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THE
**BOOT-BOY'S
LUCK!**

A Stirring Story of School Life and Adventure, featuring the Boys of St. Frank's.

New Series No. 93.

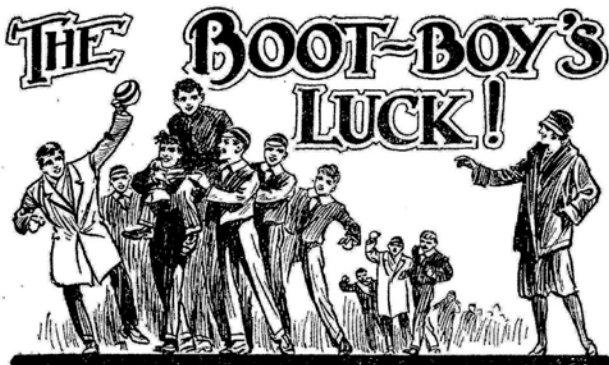
OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

February 11th, 1928.



"Harold," said Mr. Grayson, looking sternly at his rascally son. "this boy has been telling me that you are a thief!" Harold Grayson turned white, then, seeing the stolen notes in Travers' hand, crumpled up completely.

Meet the Boot-boy Baronet in this fine yarn!



By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

Vivian Travers has determined to restore to Jimmy Potts—the Ancient House boot-boy—and his mother their lost fortune, and he schemes to do it through Harold Grayson, the rascally son of the man who originally ruined Jimmy's father. This grand yarn tells how Travers succeeds and how, subsequently, Jimmy is able to reveal to a very astonished St. Frank's that he is really Sir James Potts, Bart.—Ed.

CHAPTER 1.

By Grayson's Orders!

ARCHIE GLENTHORNE, of the Remove at St. Frank's, waved a languid hand.

"Is that all clear, Potts, old scream?" he asked.

"Yessir!"

"I take it that you know absolutely what to do."

"Yessir!"

"Good man!" said Archie. "In fact, I might say, dashed good man! These new neckties are frightfully important, Potts. So be sure you shove the fourteen-bob postal order into the envelope, and seal it up. I've given you a quid, and you can keep the change for yourself."

"Yessir," said Jimmy Potts. "Thank you, sir!"

"Absolutely not!" declared Archie. "I mean to say, you're one of the right sort, Potts, old thing. Always ready to run errands and so forth. Always smiling and cheerful, and as willing as anything. Kindly ooze away now, as Archie desires a short spasm of the dreamless."

"Yessir!" grinned Jimmy.

The boot-boy of the Ancient House went softly to the door of Study E, and passed out into the Remove passage. He was already dressed in his overcoat and scarf—concealing his smart blue uniform with its brass buttons.

Near the end of the passage he ran into Handforth & Co., of Study D. And it was characteristic of Jimmy Potts that he should come to a halt, and touch his forelock.

"Just going to the village, Master Handforth," he said. "Anything I can get for you down there?"

"Not this evening, Potts, old man—thanks all the same," replied Edward Oswald Handforth. "To tell the truth, funds are a bit low in Study D, and we can't afford any luxuries."

"Hard luck, sir!" said Jimmy, with a smile. He passed on, and a moment later he was in the dark Triangle. Dusk had already fallen, and the evening was setting in blackly. The boot-boy had almost reached the gates, when he heard a hail.

"Just a minute, Potts!" came the voice. Jimmy frowned. He recognised that voice. It was the harsh, unmusical voice of Grayson of the Fifth. Grayson was an East House fellow, and Jimmy Potts was not supposed to run any errands for the boys of the other Houses. But he paused, and his expression became set.

The burly form of Harold Grayson loomed up.

"Going to the village?" demanded the Fifth Former.

"Yes!" muttered Jimmy.

"All right—I want you to do something for me," said Grayson, lowering his tone. "Call in at the White Harp and fetch a parcel. It's waiting, all ready. I was going to send for you, as a matter of fact, so this meeting has saved me the trouble."

"Look here, Grayson, it's not fair of you to expect me to do this!" said Jimmy Potts tensely. "I've already been threatened with dismissal for going into that low-down inn, and if I'm seen at the place again I shall get thrown out of my job."

"Hang you!" snapped Grayson. "Say 'sir' when you talk to me, you menial!"

"I say 'sir' to those whom I respect!" retorted Jimmy hotly.

"You confounded pauper!" said the bully of the Fifth, with a scowl. "You'll either go to the White Harp, as I order you, or I'll let everybody know who you really are!"

"I'm not ashamed—" "I know you're not!" interrupted Grayson. "In fact, you're a young fool for masquerading here as a boot-boy. But since you don't want everybody to know that you're really Sir James Potts, Bart., it gives me a bit of a hold over you, see? You do as I order, and I'll keep your secret. But if you get obstinate, I'll soon let it out!"

The boot-boy baronet took a deep breath.

"It was your father who ruined my father—who sent him to the grave!" he said thickly. "And you're a chip off the old block, Grayson!"

"I don't want any of your confounded cheek!" snarled Grayson. "Before your father lost all his fortune—before he died—you may have been somebody in the social world. But now you're only the buttons in the Ancient House—a menial! And your mother is a menial, too—housekeeper at the Moor View School! Plain Mrs. Potts, eh? By gad what a come-down! And you're afraid to let anybody know who you really

are, in and you get thrown out of your jobs!"

Jimmy Potts clenched his fists.

"You'd better be careful, Grayson—or I might forget my menial position!" he said fiercely. "It's all right—I remember who I am, though. I don't want you to blab out the truth concerning my mother and me, so I'll go on this errand for you."

"That's better!" said Grayson, with a grin. "Cut off, kid! Go to the back door, and ask for the parcel for Mr. Grayson. They'll give it to you in two ticks. And look here! When you come back, bring the parcel straight to the woodshed."

"Yes, but—"

"No questions!" snapped Grayson. "Bring it to the woodshed—and tap three times on the door. We'll know who it is, and we'll let you in. That's all. Clear off!"

Sir James Potts, Bart., without a word, turned on his heel and walked away. Grayson chuckled jeeringly, and turned in the other direction.



CHAPTER 2.

Ready for the Sport!

AS Jimmy Potts walked down the lane, his thoughts were bitter.

In the whole of St. Frank's, Grayson was the only fellow who knew his real identity—with the sole exception of Vivian Travers, of the Remove. But Travers was Jimmy's friend. They had both been at Beecleston College together, in the old days before the crash.

Travers had kept Jimmy's secret loyally. Yet Travers was a questionable sort of fellow, in some ways. Not that Jimmy Potts thought so. Jimmy was convinced of Travers' decency, and he would hear no word against the new fellow in the Remove.

Grayson was a different proposition.

Grayson was a cad—a bully—a blackguard. He was taking advantage of his knowledge. There was nothing dishonourable in Jimmy Potts' position at St. Frank's. He was earning his own living—and he had accepted the position as boot-boy so that he could be near his mother. Neither of them used their titles. What was the use?

They had been left penniless after the crash, and it was better for them to earn their own livings with ordinary plain names. But if the fellows of St. Frank's got to know that the Ancient House boot-boy was a baronet, there would be a lot of talk. The position, indeed, would be intolerable—and Jimmy would have to leave. Thus it was that he obeyed the orders of Harold Grayson, and went on his disreputable errands for him. Jimmy was very comfortable at St. Frank's—very happy—and he did not want to leave.

Fortunately, he had no trouble at the White Harp—the disreputable inn at the end of the village. He received the parcel for Grayson, and he got back into the lane without anybody spotting him. And yet it was a risk. For if any of the masters had seen Jimmy going to that place, he would have been questioned—and probably dismissed. For the headmaster, meeting Jimmy coming out of this same place on a previous occasion, had warned him once already.

"Oh, I wish I could do something!" muttered Jimmy, as he walked back towards the school, after executing Archie's commission. "But if I defy Grayson, he'll be vindictive, and he'll tell everybody about me. I shan't get dismissed, but I shall have to go, all the same. What a cad the fellow is!"

