet corner of Sussex, over a mile from the village of Bellton, and with all the other St. Frank's fellows away, the school was like a dead place. Except for that one stronghold of the rebels, everything was quiet.

Handforth was feeling the effect of this stagnation. He wanted to get out, if only for the run of it. It would be a bit of excitement—a bit of activity.

It wasn't a very nice afternoon for a jaunt, either. The sky was dull, with a promise of rain, or snow. A wind was moaning over the meadows, and the evening threatened to close down prematurely.

"How do you propose to get out, anyhow?" asked Church, with a glare. "Some of the other fellows are bound to spot you, and——"

"No, they won't!" replied Handforth, with a grin. "I've thought it all out."

"Oh!" said Church coldly. "And what's the idea?"

"Nothing much—but it's a brilliant one!" replied Handforth, with perfect calmness. "You remember that secret passage which leads from the common-room, downstairs, to the Ancient House?"

"What the dickens——"

"Well, we're going by that secret passage—at least, I'm going by it!" went on Handforth. "I'm not so sure that you chaps ought to come. In fact, I forbid you to come. I'm going out by way of that secret passage, and I shall get into the Ancient House—into one of the cellars. Then I can easily slip out of one of the gratings, and hop across to the lane. How's that, you chaps?"

Church and McClure were bound to admit that this plan was an excellent one. None of the general's men were watching the Ancient House, since it was this building that the general himself had commandeered for his own use and there was very little chance of Handforth meeting anybody down in the enemy's cellars. Until that moment, Church and McClure had quite forgotten the secret passage.

Yet they should have remembered it, since the rebel leaders had been captured at the very beginning of this barring-out, and they had been thrust, by General Carfax, into the Ancient House cellars. Much to the general's startled surprise, his prisoners had escaped, and to this day he did not know how they had done so. That secret of the underground passage was known only to the boys.

Handforth was as good as his word, too.

Without any further beating about the bush—without any more argument—he led the way downstairs. Church and McClure followed him like shadows. In no circumstances were they going to leave him. They knew well enough that he could not be trusted out alone. As sure as the sun was shining somewhere, so it was just as sure that Handforth would get into trouble if he were allowed out unattended.

Church and McClure were hoping against hope that the junior common-room would be filled, and that Handforth would not be able to slip through that secret panel which led into the hidden passage. But their hopes were dashed. For when they got to the common-room, it was empty.

Most of the rebels were in the dining-hall, where the fire was more cheerful, or in the studies or the senior day-room. Now that they were masters of the entire House, they had no liking for their own normal quarters. It was, after all, perfectly natural that this should be so.

"Here we are—just as I thought!" said Handforth, with satisfaction. "Not a soul about—and we can slip out in two jiffs. Come on!"

"Yes, but——"

"Are you coming, or not?" demanded Handforth aggressively. "By George! I've never known such chaps for arguing! If I have any more of it, I shall refuse to take you with me!"

Apparently he had overlooked the fact that he had refused to take them with him, not more than five minutes ago. But that was like Edward Oswald Handforth. One never knew quite what he was going to say, or do, next.

A minute later the chums of Study D were creeping silently out of the rebel stronghold—off on this apparently senseless escapade!



## CHAPTER 3.

### Just What Handforth Wanted!

"WELL, what about it?" asked Handforth triumphantly.

Everything had gone smoothly. They had got through the secret passage without any misadventure; they had found themselves in one of the Ancient House cellars and they had escaped from this place with ease. Now they were in Bellton Lane, with the open road in front of them, and without a soul in sight. Handforth was striding along, revelling in his new-found freedom.

"What about it?" he demanded again.

"Well, it's not so bad," admitted Church. "It's jolly good to be out again—to feel free for once. I'm not denying that it's been pretty rotten, hemmed in the Modern House for days. We're all fed up with it, if it comes to that."

"Then where's the harm of us dodging out for an hour?" asked Handforth. "Besides, we may be able to discover something. If we're lucky, we may get to hear about the general's scheme for the next attack. It's nearly dark now, and when we get back to St. Frank's, it'll be as black as pitch. My idea is to prowl round for a bit, and do some scouting work."

"Oh, help!" murmured McClure.

"Eh?"

"Nothing!" said Mac hastily. "It doesn't matter!"

The prospect of Handforth indulging in some scouting work was an alarming one. McClure thought it wiser to change the subject.

"But why go to the village?" he asked. "Why not cut through the wood, and have a good run along the towing path? Or go on to Bannington Moor, and have a breath of real air?"

"The air's just as good in the village!" retorted Handforth. "Besides, I want to show myself. I want those village rustics to see that we're not afraid of the general. I want everybody to know that we can come out just when we like. They're saying that we're prisoners, and that we daren't move. Well, we'll show 'em differently!"

It was evidently quite useless, and Church and McClure resigned themselves to the inevitable. Handforth meant to go to the village, and there was an end of it.

As they crossed the bridge near the end of the High Street, the winter's evening was rapidly drawing in. It was only possible to see for twenty or thirty yards ahead. The dusk was falling quickly, and one or two lights were already beginning to gleam behind the windows of the village shops.

"I tell you what!" said Handforth. "We'll go into the tuck shop, and get some cakes, eh? A regular load of them! We'll treat the chaps to a lot of doughnuts for tea!"

"That's not a bad idea!" said Church, nodding. "In fact, it's a brain-wave."

"Topping!" said McClure.

They were both struck by the same thought. For if Handforth was loaded up with parcels on the return journey, he would not be so keen for the scouting work. Church and McClure proceeded to eulogise on the wonderful character of this fresh suggestion. But in the middle of it, a sharp, wailing cry reached their ears.

"What was that?" said Handforth, coming to a halt.

"Sounded like a kid squalling!" replied Church. "No need to bother——"

"By George!" interrupted Handforth, his voice rising with anger. "Look there!"

Just down the opening of a little side lane, they beheld a burly, clumsy figure. They recognised it at once as that of Lumpy Bill, the village bully.

And Lumpy Bill was indulging in one of his favourite occupations. He was, in fact, maliciously and brutally twisting the ears of a small boy of about nine. The unfortunate youngster was helpless in the grasp of the bully, and his wails were cut short by one of Lumpy's hands which had been clapped over the victim's mouth.

"Shut your mouth!" came Lumpy Bill's growling voice. "Make faces at me, would you? I'll learn you, you little cub!"

He delivered a vicious punch at the small of the boy's back, and Handforth & Co. could hear the thud as Lumpy Bill's knuckles struck against the child's spine.

"You—you rotter!" roared Handforth furiously.

Lumpy Bill gave a start, and spun round. He was just in time to see Handforth leaping at him like an enraged bull.

"'Ere!" gasped Lumpy Bill, in dire alarm. "What the——"

Biff!

Lumpy Bill took it. He took it where he didn't want to take it—in the very centre of his ugly nose. And it was one of Handforth's most beautiful drives. The village

bully staggered back, howling like a stricken animal. Then he sat down in the hard road, and rolled completely over.

"You—you hulking great rotter!" panted Handforth, standing over him. "Get up! Get up, and let me knock you down again!"

"Hi!" howled Lumpy, sitting up. "'Ere, Sam! 'Elp!"

"That's right—call your pals!" said Handforth fiercely. "The more, the merrier! I'm just in the mood for a good scrap!"

"You cut off, kid!" said Church, turning to the small child, who was gazing apprehensively at Lumpy Bill. "You bunk while you've got the chance!"

The boy bunked—sobbing pitifully. And the sight of him running like that gave Handforth fresh strength. He seized Lumpy Bill by the scruff of the neck, and dragged him to his feet.

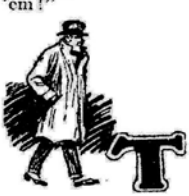
"Now then—I'm going to let you taste my right!" he said joyously. "That one I just gave you was a left! See if you can tell any difference!"

Crash!

Lumpy Bill did his best to dodge, but it was hopeless. Handforth was famous for his right-hand drives. The blow caught Lumpy Bill under the chin, and he went reeling over again This was just what Handforth wanted, and he was enjoying himself tremendously.

Then, just at that moment, with a series of yells, a number of other village fellows came running up They had heard their leader's shout, and they were eager to join in the affray.

"Lumme, some of them St. Frank's kids!" went up the shout. "Come on, mates—into 'em!"



## CHAPTER 4.

### Enter General Carfax!

THE affair had developed so suddenly that Church and McClure were hardly ready. They weren't such fire-eating fighters as Handforth.

All the same, they gave a good account of themselves—as Lumpy Bill's friends soon found out, to their cost.

Altogether there were five of the village chaps, and Handforth & Co. knew them well. They were Lumpy Bill's own particular set—and they represented the worst characters of Bellton.

There were plenty of excellent boys in the village, and the St. Frank's fellows were on the best of terms with them. But Lumpy Bill's crowd was beyond the pale. They were equally unpopular amongst the St. Frank's boys and the village worthies.

"That's the idea!" roared Handforth, as he saw Church and McClure fighting hard. "Keep it up, you chaps! I never hoped for anything as good as this!"

Church and McClure were not quite so sure about it being good. Church already possessed a nasty bulge over his left eye, and McClure was beginning to look somewhat groggy, after a concerted attack from two of the village bullies.

But they rallied, and Handforth came to their aid, too. The valiant Edward Oswald was worth any three of Lumpy Bill's set, and Handforth was sailing in with such energy, and with such vim, that the villagers were having a bad time of it.

As for Lumpy Bill himself, he was decidedly a wreck by this time, and he no longer took any interest in the fight. At the moment Lumpy was crawling away, with one black eye, a cut lip, and a puffy ear. He was dazed and dizzy, and his heart was black with rage.

"All right!" he snarled. "I'll get even with you, you young whelps!"

"Come back, and fight it out!" bellowed Handforth, as he continued battling against the others.

But Lumpy Bill slunk off, racked with pain; his companions after a very small sample of Handforth's fists, followed him. To be exact, the villagers were completely routed.

"Them young demons!" said Lumpy, with a gulp. "I'll get even with 'em for this! Yes, mates, I'll get even with 'em!"

In the darkness, they all vanished, and Handforth looked round indignantly when he found that he had no further enemies to conquer.

"Well I'm jiggered!" he exclaimed. "They've gone! All of 'em! Well, of all the rot! We haven't half finished!"

He looked round at his chums, and then he started. Church was just picking himself up, and there was a puffy, unnatural look about Church's visage. McClure as in rather better fettle, but it cannot truthfully be said that he was unmarked.

"Hurt, old man?" asked Handforth sympathetically.

"It's all right—I shall be better in a tick!" muttered Church, looking at Handforth in a bleary kind of way. "My hat! One of those cads chucked a stone at me, you know! It biffed me right on the head, and I went all dizzy!"

"The beasts!" said Handforth hotly. "So that's the way they fight, is it?"

"Cave! gasped McClure suddenly.

"Eh? What the——"

"The general!" hissed Mac. "Quick, you asses! Bunk!"

They looked round, and, sure enough, the tall, impressive figure of General Christopher Carfax was striding down the lane in the gloom He was just entering the village street, and he was alone.

"Nothing to be afraid of!" said Handforth coolly. "I've a good mind to go up to the general, and to——"

"No you won't!" said Church. "Grab him, Mac!"

Between them they managed to drag Handforth down the side lane, and General

Carfax passed on without even knowing that the rebels were so close at hand.

Handforth didn't care at all. He was feeling better now—he was contented. True, his knuckles were hurting him somewhat, and he had one or two marks on his face. But they were trifles.

"Let's get back to St. Frank's!" said Church eagerly. "Now that the general's in the village we don't want to go there. Let's get back while we can!"

Much to the relief of the pair, Handforth agreed. He was feeling so satisfied after that scrap with Lumpy Bill & Co., that he would have consented to anything. He had had a good old fight, and he was himself again.

"Well, it was worth coming down for, wasn't it?" he asked gaily, as they set off at a sharp walk. "We've had a mill with those village louts, and we've routed them. Yes, by George, we sent them howling about their business!"

"We shall have to tell the other chaps," said Church.

"Why shall we?"

"Because they'll wonder why we're looking so battered," replied Church, as he tenderly felt his face. "Not that it matters, anyhow. Won't they be jealous, too?" he added, not without a touch of sarcasm.

"You bet they will!" replied Handforth, failing to notice that sarcasm. "Won't there be a row when they know that we've been out, and that we've had a scrap with the village louts, and won the day! All the rest of the chaps will be green with jealousy!"

"Oh, rather!" said his chums.

But they didn't feel very enthusiastic. From their point of view, the whole affair had been futile. Nothing had been gained—except a black eye or two, and a number of painful bruises.

But yet they were wrong.



That little affair with Lumpy Bill & Co. was destined to lead to the most startling results!

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### CHAPTER 5.

#### Lumpy Bill Overhears Something!

LUMPY BILL crouched in a doorway of the High Street, hidden by the shadows. He slunk there, very much after the fashion of a whipped cur.

"I'll get even!" he muttered savagely.

His point of view was curious. One might have wondered what he had to get even about—since he had only received the thrashing that he deserved. He knew well enough that Handforth had only attacked him because he, in turn, had been attacking a helpless child

But Lumpy Bill did not look at things in this way.

He had always had a grudge against the St Frank's fellows. There was a constant feud between his set—of which he was the leader—and the decent fellows of St. Frank's. But it was very seldom that Lumpy Bill received such a hiding as he had just obtained from Handforth's hands.

And Lumpy Bill allowed his venom to encompass the entire rebel force. He hated them all—and his feeble mind sought some way in which he could "get even."

But he might have spared himself the trouble, since his wits were not equal to the task. While he was thinking in this aimless way, he beheld a form. It was a form he did not care to see, and he cowered further back into the shadow of that deep doorway.

The figure was that of P.-c. Sparrow, the village constable. Lumpy Bill had no reason to like Mr. Sparrow. They were natural enemies

During childhood, Lumpy Bill had played every kind of mean trick upon the burly, good-natured policeman, aided by his fellow urchins. And now that Lumpy had grown older, his animosity was greater than ever. For Sparrow was never tired of chiding him on his idle habits, and advising him to be more worthy of the village.

So Lumpy Bill crouched further back, and waited for P.-c. Sparrow to pass.

But P.-c. Sparrow did not pass. For just then another form loomed up out of the evening gloom, and paused. The newcomer was General Christopher Carfax.

The constable saluted smartly.

"Dull this evening, sir," he remarked. "Looks like there might be some rain before morning."

"I shouldn't be surprised!" replied the general, in his loud, booming voice. "I shouldn't be at all surprised, Sparrow."

"Things any better up at the school, sir?" asked the constable respectfully.

The general gave a snort.

"No, by gad!" he grunted. "No better at all! Confound 'em! Infernal young puppies—that's what they are! Game, though—yes, they're game enough! Stubborn as mules, too!"

The constable coughed in a discreet manner.

"You've used the right word, sir," he said. "They're game. Never see'd anything like it—not in all my experience! It's like 'em to stay there during the Christmas holidays. That there youngster, Master Handforth—he's a one!"

"They're all the same—they're all impudent and unruly and—and full of pluck!" said General Carfax fiercely. "That's the worst of it—although, by crackey, I can't blame them for being plucky. They don't know when they're beaten, constable. That's the trouble!"

"They was allus like that, sir," said Sparrow, shaking his head.

"But they'll soon know their master!" said the general, with a sudden explosion. "Yes, by gad, I'll teach them something this time!



**There came a crash as something hurtled through the window. Next moment Church uttered a groan an staggered back into the arms of Handforth and Fullwood.**

They won't be able to play fast and loose with me for much longer. Young scamps! I'd give fifty pounds—spot cash—if they could only be forced out of that stronghold of theirs!"

"That's a lot of money, sir!" said Sparrow, greatly impressed.

"Yes, fifty pounds!" repeated the general aggressively. "I don't care how they're driven out, so long as they're beaten! That's the main thing, Sparrow! But—I'm not done! Sooner or later, I shall conquer them. And then, by crackey, they'll suffer!"

The constable looked rather surprised.

"Why, sir, you don't mean that about the fifty pounds, do you?" he asked.

"Yes, I do!" roared the general. "I'll give it to anybody if they'll only drive those boys out! No questions asked, either!"

The old soldier did not seem to realise that he was making an admission of failure in this very speech. If he was willing to give fifty pounds to an outsider for driving the rebels out, then it conclusively proved that he himself had failed. It also proved that he had no immediate prospect of success.

And this, in fact, was the truth.

General Christopher Carfax was desperate. No matter what scheme he adopted, the rebels had always beaten him. Only recently he had seized all their food, and then found that they had recaptured it. Now they were more firmly entrenched than ever. Their spirit was unconquerable.

"Well, I can't stand here all the evening, talking!" went on the general gruffly. "Mind you keep out of this, constable!"