It was pitch dark when Jimmy turned into the old Triangle again, and nobody saw him as he made off under the gaunt, leafless chestnuts towards the woodshed, which was hidden away near the shrubbery. It was a quiet enough spot, even during the daytime—but after darkness had fallen it was generally deserted.

Not a light of any kind showed as Jimmy approached, and he wondered if he had been fooled. What could Grayson be doing in there, anyhow?

Even at close quarters, Jimmy could not see any chink of light. He paused uncertainly outside the door, and rapped upon it three times. Then he waited, listening intently.

He heard a shuffle from within, and the next moment the door opened.

"That you, Potts?" came a whisper in Grayson's voice.

"Yes," said Jimmy.

"I suppose you mean 'Yes, sir'?" snapped Grayson. "Well, come in—and hold your tongue. It's all right, Kenmore!" he added. "This kid will do anything I tell him. He's safe enough—he'll be afraid to split. I happen to know something about him, and he'll get the sack if I tell. So he always obeys my orders."

Jimmy compressed his lips. He wanted to blurt out the truth, so that Grayson's companions should not suspect him of anything dishonourable. But he managed to hold himself in check. It would be foolish to give himself away like that. Besides, what did he care what Grayson's disreputable companions thought?

After he had passed into the woodshed, the door was closed, and he heard a blanket, or some sacking, fall back into place. The next instant a lamp was lit, and the gleams of yellow light revealed the interior.

Both the door and the window were heavily blanketed, so that no chink of light could pass out. And Jimmy Potts found himself looking round in real astonishment.

For the inside of the woodshed was very different from what he had expected. It was quite cosy and comfortable, with one or two chairs, and rugs hung all round the rough walls. There was a small table in the

centre, and a sort of sideboard, made from boxes.

Indeed, the interior of the woodshed was a kind of club room now—very compact, very homely, and doubly interesting by reason of its being a secret resort.

"Got the parcel?" asked Grayson eagerly. "Good! Now we shall be all right, you fellows! There's some wine here, I believe—and some ginger-ale to go with it."

Jimmy Potts could see that the other occupants of the shed were Kenmore of the Sixth and Guy Sinclair, his friend. There were one or two other senior "blades," too. Cards were on the table, and the air was heavy with cigarette smoke.

It was quite obvious that these young bloods were about to have a gamble on the quiet. They were going to have a high old time—in the early part of the evening, with masters and prefects, so to speak, all round them! It was an audacious business.

"I'm not so sure that this'll be safe!" said Kenmore uneasily. "I don't like this confounded kid knowing about it, Grayson."

"I tell you he's safe!" said Grayson easily.

"Of course, there's nothing to worry about," went on Kenmore. "If he says anything, we can easily deny it. Nobody will believe the boot-boy, anyhow. And afterwards we'll skin the life out of him!"

"You needn't worry," said Grayson. "He won't say anything. Now then, Potts—outside! And stay there! Stay just outside the door—not more than five or six yards away, at the most. You've got to keep watch."

"But I can't!" protested Jimmy.

"I don't want any argument!" snarled Grayson. "Outside—and keep watch! Confound your impudence, obey my orders!"

And there was a threat in Grayson's very tone!



CHAPTER 3.

The Interruption.

JIMMY POTTS stood his ground, and made no attempt to move.

"Do you hear me?" said Grayson, with a glare. "Outside—and keep watch!"

"I've got work to do this evening!" said Jimmy, with anxiety in his tone. "The matron is expecting me back, and if I don't turn up I shall get into serious trouble. My time isn't my own, like yours is, Master Grayson. It's not fair to make me wait outside—"

"I don't care whether it's fair or not!" broke in Grayson. "I've given you your orders, and you'd better carry them out. Remain on watch until I tell you you can go. That's all! If you slip off without permission—well, you know what to expect!"

Grayson was enjoying this—he was reveling in it. He was just the kind of fellow to

enjoy the discomfiture of such a victim. There was scarcely one redeeming feature in Grayson's character. He was a bully—he was a liar—he was a blackguard.

Two minutes later, Jimmy Potts found himself outside, with the bitter wintry wind cutting round him. And there he was compelled to wait—on guard. He had to stay out there, while those young rascals gambled and smoked and enjoyed themselves.

Jimmy would get into trouble afterwards. Perhaps Mrs. Poulter would not be very severe with him—for she liked him. She was a kindly old soul, and already Jimmy had won a way into her heart. So his punishment, perhaps, would not be very severe. At the same time, he rebelled against this despicable duty.

Twenty minutes elapsed, and every now and again the voices of the young gamblers came out to the sentry. Apparently that wine was getting into the heads of those reckless "sports." At all events, they were becoming much noisier now.

And Jimmy was anxious. For if they were discovered because of their noisiness, they would blame him, and then—

Jimmy's thoughts came to a sudden stop. He had heard a footstep—a crunching of the gravel, comparatively near by. Jimmy held his breath.

Bending forward, he peered into the gloom, and he was just able to see the figure of a man. For a moment the figure was outlined against a patch of light on the other side of the Triangle, and Jimmy had no difficulty in recognising the form.

"Pycraft!" he muttered, in alarm. It was by no means unusual for Mr. Horace Pycraft, the interfering master of the Fourth, to prow! about the school grounds. Mr. Pycraft was generally on the prow!, one way and another. There was nothing he loved better than to catch the fellows by surprise. He was universally hated for his prying ways.

Not that Mr. Pycraft had the slightest indication that anything was happening so near to him. He was on his way to another part of the school grounds, and he would have passed on without a suspicion if a sudden shout of laughter had not brought him to a halt.

That shout had come from the woodshed—and it was cut short almost as soon as it had started. Evidently the culprit had realised his mistake. But it was too late now!

For Mr. Pycraft was staring in the direction of the shed, and Jimmy Potts distinctly heard him give a little snort. It wasn't Mr. Pycraft's way to pass on without making inquiries. He came striding towards the woodshed, his head poked forward—for all the world like an inquisitive bird.

"Crums!" breathed Jimmy. "He's coming here!"

There was only one thing to be done. Jimmy knew that he would have to give the

warning. If he failed to do so, Mr. Pycraft would burst in, and he would discover the seniors at once. They would all get into trouble—the ringleaders would probably be expelled. And Jimmy Potts knew that he, too, would be exposed. He had no disgrace to face, like these others—but he did not want to leave St. Frank's.

With a swift movement, he turned and stepped up to the door. Mr. Pycraft was still twenty yards off, and he was now approaching cautiously. The Fourth Form master was evidently intending to creep up, so that his approach would not be heard.

Rap-rap-rap!
They were three urgent knocks on the door, and there came a scuffle from inside. The next moment the door was flung open. Like a fool, Grayson had not turned out the lamp, and a stream of light came out.

"Who is that?" came a shout in Mr. Pycraft's shrill voice.

"Quick!" panted Jimmy. "It's Mr. Pycraft! He's coming!"

"Pycraft!" gasped Grayson, in dire alarm. "Quick, you fellows! Bolt! It's that interfering beast Pycraft! Hurry up—the back exit! We can't go this way, or he'll spot us!"

Next moment there was a wild stampede within the woodshed!



CHAPTER 4.

Trapped!

THE seniors knew only too well what would happen if they were caught.

Simon Kenmore was a prefect, and he, at least, would be expelled in disgrace. In fact, they would all be in danger of expulsion. So their stampede to escape was not very surprising.

They took no notice of Jimmy Potts now. He had given the warning, and their interest in him ceased. Their one thought was to escape—to get away before Mr. Pycraft arrived.

Those disreputable seniors railed at their bad luck—forgetting that they themselves had brought on this crisis. Grayson had believed that the woodshed would be a safe retreat for many a quiet gamble. But the party had brought this trouble on themselves—for failing to exercise caution.

Jimmy, rather bewildered, found himself pushed this way and that. Then he saw, to his surprise, that there was a little low doorway at the back of the shed. It wasn't the proper doorway—but a secret exit, in case of alarm. Perhaps Grayson had made it himself. It was only composed of two or three loose boards, with some bits of leather attached to act as a hinge.

One by one, practically falling on one another, the seniors plunged through, and Grayson was the last one to go.

With a little gasp, Jimmy Potts went down on his hands and knees, and prepared to follow. It was just as important that he, too, should escape.

Crash!

Just as Jimmy was about to crawl out into safety, the crazy door slammed with a crashing thud. If Jimmy had been three or four inches nearer it would have struck his head and rendered him senseless, for just then he was trying to get out, head first.

"Oh, you cad—you dirty cad!" he muttered hoarsely.

He wrenched at the door, but it was ill-fitting, and it had become jammed. Mr. Horace Pycraft was already at the doorway, and he could see Jimmy's crouching form at the back of the woodshed. There was no possible way of escape for the unfortunate youngster.

"Stand up, sir—stand up!" shouted Mr. Pycraft excitedly. "Who are you? Do you hear me? Stand up!"

With his heart beating heavily, Jimmy Potts turned round and faced the master of the Fourth. As he did so, his overcoat opened, revealing the shining buttons underneath.

"Boy!" thundered Mr. Pycraft. "What does this mean?"

"I—I—"

"You are Potts!" went on Mr. Pycraft. "You are the buttons of the Ancient House, are you not?"

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Pycraft strode across the woodshed, and, pushing Jimmy aside, examined the secret door. When he looked round, his face was flushed with anger.

"Where are the others?" he demanded. "Where are your—your disreputable companions?"

Jimmy thought it unnecessary to answer—for the thing was obvious.

"They managed to escape, eh?" said Mr. Pycraft. "A door here—a secret exit! Good gracious! What have I discovered? I am amazed—I am shocked! What have you to say for yourself, Potts?"

In the circumstances, Jimmy Potts felt it better to say nothing.

"Smoking!" went on Mr. Pycraft, sniffing the air like a retriever. "Upon my soul! Card playing, too!" he added, as he saw the strewn cards on the table. "Yes, and money as well!"

He went across to the rickety little "side-board" and picked up a bottle. There was an expression of gloating satisfaction on his face as he read the label.

"Wine!" he said triumphantly. "Good heavens! Wine—gambling—smoking! Potts, I am amazed—I am staggered! You young reprobate!"

"I wasn't in here, sir!" panted Jimmy, forced to speak. "You—you don't understand! I was only keeping watch outside! I didn't want to keep watch, either—I had to! They—they forced me!"

"Enough!" snapped Mr. Pycraft. "Do not lie to me, boy! You were in here with the others—that much is obvious! You tried to escape with the others, but the door jammed, so you could not do so. Who were your companions? Tell me! I demand that you shall give me their names!"

Jimmy was silent.

"Do you hear me, you insolent young rascal?" shouted Mr. Pycraft.

"I am not insolent, sir," replied Jimmy.

"You are insolent in the very fact that you will not answer me!" stormed the master. "Give me the names of your companions! Come! I will stand no further nonsense!"

"I am sorry, sir, but I can't give you any names," replied Jimmy steadily.

"You can't!" roared Mr. Pycraft. "Is this an exhibition of deliberate defiance, boy? You are a servant—an underling! I command you to speak!"

"All the same, sir, I can't give you the names," replied Jimmy, pale to the lips.

Mr. Horace Pycraft breathed hard.

"We will see about this!" he said grimly. "Good gracious me! A perfectly disgraceful affair! It is a fortunate thing that I was on the alert—and that I thought it fit to investigate! A scandalous state of affairs, Potts—and you may be quite sure that you will pay for it! Come with me!"

"Where—where are you going to take me, sir?" asked Jimmy, with a gulp.

"Where?" barked Mr. Pycraft. "To the headmaster! This matter is too serious to place before your housemaster, Potts—your employer. It must go before Dr. Stafford himself!"

CHAPTER 5.

Without Notice!



DR. MALCOLM STAFFORD was looking rather impatient, and not a little testy, as Mr. Pycraft came

bustling into his study.

A few minutes earlier, Dr. Stafford had received a request for an immediate interview. And he greatly disliked these interviews with Mr. Pycraft. For the master of the Fourth generally came to lay a petty complaint of some kind before him.

"Good-evening, Mr. Pycraft!" said the Head coldly.

"Good-evening, sir—good-evening!" said Mr. Pycraft. "Come, Potts—come inside! Stand there—near the door!"

"What has this boy done?" asked the Head impatiently. "Surely, Mr. Pycraft, if you have any complaint to make against an employee of the school, it should be made to the matron of his own House—or to somebody in authority on the spot."

"The matter was so serious, sir, that I thought it my duty to bring the boy straight

before you," replied Mr. Pycraft, with a kind of ghoulish pleasure. "This boy is Potts, the buttons of the Ancient House. I believe he is a newcomer to the school."

"In that, Mr. Pycraft, you are right," said the Head. "Will you be good enough to tell me what misdemeanour he has committed?"

"The affair is most serious, sir—indeed, grave," replied Mr. Pycraft. "I happened to be passing through the Triangle, when I heard a shout of laughter from the direction of the woodshed. Wondering what it could mean, I immediately went there, and I found the door ajar, and this boy, Potts, was trying to escape by means of a little exit at the rear of the shed. He had had several companions with him, but they managed to give me the slip. And Potts refuses to disclose their identities."

The Head nodded, and looked across at Jimmy.

"Potts," he said quietly, "stand forward."

Jimmy did so, but before the Head could question him, Mr. Pycraft went on:

"But one moment, sir—one moment!" he said hurriedly. "Please let me finish what I was saying. You will realise the gravity of this situation when I tell you that the woodshed was filled with tobacco smoke. There was a table in the centre of the shed, and the table contained cards and money."

"Cards—and money!" said the Head, startled. "Do you mean that this boy and his companions were gambling?"

"Undoubtedly, sir," said Mr. Pycraft. "But even that is not the worst. There was a bottle of wine there—and glasses, too. I can only say, Dr. Stafford, that I was shocked. Inexpressibly shocked. This boy—this young servant of the Ancient House—to be gambling and drinking and smoking on the school premises!"

The Head's expression had changed, and now he was looking very stern. For once in a while, apparently, Mr. Horace Pycraft had hit upon a genuine case.

"Potts!" said the Head sternly. "What explanation have you to offer?"

"None, sir—except that I wasn't in the shed," said Jimmy desperately. "I mean, I was not—"

"Not in the shed!" shouted Mr. Pycraft. "What a base lie! How dare you, you young rascal?"

"I mean, sir, I wasn't in the shed while there was any card-playing going on," said Potts. "I was on watch outside—although I didn't want to be. I've never smoked, sir—and I've never gambled, either."

"I trust you will take no notice of this rigmorole of falsehood, sir?" said Mr. Pycraft excitedly. "I tell you, I found the boy there—I caught him red-handed. There is only one possible conclusion, of course. He was entertaining some disreputable friends of his from the village."

Jimmy Potts started. It hadn't occurred to him that such an explanation would enter Mr. Pycraft's mind. And yet, after all, it was the most natural one. Never for an

instant did Mr. Pycraft suspect that the other boys were seniors of St. Frank's itself. He took it for granted that they were Potts' friends—from the village. Mr. Pycraft, apparently, did not hold a high opinion of the young villagers.

"Well, Potts?" said the Head angrily. "You were caught in this woodshed, trying to escape. Mr. Pycraft tells me that there had been smoking—gambling—wine-drinking. Do you deny this?"

"No, sir," said Jimmy, in a low voice. "But I do deny that I joined in it."

"That is a mere quibble," said the Head impatiently. "Whether you were actually in the shed at the moment, or whether you were keeping guard, is a matter of little importance. You were fully aware of what was going on within this shed, I presume?"

"Yes, sir," admitted Jimmy miserably.

"Then, to all intents and purposes, you were a party to the entire disgraceful orgy," said Dr. Stafford. "You must give me the names of these other boys, Potts. You must tell me who these friends of yours were."