"I shall, sir," said Sparrow promptly

"It's none of your business, this quarrel!" said the general. "It's just between the boys and myself. And I can deal with 'em, too—without any help from the police!"

"I'm sure you can, sir!" said Sparrow, touching his helmet. "Why, I wouldn't go near the school, not for a pension! I know them youngsters—and they are a lively lot o' young sparks. But you can't get away from it that them boys are showin' a lot of grit!"

"Impudent young puppies!" stormed the general. "That's what they are! Impudent young puppies!"

And he strode on, fuming.

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## CHAPTER 6.

### Lumpy Bill Senior Gets an Idea!

"FIFTY quid!"

Lumpy Bill muttered those words in a greedy, excited voice.

"Fifty quid!" he repeated breathlessly.

It came into Lumpy's head, at that moment, that he and his companions might be able to make a big attack on the Modern House, and drive the rebels out. Then his limited intelligence came to his aid, and assured him that the thing was impossible. In the first place, there were scores of those rebels, and their doings were the talk of the whole countryside. The St. Frank's juniors were determined and desperate—and they were not to be easily driven out of their fortress.

Lumpy Bill remembered that his own particular set was limited. The majority of the village boys were decent, and all their sympathies were with the St. Frank's fellows. They wouldn't consent to any attack on the school.

"Fifty quid!" muttered Lumpy. "It's a big pile o' money, and I don't see how I can get hold of it! Most of these chaps in the village wouldn't help!"

So Lumpy's heart sank within him. The fifty quid which, for a moment, had seemed measurably within his grasp, now eluded him. He hunched himself up, and moved out of the shadow of the doorway. He was feeling slightly better now. He knew that his face was battered, and when he walked he ached in every limb. He wanted to get home, so that he could crawl up to his bed and take some rest.

He was cautious as he walked. He didn't want to meet any of his cronies—for he felt certain that they would round on him. They had all fared badly against Handforth & Co., and they were sure to blame Lumpy for starting the fight in the first place.

As it happened, the village bully reached his father's cottage without meeting a soul. There was a light burning in the front window, so Lumpy opened the little gate and walked round to the rear. He was hoping that he would be able to get in without his father hearing him. For Lumpy had no love for Mr. William Stubbs.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Stubbs was not Lumpy's father at all—but his stepfather.

Not many months since, his father had died, and his mother had married again; Lumpy's stepfather was one of the worst characters in the village. He was a loafer, a racing tout, a hulking good-for-nothing in every sense.

Incidentally, Lumpy's mother was little better. She was quite a character in Bellton, and P.-c. Sparrow had arrested her on more than one occasion. Her appearances in Bannington police court had been quite frequent.

Lumpy Bill's hopes were dashed to the ground, for he had hardly set foot in the little kitchen before there was a growl from the doorway which led into the sitting-room, and his stepfather stood before him. Bill Stubbs was a big man, with a bloated, dissipated face. His chin was unshaven, and his hair was towsled.

"Oh, so there you are!" said Stubbs, growling. "Where have you been, you young cub?"

"Nowhere!" said Lumpy Bill sullenly.

"Yes, you 'ave!" said his stepfather. "Fighting again, eh? Haven't I told you to stop fighting? Come here!"

"I won't!" panted Lumpy Bill.

He eyed his stepfather cautiously, and not without fear. He had received more than one hiding from Bill Stubbs.

"Come here!" roared the man. "I don't want none o' your lip! When I tell you to come, just you come, or I'll give you a clip on the side of your 'ead!"

"What do you want me for?" panted Lumpy.

His stepfather made a rush at him, and Lumpy had no time to escape.

"Wait a minute," gasped the youth. "'Ere, keep your hands off me! Promise not to touch me, and I'll show you how to make fifty quid!"

Mr. Stubbs was so surprised that he held his hand.

"Fifty quid?" he repeated suspiciously. "What do you mean?"

"It's that there General Carfax—him up at the school!" said Lumpy Bill hastily. "He was talking to old Sparrow just now, and he said he'd give fifty quid if them boys could be shifted out of the school. He meant it, too—every word!"

"Oh, he did, did he?" said Bill Stubbs, rubbing his scrubby chin. "He'd give fifty quid to get them boys out, eh? I don't wonder at it, the young demons! Enough trouble they've caused. I wouldn't mind layin' hands on that money, neither!" he added musingly. "And it ought to be pretty easy to get them kids out."

"Easy?" sneered Lumpy. "Try it, and see."

"If only I could get some of the boys over 'ere, the job could be done as easy as winkin'!" went on his stepfather. "They're the fellers for a job like this!"

"Are you talkin' about the chaps over in Bannington?" asked Lumpy Bill. "Them as usually goes on the race-course?"

But his father made no reply. He was thinking. Mr. Stubbs was not lacking in intelligence. He was in close touch with a disreputable race gang which had, at the moment, made its headquarters in Bannington. And he happened to know that the "boys" had had a very bad week. At the Bannington races they had lost consistently, and they were all broke.

Stubbs had left them only that afternoon, and he knew that they were unable to leave the town, because they had no money—and many of them were in difficulties regarding their next meal. They were a low down lot—a disreputable crew.

And here was a chance of getting fifty pounds—just for driving a handful of boys out of a barricaded building! Yes, and there was a chance of getting hold of some loot, too! That was another thought which occurred to the ingenious Mr. Stubbs!



## CHAPTER 7.

### Easy Money!

LUMPY BILL eyed his stepfather narrowly, and he felt relieved. He could see that now he was in no fear of a hiding.

"Well, what do you think of it?" he ventured, at last.

"You ain't foolin' me?" asked Mr. Stubbs, with a suspicious look. "This 'ere's true what you said?"

"True as I stand 'ere," said Lumpy. "I 'eard the general with my own ears—not a quarter of an hour ago. 'I'd give fifty quid if them boys could be got out,' he says. 'Fifty quid, Sparrow!' he says. 'And no questions asked, neither!'"

"No questions asked, eh?" said Stubbs cunningly. "Looks to me like as if the general is a bit desperate. I don't wonder! Them boys have been giving him a twistin' one way and another. I dessay it'll be worth fifty quid to him to have the whole thing over and done with."

The more Mr. Stubbs thought about it, the more he favoured the idea. Why, it would be child's play! It wasn't to be expected that boys could drive these rebels out.

But men! And men such as Stubbs had in mind! A racecourse gang—a party of regular toughs, drawn from the worst slums in Bannington, Helmford and Southampton. Among that gang, too, were quite a number of London ruffians who found the Metropolis too unhealthy for them at the moment.

Not only did Stubbs think of the fifty pounds reward, but he had his eye on the possibility of booty, too. After they had driven all the boys out, they would have the Modern House to themselves for a spell, and in a very short space of time—ten minutes even—they could lay their hands on lots of valuable articles. Yes, it was well worth thinking about—well worth acting upon!

"I'd best not speak to the general about it," muttered Stubbs. "I don't s'pose he'd give *orders* to have the place stormed. But if we done it, and got the boys out, it would be a different thing. No questions asked, eh? It's a cert!"

Without a word, he turned on his heel and lumbered out of the cottage. An idea had just come to him—and it made him hurry. Walking rapidly, he arrived at the end of the village just as the bus from Caistowe appeared. It didn't actually go through Bellton, but only skirted the end of the High Street.

Stubbs climbed on board, and throughout the journey to Bannington he thought of his plan. When he arrived at the local town, he made his way to the slum district.

Hard by the gasworks, he turned into a disreputable inn. Inside, he found a group of rough-looking men. They were all glum and miserable—and a more unprepossessing crowd would have been hard to find.

"Back again, Bill?" asked one of them, looking at Stubbs.

"Yes, and I've got a job for you, boys!" said Lumpy's stepfather. "Can't talk about it in here. Come outside!"

"A job?" said one or two of the racecourse roughs.

They followed Stubbs out into the street, and in a few moments they were collected under a lamp-post. There were fifteen or sixteen of them, and they gathered round Stubbs eagerly. In a way, they looked upon this man as a leader.

"What's the game, Bill?" asked one of them.

"It's easy pickin'—that's what it is!" replied Stubbs. "Have you fellers 'eard about the row over at St. Frank's School?"

"What row?" asked an ugly-looking rough with one eye. "We don't want to 'ave anything to do with schoolboys!"

"But this is different," said Stubbs.

And he proceeded to outline the situation. He told his companions how the St. Frank's fellows were defying General Carfax, and how they had barricaded themselves into one of the school buildings.

"The trouble is, this old codger can't get 'em out," said Stubbs. "It ought to be easy, too. They're only a crowd of namby-pamby schoolboys. Young gents, if you know what I mean—the classy sort. My idea is for us to go along, and shove 'em out of that place."

"Us?" said one of the others. "You ain't ill, are you, Bill?"

"I don't want none o' your sarcasm!" frowned Stubbs. "The fact is, this general bloke has offered thirty quid to anybody who can get them boys out. Thirty quid—down on the nail—with no questions asked!"

Mr. Stubbs had emphasised the word "thirty" very particularly. For it had suddenly occurred to his cunning brain that there was no need to be perfectly frank. He would see General Carfax after the boys had been removed, and he would collect the fifty pounds. Then, afterwards, he would divide thirty of it among the gang, keeping his own share of the money. In that way, he would be able to pocket twenty pounds for himself.

"Besides, there's more in it, too!" he went on. "This school is one of the biggest in the country—with swell cutlery an' silver an' all that sort o' thing. These boys 'ave been playin' fast an' loose with all the school stuff for weeks. It'll be lyin' about by the 'andful!"

"That's true enough!" said one of the men. "Lumme, mates, it's worth it, ain't it? At the worst, we shall touch over a quid each—an' we're all broke."

"That's it!" said Stubbs. "It won't take

us more than half an hour to walk over there, an' we'll have the kids out in two minutes. It's money for nothin'! An' think of the stuff we can pick up, too—after we've chucked the kids out o' their stronghold, as they call it."

"What about this general bloke?" asked somebody. "He'll 'ave the p'lice on us if 'e misses anything!"

"How can 'e miss anything?" demanded Stubbs impatiently. "He doesn't know where the things are hisself! The boys 'ave been messin' everything up, an' there'll be nothin' missin' for weeks—until everything's straightened out!"

The argument was a sound one, and after a further talk the gang was ready. Other men had come up by now—all of the same type. When Stubbs and his crowd moved off on their mission, they numbered twenty-six strong.

They felt that they had an easy task in front of them—but then, they didn't know the St. Frank's rebels!



## CHAPTER 8.

### The Attack!

"GOOD gad!"

Archie Glenthorne, the Genial Ass of the Remove, came to a halt in the middle of the lobby of the Modern House, and he adjusted his monocle with great care.

"What's the matter with you, dummy?" asked Handforth.

"I rather think, dear old battered one, that I'm the chappie to ask that question?" said Archie. "I mean to say——"

"I'm not battered, you ass!" frowned Handforth.

"Well, not exactly, although the good old features are slightly wonky," said Archie. "I was really thinking of these poor chappies. I don't wish to be personal, Church, old boy, but it seems to me that the good old visage has side-slipped!"

"We've been having a fight!" said Church bluntly.

"Oh, rather!" agreed Archie. "A fight, what? I see what you mean! One of those good old scraps, as it were. Well, dash it, it seems to me that Handforth has gone rather too far this time——"

"You prize idiot!" interrupted Handforth. "You don't think I knocked these chaps about like this, do you? We've been down to the village, and we had a scrap with Lumpy Bill and some of his pals."

"What's that?" came an inquiry from Nipper, as he hurried down the stairs with Reggie Pitt and Fullwood and one or two of the other rebels. "Did you say that you've just been to the village, Handy?"

"Yes!" grinned Handforth. "We've had a fine old time!"

"No wonder we couldn't locate you, then!" said Fullwood. "Of all the nerve! What on earth have you been doing in the village?"

"You—you reckless ass!" said Nipper, not without anger. "What possessed you to take such a chance, Handy? If you had been captured, the whole game would have been up!"

"That's what we told him!" said McClure. "But he wouldn't listen!"

"When did you go?" asked Buster Boots, of the Fourth.

"Just before darkness," replied Church. "Handforth got a sudden idea into his head to go to the village, and you know what he's like when he gets an idea! Steam-hammers can't knock it out of his skull!"

"But why didn't you tell us?" asked Nipper, somewhat heatedly. "If we had known, we should have piled on Handforth, and——"

"We couldn't tell you!" interrupted Church. "Handy asked us to keep a secret, but he didn't tell us what the secret was until after we'd promised. So we were helpless!"

Reggie Pitt grinned.

"Our Handy is getting wily in his old age," he chuckled. "That's the refreshing part of Handy, you know—always doing something new!"

Handforth looked at the juniors coldly.

"I'm blessed if I can see what all the fuss is about," he said. "What's the matter with you? We've come back, haven't we?"

"Yes, luckily!" said Nipper. "That's the surprising part of the whole affair. What did you go to the village for, anyhow—and who did you see there?"

"Lumpy Bill and his pals!" said Handforth, with satisfaction. "We had a fine old scrap, too. Lumpy is looking like a jelly now. I blacked his eyes, and gave him a pair of thick ears, and generally mangled him up!"

"Handy's been spoiling for a fight for days!" chuckled Fullwood. "I expect he got to such a state of impatience that he couldn't wait any longer. Well, there's no harm done, as far as I can see."

"I'm not so sure about that," growled Nipper. "It's quite enough for us to be at enmity with General Carfax. Lumpy Bill can't be particularly pleased with Handy after that scrap, and he might cause some trouble."

Handforth snorted.

"A fat lot of trouble that beggar can cause!" he said tartly. "He may be vindictive, and he may be a bullying beast, but we needn't be afraid of him—or of his pals, either. They're only a handful, anyhow!"

The other juniors agreed with Edward Oswald. Indeed, that aspect of the matter was soon forgotten. Fellows came crowding round, eager to hear of the adventure, and most of them were envious of the chums of Study D.

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For while the bulk of rebels had been imprisoned in their fortress, Handforth & Co. had ventured out, and had tasted of the delights of freedom. For the juniors were becoming sorely impatient at their prolonged idleness. They wanted to be out—to go home—to enjoy the delights of Christmas and the New Year. It was rather too late for Christmas now—but the holidays were not yet over.

Still, they had sworn to support Handforth to the bitter end, and none of them had the slightest idea of surrender. They would stick it out—they would beat General Carfax at his own game.

So Handforth & Co. were envied by the others, and when they had had their tea, they went upstairs to one of the upper windows to take a spell at look-out duty.

The evening was now as black as pitch, and heavy clouds were scudding across the sky, driven by a moaning wind.

It was rather peculiar that Handforth & Co. should no sooner take their positions at their posts than a warning cry came from the other end of the building.

"Get ready, you chaps!" shouted somebody. "Enemy about to attack!"

"What!"

"By George!" gasped Handforth. "At last!"

In less than a moment the rebel stronghold was astir from end to end. The enemy was about to attack! It was the signal they had all hoped for for days!



### CHAPTER 9.

#### An Unexpected Resistance!

"EASY!" said Mr. William Stubbs, in a coarse voice.

They had climbed over the wall eagerly, and now they stood surveying the task that lay ahead of them. And it certainly did look easy. The Modern House was quite an ordinary-looking school building—picturesque, and of great architectural beauty. But it

seemed to present no difficulty from Bill Stubbs' point of view.

"What about the old boy?" asked one of the other men. "Think he'll interfere?"

"Not likely!" said Stubbs. "He'll be only too glad to let us go ahead. He wants them boys chucked out—an' we're 'ere to do the chuckin'! I know these kids!" he went on contemptuously. "They've been causin' trouble here for weeks. This old bloke who's in charge of things is too durned squeamish. But *we'll* 'ave 'em out!"

The others, with many coarse words, agreed that Bill Stubbs had spoken the truth. It seemed a very simple matter to them—and they were even doubtful if General Carfax was actually willing to pay the thirty pounds. What could be simpler than to break into those windows, to grapple with the boys, and pitch them out?

All the members of this race-gang were thinking of another thing, too. Once the boys were out, they would be able to loot the Modern House from end to end. In the confusion they would be able to fill their pockets with all manner of valuables. The actual money was nothing. It was the thought of the spoils which led these roughs to embark upon the adventure.

"Ready, mates?" asked Stubbs, looking round at the shadowy forms near him

"Yes, an' we might as well get it over," said one of the others. "Come on—one rush ought to be enough. We'll soon be inside."

Practically all of them had armed themselves with stout sticks, and, without any attempt to keep to any settled plan, they advanced.

The men ran in all directions, making for the various lighted windows of the ground floor. If they had any idea in mind at all, it was to smash the windows with their sticks, to climb through, and to chase the boys out.