"I am sorry, sir—but I can't do that," said Jimmy. "I can't give you any names."

It was, indeed, impossible for him to do so—since it would mean exposure for these seniors. And Jimmy was not the kind of fellow to sneak.

Dr. Stafford and Mr. Pycraft consulted together for a few moments in low voices, and then the Head turned to Jimmy Potts again.

"You will quite understand, Potts, that you cannot remain in the school after this disreputable incident," he said coldly. "You will cease your duties from this moment!"

"Oh, sir!" gasped Jimmy, in agony. "But—but—"

"Enough!" said the Head. "You will go to your House, Potts, and you will pack your belongings. To-morrow you will leave the school—and I shall give you a month's wages in lieu of notice. Go! I will communicate with your Housemaster at once."

"I give you my word, sir, that I wasn't—"

"That will do, Potts!" said the Head gravely. "Go!"

And Jimmy Potts went—stunned and dazed.



CHAPTER 6.

Nothing to Worry About!

IT WAS, indeed, a heavy blow for the boot-boy baronet.

It was bitterly cruel, too—it was ironical to a certain degree. For Jimmy had obeyed Grayson's orders so that the truth—that he was a baronet—would not come out.



In rising from the floor of the shed—which, only a few moments before had been used as a gambling den!—Jimmy's coat parted, revealing his uniform to the searching eyes of Mr. Pycraft. "Boy!" thundered the scandalised Form-master. "What does this mean?"

And in obeying Grayson's orders he had only earned himself dismissal in disgrace! He was to leave St. Frank's without notice—like any servant discovered in some act of petty theft.

Yet, if he had ignored Grayson, and if Grayson had told the truth, the Head would have been kindly, and would have sympathised with him. He would have left St. Frank's, it was true—but he would have left honourably, and the Head, no doubt, would have secured him another excellent post.

As it was, through obeying Grayson, he was dismissed in disgrace.

That was the galling part of the whole affair. Jimmy called himself a fool and a coward as he wandered across Inner Court, on his way back to the Ancient House. He was bitter in his condemnation of himself. It did not occur to him that he was singularly courageous. For a true explanation from him would have meant his salvation. But it was not Jimmy's way to sneak.

A figure loomed out of the gloom as he approached Big Arch, and a soft voice came to him.

"Hallo, Jimmy, dear old fellow!" it said.

"Travers!" muttered Jimmy Potts, with a note of relief in his voice.

"Well, well!" said Vivian Travers of the Remove. "What have we here? Trouble? Confide in your Beccleston pal, and all will be well."

"Travers—I'm dismissed!"

"Dismissed!"

"Sacked!" panted Jimmy, seizing Travers by the arm. "I'm kicked out in disgrace!"

"Very dramatic—very dramatic, indeed," said Travers coolly.

Jimmy looked at him despairingly.

"Oh, you don't seem to realise the seriousness of it all!" cried the dismissed boot-boy. "I've been sacked, I tell you! And all through that rotter Grayson! It's his fault for making me keep guard outside the woodshed."

"Dear, dear, sounds interesting!" said Travers benevolently. "But let me hear more about it. I may say that I saw the Pycraft bird hauling you off, and I wondered what it meant. So I hung about here, hoping to catch hold of you as you came away. Well, I've caught you. Now, what is it?"

Jimmy explained—his voice low and tense with emotion.

"A very pretty story," said Travers, at length. "So you are going to sacrifice yourself for the sake of those unutterable cads!"

"I couldn't give them away, could I?" demanded Jimmy. "I know that they're cads, but I'm not an informer, Travers!"

"No—you're a brick!" said Travers warmly. "In fact, you're too darned good, if you ask me. Those fellows aren't worth it. Not that I shall urge you to alter your course, dear old fellow. I respect you for it—I admire you."

"Oh, do shut up!" said Jimmy miserably.

He fell silent for a few moments.

"Thinking about your mater, eh?" said Vivian Travers.

"Yes!" muttered Jimmy. "She'll believe me, of course—when I tell her what happened. I needn't mention any names to her—but she'll believe me. That doesn't alter the fact, though, that I've been sacked in disgrace, does it? I shan't have a reference, or anything. It'll be an awful job for me to get another post?"

"Take my advice, and go for a nice little walk," said Travers, taking Jimmy by the arm. "Don't go indoors yet. Go for a walk to the village—anywhere. What you want is plenty of fresh air, to blow the cobwebs out of your brain. And don't worry! Everything will soon be all right."

Jimmy stared at him.

"What do you mean—all right?" he asked. "How can it be all right? I've got to leave the school to-morrow!"

"Don't you believe it!" laughed Travers. "In fact, just leave this affair in my hands, Jimmy. Justice is going to be done—and a few other things, too."

"Are—are you going to help me?" asked Jimmy, with a sudden expression of hope in his voice.

"You saved my life once!" replied Travers.

"Oh, don't keep talking about that!" said Jimmy uncomfortably. "I suppose you mean when I climbed down that cliff, after you'd been fooling about on your motor-bike?"

"I'll admit that I had been fooling about—and there's no question that you saved my life," replied Vivian Travers. "One good turn deserves another, Jimmy. I can never hope to repay you in full, but I can do my little best. And you can take it as gospel that you won't be dismissed from St. Frank's. Now then—go for your walk, and leave this to me."

Jimmy Potts, after he had parted from Travers, felt greatly comforted. There had been a very confident note in Travers' voice—but even Jimmy Potts did not realise the full extent of the Remove fellow's scheming.

Indeed, if Jimmy had only known what was in Vivian Travers' mind, he would not only have been amazed, but he would have been staggered!



CHAPTER 7.

The Spy!

"O-MORROW!" murmured Travers, as he entered the Ancient House. "I wonder if— Well,

well! No use wondering. But we shall see what we shall see!"

The thought of the morrow seemed to amuse him slightly, for as he turned into the Remove passage he was smiling. Yet it was not a smile of pure amusement. It was a smile that had a certain quality of grimness and determination in it.

Arriving at the door of Study A, Travers placed his hand upon the knob and opened the door suddenly. His idea in this surprise action—if any—was to catch Gulliver and Bell, his studymates, on the hop. They were always nervous, and it amused Vivian Travers to see them jump, and to throw good cigarettes into the fire.

But although the study was occupied, neither Gulliver nor Bell was there. Teddy Long, of Study B, was bending over Travers' own desk.

And, what was more to the point, Teddy Long had a bundle of currency notes in his hand!

Travers took a kind of mental photograph in that brief second.

There was Teddy Long, staring upwards with excited, startled eyes. There lay the bundle of notes in his hand—with the open drawer below.

"You young blighter!" said Vivian Travers furiously.

The sneak of the Remove started back, frightened and dumbfounded.

"I—I—I—!" he stuttered. "Oh, crumbs! I mean—I—"

"I knew you were a sneak and a liar, Long, but it's news to me to find out that you're a thief!" said Travers harshly, as he strode into the room, slamming the door behind him.

"I'm not here—I—I—mean, I only popped in to—borrow a couple of spoons!" panted Long desperately. "Go easy, Travers! What the dickens—leggo my arm!"

"You prying young hound!" rapped out Travers.

With one movement, he wrenched the bundle of currency notes out of Teddy Long's hand. A glance at it assured him that none of the notes had been interfered with. They were bound together by elastic bands, and Travers had evidently arrived at the moment when Long had just discovered the treasure.

"Where—where did you get all this money, Travers?" asked Long, his curiosity getting the better of his terror. "There's a lot there! Over twenty quid, by the feel of it!"

"Get out!" said Travers, with deadly coolness.

"Yes, rather!" gasped Teddy. "But—but—"

"Get out!" thundered Travers.

Teddy Long was doubly startled. This was the first time that Travers had ever allowed himself to emerge from his mask of coolness. Ever since he had come to St. Frank's he had been noted for his serene

equanimity. But now he was pale with anger—his eyes glittered with danger.