But they were only half-way across the open space before a sudden yell rang out from the roof of the Modern House.

"Get ready, you chaps!" it roared. "They're coming!"

"Hurrah!"

"We're ready for 'em!"

The attackers were surprised at that sudden roar of defiance, and they were still more surprised at the hissing rain of peas which descended upon them at that moment.

The roughs had believed that there would be no such defence. A party of yelling schoolboys, a few feeble attempts to prevent the entry, and then it would be over. The reality was vastly different.

Hisssssss! Hisssssss!

The peas came down in a deadly cascade, shot from a score of peashooters. From the "battlements" of the fortress the rebels could only see a scattered enemy force. At the moment the boys believed that they were up against the general's men, as hitherto. They had no clue yet to the actual character of their new attackers.

But the general's men were gentlemen compared to this racecourse gang. Indeed, the old soldier had made a point of employing only respectable men—ex-service men mainly, and such like. Stubbs and his crowd were nothing but the dregs of humanity.

"Let 'em have another volley!" came Handforth's roar. "Come on, you rotters! Where's the general? Why isn't he leading you? By George! Do you think you can drive us out like this?"

Handforth was feeling rather disappointed. He had been hoping that something new was about to develop. After all this time, General Carfax ought to have evolved some novel method of assault. But, if the preliminaries were anything to go by, it seemed that this attack was to be the most elementary of any. The enemy force had no discipline whatever.

"Don't take no notice, boys!" roared Stubbs. "They're only kids! No need to be afraid! Come on—let's make a quick job of it!"

"I thought you said they was 'armless kids?" growled one of the other men. "They're peltin' us already!"

"It won't 'urt you!" snapped Stubbs.

And Lumpy Bill's stepfather lumbered forward to set an example to the others. He was thinking of that fifty pounds, and the twenty that he could privately pocket.

Once again the attacking force advanced, and now they made a blind rush. It was hopeless from the start. As they came within range of the lower windows, another order rang out.

Whiz! Whiz!

Scores of missiles came hurtling through the lower windows. Many of them burst in the faces of the roughs, and the air became filled with curses.

This new form of defence consisted of ordinary paper bags, filled with cinders, soot and flour. All that flour that had been rendered uneatable in the general's last "big push" was now coming in very handy. It was no good for food, but it made excellent ammunition.

Crash! Splosh! Crash!

Eggs were coming now—the majority of them in a state of decay. The racecourse roughs broke ranks blindly, still cursing horribly. They fell back and got out of range. They had had their first taste of the St. Frank's rebels, and they were beginning to reorganise their ideas!

## CHAPTER 10.

### The General Looks On!



"FUNNY!" said Nipper, frowning.

"Beastly funny!" said Fullwood. "You mean these — these hooligans?"

"Yes," nodded Nipper. "I can't understand it! General Carfax's men haven't acted

like this before—and they haven't been so disorganised, either. There's something rummy about this business, Fully."

"I was thinking exactly the same thing," said Ralph Leslie Fullwood. "I don't believe they're the general's men at all!"

"I'm jolly certain they're not," put in Handforth, joining them. "Look at 'em—all backing away, and collecting near the school wall!"

"Wait a *minute*!" said Nipper grimly.

They were standing on the Modern House roof, in the front of the building, and from this vantage point they could look right across the Triangle. Below them, every window was filled with eager rebels. It was just the same at the other windows—those that overlooked the East Square and the School House. Every fellow was at his post.

But so far hardly any defensive tactics had been necessary. The strange enemy had retreated in dire confusion.

"They didn't expect any trouble at all, by the look of it," said Handforth, in a puzzled voice. "Who the dickens are they, anyhow? And where's Nipper gone to?" he added curiously.

"No good asking me," said Church. "Here he comes, though."

Nipper was carrying a cumbersome object. It was a huge headlamp from a motor-car—an old-fashioned one. But it had recently been converted by Nipper, and now there was a wire lead affixed to it, the other end of which led down to an electric light point indoors.

"Our searchlight!" said Nipper briefly.

"Good man!" grinned Handforth. "Now we'll see something!"

Nipper touched a switch, and a dazzling beam of light shot out from the lamp, and hovered uncertainly over the Triangle for a moment. Then it became steady, and in the circle of radiance were a number of figures. They stared dazedly at the light, and then scattered with frantic haste, trying to escape that tell-tale beam.

"Well, I'm blessed!" said Nipper, in amazement.

"Why, they're regular hooligans!" ejaculated Handforth. "Look at 'em! Rough-looking rotters, with chokers round their necks! I've seen men like this in charabancs, coming from race meetings."

"Handy, old man, you've hit it!" said Nipper grimly. "These aren't the general's ordinary men. They're a race gang!"

"Good gad!" said Archie. "You don't absolutely mean to say, dear old lad, that the general has employed a party of frightful race-track bullies to drive us out? I mean, dash it, there's a dashed limit!"

There were many other expressions of indignation, too.

"I can't understand it," muttered Nipper. "Hang it, the general wouldn't descend to such shabby methods! He's used a few questionable kinds of strategy, but he hasn't played a low-down game of this kind before. What can it mean?"

"He must be getting desperate—that's all," said Handforth. "By George! He won't get his beastly underlings to drive us out in a hurry. They're only a rabble, at the best."

"Look out! They're making another rush!" said Fullwood.

A number of orders were instantly shouted. Every rebel became alert. The searchlight waved to and fro, revealing the intentions of the roughs. They were on the point of making a second assault.

"I say—look!" exclaimed Nipper suddenly. "Down there—right in the centre of this beam! Stubbs—the village good-for-nothing!"

"Why, so it is!" said Reggie Pitt. "But all these other men are strangers. They don't belong to this district."

"Stubbs!" repeated Nipper, frowning. "That's rummy! Now I come to think of it, Stubbs is Lumpy Bill's stepfather."

Handforth started.

"Lumpy Bill!" he repeated. "You—you don't mean——"

"Well, it looks queer, doesn't it?" said Nipper. "You pulverised Lumpy Bill this evening, Handy, and here's his stepfather, leading a gang of racecourse toughs! To my mind, it looks like a case of two and two making four."

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

So this was the fruit of his escapade! It startled him. But he hadn't much time to ponder over the matter, for the attackers were coming on again, and the defenders were all needed.

Not that the attack had any effect.

Once again the enemy was beaten back. Pea-shooters came into action, and now hose-pipes were added to the defence system. From three different points the jets of water came hissing out, taking the roughs completely by surprise.

They fell back, gasping and cursing.

Meanwhile, over in the Ancient House, at one of the windows, stood General Christopher Carfax. He had been looking on for some time, astonished at first, and then pleased. He didn't know who these men were, and their sudden arrival filled him with wonder.

Without any urging, they were attempting to drive the rebels out!

"Good!" muttered the old soldier. "Splendid! By gad, I haven't the faintest idea what it means, but they can go ahead! I'll do nothing!"

He would neither urge them nor hinder them, but he would stand there and watch. Afterwards he could make a few inquiries, and discover the truth of this surprising development.

The general had forgotten all about his words to P.-c. Sparrow.



## CHAPTER 11.

### Getting Serious!

"THIRTY quid!" said one of the defeated roughs, with withering contempt. "I should think it is worth thirty quid! You never told us these boys were barricaded in, an'——"

"How was I to know?" snapped Stubbs. "I thought they were only a crowd of kids. You ain't goin' to let 'em beat you, are you? We ain't afraid of a little water! Why not make a big rush, an' get straight in?"

"We'll half kill 'em when we do get in!" snarled one of the others.

These ruffians were now in a very ugly mood.

Their initial efforts being frustrated, they were ready for any mischief. Decent men might have accepted defeat; they might have realised that the job was too big for them. But these hooligans were criminals at heart, and this resistance only made them the more desperate.

"We'll get 'em out!" growled one of the men. "We'll do it even if we 'ave to smash the place up! We ain't goin' to be bested by a crowd of schoolboys!"

This particular racecourse gang prided itself on its fighting abilities. It had been victorious in more than one "gang war," and it took rather a pride in the fact that nearly every one of its members had served a term of imprisonment.

For them to be defied by a crowd of mere schoolboys was something new!

"We want some light!" said Stubbs. "Ain't there any wood about here? Let's make some bonfires! We shall see what we're doin' then."

"That ain't a bad idea," said one of the others. "Come on, you fellows! We'll soon get some wood, an' then we'll have some fires goin'. Can't see a darned thing in this darkness."

The searchlight had been extinguished, and every other light in the Modern House had been put out, too. The rebel defenders were crowding at the windows and barricades, better off for the lack of lights. For every lighted window was a mark, and the glow dazzled them, too.

It was better to be in darkness. For while they were almost hidden from the enemy, they could clearly see the moving forms in the Triangle.

"What are they up to now?" asked Nipper wonderingly. "They seem to be breaking into the gym, by the sound of it. I rather think the police ought to be here. These men are dangerous."

"But they'll never drive us out!" said Handforth.

Nipper made no reply. He was uneasy. He didn't like the way in which things were going. True, these men had done practically nothing so far, but there were many indications that they were now on the point of getting reckless. And when a gang of racecourse toughs gets reckless, the consequences are liable to be grave!

Crash—crash!

Ominous sounds were coming from the gymnasium, and the rebels could now see that the men were staggering out of the building, heavily laden. But in that gloom it was impossible to discover the exact nature of their tactics.

"Better switch the searchlight on again!" advised Handforth.

"I'm doing it!" said Nipper.

Click!

The light shot out, and at the same moment there were a large number of shouts from the rebels. To their amazement they saw that their strange attackers had robbed the gym of all its furniture. Folding chairs, tables, gymnastic appliances, and other articles were being dumped in the centre of the Triangle, near the fountain.

"Great Scott!" shouted Fullwood. "They're going to make a bonfire of all that furniture!"

"My only hat!"

"What's the matter with the general?" roared Handforth. "Why doesn't he come out and stop it?"

The rebels didn't know it, but General Carfax was a much puzzled man. He was viewing these developments with great uneasiness. Yet he hesitated to interfere. He was hoping against hope that the rebels would be beaten; that they would be driven out of their stronghold, and scattered.

The old soldier was sick and tired of this guerilla warfare, and if there was any chance of the victory coming unexpectedly into his hands, he would grasp it. And so he hesitated—so he waited. He would hold his hand a little longer.

Some of the other men were coming up now, carrying cans of petrol. They had been raiding the garages. They were in a reckless frame of mind, for it was apparent to them that the school was deserted, except for these schoolboys. And the prospect of loot was constantly at the back of their minds.

"There's a couple of cars in the gerridge!" announced one of the roughs, as he arrived with the petrol. "It'll be easy, mates! We can get away in 'em when we've done!"

This was good news. Many of these men had stolen motor-cars before now. They were all crooks and criminals.

A roar sounded as somebody threw a match upon the petrol-soaked bonfire. The effect was instantaneous. Tongues of flame went shooting upwards. Where darkness had prevailed, a lurid, flickering glare now held sway.

"Now we'll get 'em!" shouted Stubbs. "We'd best make for one spot, mates! See those two lower windows? We'll smash clean through 'em, an' then we'll give these kids somethin' to be goin' on with!"



**Tied to a post at the foot of the stairs, Bill Stubbs and his gang of ruffians found the bound and gagged figure of General Carfax. "Who's this?" demanded Stubbs viciously.**

Never had the old school been so menaced. As the minutes passed, these hooligans were getting more and more desperate.

"Did you see that?" said Nipper tensely. "The fools give themselves away! They're going to attack those two windows, just against the main door! There's no reason in their actions. They're telling us everything they mean to do."

"So much the better!" growled Hand. The rebels were able to concentrate their strength. They knew exactly where the hooligans were going to attack, and when the next onslaught came the result was even a more foregone conclusion than before.

There was one erratic rush—one stream of foul curses—and then the battle became chaos. Pea-shooters sent their hissing messages, hose-pipes played their streams of water upon the mob—and the attack was over.

The men fell back, defeated once more, but now blind with rage and ripe for any devilry!



## CHAPTER 12.

### The Turning of the Tide!

CRASH!

It was a splintering of glass from one of the upper windows.

"What was that?" asked Watson, with a start.

"I was afraid of it!" said Nipper anxiously. "They've started!"

"Started what?"

"Throwing stones, or something!" said Nipper. "And that sort of thing will beat us—if they keep it up!"

"Beat us?" gasped Tregellis-West. "Begad! You don't really think, dear old boy, that there's any possibility——"

"If these men start throwing stones in real earnest, we shan't be able to hold the defences," interrupted Nipper fiercely. "We've never had to cope with this sort of ruffianism before. What the dickens can we do?" he added desperately.

Crash—crash!

Two other ominous sounds came from the windows, and Nipper sped across the roof and plunged indoors. Ten minutes had elapsed since that last debacle. The roughs had retreated, soaked to the skin and filled with venomous rage.

And now, out of the darkness, had come these dangerous missiles!

Once again the Triangle was in pitchy gloom—for some of the enthusiasts in charge of the hose-pipes had played the stream of water on that bonfire, and had blotted it out like the snuffing of a candle.

"What's happened down here?" shouted Nipper, as he raced along the upper corridor.

"They're throwing stones!" gasped Armstrong, of the Fourth, as he came out of one

of the dormitories. "I was nearly hit just now! A whacking great flint came in, and——"

"Anybody hurt?"

"No, thank goodness!" said Armstrong shakily. "But it was a jolly near thing! Griffith was hit by a bit of broken glass, but it didn't cut him. The chap might have been blinded!"

Nipper breathed hard.

For once in his life he was nonplussed. He simply didn't know what to do. In their wildest dreams the rebels had never imagined that they would be called upon to deal with a situation like this.

And if the rebels were puzzled, what of General Carfax?

At last the old soldier had decided that something would have to be done. These men, in spite of their good intentions—good from the general's point of view—were going too far. They were becoming destructive, and that was something that the general couldn't countenance.

He strode out of the Ancient House, and advanced towards the mob.

"What's all this?" he demanded angrily. "Confound it! What do you men think you're doing? Stop this nonsense at once!"

"Who's this old codger?" asked somebody.

"It's the general!" said Stubbs thickly. "All right, general—leave it to us! We'll get these kids out of it!"

"I hope you will—but you mustn't go to extremes!" said the general gruffly. "You were throwing stones just now, and I can't allow that. Any more of that sort of thing, and I'll have you——"

Crash, crash, crash!

In direct defiance of the general's orders, half the ruffians were now throwing stones and big lumps of turf and hard earth. The general's presence did not awe them in the least. They not only ignored him, but would have laid hands upon him if he had persisted in his protestations.

Fortunately, General Carfax sensed his danger. At close quarters, he could see that these men were in an ugly mood. There were over a score of them, and the general himself was alone. That evening there were none of his men on duty, for he had given up all hope of defeating the rebels by having guards on the watch.

It so happened that General Carfax was utterly alone at this hour. Even his butler had gone out, having been sent to Bannington on an errand; and, of course, there were no domestics at St Frank's now.

Fuming and fretting, the general went back into the Ancient House.

"The police!" he muttered. "By gad, I'll soon deal with these unruly dogs!"

Before he got to the telephone, however, he changed his mind. What would be the result if the police came to St. Frank's? The very thought of it was enough to make General Carfax giddy.

There would be a regular fight between the police and these roughs, and the newspapers would get hold of the whole story. The reputation of St. Frank's would suffer immeasurably, and he—General Carfax—would be the laughing stock of every public school in the kingdom! He, the man who had come to St. Frank's to quell a schoolboy rebellion, appealing to the police for protection—after he had allowed a gang of roughs to attack the boys, and after they had got beyond his control!

No, he couldn't ring up the police. The consequences would be too disastrous.

And so the situation at St. Frank's became more and more acute, and the plight of the rebel schoolboys was now grave.



## CHAPTER 13.

### Foul Play!

HANDFORTH took a deep breath.

"We can't stand this!" he said hotly. "Are we going to remain in here, you chaps, and let these rotters chuck stones at us? There's only one thing to be done!"

"And what's that?" asked Church.

"We've got to go out and attack these rotters, face to face!" said Handforth firmly.

He and his companions had left the roof of the Modern House, and were now anxiously watching the proceedings through one of the dormitory windows.

"Chuck it, Handy!" remarked Nipper, coming up. "It's no good giving advice of that sort."

"What are we going to do then—stick in here and get whacked?" shouted Handforth.

"If things become desperate enough, we'll fight these roughs, hand to hand!" said Nipper. "But we can't lead our chaps into such danger deliberately, Handy! These men are ruffians—hooligans. If it came to a hand-to-hand fight, they wouldn't hesitate to crack a good few heads! And that would mean hospital for lots of us!"

Handforth cooled down.

"Perhaps you're right!" he admitted. "By George! I hadn't thought of that! These rotters are armed with sticks and things, aren't they?"

"That's why I'm so worried," said Nipper. "We can't fight them in the ordinary way—we can't make a rally, and dash out at them. And yet if we stay at these windows—at the barricades—we stand a good chance of getting——"

Crash crash, crash!

In quick succession, a number of splintering crashes sounded. About a dozen windows were shattered to pieces at the same moment. The attackers were making a concentrated onslaught; stones and lumps of grass and hard earth rained against the Modern House.

"Back, you chaps!" shouted Nipper. "Good heavens! Look at this!" he added.

picking up a small piece of jagged stone. "If that had hit somebody, it might have seriously injured him!"

"Oh, my goodness!"

Crash!

"Oh!" screamed Church, staggering back from the window.

"Hold him!" yelled Handforth, in dire alarm.

Church reeled, and would have fallen but for the support of McClure and Fullwood. He was breathing heavily, and for a moment or two he seemed to be unable to speak.

"Bring him out into the corridor—quick!" panted Nipper. "Switch on the light, somebody!"

Church was pulled back, and all the other rebels retreated from the vicinity of the windows. In a moment, Church was in the corridor, and one of the electric lights was gleaming. Fresh shouts of anger and alarm went up.

"Your head, old man!" said Handforth, in anguish.

Church was indeed a ghastly sight. Blood was streaming down his face, and dripping from the point of his chin. There was an ugly gash in his cheek, and it was bleeding profusely; just above the gash there was an nasty contused wound.

"Something hit me!" he muttered. "A stone, I think—and the glass from the window cut me, too!"

"The rotters!" shouted Handforth thickly. "By George! What shall we do, Nipper? Aren't we going out to fight them?"

"After this?" said Nipper, pointing to Church. "If they'll do this at a distance, old man, what will they do if we get to close quarters! They'll half kill some of us!"

Handforth gulped.

He knew only too well that Nipper was speaking the truth. All the rebels, in fact, were getting more and more alarmed. This battle was developing in a most dramatic way, and it was becoming more and more evident that the barricades could no longer be manned.

Church was quickly taken away to one of the bath-rooms, and his wounds were bathed. Bandages were applied, and in a very short time he was almost looking himself again.

"It's all right! Don't make a fuss!" he growled, as Handforth hovered round him. "It's only a scratch!"

"Only a scratch be blowed!" said Handforth, who was filled with anxiety for his chum. "That stone might have killed you, old man! It might have blinded you, anyway! Why don't the police come? What's the matter with General Carfax?"

"I expect he's helpless," said Nipper. "All the same, he's responsible!" he added, a hard note coming into his voice. "Yes, the general is entirely responsible! He could have put a stop to this at the very beginning, if he had had any sense of decency. But no; he let it go on! He didn't know these men were such ruffians, and he thought they'd drive us out. Well, he'll have to pay for his——"

"They're coming again!" went up a shout from some of the rebels. "And they're chucking stone and clods of hard earth all the time! We can't guard the barricades—and we can't use our pea-shooters, or anything!"

Nipper pursed his lips.

"We've got to do something," he muttered.

He thought frantically. As it was no longer possible to man the barricaded windows, the enemy would soon be in. And once these ruffians broke in, all hopes of holding the fortress would be at an end.

Some of the rebels might lose their eyesight if they remained at their posts. It was comparatively safe up on the roof, but what was the good of that? The lower windows were the most impregnable, and these roughs were making for them.

Crash! Thud! Crash!

"There go the windows!" said Fullwood, with a gulp. "They'll be inside within a couple of minutes! What we are going to do, Nipper?"

"I don't know," replied the rebel leader. "Let me think, you chaps! Let me think!"



## CHAPTER 14.

### Nipper's Plan!

"IT'S the general's fault!" muttered Nipper fiercely. "And he ought to suffer! He ought to pay! But how? How can I make him——"

He broke off, and an excited look came into his eyes.

"Thought of something?" asked Watson eagerly.

"Nearly!" said Nipper. "Give me a minute, old man. Let's have just a minute. It's coming all right—it's taking shape! Yes, by jove, I believe I've got the wheeze!"

None of the other rebels gave Nipper much credit for his brainwork at the moment. They were all confused; they were all excited and bewildered. One or two—Reggie Pitt and Buster Boots included—were thinking busily, trying to find some way out of this tangle. But all the others were too excited to do any coherent thinking.

"Yes, I've got it!" said Nipper tensely. "I want about a dozen volunteers!"

"I'm game!" shouted Handforth promptly.

"Absolutely!" put in Archie. "Count me in, Nipper, old boy!"

"Me, too!"

Everybody seemed to be eager to accompany Nipper on this unknown mission. They were all in the lobby, and from various parts of the House they could hear the crashing of glass and the enraged shouts of the mob. Now and again a heavy thud sounded upon a closed door as stones struck it.

The stairs were filled with rebels, too, and the excited faces of the boys could be seen up in the higher corridor. They were all piling into the passages now, away from the windows of the outer walls. It was too risky to remain at those posts.

"They'll be in soon," said Buster Boots, pushing his way through the crowd. "They're smashing down the barricades at the back, and——"

"Rush back, and hold every doorway you can!" broke in Nipper. "Even if they get into the rooms, they might find it difficult to smash down the doors. We want to keep them out as long as we can. Give me ten minutes, and everything will be all right."

"But what are you going to do?" demanded Handforth.

"Seize General Carfax!"

"What?"

"We're going to seize General Carfax!" said Nipper grimly. "He's responsible for all this, and he's got to pay! I've thought of a stunt to bring home to him the full enormity of this outrage."

"But, hang it all, I don't suppose he meant these men to get so rough!" protested Watson.

"That doesn't make any difference," said Nipper. "The general was over in the Ancient House all the time, and he saw what type of men these were. He ought to have sent them off as soon as they arrived. As he hasn't done so, he'll have to take the consequences!"

"But look here!" broke in Handforth. "It's all very well to talk about seizing the general, but how the dickens are you going to do it?"

"Yes, Nipper, explain!" went up a combined shout.

"There's no time to explain," replied Nipper swiftly. "I only want a dozen volunteers, and I want them now, without any squabbling. All the rest of you had better work like mad in defending the passages! Don't let these men overrun the building—that's all!"

Nipper gave some other instructions, too, and there were more excited shouts.

A dozen fellows were soon picked out, and Nipper led them straight to the junior common-room. As they entered, a crash of glass sounded at the window, and something thudded into the centre of the apartment.

"Don't take any notice," said Nipper. "They're only throwing things as yet; they're not actually at the barricades. Come on! We've got to look alive!"

"By George!" panted Handforth. "The secret passage!"

"Yes," said Nipper. "We're going through the secret passage. And we can get into the Ancient House in two minutes, if we hurry."

"Now, why the dickens didn't I think of that myself?" demanded Handforth, in an exasperated voice.

"You did think of it, old man," said Nipper. "You got out earlier in the evening by means of this secret passage. That's what put the idea into my head. Come on! Don't ask any questions! There isn't time! All you fellows had better realise that our position is pretty bad!"

The secret panel was quickly found and opened, then the rebels went hurrying through. Down they went into that tunnel, Nipper leading the way, with an electric torch. Before long they came to the cellar in the Ancient House, and it was with great relief that Nipper found that the door at the top of the steps was unlocked.

"Good!" he muttered. "I was half afraid that we should have some trouble here. Now, you chaps, not a sound! We're going to grab the general, and we don't want to give him any warning of our approach. Come on! Every second is of importance!"

Nipper had thought deeply before taking this step. According to all his calculations, the Modern House would fall within ten minutes. The race gang were getting the best of the fight. This was only to be expected, considering the ruffianly methods they were employing.

But Nipper did not mean his fellow-rebels to stand the risk of a personal encounter with these unscrupulous hooligans. It was General Carfax's fault that they were here, and General Carfax was the man who should bear the brunt of their enforced entry!



## CHAPTER 15.

### The Prisoner!

GENERAL CHRISTOPHER CARFAX paced up and down his study, wild with anxiety.

"By Heaven, what can I do?" he muttered. "The hounds—the ruffians!"

The old soldier was in a rare state. He had refrained from ringing up the police, and now he was regretting his hesitation. If only he had taken firm steps earlier the police would have been here by now, and all this terror would have been over.

But what was the good of ringing up the police now?

According to all the sounds that came from the other side of the Triangle, Stubbs and his men were wrecking the Modern House from end to end. Such desperate methods could not continue for long. The only consolation that the general got out of the whole situation was the undoubted fact that the rebels would soon be driven out. They would never be able to withstand such an onslaught.

And so, perhaps, good might come out of evil.

General Carfax opened the door of his study and strode out into the passage. It was his intention to go to one of the front windows and to take another view of the battle. With rather a shock, he found himself half-hoping that the rebels were holding

out. In spite of himself, his sympathies were with these orderly schoolboys. For the first time the general appreciated the fact that the rebels had conducted their campaign with dignity and decency right from the very start. Perhaps they weren't such young rascals, after all.

"That won't do!" he muttered, frowning. "I mustn't have any sympathy with them! They're a crowd of impertinent young puppies! They deserve to be——"

He broke off, staring in amazement.

For, to his utter surprise, a number of figures had appeared at the other end of the corridor. They were junior schoolboys—a party of the rebels! And they were here—right inside the Ancient House!

"Boys!" thundered the general. "Good heavens! How did you get in? What is the meaning——"

"Grab him!" roared Handforth.

"Hurrah!"

"Down with the general!"

There was a sudden rush, and the next moment General Carfax, too stupefied to resist, was seized by many hands. He attempted to expostulate, but before he could get out a dozen words a muffler was pulled over his face and drawn tight. It had the double effect of blindfolding him and gagging him.

Then, while he spluttered and gurgled behind this muffler, ropes were passed round him. He was being bound—roped up! Of all the staggering surprises that evening, this was the most staggering! General Christopher Carfax wondered if he were dreaming; he wondered if he were in the middle of a particularly bizarre nightmare. And yet, at the same time, he had no need to pinch himself to make certain that he was awake.

"Good!" came Nipper's voice. "That's the style! It couldn't have been done more neatly! Bring him along!"

"Talk about luck!" came the gloating voice of Handforth. "I was expecting a lot of the general's men to pounce on us. But there's nobody here, by the look of things. What do we do—go straight back?"

"Yes!" said Nipper. "And the sooner we're back the better!"

In vain the general tried to speak. He was utterly bewildered. What could this mean? How had these boys seized him in this way? And what did they mean when they said they were going to take him back? Back where? Surely they did not mean to carry him into the Modern House—into the very centre of the rebel stronghold?

Not for the first time since General Carfax had taken command did he realise that these boys were far more enterprising than he had given them credit for being.

And another point struck the general, too.

Although he had been seized, and bound and gagged, he had not been roughly handled. He had not heard a word of disrespect uttered, either. In some indefinable way the juniors had treated him with dignity. In an undignified situation, they had yet managed to remain respectful. There was something rather wonderful about it.

What happened immediately afterwards was more than the general could fathom.

He knew nothing whatever about that secret passage, and so he was completely in the dark as to the rebels' movements. It was clear that they meant to take him over to the Modern House. But in order to do that they would have to go out into the open—according to the general's ideas—and that would mean an encounter with these hooligans.

Yet, extraordinarily enough, in less than five minutes the general actually found himself within the walls of the Modern House, and those hooligans had not even come near them. Never for a moment did the old soldier suspect that he had been taken underground, along a hidden tunnel. Confined in that muffler, his ears had been unable to detect any tell-tale sound.

"Hurrah!"

"The general's here—they've got him!"

"Sharp's the word—bind him up!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Bind him up and get it over!"

General Carfax listened in fresh bewilderment. What did they mean—"bind him up?" Was he not bound already? He was—but not in the way that the juniors desired!



## CHAPTER 16.

### Strategy!

OUTSIDE all was confusion and noise.

From various parts of the rebel fortress, streams of water were hissing from the hose nozzles. But it was noticed that these nozzles did not move. The water came in the same steady stream, and it was easy enough for the attackers to dodge past.

Another great bonfire had been lighted—well beyond the range of the hosepipes—and its flickering glare illuminated the walls of the old school buildings. The scene was an eerie one. It was almost impossible to believe that this desperate affair was taking place at a public school, in the heart of the quiet Sussex countryside.

Stubbs and his fellow ruffians were beyond all control now.

They wouldn't have cared if a dozen policemen had swept up. They would have stoned them—they would have gone to any length of desperate violence.

These boys had defied them, had soaked them to the skin, had pelted them with peas, and they were determined to break in, to loot the Modern House, and to have a terrible revenge on these schoolboys.

In spite of their desperate efforts, the hooligans had not yet broken in. They had



The ruffians made a rush for the door, little suspecting that Willy Handforth and a dozen other fags were waiting to receive them on the other side. And as each man dashed out he was seized, rolled in the gravel and made prisoner.

made several wild dashes, and had reached the windows. But they soon discovered that there were strong barricades behind the glass, and it was no easy matter to shift them.

And behind the barricades there were the figures of the defenders—standing at their posts, waiting calmly and stoically for the assault.

But here there was a little piece of trickery—which the hooligans did not yet realise. For those figures were dummies!

While Nipper and his men had been dashing to the Ancient House to capture General Carfax, a number of the other rebels had rigged up some dummies, and had propped them in position at the barricades. It was a ruse to deceive the enemy—to gain time. It was altogether too risky for the boys themselves to remain at the windows, for it might mean them sustaining serious injuries from the flying stones.

It was only a matter of seconds now before the gang of roughs would be inside the Modern House.

Already some of the barricades at the back of the building were breaking down—forced in by the enraged attackers.

In the lobby of the Modern House, General Christopher Carfax was in a most unenviable position. He had forgotten his momentary feeling of sympathy with the rebels. Now he was as antagonistic towards them as ever he had been. They were treating him with the same respect, it was true, but nothing could alter the fact that he was a prisoner in their hands. Never would he forgive that!

He could tell, now, that he was being bound hand and foot to the pillar at the bottom of the staircase!

Why this should be so, the general could not possibly imagine. Perhaps it was only a jape—perhaps these rebels were irresponsible, and were too excited to realise what they were doing. What logical reason could they have for tying him in this extraordinary position?

But there was a good deal of method in the madness of the St. Frank's rebels. In their opinion, it was a case that was very akin to poetic justice.

"That'll do!" said Nipper at last. "Good egg! He'll never get free—and I rather think that the hooligans will get a bit of a surprise when they finally break in!"

"It's a pity we couldn't keep them out!" said Handforth regretfully. "After all this time, it's pretty rotten to have to admit defeat!"

"Don't you believe it," said Nipper. "We're not defeated yet! But there's no sense in staying here, and getting half killed by these maddened brutes. They never ought to have been allowed to stay here. That's the whole trouble. They ought to have been sent about their business as soon as they arrived!"

This was deliberately intended for the general's ears, and there can be no question that those members burned as they heard the words. For General Carfax, deep in his own heart, knew that he had made a fatal mistake. He should never have allowed these men to take control.



**The ruffians made a rush for the door, little suspecting that Willy**
**And as each man dashed out he w**

For now that they had done so, they were beyond control.

What had previously been a harmless schoolboy situation had now become an affair of deadly danger.

Nipper had been very wise in his actions.

He knew—better than any other fellow, perhaps—what these race gangs were capable of. They were not merely hooligans—but they were criminals; they were men who were accustomed to every kind of violence. In their present maddened condition, they felt that they had licence for anything. And one thing was absolutely certain. They were determined to break into the Modern House,

and if they found any of the rebels there, they would exact a terrible price!

For by this time these men had forgotten all about that insignificant thirty pounds promised them by Bill Stubbs. They had almost forgotten the possibility of looting the premises. They were after the blood of these schoolboys! They wanted revenge—they wanted to batter the juniors about, and to make them suffer dearly for their temerity in resisting them!

The hooligans realised that once they succeeded in getting inside the Modern House the rebels would be almost helpless. What else could be expected?

But they had reckoned without the ingenuity of Nipper!



lozen other fags were waiting to receive them on the other side. he gravel and made prisoner.



## CHAPTER 17.

### Not What They Expected

COME on, mates—we're in!"

"And about time, too!"

The main body of attackers was at the extreme rear of the Modern House. They had discovered that there was less resistance at this point.

A hosepipe was hissing close by, splashing noisily on the paving stones. But apparently it had been deserted by the defenders, for there was no attempt to direct the jet of water.

In the semi-gloom, too, the ruffians could detect a few of the boys, standing behind the barricades.

But there was one window that appeared to be unprotected, and at last the mob had broken through. The window itself had been torn completely out, and now the barricades were forced aside, and the way of entry was clear. In a savage crowd, the men were climbing through, confusing one another by their very movements, and thinking only of getting into the main section of the building, so that they could grapple with these schoolboys.