"There's something fishy about this!" shouted Teddy Long, his words almost tripping over each other in their haste to get out. "What does it mean, Travers? Where did you get all that money? I'm jolly well going to tell the other chaps—"

"I'll give you something else to tell them!" interrupted Vivian Travers savagely.

With one swift movement, he stepped round the table. Long tried to dodge, but it was useless. Travers was one of the best athletes in the Junior School, and his movements were as lithe and as swift as a panther's. He seized Teddy Long by the scruff of the neck, and by the seat of his trousers.

"Hi!" howled Teddy, in alarm. "Leggo! You rotter! If you touch me—"

"This way!" broke in Travers curtly.

He lifted Teddy Long off the floor and, shaking him fiercely, forced him towards the door. Teddy kicked and struggled every inch of the way.

"If—if you'll let me off, I won't say anything to the other chaps!" he panted desperately. "I won't give you away, Travers!"

"You confounded young fool!" said Travers contemptuously. "I should fall to a pretty low level if I made any bargains with you my lad!"

He released the seat of Long's trousers, and opened the door. Then he planted a well-directed kick on Teddy's rear.

"Help!" shrieked Long, as he sailed through the doorway. "Oh, my hat! You—you bullying rotter!"

Crash!

Travers' boot again came into operation, and Teddy Long was almost lifted from the floor. He staggered across the Remove passage, hit the wall on the other side, and collapsed. But he was up in a second, and he went flying down the passage, yelling at the top of his voice.

Travers slammed the door of his study, and stood for a moment, thinking. Then he went across to the desk, took the notes, and was again thoughtful.

"Awkward!" he muttered, frowning. "In fact, deucedly awkward!"

He closed the desk, and then sat down at the table. Only for a moment or two did he toy with that bundle of notes. Then he opened the table drawer and slipped them just inside. After that he pulled books, exercise paper and pens towards him, and coolly started his prop.

If Travers was expecting any awkward developments, at least he did not appear to be perturbed.

Yet, knowing where those currency notes had come from—and knowing Teddy Long's character—Travers had the best of good reasons for being alarmed!



CHAPTER 8.

Circumstantial Evidence!

"TWENTY-FIVE pounds!" gabbled Teddy Long excitedly.

"In Travers' desk?"

"Yes!"

"You actually saw it there?"

"Yes, of course!" said Long. "I had it in my hand—and then Travers came in!"

"What did he do?"

"He kicked me out, the beast!" panted Teddy. "But he was as pale as a sheet—and there was guilt on every line of his face!"

Teddy Long had reached the Remove Common-room, and it had only taken him twenty or thirty seconds to blurt out his strange story. There were a good many fellows there, and they had gathered round Long—some excited, some tolerant, others frankly sceptical.

"Just a minute!" said Edward Oswald Handforth, pushing forward. "This thing needs investigating!"

"Good old Sherlock!" chuckled Fullwood.

"This isn't a time for rotting!" frowned Handforth. "Now then, Long, my lad! You say that you were in Study A, and that you found a bundle of currency notes in Travers' desk?"

"Yes!" said Long breathlessly.

"Was there anybody else in Study A with you?"

"Not until Travers came in."

"Then what the dickens were you doing in there?" demanded Handforth aggressively.

"Eh? I—I—"

"Prying about as usual, I suppose?" roared Handforth. "You beastly little spy! You interfering sneak! And you've got the nerve to come here and tell us about it!"

"But—but that money—"

"Never mind about the money!" thundered Handforth. "I've a good mind to biff you in the eye for being such a rotten little Paul Pry! By George! Things have come to a pretty pass when you rush into the Common-room boasting publicly that you've been searching through a fellow's desk!"

"Hear, hear!" said Nipper, with a hard look on his face. "I rather think this is a matter for the Form to deal with. We don't want to hear anything about those notes, Long! You had no right in Travers' study, and you had less right to ransack his private desk! We don't want to know what you found there—"

"Don't we?" interrupted Hubbard excitedly. "Cheese it, Nipper!"

"Now, you keep out of this, Arthur Hubbard!" said Handforth darkly. "Nipper's the captain of the Remove, and his word goes! If it comes to that, so does my word,

too! We don't want to hear any of Teddy Long's lying tales—"

"But it's the truth!" howled Long. "It's all very well for you to talk about me sneaking, and all the rest of it, but how do you explain those notes in Travers' desk? Twenty-five currency notes—"

"Did you count them?" demanded Nipper sharply.

"I—I— Well, I didn't actually count them," said Teddy. "But anybody can tell by the feel of notes how many there are. They were all in a bundle—with elastic bands round them. Just about twenty-five."

"Hang it, give the chap a chance!" said Hubbard. "I'm always bumping Teddy for his lies and his sneaking habits. But this thing is a bit different. What about that money that was stolen from the Moor View School the other day?"

"Just what I was thinking!" said Tommy Watson uncomfortably. "It's not our business, I know—and I don't believe for a minute that Travers is a thief—but it does look a bit squiffy, doesn't it?"

"Squiffy!" echoed Hubbard. "It's as clear as daylight! A few days ago twenty-five quid was pinched from Miss Bond's study at the Moor View School, and not a trace of it has been found since! And now Teddy Long finds twenty-five quid in Travers' desk!"

"Well, what about it?" demanded Handforth fiercely. "It's only circumstantial evidence, at the best! I'll admit that I had a few suspicions against Travers at first, but it's all rot! He's not that kind of fellow! He's fairly rolling in money, too! Why the dickens did he want to steal twenty-five quid from the girls' school?"

"There's no need to go into whys and wherefores," put in De Valerie. "I'm rather inclined to back Hubbard up. We all know that Travers was at the Moor View School when the robbery took place. Lots of you fellows were there—at Winnie Pitt's birthday party. And afterwards Travers' footprints were found outside Miss Bond's study window! We thought it was jolly suspicious at the time—but there wasn't enough evidence to point to anything definite. But if Teddy Long saw twenty-five pound notes in Travers' desk, it makes all the difference!"

"Of course it does!" said Hubbard. "And who knows anything about Travers, anyhow? He's a comparatively new chap, and it may be all spoof about him rolling in money."

"You ass!" shouted Handforth. "Isn't he always splashing his money about?"

"Yes, it's all idiotic rot!" agreed Nipper. "You fellows had better forget the whole affair."

"What about the numbers of the notes?" asked De Valerie, looking at Long. "Did you notice them?"

"There wasn't time," replied Teddy. "I'd no sooner got hold of the bundle of notes, when Travers came in."

"Well, it might be a good idea to go along and have a look at those notes!" said De Valerie grimly. "For Travers' own sake, it's necessary. The numbers of the notes were taken—they were even published in the local paper the day after the robbery."

"There's a copy here!" sang out somebody.

"Good!" said Hubbard. "If Travers can show us that these notes of his have got different numbers, then we shall be satisfied."

Nipper shrugged his shoulders.

"If you're set on it, you'd better go, then," he said. "It's certainly a good idea about the numbers. It will settle the point, once and for all. And if it isn't settled now, there'll only be a lot of unpleasant suspicions against Travers."

"That's right!" nodded Handforth. "Of course, the numbers will all be different—that's obvious! But with such a lot of suspicious rotters about, we'd better have the thing straightened out at once."

And there was a rush towards the door.



CHAPTER 9.

Awkward for Vivian Travers!

PERK did not seem to appeal to Travers for, after a few minutes with his books, he pushed them aside and took up a copy of the "Bannington Gazette," which had been lying on the table.

He smiled whimsically as he re-read a paragraph which was headed with the words: "No Clue To Moor View School Robbery." He glanced at a list of numbers which were printed lower down in the column.

Then, with a chuckle, he opened the table drawer, and took out the currency notes.

"I wonder if that young blighter made a note of these numbers?" he murmured, as he idly fingered the notes. "Well, well! Life's full of troubles!"

Travers had good and sufficient reason to be anxious—although he didn't seem in the least perturbed now. Yet it was a fact that the numbers published in the paper, and the numbers on those notes in his hand, were identical! In point of fact, these very notes were the very ones that had been so recently stolen from Miss Bond, headmistress of the Moor View School!