But they met with another check, even after they had gained entry to the room. For the door was locked, and this, too, appeared to be barricaded on the other side.

"We'll soon break this down!" roared Bill Stubbs savagely.

Crash—crash!

He was holding a big cudgel in his hand, and he drove it against the panels of the door, smashing and splintering them. The more destruction these men caused, the more they became aflame. The very ferocity of their attack was making them indifferent as to the consequences.

Farther along, at other windows, more members of the race gang were breaking through the barricades, and so it happened that an entry was made at three or four places almost simultaneously.

The doors were smashed down inside, and the two or three parties of men broke through to the corridor practically at the same time. The electric lights were gleaming, but there was no sign of any rebels.

"Well, we're in!" panted Stubbs hoarsely. "And now for them durned boys!"

"We'll make 'em smart!" snarled one of the others.

They swept along, and some of them rushed upstairs. At close quarters, these men were more reckless than ever. They knew that they would be able to deal with these schoolboys with ease. For they were all armed, and they would not hesitate to use their cudgels.

But there was something uncannily quiet about the Modern House now.

Ten minutes ago it had been alive with youthful shouts—noisy with the cries of the rebels. But now there was nothing but silence. Every passage was deserted, and everything had an air of desolation.

It was such a surprise for the intruders that they were momentarily cooled. They hardly knew what to make of it, and they paused in their mad rush, puzzled.

"There's something fishy here!" said Stubbs, with a scowl. "Them boys is up to their tricks! Waitin' for us, no doubt—behind some o' these doors! But they needn't think as 'ow they're goin' to give us any surprise!"

"Let 'em show themselves, that's all!"

But the rebels did not show themselves, and as the men spread themselves over the Modern House they were forced to the conclusion that the rebels were not there. This was almost uncanny in its startling truth. The rebels were not there!

But how had they vanished? How had they got away?

That was the staggering question. These ruffians had been all round the building, and every wall had been observed; the men were willing to swear that none of the schoolboys had escaped. Yet the fact remained that they were no longer in their fortress. Where had they gone to? And how had they got away?

The theory that they were hiding somewhere within the building was no longer tenable. For they simply were not there. But somebody else was!

As Stubbs, and about half a dozen of his companions, came down the main stairs, they received a surprise. There, at the foot, and bound to the post, was the figure of a man—a big man. He was quite helpless, for his ropes were numerous, and he was gagged with a muffler.

"Blamed if I can understand it!" said Stubbs, as he ran down. "Who's this?"

He pulled the muffler away from General Carfax's mouth, and he found himself looking into the glaring eyes of the old soldier.

"Release me!" panted the general. "Cut these ropes at once! Those—those infernal boys——"

"They've gorn!" said Stubbs. "What's become of 'em—eh? You've been 'ere all the time, ain't you? Where've they got to?"

"I don't know—I haven't the faintest idea!" panted General Carfax. "Release me—do you hear?"

"Not in such a 'urry!" said Stubbs coarsely. "I'll release you when it pleases me—an' not afore! You're General Carfax, ain't you? You're the big boss of this show, ain't you?"

"I am General Carfax!" said the old soldier, attempting to maintain his dignity. "Well? What of it?"

"Them boys are cleared out o' this buildin'—eh?" went on Stubbs cunningly.

"You know very well that they have cleared out——"

"Then I'll trouble you for fifty quid!" said Lumpy Bill's stepfather, with a leer. "Fifty quid, my fine old joker! An' I reckon as 'ow we've earned it, ain't we? Any'ow, we've done what we come for—we've driven them kids out o' this buildin'."

But Bill Stubbs had made a mistake—he had totally overlooked the fact that he had told all his companions that the promised sum was thirty pounds. And now many of these hooligans were looking at Stubbs with a new kind of interest!



## CHAPTER 18.

### The Vanished Schoolboys!

GENERAL CARFAX was about to give vent to a bellow of anger, when he checked himself. Something seemed to warn him that those tactics would not serve him now. These men had only removed his muffler, but they had made no attempt to cut his bonds.

"Come, come!" he said gruffly, subduing his tones with difficulty. "This won't do, my men! I don't know who you are, or why you are here, but the time for explanation will come later. Be good enough to cut me free!"

"Might as well, I suppose," said Stubbs.

He produced a knife, and a moment later General Carfax was stamping about in the lobby, eyeing these villainous-looking men with growing distrust and aversion.

"What about the boys?" he demanded. "Where are they?"

"'Ow should I know?" snapped Lumpy Bill's stepfather. "We've cleared 'em out o' this place, an' that's what you wanted!"

"But, man alive, they may be seizing the Ancient House!" shouted the general, as a sudden thought came to him. "They may be converting the Ancient House into another stronghold! Perhaps they're——"

"It don't matter to us what they're doin'!" broke in one of the other men. "We've kicked 'em out of this place, an' that's what we came for."

This was not strictly true—since the rebels had vanished of their own accord, as though by some magic process. They had simply melted into thin air, and had left no trace behind them. They were certainly not in the Modern House any longer, for by now many of Stubbs' men had searched the attics, all the other bed-rooms, and even the cellars. But not one of the schoolboys had been found. Consequently, the invaders were more enraged than ever.

"Search the whole school!" shouted the general excitedly. "Go into every nook and corner, and find out if those boys——"

"'Old on, old feller!" interrupted Stubbs. "It don't matter to us what them boys are doin' now. You was 'eard to offer fifty quid

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if them boys could be got out o' this buildin'. An' we've done it for you. So let's see the colour of that fifty!"

"Fifty?" said one of Stubbs' men. "I thought you told us thirty, Bill?"

Bill Stubbs gave a violent start.

"The—the fact is, the general mentioned fifty!" he stammered. "I must have made a mistake——"

"Yes, an' we can guess what kind of mistake it was!" snarled the man. "Thought you'd put twenty quid in your own pocket—eh? What d'you think of 'im, mates?" he added, turning to the others. "Tried to double-cross us, the twister!"

The men came round menacingly, and Bill Stubbs backed away. But he took good care to remain near the general.

"It's all right—it's all right!" he said hastily. "Only one o' my jokes! I wanted to give you a bit of a surprise when the right time came. Now then, what about that fifty?" he went on, jabbing Carfax in the side. "Come on—out with it! We've earned the money, an'——"

"Confound your impudence!" roared the general. "Keep your filthy hands off me! How dare you?"

Stubbs reeled away, more surprised than anything else.

"My 'ands are as good as yours!" he retorted savagely. "An' I can do what I like with 'em—see? Who the blazes do you think you are, any'ow?"

"Get off these premises!" shouted the general, with dignity. "You confounded rogue! You've done enough damage already! And if you imagine for one moment that I'm going to give you a penny—let alone fifty pounds—you have made a very grave mistake!"

Stubbs swallowed something—hard.

"Does that mean that you won't come across with the money?" he asked harshly.

"It means that you won't get a farthing!" replied the general. "By gad! What impertinence! Do you know that you and your men have caused hundreds of pounds worth of damage to this building? I gave no orders for you to break in like this. Neither did I make any promise of a fifty pounds reward!"

"See?" shouted Stubbs angrily, turning to the others. "The old codger is trying to get out of it now! We've done 'is dirty work for 'im—we've got them kids out—an' now 'e won't pay!"

"Yes, an' you're as bad as 'e is!" roared one of the men. "Tried to keep twenty quid for yourself——"

"How could I keep twenty quid when I ain't got nothin'?" demanded Stubbs, with a roar. "You blamed fool, you don't know what you're talkin' about——"

"I know that you was tryin' to twist us!" said the other. "Wasn't 'e, mates?"

"Of course 'e was!" went up the shout. "Just like Bill Stubbs, too—allus was a twister!"

"Grab him!"

"That's it—grab the pair of 'em!"

To the startled surprise of General Carfax, both he and Stubbs were seized by the excited mob, and the next moment they were being forced outside. The barricades had been torn down from the main door by this time, and these two fresh prisoners were swept out into the Triangle, where the mob gathered round them in an enraged crowd.

"Let's chuck 'em in that there pond!" shouted one of the men, pointing to the Fountain Pool. "That's it—let's tie 'em to the stonework there, an' pelt 'em!"

"A thundering good idea!" said another of the roughs. "Come on, mates—lend a 'and!"

"Stop!" thundered the general. "Release me at once! I'll have the police on you for——"

"That's done it!" went up a shout from somebody. "'E'll 'ave the police on us, mates! We'll see about that, won't we? Let's tie 'im up first, an' take shies at 'im!"

In spite of all the general's protestations, he was dumped forcibly into the very centre of the Fountain Pool and roped to the fountain itself. Bill Stubbs shared the same fate, too!



## CHAPTER 19.

### The General's Ordeal!

EVERYTHING had developed so swiftly that General Carfax was feeling utterly bewildered. It was more than he could cope with. And now his own predicament was the worst disaster in this long series of disasters.

For he knew well enough that these hooligans were ruthless. They had demanded money, and he had refused. Therefore, they were going to "take it out of him."

But no matter what they did, General Carfax vowed that he would not offer them money now. In the first place, it would have been the act of a craven—and the general was a celebrated soldier; and, in the second place, it would have been futile.

These men were beyond reason—beyond control.

And what of the boys?

The mystery of their disappearance was the most puzzling of all the riddles. They had certainly gone from the Modern House, and Bill Stubbs was claiming the credit for having driven them out. But the general knew that this was a lie. The boys had disappeared of their own accord.

But where were they?

They had certainly not seized any of the other school buildings in lieu of their own stronghold. For the Ancient House and West House and the East House were dark and silent.

It was a complete enigma.

Just now the general felt that the presence of the boys would have been distinctly welcome. Not so long ago he had been eager enough to see the last of them. But now, with these ruffians in command, the situation was so intensely aggravated in seriousness that the previous affair with the boys seemed a mere trifle by comparison.

"Let them have it, mates!" went up a shout.

"They're mad!" snarled Stubbs, as he struggled helplessly with his bonds. "They've all gorn mad!"

"And I imagine you are the man who led them into this madness!" said the general fiercely. "You rogue! You unmitigated scoundrel! I'll see that you suffer for this later!"

"Shut your 'ead!" snapped Stubbs.

The general compressed his lips, and seemed to swallow something. The next moment a lump of earth struck him on the side of the face. He closed his eyes instinctively, and his lips were drawn into a thin line. He waited for the next missile.

There was a hiss, and another clod of earth came. It hit Stubbs on the chin, and the man roared out a string of curses. The other men yelled with coarse laughter, and entered into the "fun" with more zest than ever.

"Stop it, you crazy fools!" bellowed Stubbs. "You'll blind us if you ain't careful! And what's the idea of including me in this game? I'm the chap what led you 'ere——"

"You tried to twist us, you rotten swindler!" shouted somebody. "We can't get at them boys, any'ow, so we'll make you go through the mill! You and that there brass 'at!"

Whizz—whizz!

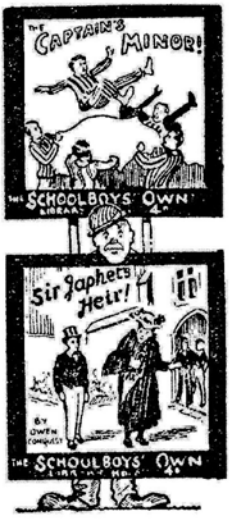
Mercifully, the aim of these fools was atrocious, and most of the missiles flew wide. But a few scored direct hits, and the whole situation was becoming acute.

While this particular kind of madness was going on, the rest of the hooligans remained in the captured Modern House.

Their sole object was loot.

They found themselves in complete possession of the place, and they remembered Stubbs' promise of "pickings." This part of the programme was of far more importance than the promised monetary reward.


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But there was one thing that the gang overlooked. They had divided themselves into two disorderly sections.

One party was out in the Triangle, getting itself into a mad frenzy, and the other party was distributed over the Modern House, rifling the cupboards and wardrobes, etc.

And a divided force is a weak force.

Nobody gave a thought to the vanished schoolboys. They had gone, and their absence was not regarded as a significant feature.

Yet the St. Frank's rebels were very, very close!

To be exact, they were in the shrubbery, hiding among the monastery ruins. The whole evacuation had been carried out with masterly skill.

After the general had been left bound to the staircase, the rebels had made an orderly retreat through the secret tunnel. From the Ancient House they had filed out by means of the rear door, and had then stolen round to the shrubbery. From this point of vantage, they were watching—ready to act, if the occasion should arise. Out in the open they felt that they were a stronger force. They regained their confidence, and the spirit of battle was strong within them.

"We had to leave, you fellows," murmured Nipper. "It was the only possible way. It seems like a defeat, but it isn't. Or, at least, it won't be by the time the evening's over."

"Just strategy, eh?" murmured Reggie Pitt.

"Exactly!" said Nipper. "But I don't like the way things are going now. What's happening in the Triangle? I think one of us had better pop out and have a look. Those brutes are making enough noise, anyhow."

"I'll go!" said Handforth.

"No you won't!" growled Nipper. "We don't want our hiding-place given away! I think, perhaps, I'd better go myself."

"Two's better than one!" remarked Willy Handforth coolly. "I'll go with you, Nipper. We've got to find out how the land lies."

Handforth was vastly indignant as his minor edged off with the rebel leader. A moment later, Nipper and Willy received a big shock.

They had heard all sorts of sounds from their place of concealment, and they knew that the roughs had broken into the Modern House. But the sight they beheld filled them with surprise and consternation and anger.

The Triangle was lurid in the glare of the bonfire, which was now blazing in the wind. In the fountain, almost knee-deep in that icy water, were General Christopher Carfax and Bill Stubbs! Blood was already streaming down their faces, and they were the target for the missiles being thrown by a number of frenzied roughs.

"Oh, the inhuman brutes!" panted Willy.

Nipper made no comment. He had taken one swift glance at the Modern House, and he had seen moving figures at the lighted windows. Nipper saw, too, that there were only about ten members of the gang in the Triangle; all the others were busy on their looting job. The enemy force was divided.

It was a chance in a thousand!



## CHAPTER 20.

### The Counter-Attack!

ILLY clutched at Nipper's sleeve.

"We've got to do something!" he muttered. "They've got the general——"

"I can see it!" interrupted Nipper. "Come on—quickly!"

The sped back to all the other impatient rebels, and Nipper made no attempt to lower his voice. Indeed, he shouted loudly, calling everybody to attention. The Remove, the Fourth, and the Third swarmed round.

"They've got the general tied to the fountain, and they're stoning him!" shouted Nipper. "Over half the brutes are robbing the Modern House, and there aren't more than ten men in the Triangle. Come on!"

Handforth gasped.

"You mean——" he began.

"What else?" snapped Nipper.

"Good man!" roared Handforth enthusiastically.

With one accord, the rebel force swept to the attack, and never had they shown such enthusiasm. For not only were they certain of success now, but they were going to the aid of the helpless old gentleman—who, after all, was a soldier and a gentleman, in spite of his blundering ways.

And Nipper did not lose sight of the fact that this service would be of enormous value to the rebels.

With roars of anger and excitement, the Remove swept into the Triangle. The Fourth came immediately behind, and the next moment the Third appeared. Those ten men were not merely attacked, but they were swept off their feet, rolled in the gravel, and generally battered.

Each man had about six juniors on the top of him, keeping him down, preventing him from kicking, and driving his face into the gravel when he started swearing. The brutes hadn't the faintest chance, so sudden had this attack come.

Nipper, Handforth and Reggie Pitt took no part in the fighting. They sped straight to the fountain, and Nipper's knife was already out as he came up.

"All right, general, we'll settle this business!" panted Nipper. "Leave it to us, sir."

General Carfax nearly choked.

"Good boy—good boy!" he said thickly. "Upon my soul! To—to think that you should come to my help, after—— Splendid! Thank you, boys—thank you! By heaven, the scoundrels!"

"Never mind them, sir—they haven't done such a great deal of damage yet, and we'll see that they don't do any more," said Nipper soothingly. "This way, sir! Grab hold, Handy!"

"Nonsense!" blustered the general. "I don't need any help, boys! I don't need—— Upon my soul, I—I——"

He swayed as he spoke, and it was just as well that the juniors were supporting him. Strong man though he was, General Carfax had become weakened after his unpleasant ordeal. Two, at least, of the dangerous missiles had struck him on the head, and he was still dizzy. Blood was smeared over his face. His legs were drenched, and his feet were so numbed with the cold that he could hardly feel them.

"I'm sorry if we handled you a bit roughly when we bound you to the staircase, sir," said Handforth. "That was just a stunt of ours. We thought you were responsible for this hooliganly attack——"

"And so I was!" snapped the general. "Yes, by crackey, so I was! I deserved it! I ought to have sent those men about their business before they became inflamed, and—— Huh! What's the matter? Confound it, I'm in a worse fix than I thought!"