Travers shrugged his shoulders, slipped the notes back into the table drawer, and devoted himself to his work again. But he was not permitted to get immersed in it.

For suddenly he looked up. The tramping of feet sounded out in the corridor, accompanied by loud and excited voices. He dipped his pen into the inkpot, and chuckled

(Continued on page 14.)

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"Thought so!" he murmured complacently. There was a thud upon the door, then the door opened with a jerk, and Handforth strode in, followed by a big percentage of the Remove. Within a minute, the study was crammed almost to suffocation.

"Don't mind me!" said Travers, looking up. "I love doing my prep. under these conditions. Make yourselves quite at home, dear old fellows!"

"We've come here to prove your innocence, Travers!" said Handforth bluntly.

"Innocence?" repeated Vivian Travers, laying his pen down. "Impossible! Alas, I am no longer innocent! The ways of this world are hard and cruel, and one has only to live in a big public school for two or three weeks, and his innocence flies! Instead of innocence, one finds cynicism—bitterness—disillusionment!"

"Ass!" frowned Handforth. "This is no time for your rot, Travers! That young sneak, Teddy Long, says that he found twenty-five currency notes in your desk!"

"Splendid!" said Travers. "I've often tried to find something like that, but I've never had any luck. I shall have to invite Teddy Long to my study pretty frequently, if he can perform such miracles!"

"Look here, Travers, let's get this thing over!" said Nipper uncomfortably. "I don't want you to think that I'm a party to it—or Handforth, either. But lots of the fellows are saying nasty things about you."

"My skin," said Travers, "is tough." "You remember that twenty-five quid was stolen from the Moor View School the other day," went on Nipper. "Fortunately, the numbers were taken—and published."

"I believe they were," nodded Travers, picking up the local newspaper. "In fact, here they are. Well?"

"Well, we want you to prove that Teddy Long's insinuation is unfounded," said Nipper quietly. "If you'll show us those notes of yours, Travers, it'll only take a moment to prove that the numbers are different. Then perhaps these scandal-loving asses will be satisfied!" he added, with a general glare round.

"An excellent idea, I'll admit," said Travers, leaning back in his chair. "But there appears to be a snag, dear old fellow. Before going into the question of Long's insinuation, wouldn't it be a good idea to question his veracity?"

"His what?" said Handforth.

"It has been rumoured," said Travers. "That Teddy Long is not famed for his truthfulness. I am a new fellow here, comparatively, and I do not pretend to know Long's character as well as the rest of you. But I have already discovered, to my cost, that Long is a big—a very big—fibber. Do you really believe that he found a bundle of notes in my study?"

"He says—" began Hubbard.

"Long says this, and Long says that—and ninety-nine per cent of what he says is as false as the complexion of a movie star."

said Travers coolly. "My dear old fellows, I don't know anything about the notes."

"Don't know anything about them!" shouted Teddy Long excitedly. "Why, you took them out of my hand!"

"You were dreaming—or else you made the whole thing up," said Travers, with contempt. "Hang it, you fellows, it's not possible that you believe this yarn, is it? You don't take any notice of the champion liar of the Junior School, do you?"

"By George!" said Handforth, startled. "I hadn't looked at it in that way!"

"Then please look at it in that way now," said Travers reproachfully. "I must say, Handforth, that I regard this as a bit of a slight. You come here to examine some notes of mine which Teddy Long says exist. But do they exist? I can tell you with all truthfulness that I don't own more than fifteen quid, and a few odd shillings. And it's not a bit of good examining this money, because it's in the shape of three fivers."

Travers produced his pocket book, and emptied the fivers on to the table. He was very cool and collected, and the majority of his visitors were beginning to get doubtful.

Teddy Long was so excited that he could hardly speak. But he was known to be a famous liar, and he was noted, too, for his vivid imagination.



CHAPTER 10.

The Bluff!

VIVIAN TRAVERS picked the fivers up, and replaced them in his pocket-book.

"Well?" he asked. "What are you going to do? Of course, if you choose to believe Long I have nothing further to say."

"Do you mean that he didn't come to your study at all?" asked De Valerie.

"He was here, all right," replied Travers. "I found him shoving his ugly little nose into my desk. I kicked him out—and I kicked him hard. But as for the fairy tale about the bundle of currency notes—"

"It's not a fairy tale!" shouted Long excitedly. "Why, you—you rotter! You know jolly well that you snatched the notes out of my hand!"

"Did I?" asked Travers coolly. "And what did I do with them—throw them on the fire? Did I destroy the deadly evidence? I haven't moved from this study since I kicked you out, Long. I've been doing my prep., like a good little boy!"

"Then those notes are still in this room!" shouted Long. "Travers must have hidden them somewhere!"

"Of course!" said Vivian Travers, nodding. "I must have hidden them somewhere! Really, my dear Watson, your perspicacity amazes me more and more each day!"

day! Of course, I hid the notes away somewhere."

"Don't be an ass, Travers!" said Nipper gruffly.

"Nature has made us what we are, dear old fellow," replied Travers, smiling. "Well, why don't you all go ahead? If the notes are in this room, surely you could easily find them? Don't mind me! Go straight at it—search every corner of the room!"

"That's what we're going to do!" roared Teddy Long.

"Splendid!" nodded Travers. "And don't forget to search me, too. All my pockets are at your service. While you are about it, I urge you to closely examine the coal scuttle. You might as well rake through the cinders, in case you find any incriminating ashes. Turn up the carpet, and look at any loose floor boards. There may even be some secret panels in the walls. Who knows?"

There was a note of veiled contempt in Travers' tone—a kind of amused sarcasm. Most of the juniors in that study were feeling very uncomfortable.

"Do you mean that you want us to search?" asked Hubbard bluntly.

"What else?" asked Travers. "Search away—and you have my blessing! But you don't mind if I get on with my prep. in the meantime, do you? Perhaps I'd better turn my pockets out now, so that I shan't be bothered—"

"Chuck it, Travers!" said Handforth. "We're not going to search you—or the study, either!"

"Of course we're not!" said De Valerie. "We'd better clear out, you fellows! And I rather think we owe Travers an apology for suspecting him of such rotten things. Why, when you come to think of it, we've almost called him a thief!"

"On the word of Teddy Long!" said Travers sadly.

"But it's true!" hooted Long, in desperation. "I tell you I saw those notes—"

"This way, my lad!" said Handforth, seizing Long by the arm and pulling him round. "Grab him, you chaps! We'll give him a jolly good bumping for this!"

"Rather!" said Hubbard. "We'll knock all the breath out of him!"

"Hear, hear!"

In vain Teddy Long struggled.

"Don't you believe me?" he shrieked.

"I saw those notes in Travers' desk, and just as I was going to take the numbers, he came along and—"

"Shut up!" roared Handforth.

"It's the truth!" screamed Long. "I may tell a few fibs sometimes, but I've been telling the truth this time!"

But Long's reputation was against him, and Travers' cool handling of the situation had impressed the fellows immensely. He had asked them to search his study—he had requested them to examine every nook and cranny. It was sheer bluff on Vivian Travers' part—and the bluff had worked!

The door opened, and Teddy Long was whirled out. Afterwards, the juniors trooped into the corridor, and summary punishment descended upon Long's head. He was bumped again and again. He was frog-marched, and his life was generally made miserable.

Inside Study A, Travers was smiling complacently. When the last of the sounds had died away, he opened the table drawer, took out the bundle of notes, and grinned.

"And they were there all the time!" he murmured whimsically. "In any sudden crisis, there's nothing like keeping your head. What a life!"



CHAPTER 11.

The Invitation!

JIMMY POTTS, with hands thrust deeply into his overcoat pockets, trudged down Bellton Lane

towards the village.

Travers had told him that the fresh air would do him good—that it would brighten him up. But it must be admitted that Sir James Potts, Bart., was as gloomy as any boy could possibly be.

His whole world had been shattered.