Again he had swayed heavily, and now he made no attempt to discourage these boys who were helping him. Not only did they escort him into the Ancient House, but they assisted him up to his bed-room, and would have helped him to undress if he had not peremptorily ordered them to go.

"I'm all right now!" he growled. "I'll get into dry things, and——"

"You get into bed, sir," advised Nipper. "You'll catch a chill unless you take prompt measures. We'll look after the school, sir—leave it to us!"

The general passed a hand over his brow.

"Gad, I believe you'll do it, too!" he said wearily.

The juniors hurried out, and as the door closed a sudden gleam entered the general's eyes.

"Fine boys!" he muttered. "Yes, by gad, splendid fellows! Hang it, I don't know why I've been so infernally obstinate! H'm! H'm! This won't do!" he added gruffly. "Mustn't weaken! No, by crackey! Mustn't weaken!"

But General Christopher Carfax had already weakened—and what was more, he knew it.

Outside, Nipper and the others dashed into the Triangle, and found a number of prisoners. Reggie Pitt was in charge of the force, and he was grinning cheerily.

"Ten of 'em!" he announced, as Nipper hurried up. "General all right? Good! Yes, ten of 'em!" he added breezily. "There they are! Have a look at 'em! A nice neat job, eh?"

Nipper chuckled.

It had been quick work, indeed. Those racecourse roughs were standing in a row against the wall of the West House. They were tied together in a long chain, and their feet were so hobbled that it was impossible for them to move. Each man was effectually gagged, too.

"That's one lot!" said Nipper, with satisfaction. "Now for those brutes in the Modern House!"



## CHAPTER 21.

### The Big Fight!

BUT the hooligans had taken alarm.

From the Modern House windows, they had seen what had happened to their companions—and they were considerably cooled. They knew, when it was too late, how foolish they had been to divide their forces. In their greed, they had caused this disaster.

"Them boys are like young demons!" said one of the roughs to his companions. "Lummy! I never saw such fightin' in all my puff. They're comin' across here now——"

"Surrounding the building, too," said another. "'Ere, we'd best 'op it!"

But it was too late. Willy Handforth, in command of the Third, had realised that events would move in this one direction, and he had rushed his fags round the Modern House as a kind of preliminary guard. His object was to prevent the escape of any intruder.

Now the Fourth and the Remove were coming into action, too.

"It's rummy how things change!" said Handforth. "Not an hour ago we were inside, defending the place against those brutes. Now they're inside, defending it against us."

"They won't be inside for long!" said Nipper. "Now, you chaps, always remember one thing—and you particularly, Handforth. Don't try to attack these beggars single-handed."

"Why not?" said Handforth aggressively.

"Because we don't want any funerals!" replied Nipper.

"Eh? You silly ass——"

"I'm not trying to be funny, Handy," said Nipper earnestly. "It really is a risk. These men are trapped—and they are crooks of the worst kind. If you try to fight one of them, and he happens to have a cudgel, he'll use it without a qualm. So go easy."

"By George, I believe you're right!" said Handforth, startled.

When the rebels prepared for the big attack, they were ready for any emergency. Every fellow had armed himself with a stout stick, and they swept straight into the main entrance like a raging flood. A group of the roughs had attempted to close the door, but they had been prevented by some of the barricades jamming. They had then flung missiles at the approaching juniors, but they had not been able to stem the tide.

The juniors swept in, righteously indignant.



**One after another the hooligans attempted to jump over the fountain. Nearly all of them failed and plunged into the icy water. The rebels looked on with amusement; they were thoroughly enjoying themselves.**

These men were thieves and robbers, and they had to be thrown out.

Down the passages fled the intruders, and the air was filled with excited shouts. Altogether, there were about fifteen men in possession of the rebel stronghold. Bill Stubbs, of course, had been captured with the others, and was now a member of the "chain gang."

Two of the ruffians were quickly captured. The rest escaped.

At least, they discovered, to their joy, that the rear door was unguarded. They swept out, unwilling to engage in any clash with these determined schoolboys. As an intact force, the men would have fought brutally, and would certainly have won. But, scattered as they were, their wise policy was to bolt.

So they plunged out into the darkness behind the Modern House. And one after another they fell headlong into the hands of Willy and his men—who were waiting there for this express purpose!

"Four—five!" sang out Willy monotonously. "Catch, Chubby!"

Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon, to say nothing of a dozen other fags, caught two further prisoners as they were sent reeling towards them. Each man had been rolled in the gravel, and had been so mauled by the fags that they hardly knew whether they were dreaming or awake. Then the captives, one after the other, were quickly roped. They had no chance to indulge in any of their hooliganism.

They were jumped on, pulverised, and generally battered before they even had time to know that they were in any danger.

Then at last the last man was driven forth, and all the prisoners were gathered together in one big group. They were a sullen, ferocious looking crowd.

Their entire project had failed.

Not only were they devoid of the cash that Bill Stubbs had so glibly talked about, but any booty that they had managed to capture was relentlessly wrested from them. Their only gain consisted of endless black eyes and thick ears and swollen noses.

"Well, there they are—the whole crowd!" said Nipper contemptuously. "The best thing we can do is to hold them here until the Bannington police arrive. They'll be charged with causing malicious damage——"

"That ain't true!" snarled Lumpy Bill's stepfather. "We was told that General Carfax was willing to pay fifty quid——"

"Yes, we know all about that," interrupted Nipper, "but it won't wash. You're a lot of hooligans, and you came here to rob the school. But we shan't give you over to the police—it would be too much of a scandal. We'll deal with you ourselves."

"Ain't you done enough?" snarled Stubbs.

He was the only prisoner who had had his gag removed, and he was acting as spokesman for the others. Not that they really needed any spokesman. All the talking was done by the rebels.

"I think we'll make them leap the fountain pool," said Handforth, with relish. "How's that, you chaps? One after the other, eh? If they do it, they can escape scot-free."

The idea was generally approved, and during the next half-hour, the St. Frank's rebels thoroughly enjoyed themselves.

One after another, the men were unbound, and one after another they were forced to take a long run at the fountain pool.

It was practically impossible for them to jump across that wide circle of water. The fountain itself was not particularly high, but it had to be cleared. And if any jumper fell short, he plunged headlong into the icy water.

Incidentally, only two men out of the whole crowd cleared the jump. The others, amid roars of laughter from the boys, splashed in; when they dragged themselves out they looked like drowned rats.

The scheme was certainly effective.

For if these brutes had had any fight left in them, that ducking robbed them of it. They slunk away, cursing savagely. They were bruised, battered and beaten. And they had had enough of the St. Frank's rebels!



## CHAPTER 22.

### No Surrender!

"WELL, that's that!" said Handforth complacently.

"Those scoundrels deserved twice as much as we gave them, but what could we do?" asked Nipper. "They ought to go to prison—the whole crowd, of course. But we don't want to bring a scandal on the school. It was better to let them go."

"They failed pretty miserably, anyhow," said Fullwood.

"But did they fail?" growled Buster Boots, of the Fourth. "I'm not so sure about it! If you ask me, they succeeded. Anyhow, they've driven us out of our quarters, haven't they."

"They have—and we've had an exciting evening," replied Nipper. "But you surely don't think that we're going to stay out, Buster, do you? We've got to take possession again, and to re-erect all the barricades."

"Hurrah!"

"No surrender!"

"It doesn't matter what happens, we'll hold out!" said Nipper. "We'll stand fast to the bitter end. That's the policy for you fellows!"

"Rather!" agreed Handforth. "Let's grab the Modern House again while we've got the chance. The general's own men might come along next!"

But there was not much fear of this. Indeed, the juniors did not regard it as a fear at all. The men that General Carfax had employed were gentry-folk compared to the scoundrels who had just left.

For the next three hours the Modern House was a hive of industry!

(*Continued on page* 32.)


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The site where the excavating was going on had been occupied by a big glass works, and the story the twisted mass of glass fragments told was this: The Navy of that long-distant period was short of "hands," as the Navy frequently then was. The remedy for that was the Press-Gang. Out, therefore, the Press-Gang sallied, with a keen eye lifted for big, hefty fellows likely to make just the fighting material Britain wanted on the High Seas.

That old glass works took their fancy. Within were some fine, husky chaps who, if they could be jumped on unawares and impressed into the Service, would in due course be likely to render the Navy some tolerably useful first-aid!

### The High Seas Combed.

The glass-workers thought differently. They would go on glass-blowing. A life on the ocean wave did not come within the scope of their ambitions. Up strolled the Press-Gang. They were refused admittance. They lay siege to the factory. The operatives promptly retaliated by pouring molten glass out of the windows down to where they imagined the several heads of the Press-Gang warriors to be!

Whether or not the Press-Gang claimed the honours of the day we do not know. But the molten material of that strange battle was never cleared away, and it was left for twentieth-century navvies to bring it to light again from where it lay under the load of soil and rubbish which had accumulated during the passage of time.

From the days of Edward I, this lively mode of finding recruits for the Navy has helped to make much local history! Usually it was a captain, two lieutenants, and a picked body of fighting men who formed a Press-Gang. Their general field of action was by the waterside, where young and very able-bodied men were to be found with a working knowledge of boats.

When this "prey" failed, country labourers were grabbed. But these made poor material to commence with. They wanted sailors already half-made! The High Seas were combed, too, when need arose, especially when Britain was at war. Those were the stirring times when merchantmen and sailing vessels, even of the smallest size, were far from glad—in war-time, and often out of it—to sight a British man-o'-war!

### Tooth-and-Claw Fights!

The law of the realm was all on the side of the Press-Gang. All men sound in wind and limb, between eighteen and fifty-five years of age, with the exception of very young sea apprentices, harpooners in whalers, and a few others, were legal spoils.

The Press-Gang had every right to board a merchantman or other vessel—providing, of course, it was British—and collar a goodly part of the crew. They realised it was necessary to leave the skipper a sufficient number of hands to work the ship back to port again, where more seamen might be picked up to fill the blanks! There was no limit to the number of times the poor old merchant ship might thus be raided, and so it sometimes came about that a particular vessel had an exceptionally lively and interrupted voyage to foreign parts!

Naturally, the crew of the boarded ships did not sit down and twiddle their thumbs whilst the Press-Gang made a selection. Generally they fought tooth and claw. Losses on both sides were common, and the Press-Gang took their thumps and cutlass wounds as all part of the day's work.

### Five Years in the Fleet.

The privateer that was expertly manned and could clap on a grand speed of sail as soon as a suspicious-looking man-o'-war hove over the horizon had some chance of getting away with her full complement of hands And you can lay to it that the captain's urgent orders were swiftly obeyed, for no man could

look forward with anything but distaste to five years' unwilling service in the Fleet—that being the limit for an impressed man's service. The law recognised his comfort *that* much!

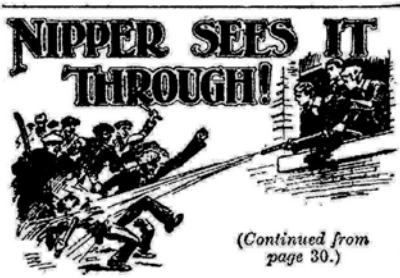
In the days when certain English ports—the Cinque Ports, they were called—were required by law to furnish the Navy with a given number of ships, as well as of seamen, the occasion sometimes arose when either the demands of the Navy suddenly increased, or the number of ships which the port could command fell short when it came time to deliver them to the naval authorties.

It came to the same thing. Out went the Press-Gang, to snatch whatever ships they could come up with. It was like killing two birds with one well-aimed brick. They "pinched" a ship, with crew complete—and the Navy had another complete fighting unit wherewith to hustle and harry the Spaniards or whoever else England might at that time be at war with!

### "Foot-Sloggers," Too!

The men who were caught could be pushed into either the Army or the Navy, as required, though it was not often that the land service needed recruiting in this way. Cromwell sent out his Press-Gangs when the strength of his armies declined, but even he never roped in so many unwilling warriors as were forcibly snared in the unrestful times of the great Queen Bess The bruisers who went out on the trail then were usually called "takers," the title of Press-Gang being a later one.

The services of the Press-Gang were undoubtedly necessary those days, for extremely weevilly biscuits, the oldest and toughest of salt "junk" and the poorest of pay was all that a naval man could expect. The necessity passed entirely away when the Royal Navy as we know it to-day came into being. And now there is no better-treated or prouder man on or off the Seven Seas than a voluntarily enlisted British Jack Tar!




(*Continued from page* 30.)

While Fatty Little and his assistants prepared a much needed meal, all the other rebels busied themselves at the barricades. The defences were re-erected and the stronghold was got shipshape again.

True, the windows could not be repaired, but they were patched up. Blankets were hung over the gaps, and the smaller holes were pasted over with paper. Long before the evening was out an extraordinary change had come about. Once more the rebels were entrenched, and all the general's hopes were dashed to the ground.

High revels were held in the dining-hall, and a feeling of intense optimism prevailed.

"Somehow, you chaps, I believe that we're near the end," said Nipper dreamily. "After this the general can't hold us much longer. He daren't risk another catastrophe of this sort."

"Yes, we don't know how lucky we are to escape with only a few cuts and bruises," said Pitt fervently.

"He'll come to us with a flag of truce soon," grinned Handforth. "You wait and see, my lads! The rebellion's nearly over—and we've won. At this very moment I'll bet old Carfax is wording the armistice."

But over in the Ancient House General Christopher Carfax was pacing up and down his bed-room, his dressing-gown flapping about his legs. He was feeling so much better that all his old doggedness had returned, and there was a square set to his jaw.

His butler had returned long since—and had reported that the rebels were again in full possession of the Modern House.

"They think I'm beaten, do they?" muttered the grim old soldier. "By gad! They'll soon find out their mistake! Good lads, though!" he added, his expression softening. "Yes, by crackey, good lads! The way they saved me was splendid. Yes, splendid! H'm! I might have been injured for life——"

He broke off, and frowned.

"But this won't do!" he muttered curtly. "It's no good being soft! These boys have defied all the school rules and regulations, and they're just as bad as ever! Young good-for-nothings! So they're back in their fortress, are they? And they're expecting me to weaken, and to let them all off scot-free! We'll see about that!"

General Carfax set his jaw more determinedly than ever, and ruthlessly thrust aside those kindly, human thoughts which persisted in obtruding themselves. It was no good being human now. Defiance had to be met firmly, and the ringleaders punished.

And so the deadlock continued—with the cry of "No surrender!" going up from both camps!

THE END.

(*Next week's yarn, which is entitled "Victory For The Rebels!" is the last of this series, so you want to make sure you don't miss it. Also look out for particulars of a grand new series of stories which starts in a fortnight's time.*)

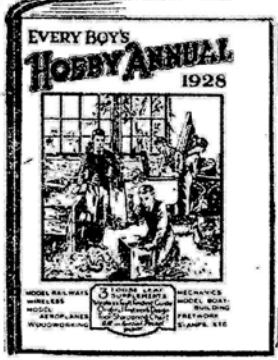
# A BOOK YOU SIMPLY MUST HAVE!



6/-

EVERYWHERE







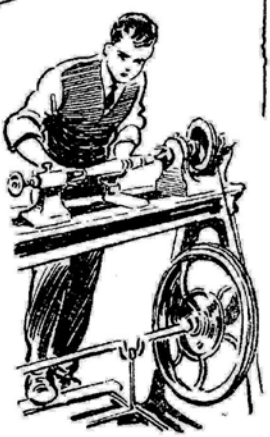

EVERY BOY'S

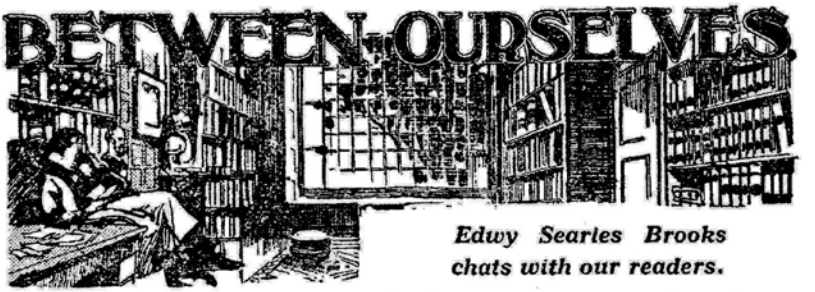
# HOBBY ANNUAL



This popular Annual contains dozens of interesting and instructive articles on Carpentry, Pet-keeping, Stamp-collecting, Fretwork, Wireless, Amateur Mechanics, Model Railway Building, Photography, and many other subjects.

If you haven't a hobby now, you will want to start one just as soon as you've seen this wonderful volume.