At St. Frank's, he was very happy, and although he did not pretend to over-like his duties as boot-boy, he was nevertheless determined to carry on, and to do his work thoroughly and loyally.

At Beccleston College, he had been Junior skipper, and he had been the social equal to any of these fellows at St. Frank's. But now he was compelled to earn his own living, and he was plain Jimmy Potts, the buttons.

Jimmy was very philosophical, as a rule. He took life as it came—and he was finding that working for his living was not so terrible, after all.

As he neared the village, his thoughts turned to his mother. Lady Potts—now known to all and sundry as Mrs. Potts—was the housekeeper at the Moor View School. It was quite a responsible position—a position that any lady could accept. Truth to tell, Jimmy's mother did not like the idea of him cleaning boots and running errands, and wearing a uniform with lots of buttons.

But Jimmy had wanted to be near by, and he had accepted the only job available. And what was the matter with it, anyhow? It was an honourable situation, and Jimmy had no false pride.

But now? What could he tell his mother? He was dismissed—without notice! On the morrow, he would be compelled to leave the school. Where could he go? What could he do now?

The unfortunate youngster was torn with anxiety and bitterness. Anxiety concern-

ing his immediate future, and bitterness when he thought of Grayson.

Yes, Grayson was the cause of all this! The bullying Fifth-Former had disgraced him, and there could be no redress. That was the galling part of the whole situation. Jimmy was not revengeful, but he did feel that Harold Grayson deserved something lingering—preferably with boiling oil in it.

"Hallo, Jimmy!" said a cheery voice. "Well, I'm blowed! The very chap we wanted to see, Bob!"

Jimmy Potts started, and came to a halt. Almost before he knew it, he was surrounded by three sturdy young villagers.

Two were youngsters of about his own age, and the third was several years older. They were Joe Spence, the captain of the Bellton Boys' Eleven, and Alf and Bob Catchpole. Alf was in the Boys' Eleven, too, but Bob was the skipper of the Bellton Rovers.

This latter team was quite renowned. It was in the District League, and, according to all reports, the Rovers were hot stuff.

"You—you want to see me?" asked Jimmy, trying to smile.

"Well, Bob wants to see you, as a matter of fact," said Joe Spence. "He's heard what kind of game you played for us, and he wants to collar you for the Rovers."

"The Rovers!" echoed Jimmy Potts, staring. "But—but I'm so much younger

"That doesn't matter!" said Bob Catchpole eagerly. "Age doesn't count at all. At least, it doesn't with a player of your sort, young Potts!"

Jimmy hardly knew what to say. He was certainly a remarkable footballer. In a recent game against the St. Frank's juniors, Jimmy had been the outstanding figure. Not that this was very surprising—considering that he had been Junior Skipper at his old school, Beccleston.

"You'll play for us, won't you?" asked Bob Catchpole anxiously. "You see, it's a special occasion. We're going to play against the St. Frank's seniors—the First Eleven!"

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Jimmy.

The prospect was very alluring. A match against the St. Frank's First! It sounded almost too good to be true!

"We challenged 'em some time ago," went on Bob Catchpole. "But they didn't accept straight away—mainly because there was some nasty talk about me."

"Yes, you were accused of fouling, or something, weren't you?" asked Jimmy.

"That's it!" nodded Bob. "There was an inquiry, and all the nobbs of the League were there. Anyhow, I was exonerated—and I left the court without a stain on my character!" he added, with a grin.

"I'm jolly glad to hear that," said Jimmy. "And so the St. Frank's seniors have accepted the challenge now?"

"Yes—I got a letter from Fenton this evening," said Bob. "I can tell you, the

Rovers are all jolly bucked about it. We're going to play them on Saturday—on their own ground! And, if you'll help us, there's just a remote chance that we shall win. You're as hot as mustard, Potts, and we want you. I'm the skipper, and I'm giving you the invitation."

"Well, of course, it's very good of you," said Jimmy. "Thanks awfully! I—I'll play of course— Oh, but wait a minute!" he said in dismay.

"What's the matter?" asked Joe Spence. "I—I'm leaving St. Frank's!" said Jimmy blankly.

"Leaving!"

"Yes, I—"

"That won't make any difference!" put in Bob Catchpole, who was very anxious to secure this keen young player. "You'll still be in the district on Saturday, won't you?"

"I suppose so," said Jimmy miserably.

They didn't question him—feeling, perhaps, that he did not want to discuss the matter. They had an inkling that he had been dismissed, and, although they were full of curiosity, they held their tongues.

However, when Jimmy parted from them he was feeling happier. He had accepted that invitation to join the Bellton Rovers, and his love of football was so great that his former depression was tempered by the thoughts of the coming game.

But Jimmy didn't know what Vivian Travers was doing at that very moment!



CHAPTER 12.

Travers Means Business!

GRAYSON and Shaw, of the East House Fifth, looked at their visitor with undisguised hostility.

Vivian Travers had just come into their study, and now he was leaning with his back against the door.

"Well?" demanded Grayson harshly. "What do you want?"

"A little chat with you, Grayson," replied Travers. "At least, I don't actually want it—but I feel that it is necessary."

"Are you going to stand cheek like this from a Remove kid?" asked Shaw, turning to his study mate. "We'd better kick him out, hadn't we?"

"We're going to do it—now!" said Grayson savagely.

"Just a minute!" exclaimed Travers, with perfect coolness. "You mustn't get excited, Grayson—it doesn't suit your complexion."

"Confound you—"

"Before you throw me out, I want to know what you're going to do about Jimmy Potts?" said Travers pointedly.

The two seniors stared at him. Just



Thinking Teddy Long had been spreading false stories about Vivian Travers, the Removites seized hold of the screaming, struggling Long, and rushed him along the corridor, preparatory to frog's-marching and bumping him.

recently, Travers had been very "thick" with them—but only for his own ends. Now that Travers had gained what he had set out for, he was no longer obliged to affect a friendship which he did not actually feel.

"Jimmy Potts?" repeated Grayson.

"Jimmy Potts!" nodded Travers.

"You young idiot, what do you think we care about Potts?" demanded Grayson. "He's only your infernal boot-boy!"

"But even infernal boot-boys are human," said Travers. "And justice is just as necessary with infernal boot-boys as it is with infernal Fifth Formers!"

"You cheeky young hound!" roared Grayson, red with rage. "I'll give you one minute to clear out!"

"Good!" said Vivian Travers. "I can say all I want to say in one minute—and less than a minute. It may surprise you to know that I witnessed the entire affair at the woodshed this evening."

"You witnessed it?" blurted out Shaw, with a start.

"Yes!" nodded Travers.

This was not precisely the truth—but Vivian Travers was a peculiar sort of fellow, and he had already proved that, when he had a purpose to be accomplished, he was not

strictly veracious. But, in Travers' favour, it must be said that he did not make a habit of telling malicious lies. Most of his lies were of the white variety—not that they were pardonable on that account.

"A very interesting affair," went on Travers. "Enter Mr. Pycraft, inquisitive as usual. Exit Grayson, Shaw, Kenmore & Co. Limited, leaving the unfortunate Jimmy Potts to face the music."

Grayson and Shaw were nonplussed for a moment. It was obvious that Travers knew all the facts—and they took it for granted that he had been a witness, as he had stated.

"Well, who the deuce is Potts, anyhow?" asked Grayson harshly. "He's a boot-boy—and he's got nothing to lose."

"Nothing—except his job!" said Travers.

"What do we care about that?"

"I rather fancy that you care nothing," replied Travers. "But, as I mentioned before there is such a thing as justice. You may be interested to know that Potts has been sacked without notice. He is under orders to accept a month's wages to-morrow, and to clear out of the school."

"Good riddance to him!" said Grayson sourly.

"He was hauled before the Head by old Pycraft, and Pycraft arrived at the brilliant conclusion that Potts had been entertaining some friends of his from the village," went on Travers. "Do you realise, you hulking great worms, that Potts refused to give your names?"

"It wouldn't have mattered if he had given our names," said Grayson unpleasantly. "We should have denied everything—and the Head would have believed us sooner than a common menial."