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

G. Hurst (Teignmouth), "Iris"* (London, N.1.), W. Robinson (Southampton), John Shaw (Greenwich), L. J. Fisher (Kentish Town), Eric Jackson (Seaforth), N. Brewerton (Masterton, N.Z), Meg Prosser (Glasgow), Anthony Cooke (Exeter), Marie Molloy (Christchurch, N.Z.).

* * *

You want to get hold of the whole of the Old Series of Our Paper cheaply, G. Hurst. That's rather a tall order, as there were 568 copies. But perhaps you couldn't do better than join the St. Frank's League. Then you'll be entitled to apply in print to the other readers who'll probably supply your wants.

* * *

Thanks, "Iris," for your nice letter. I'm going to quote a bit of it, to reassure some of you Jacks and Jills who think you're getting too old to read the Old Paper. "I am nearly 20, and my sister is 18, but we shall still be reading the NELSON LEE when we are being wheeled about in bath-chairs."

* * *

Yes, W. Robinson, my photo exchange offer is still open. No advertisements can be inserted in the "Correspondents Wanted" columns other than from League members. The Northestrian series occupied eight issues—No 36 (New Series) to No. 43—Jan. 8th, 1927, to Feb. 26th, 1927—both inclusive. If a League member, you should have no difficulty in securing the set.

* * *

I'm afraid no sustained interest could be got out of tennis, L. J Fisher, and for that reason the game hasn't so far featured in the St. Frank's tales. Still, if requests were numerous enough I wouldn't mind having a shot at it. In fact, there's practically nothing I *wouldn't* give you readers if I felt you really wanted it.

* * *

No, Eric Jackson you don't have to secure a new regular reader in order to qualify for League membership. Just get an extra copy any week, get the Application Form out of it signed by the non-reader you introduce the paper to, and then send that Application Form in, together with the Application Form out of your own regular copy for that same week—signed, of course, by yourself. That's all. You're made a member right away. Simple enough, isn't it?

* * *

You're falling from grace, Meg Prosser. You say: "At that time I was passing the NELSON LEE on to try and get some new readers." Well, why not now? Passing the Old Paper on, when done with, to non-readers—and always different non-readers—is the finest kind of practical help all you readers can give the Editor. It's the finest way of all to prove your interest and loyalty

* * *

Yours wasn't a "mad" letter at all, Marie Molloy. It was jolly interesting. As you haven't a photo of yourself yet, I've put one of mine by for you—and I'll post it on to you whenever your own dial does come along. But I can't break my rule, and send it before. Mine for yours—not yours for mine—you know!

* * *

After this, I think I'll just dot down you.. names and whereabouts in small batches, instead of in clumps. And every now and again, when I come upon something in one of your letters which I think will be of general interest, I'll quote it, or comment upon it, or do both. And when you're next writing me—all of you—just tell me what you think of the new idea. And don't be afraid to say *exactly* what you think. There's nothing like candid criticism, you know

* *

But don't go running away with the idea that because your letter hasn't been commented upon it wasn't interesting, or welcome, or anything like that. It often happens that my most treasured letters con-

tain nothing which I can write about with any real hope of interesting the rest of the readers. So you mustn't look upon a bare acknowledgment in the nature of a slight, or as an indication of lack of appreciation, as quite the opposite is generally the case.

* * *

And don't be afraid to write and tell me whenever this little chat between ourselves is getting dry and boring. I'm often afraid this is happening. So, whenever it has outstayed its welcome, be sure to let me know. You can bet your boots it'll come out quickly enough if you don't want it—and make room for something else which *will* be likely to interest you.

* * *

William R. Allsopp (Dudley). Please send me your new address, Bill.

* * *

Arthur Rivlin* (Cardiff), O. Wallis* (Walthamstow), "Midget" (Cleethorpes), "Dorothy" (Edinburgh), William Bishop (Southampton), Miss J. Roper (Gt. Yarmouth), Wm. Kitchen (Buxton), Kenneth Beaumont (Rochdale).

* * *

Here—Erik Ormerod (Liverpool)—are the titles you want: New Series, No. 50—"Spring Cleaning at St. Frank's"; New Series, No. 51—"The Funk of St. Frank's."

* * *

Leslie Garrett (Leeds). I've shoved that right at the beginning of a paragraph, Leslie, in the hope that it'll catch your eye. I want your address, please, old man. How the dickens can I send you my "autophiz" without it?

* * *

Yours is such a jolly nice letter—G. W. Mitchell* (1, Masterman Road, East Ham, E.6)—and one so likely to interest the majority, that I'd like to quote it in full—in accordance with your kind permission. But I'll have to content myself with two extracts. You say another reader informed you that "she knew an old lady who took the NELSON LEE regularly every week, right up to the age of 84, and she enjoyed it immensely." Well, that ought to put to shame some of you readers—some of you young readers who are still in your teens—who think that you're already too old to be still reading the Old Paper. I know for a fact that thousands of adult readers all over the world regularly go through Our Paper from cover to cover.

* * *

Here's the other extract from G. W. Mitchell's letter: "I am going to buy an extra copy of the Old Paper, and give it away. I have also other extra copies, which I shall do the same with, as I think it is an excellent way to increase the Old Paper's already numerous crowd of readers, for I started like that myself." Quite right, old son—and thanks very much for your practical interest. And if all you loyalists will only take a leaf out of G. W. M.'s book, and go and do likewise, what a topping thing it will be for everybody! In fact, with a boom like that, you'd all be getting a shilling book for twopence in next to no time. For look at the encouragement to everybody concerned in its production to go one better week by week.

* * *

June Walker (Catford), Fred Rowland (Verdun, Canada), W. Knight (Shoreditch), Nelson Brewerton* (Masterton, N.Z.), Claude Wm. Pearce* (Lewisham), Valerie Ward (Cardiff), Tom Andrews (Hong Kong), "Two Critics" (Manchester), Frank Haynes (Wood Green), H. M. Green (Marylebone).

* * *

A large staff has been busily employed for some time past in sorting out your votes in the Character Popularity Contest, and I hope to be able to announce the result in a few week's time. Meanwhile, how about a *Story* Popularity Contest? Wouldn't it be a good idea if you all sent me in a list of eight stories (a series being taken as *one* story) in the order in which they have pleased you? Your first selection would then be given 8 votes, your second choice, 7 votes—and so on, down to 1 vote for your eighth title. For instance, a list might run something after this style: 1. "The Demon Within Him"; 2. Stage Series; 3. Northestrian Series; 4. "The Boy Who Couldn't Lie"; 5. Circus Series; 6 "Jogging Along The Highway"; 7. Ezra Quirke Series; 8. "Willy Handforth's Windfall." But, in order that the result may be of the utmost use in deciding the nature of future yarns, I think we ought to confine this competition to readers of at least six years standing. So, unless you've been reading the Old Paper since the beginning of 1922, don't go in for this particular contest, please. Are overseas readers included? I should jolly well say they are!

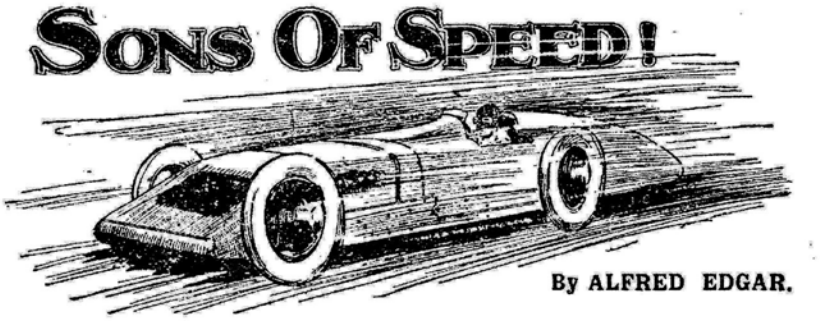
* * *

Lots of you just sign initials in front of your surnames, instead of giving at least one first name (the one you are known by) in full. Now that's not quite chummy enough for me. Hang it all, you've got my full name—so why can't I have yours? I gave a quotation from G. W. Mitchell's letter a little way back. Well, I know he's a boy (and a nice little chap, too), because he sent me his photograph in order to obtain mine. But I'm blessed if I knew whether to call him George, or Bill, or what! Look how much nicer it would have been if he had signed himself "Gerald W. Mitchell," or "G. Walter Mitchell," or whatever his Christian name *does* happen to be. You see what I mean, don't you? All right, then. Don't let me have to grumble at you again about it!



**WHAT ABOUT THIS ? Most of you chaps would reckon you were travelling mighty fast if you were in a car doing sixty miles an hour. But sixty to Bill Barry is a snail's pace. Meet this amazing speedman below.**

# SONS OF SPEED!



By ALFRED EDGAR.

HOW THE STORY STARTED—

DICK BARRY is a cheery boy with iron nerve, and his greatest ambition is to be a racing-car driver. Already he acts as mechanic to his brother—

BIG BILL BARRY, one of the most daring of British speedmen, and who is to handle a monster machine called the Kent Flyer, which is designed to do two hundred and fifty miles an hour and has been built by—

"PROFESSOR" KENT. The professor has also entered a team of Kent Cars in a terrible mountain race known as the Targa Florio. Before this comes off, however, the professor learns that Bill's great rival—

MARK LYNCH, who drives a monster car known as the Giant Ince Eight, has taken this machine to Seacombe Sands. There Lynch tries the car out in an effort to touch a pace which will smash the record for the world's fastest land speed. The car proves almost unmanageable. When Bill goes out with the Kent Flyer, he touches over two hundred miles an hour, much to Lynch's chagrin. That night, Dick wakes to see that the barn beside the inn on the seashore is in flames; inside it is the Kent Flyer. He rouses Bill and the mechanics. The two brothers smash open the barn door, to find that the Kent Flyer has been drenched with petrol and is aflame from radiator to tail!

(Now read on.)

## Saving the Flyer !

LEAPING flames were playing around the bodywork of the wonderful Kent Flyer. The lurid tongues licked off the tyres, and leaped from the hard-packed earthen floor. Someone had soaked the car with petrol, just as the double doors of the barn had been drenched! The car and the building had been deliberately fired!

Driven back by the curtain of flame that masked the doorway, Dick crouched, staring at the car. Only for a moment did he see the burning record-breaker, then it was blotted out by a giant, rolling cloud of smoke.

He heard big Bill yell something, then his brother went rushing for a mechanic, who was running up with a pail of water. As he ran, Bill tore off the jacket that he had donned: he snatched the pail, and soused the coat in its contents. An instant after, he had the garment wrapped around his head and was plunging again for the blaze.

Wood crackled madly; the whole sky seemed to be filled with the furious glare and with heaving clouds of smoke. The fierce heat of it drove Dick still further back as, from his trouser pocket, he snatched a handkerchief and dropped it into what was left of the water in the bucket.

He had the dripping linen in his hand just as Bill reached the giant doors of the barn. One of them seemed to be caught by some fire-fanned draught, for the great mass of blazing wood suddenly swung outwards and struck him fairly.

Dick saw sparks shooting out, then Bill was staggering and reeling backwards, with a couple of mechanics leaping forward to catch him as he fell.

How much Bill was hurt, Dick didn't know. But he could see that the only way of saving the great Kent Flyer was

to get it out of the barn into the open, where the assembling mechanics could tackle the flames which leaped from the burning bodywork.

That was what Bill had been trying to do. The swinging door had balked him. It was still jammed shut, but the other door was wide. The space was a screen of fire, fed by tarred wood and masked by acrid smoke. One look Dick took at it, then he had the soaked handkerchief knotted over mouth and nose and was rushing forward, as his brother had done.

The heat hit him like a solid wall. His ears were filled by the tearing roar of flames. Bits of burning wood flew from under his shoes, and then he was inside the barn.

He was more than half-blinded by the smoke, but he made out the shape of the car and, as he saw it, he realised that at any moment the petrol tank might explode. He'd got to chance that, however, and he leaped for the cockpit.

The narrow seat was afire, tongues of flame licking out of the smoke. He smacked at the hand-brake, knocking it off; the lever burnt against his palm. He jumped to the tail of the machine, thrusting through the blued flames that spurted viciously up from the floor.

There was fire underfoot and above, and fire all round him. He could see bits dropping from the roof, blazing meteors through the rolling smoke.

The aluminium sheathing of the tail burnt his hands, but the car moved forward when he pushed, and he saw that it was headed straight for the opening through which he had dashed.

As the machine rolled, he heard something crack above his head. He realised that the burning walls had weakened the roof and that, at any moment, it might come down. He thrust madly on the car again, regardless of his own hurt. The long world-beater surged forward as something that was like a giant rod of fire smashed down from above. Dick leaped back as it struck the car in the centre, bounced in a shower of sparks and settled down, stopping the machine.

In its train came a mad tumble of flaming debris—burning laths and thatch which had been released by the falling rafter.

Dick could hardly breathe now; the soaked handkerchief seemed dry over his mouth and nostrils. His eyes were stinging from the smoke. His skin felt crinkled and parched, but he gritted his teeth, pounded through the blazing pile which had dropped around the machine, and grabbed at the rafter, where no flames showed at one end.

It took all his strength to heave it up, but he managed it somehow. He slewed it sideways, loosed his hold, and watched it slither off the rounded tail of the machine. Then he thrust at the car again and shoved it on.

He was near the door now. A last, mad effort and the blazing car was nosing into the open air, while, behind him, more beams fell from the roof, filling the smoking interior with leaping sparks that fountained in wild, glittering showers.

Dick half fell across the threshold of the barn. He saved himself by clutching the car. He shoved it once again, then, gasping, reeling, blinded by smoke and burnt, he staggered into the open air in the wake of the machine!

---

### Lynch's Threat!

THE professor and big Bill grabbed at Dick as he came out. Half a dozen mechanics rushed for the machine, using the flat of their feet to shove it clear of the burning barn and down the slope to the damp sand of the seashore.

Some of them rushed to the little tool-shed close beside the inn, and came back with shovels. They crashed sand at the car, choking out the flames. Two of them burnt their fingers almost to the bone as they wrenched off the engine cover, and slammed sand on to the power unit beneath, quenching the oil that blazed there.

All the time they worked, they knew that at any second the petrol tank might burst—but it didn't. They had the long car buried almost to the hubs in sand, her cockpit filled with the stuff, and her engine hidden under it, by the time that Bill and the professor had Dick stretched out and were tending his hurts.

Somebody came out from the inn with vaseline and olive oil, lint and bandages and ointment, and they examined Dick by the light of the blaze.

All the while the tarred walls of the barn burnt fiercely, sections of the roof caving in at intervals. Until, at last, first one wall crashed inwards with a roar and then another; finally, there was nothing left of the barn but a great heap of burning woodwork.

Out on the sand, the record-breaker stood half buried, smoke still wreathing up from the forlorn pile.

"Feeling better, young 'un?" asked Bill anxiously. "Think you can stand up?"

"Of course I can stand up!" Dick answered. "Anybody 'ud think I was half dead, the fuss you're making."

"It's a wonder you aren't, anyhow," and the professor smiled a little. "But you certainly won't be able to stand. Your feet are all blistered. Will some of you fellows carry him in?"

Three of the mechanics jumped forward. Between them they lifted Dick up; Bill couldn't help, because his own hands were too badly burnt from contact with the swinging door of the barn. It was the sparks which had half blinded him, and had sent him back.

They carried Dick to his bed-room, lit by the dying glare of the barn. His arms and his hands and his legs hurt terribly; his whole body seemed to be scorched, and his face felt as though it had swollen to three times its normal size, while his skin throbbed painfully.

Half an hour later, the professor and Bill came in.

"How d'you feel, Dick?" asked the professor, in his quiet way.

"The burns hurt a good bit," and Dick grinned. "Feels like——"

"So long as they hurt, it's all right," the professor said. "The more they hurt you, the sooner you'll be fit again!" Dick stared at him in surprise, and the grey-haired man added: "It's a funny thing about burns. If they don't hurt a lot, then they're pretty bad. You see, if a burn is deep, it sears off the ends of the nerves under the skin, and that means they can't hurt you. If the burn is only slight, then the nerve ends are intact—and they can still feel. See what I mean, Dick, when I say that if you're hurt, then you'll soon be all right?"

Dick thought he understood, but he wasn't worrying about that. He wanted to know about the car.

"Can't tell how much it's damaged until daylight," Bill grunted. "Glad you're all right, young 'un. You've got some nerve, to dive in there like you did! Well done!"

He dropped a hand on Dick's bandaged arm and grinned down at him, despite the fact that it must have hurt him to do it, because his cheeks were scorched and red.

A doctor from Seacombe came half an hour later. He looked Dick over, but he didn't say anything much and, apparently, he was satisfied

Presently everything grew quiet and silent in the inn, but Dick couldn't sleep owing to the hurt of his burns. He was glad when the first streaks of the coming dawn slid through the window and began to light up the room.

With the early rays of the sun, he thought he heard voices down below. He eased himself off the bed and put his feet to the floor—he jerked them up again quickly! Blisters and burns made them painful, but he managed to get to the window by walking on the very tips of his toes.

He saw that the professor and Bill were by the Kent Flyer with a couple of mechanics, busy digging away the sand. In a little while the car stood exposed, with charred tyres on the wheels and the red paintwork of the body all burnt off.

The cockpit was dented and the steering-wheel had been smashed by the beam which had dropped from the roof. The whole machine was a fire-scorched wreck.

For a long time the four of them peered and pried around the car, the professor and Bill talking together. Dick opened the window and yelled to them, asking if the machine was badly damaged.

"We don't know for sure!" Bill called in answer. "The engine looks all right, but the frame's warped a bit, I think. Anyway, she'll have to be stripped and overhauled before we can try her out again. You hop back to bed, Dick. The doctor's coming to bust those blisters of yours after breakfast!"

Dick obeyed, grinning to himself as he thought that the car had not suffered so badly as it might have done. It was only now that he wondered how the fire had started.

The car had been drenched with petrol, he knew It hadn't got soaked like that all by itself. Obviously Mark Lynch was at the back of it. Dick remembered how chagrined the man had been when the Kent Flyer had come through her test with flying colours, while Lynch's own machine had proved almost a hopeless wash-out. He hadn't touched anything above 150 miles an hour; while Bill's car had attained a speed of 204 m.p.h. No doubt Lynch had resorted to this attempt at burning the machine with the idea of removing his rival for world's records at one sweep.

The doctor turned up after breakfast. He got busy on Dick's blisters and re-dressed all his burns. As he didn't tell the boy to stop in bed, Dick dressed himself, eased his feet into a pair of slippers, and found that he could walk without a lot of discomfort.

He shuffled downstairs and then, finding nobody about, ambled to take a closer look at the burnt-out machine. It was just as he came out of the inn yard that Mark Lynch strolled along the front of the building and, in the same moment,

Bill stepped from where mechanics were setting planks to the back of a lorry, ready to run the Kent Flyer up into the big vehicle.

The two came face to face, and both stopped dead.

Lynch looked at the burnt-out barn, at the blackened wreck of the machine, and then at Bill.

"Had a fire here?" he asked innocently, and there was the hint of a satisfied smile on his thin lips as he spoke. "Hard luck, Barry. Hasn't done your Flyer any good, from the look of it!"

"No, and it won't do you any good to hang about round here," said Bill grimly. "Take my advice and clear off."

"What d'you mean!" Lynch glared at him. "Are you suggesting that I had a hand in this? I can prove that I was in Seacombe all last night, and I——"

"Yes, and you weren't in our test shed when somebody tried to wreck our big engine not long ago!" answered Bill slowly. "Car and barn were swamped out with petrol last night, then somebody put a match to the lot and set it blazing. You didn't do it, Lynch, I know that—but you know the man who did!"

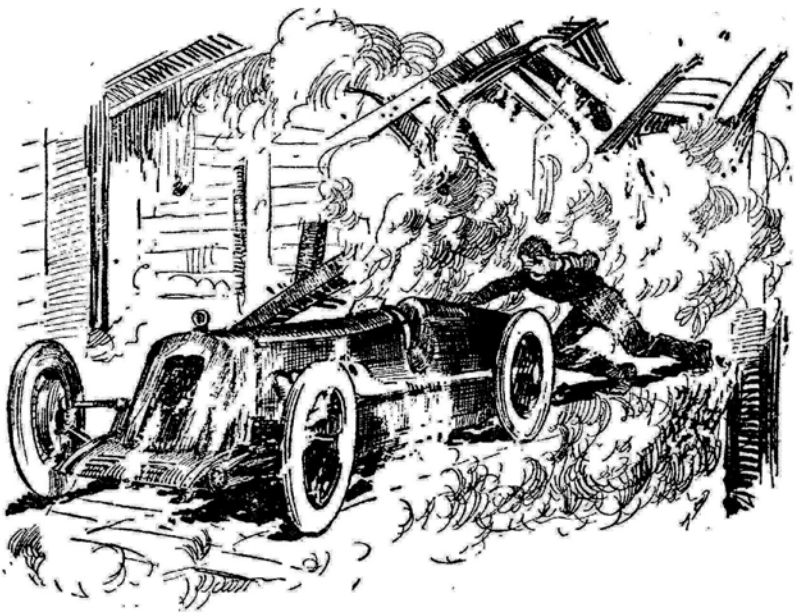
For a moment they stood glaring at one another. Dick could see that Bill's big, fire-reddened fists were bunched and quivering at his sides, although his voice was calm enough.

He had accused Lynch as openly as anybody could be accused, and Dick could read by the expression on the rival speedman's face that Bill's accusation had gone home. Over against the lorry the mechanics were watching, and most of them were grinning a little—because they knew what was coming. It came more swiftly than they expected.

Quite suddenly Lynch's right shoulder dropped and his fist came lashing up in a terrific punch for Bill's jaw. The big fellow's head went back three inches as he swayed from the blow, and his rival's bunched knuckles just shaved his chin.

The fraction of a second later, Bill's blistered right came up and under Lynch's jaw in a terrific uppercut, which jarred every tooth in the grim-visaged man's head. It shot him backwards off his feet, and he hit the sand-strewn cobbles with the flat of his back.

From the lorry there came a cheer as the mechanics saw it.



**Gasping, reeling, blinded by smoke, Dick made one last wild effort and pushed the Kent record breaker from the blazing shed.**

"You ought to ha' given him that months ago!" one of them grunted gleefully. "Get up and take your gruel, Lynch!"

Lynch rose slowly to his feet, his face venomous and one hand rubbing his numbed jaw. He stood crouched, with his free fist bunched as though he were going to hurl himself at the wide-shouldered speedman before him—but he changed his mind.

Lynch wasn't a coward; no man could be a coward who toyed with death on a three-miles-a-minute speed machine. But Lynch didn't like getting hurt, and he didn't like the strength and the weight behind Bill's fist.

Also he knew that Bill had right on his side, so he dropped his hand.

"I'll—you'll pay for this!" he snarled. "I'll get you, Barry. You've got that gang here, else I'd——" He broke off, then went on: "Wait until I get you in the Targa Florio! I'll settle you for good an' all!"

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### Momentous News!

DICK and Bill stood gazing after the retreating back of the rival driver as he went off, still rubbing his jaw. Bill watched him out of sight, then he glanced down at his fist.

"Burst one of my blisters over that swab!" he growled. "He ought—— Hallo, Dick! You've got up then. Feeling a bit easier now, eh?"

He nodded shortly, then moved to the burnt car. He started giving the grinning mechanics instructions for getting it up to the lorry, just as though nothing out of the way had happened.

Dick watched the work for a while. As soon as the car was aboard, the mechanics started packing up such gear as had not been left in the barn and was undamaged by the fire.

That afternoon Dick travelled back to the Kent Works, but it was two days before the professor would let him report for duty. Even then Dick's hands were too sore to allow him to use a tool, but he did not forget his resolution that he would be in the pink of condition when the Kent racing cars were shipped off for the big Targa Florio event.

In this race Dick was to ride as mechanic in Bill's machine. The event took place in the wild Sicilian mountains, and it was said to be the most gruelling and the toughest of all races held in Europe.

Three Kent cars were being prepared for it, and they were ready in plenty of time. They had wider bodies than those used in the Italian Grand Prix, and, somehow, they looked more grim and capable. They went down to Brooklands for their tests, and came through with flying colours.

"We don't want 'em to be particularly fast for this race," Bill told Dick. "It's stamina that counts in the Targa Florio. So long as we can get about a hundred an' twenty miles an hour out of 'em, they'll do."

Two miles a minute—and Bill didn't call that 'particularly fast'! Dick wondered what Bill considered fast going actually was! But to a driver whose ambition it was to do 250 miles an hour, perhaps a mere 120 m.p.h. *was* comparatively slow!

When his hands and feet would let him, Dick did what he could in the racing shed to ready the cars. Every morning he trotted for a solid hour before breakfast, topping that off with fifteen minutes of physical jerks and then a shower-bath. The shower-bath consisted of standing under a pail, the bottom of which had been drilled with tiny holes, and letting a hose from a tap pour into it.

The device was rough, but it served Dick's purpose, and by the time that the cars were put aboard lorries for their journey abroad, Dick was feeling fitter than he had ever been before in his life.

He knew only too well that Bill would spare neither himself, his machine, nor his mechanic in the race, and Dick was anxious not to let his brother down. Dick considered that he had failed in the Italian Grand Prix when he had cracked up after trying to drive a car which had battered Big Bill almost senseless. Dick didn't want to run any risks of failing this time.

The lorries crossed Europe leisurely enough, then shipped to Palermo just five days before the date of the race. To Dick, Sicily was very much like Italy—until Bill took him round the course. One lap was nothing less than sixty-seven miles long, and five laps of it formed the total distance of the race.

Dick had heard that the course was run over the mountains, but he had never expected anything like this. It started at sea-level on the only flat, straight part of the course. The rest of the way the road wound up and down, skimming unnerving precipices, shooting beneath frowning walls of towering rock, diving over narrow bridges and writhing around corners, where a skid meant death over the drop at the outer edge of the curve.

Mighty heights and blue depths showed everywhere. In parts the circuit was wild and lonely, giving glimpses of birds wheeling in the air below, where valleys showed green in the sunlight.

"All the teams have secret replenishment pits and supply stations around the course," Big Bill said. "That's in addition to the pit at the grand stand. You have to have 'em, in case you break down about twenty miles out on the circuit. It'll be a pretty hard race, young 'un!"

It was something for Bill to admit that. During their first actual run at speed, Dick discovered just how hard a race it was going to be, as they roared up steep slopes, slammed round corners with their off wheels kicking stones from the road into the gulf beyond the edge, and skidded down long gradients, with the car bucking under the brakes as they held her back for the hair-pin turn, which seemed almost always to come at the bottom.

They covered the circuit at fierce speed. Dick was smothered with dust and smoke and oil at the finish of it. He'd been half stifled by engine fumes when they climbed, and scared all but stiff at the rate with which they covered the down gradients—and that was only one lap. There were five like that in the race, and each lap would be infinitely harder.

But after a couple of days' practice, Dick got used to it, and it was then that Bill let him take the wheel of the car.

"Drive as hard as you can, all the way," were his instructions, and Dick obeyed. He finished the lap with his fingers stiff and the palm of his right hand sore from gear-changing, but he was only four minutes behind the time in which Bill usually covered the distance in practice.

"Pretty good," the big fellow commented. "With a bit of practice, you'll clip whole minutes off that time."

The next day Dick took the car around for two circuits and did better still. He wondered why Bill allowed him to do it. He found out on the morning of the race.

Dick was up with the first streak of sunlight, and it seemed as though the whole town woke up at the same time, because everywhere there was bustle and noise. The race started at nine o'clock in the morning.

An hour before the start the three cars were ready to leave the white-washed building in which they had been housed. Dick stood by his brother's machine, making certain that everything was ready in the cockpit — goggles, crash helmets, chocolate, thirst quenchers, and message slips to drop out at their secret replenishment pits on the circuit, if such messages became necessary.

Everything was as ready as care and thought could make it, and it was just as Dick was tightening up the belt around his overalls that he saw Bill striding towards the building. In his hand he held what looked like a cablegram. He came straight up to Dick.

"You know that the professor arranged with that Italian—Giovanni—to drive our Number Three machine?" he asked grimly. "It was because Giovanni's driven over this circuit lots of times, and knows the course. Dick, that Italian hasn't been near us all practice, and now this wire's come from the professor!" He handed it to Dick and the boy read:

GIOVANNI WIRES DEFINITE REFUSAL TO RACE UNLESS WE DOURLE FEE OFFERED HIM. HAVE TOLD HIM WE CAN DO WITHOUT HIM. GET SOMEBODY ELSE IN THE CAMP TO TAKE NUMBER THREE CAR.

"The rotter won't drive for us because we can't offer him enough money!" Dick exclaimed. "Well, he might have told us before. And, anyway, I don't suppose he'd have been much good, because he hasn't troubled to come along and find out how the car handles."

"Oh, I don't know. He's a pretty good driver is Giovanni," said Bill. "But he isn't here—and I didn't expect him to turn up, somehow! That's why I've been getting you to put in a few practice laps."

"You mean——" Dick stared at him, his eyes lighting up suddenly.

Out on the circuit he could hear cars roaring as they made for the starting line. He could see the banners and flags and bunting on the grand-stands. He could hear the roar of the crowd gathering to watch the start.

Bill stood grinning at him, crumpling the cablegram in his hand.

"You—you want me to——" stammered Dick.

"I do," said Bill. "I want you to take Giovanni's place, young 'un, and drive his car in the race!"

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*(His chance at last! His one great ambition about to be realised! You can bet Dick will grasp it with both hands. Look out for thrills in next week's extra-special instalment, boys!)*

# HOW TO JOIN THE LEAGUE

## ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE APPLICATION FORM No. 87.

**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.

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These Application Forms can be posted for ½d., providing the envelope is not sealed and no letter is enclosed.

### A FEW OF THE ADVANTAGES OF JOINING THE LEAGUE.

You can write to fellow members living at home or in the most distant outposts of the Empire.

You are offered free advice on choosing a trade or calling, and on emigration to the colonies and dependencies.

If you want to form a sports or social club, you can do so amongst local members of the League.

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.

### Nineteen Twenty-eight!

THE first week of the New Year! Jove, it's a wonderful feeling that comes over most of us. Some cynic—that amiable johnny who never sees any good in anything—has said that we think more during the first week of a new year than we do for the remaining fifty-one, and forget all we have thought with incredible mental swiftness. I wonder! Still, there's no doubt about it, we are given more to self-analysis that week than in any other. The mistakes of the past year seem to rise up in a cloud before our mental vision. Through the cloud we see the bright spots—the illuminating lights of experience. There we have it—experience. Without it the world is a sad place. You chaps have all made your mistakes, I take it. You've all profited by an experience that would not otherwise have been yours. All to the good. Some of you will be leaving school to go out into the world of business. I wish you the very best of good fortune. Others will be moving up in the school world—fresh Forms, fresh Form-masters, more difficult lessons to grind at, and fresh laurels to be won! To those chaps, too, I wish every success. In fact, to you all—girls and boys, youths and grown-ups—

### A Happy and Prosperous New Year!

I suppose you have fallen into line with the rest of us. I'm referring to the "New Resolutions" craze. Splendid! That sort of craze never did anyone any harm. The one big thing, of course, is to keep a resolution burning brightly throughout the three hundred and sixty odd days that lie in front of us. Whether we manage to keep our resolution depends to a great extent upon circumstances, environment, and last, but by no means least, the exercise of a little will-power. I wish you luck in these self-imposed tasks. It's something to have made a resolution. For my part I'm going to see to it that the "Nelson Lee Library" progresses along the right road. I have heaps of surprises "up my sleeve." To expound upon them at this juncture would, for obvious reasons, not be politic. But just "Wait and See," as a famous statesman was wont to remark. If I fail you, then slang me, and slang me hard. If I keep to my resolution, do your little bit by roping in some new readers. Is that a bargain, chums? Good! Then let's get busy!

### Another Speed King.

Congrats go to an Aberdeen enthusiast who has been a reader of the N.L.L. for several years. The two long letters he has written to me during the last week or two were full of praise of the stories of St. Frank's. He tells me among other things that he is a speed expert at longhand. I can believe it. His writing is wonderfully neat and plain, and obviously swift. Just now everybody says that the typewriter has made the pen almost unnecessary, but, of course, this is not so. The good penman is needed as much now as ever he was. But he is a rare bird. It is considered the "thing" to dash things off anyhow. That means waste of time for the other fellow who has got to read the messy scrawl. The odd part is that there is no real haste. A little care at the start, and anybody can drop into a useful, uniform hand, and the better formed the letters are the easier will be the work of writing. My Aberdonian chum is a real caligraphic artist; he can write 1,300 words per hour with ease. He has no awkward ornamentations to his capitals, and not a line too much anywhere. It is the soundest thing possible to write a good hand, and is a big asset in winning one's way.

### Snarling.

The act of falling foul of everybody and everything is deadly, and it is much too common. I have every sympathy with a chum who tells me that he can no longer stick the company of a fellow who has taken to sneering and snarling at things in general. This indicates a particularly bad form of temper. Short of punching the offender's head for every grouse, I do not see what my correspondent can do about it; he has already tackled him on the point. In the long run the inveterate grouser gets left to his own dreary society. He deserves this treatment. He is a pernicious spoil-sport; he sees a bad motive where there is nothing but good; he assumes to know better than anyone else about things in general, and he

(*Continued overleaf.*)