"Don't you believe it," said Travers. "An inquiry would have been very awkward for you, Grayson. Well, as matters stand at present, there'll be no inquiry, and Potts will be kicked out of the school to-morrow. But that mustn't happen."

"Mustn't?" snapped Grayson.

"Mustn't!" insisted Travers. "You've got to save him."

"Confound your impudence——"

"And you've got to save him this evening!" went on Travers smoothly. "I don't pretend to know how you'll do it, but you've got to go to the Head, and you've got to clear Potts of all blame."

"Are these your orders?" snarled Grayson, starting to his feet.

"You can take them as orders, if you like," said Travers. "But if you *don't* go to the Head, I shall go to him."

"You!"

"Exactly!" said Vivian Travers. "I shall go to the Head, and I shall tell him the simple truth. I shall say that I saw you and Kenmore and the rest escaping from the woodshed at the rear. You needn't think that you'll be able to bluff it out—because I was an eye-witness, and an eye-witness is just what the Head wants."

"You—you young sneak!" panted Grayson, wild with alarm. "You wouldn't go to the Head, and——"

"If it gives you any pleasure to call me a sneak, go ahead!" interrupted Travers. "But this isn't a question of sneaking at all. Justice has got to be done. I am going out now, and I shall wait in the Triangle, near Big Arch, for ten minutes. If I don't see you on your way to the Head before the end of that time-limit, Grayson, I shall go straight to the Head myself."

Without another word, Vivian Travers opened the door and strode out. There was a dead silence in the study as Travers' footsteps could be heard echoing down the corridor.

"He meant it, too!" said Shaw, at last. "He meant it, Grayson! What the deuce are we going to do?"

"How should I know?" shouted Grayson fiercely.

"But you *must* know!" said Shaw. "He'll give us away—and then we shall be sacked!"

"Shut up!" snarled Harold Grayson, pacing up and down. "Something's got to be done! That Remove kid is a holy terror! He's always as cool as a cucumber

—and he's dangerous, too! If he goes to the Head, it'll be all up! We've got to do something, Shaw!"

"You mean to say—you've got to do something!" said Frederick Shaw sourly. "Don't drag me into it!"



CHAPTER 13.

The Way Out!

HAROLD GRAYSON strode through Big Arch, and his footsteps were more or less faltering. He hated this mission—but he knew that Vivian Travers was his master, and he had to obey.

Travers himself, in the shadows, watched him go, and Travers smiled complacently.

"Exactly nine minutes!" he murmured, as he glanced up at the school clock. "I rather thought it would work!"

Knowing Travers as he did, Grayson had not dared to leave anything to chance. For the bully of the Fifth had been certain that Travers would go to the Head, as he had threatened. So it was vitally necessary that Grayson himself should interview the Head first.

He wasn't the only one affected.

Shaw, indeed, had already told Kenmore and Sinclair, and these two Sixth-Formers had rushed down upon Grayson, frantic with alarm and fear. Their own fate was in the balance, for if Travers told his story there would be a big inquiry, and then the truth would inevitably come out.

It was Grayson's task to put the thing straight. For Grayson had held that party—he had invited the others. As the host, he was compelled to save his guests from disaster.

And in desperation Grayson had thought of a cunning scheme.

He presented himself at the Head's house, and the door was answered by Phipps, the butler. Phipps was also Archie Glenthorne's valet at certain periods of the day.

"I want to see the Head!" said Grayson bluntly.

"Have you an appointment, sir?" asked Phipps.

"No—but it's very important," said Grayson. "Tell the Head that I want to see him in connection with Potts, the Ancient House boot-boy."

"Very good, sir," said Phipps. "Will you be good enough to wait here?"

And Grayson cooled his heels in the hall while Phipps went along to the Head's study. He returned after a few minutes, and Grayson was ushered into the presence of Dr. Stafford.

"I trust your reason for disturbing me at this hour of the evening is a good one, Grayson," said the Head shortly. "I under-

stand that you wish to see me in regard to Potts?"

"Yes, sir," said Grayson, assuming an air of righteousness. "I've heard that young Potts has been dismissed."

"That is perfectly true," said the headmaster coldly. "Potts is leaving the school to-morrow."

"Well, I felt that it was my duty to come forward and make a statement, sir," said Grayson glibly. "If you have dismissed Potts for what occurred at the woodshed this evening, you're not being quite fair to him."

"What do you mean, Grayson?"

"I was out in the Triangle when the affair happened, sir," replied Grayson, with a bold exterior—but with a quaking heart. "I didn't think anything of it at the time, but since I've heard that Potts has been sacked! I thought I'd better come and tell you."

"I am glad that you have come, Grayson," replied the Head promptly. "At present, the only witness is Mr. Pycraft—and his evidence is necessarily limited, since he arrived on the scene after Potts' companions had made good their escape. Do you know who those companions were?"

"I don't know their names, sir, but they were a number of village boys," replied Grayson, without turning a hair.

"Good gracious!" said the Head, in astonishment. "Village boys? Are you sure of this, Grayson?"

"Quite sure, sir."

"But how do you know?" demanded Dr. Stafford. "And why should these village boys be utilising a St. Frank's outbuilding as a—a gambling den?"

"Well, as a matter of fact, sir, Potts invited them," replied Grayson.

"He invited them, eh?" said the Head sternly. "Good heavens! This only makes the affair worse—"

"But just a minute, sir!" interrupted Grayson. "You have dismissed Potts because you only know half the truth. I believe it's Potts' birthday, or something, and he wanted a bit of a spree. Perfectly harmless, you know. He hasn't been here long, and I daresay he made friends with some of the village boys. I think it is pretty clear that he did not know their real character."

"I must confess, Grayson, that this story of yours is altogether unconvincing," said the Head coldly. "And I cannot imagine why you should come to me—"

"Please let me finish, sir," urged Grayson. "As it happened, I was out in the Triangle at the time. I heard voices, and then I could see that Potts was talking to a group of youngsters. They were all collected round the doorway of the woodshed, and a candle was burning inside."

"Well?"

"Potts was indignantly saying that he only invited them up for tea," continued Grayson glibly. "He was saying that he

thought it was only a bit of a lark. But two or three of the village boys sneered at him, and they used pretty bad language, too. They said that they had been fooled. They wanted to have a game of cards—and to do a bit of drinking, too. In fact, they had come prepared with all the necessary things and, as they were Potts' guests, they weren't going to be done out of it."

"And what did Potts say to this?" asked the Head, frowning.

"Why, he called them a lot of cads, sir," replied Grayson. "He told them to clear off. He said that he would never have invited them if he had known what cads they were. He said that he'd finished with them from that moment, and that he would never speak to them again."

"And then?"

"Then they piled on him, sir, and Potts put up a good fight for the time being," said Grayson, warming to his work. "But they were too many for him, and they got him down. Then I heard one of the villagers saying that they would hold their party, after all—and that Potts would have to stand outside the woodshed, on guard!"

"H'm!" said the Head slowly. "You mean, Grayson, that Potts was terrorised by these boys whom he believed to be decent friends?"

"Exactly, sir," replied Grayson.

"And why did you not interfere?" demanded the Head coldly. "That is what I cannot understand, Grayson. Why did you not go forward, and send these young rascals about their business?"

Grayson was ready for this teaser.

"I was just going to, sir, when I suddenly remembered that I'd left a Bunsen burner alight in the laboratory," he replied easily. "You see, sir, I'd been doing an experiment, and there was a retort on the burner, with some boiling acid in it. I was afraid that it might explode, and do a lot of damage. Until that minute, I'd forgotten all about it, and I rushed off like the wind."

"I see," said the Head, nodding. "But surely you could have done something afterwards, Grayson."

"I rushed into the laboratory, sir, turned the gas out, and when I went outside again the woodshed was empty. Of course, I didn't know it at the time, but Mr. Pycraft must have been there, and Potts was hauled over the coals. As soon as I heard that Potts was in trouble, I came straight to you. I mean, sir, it's not fair that he should be sacked for a thing like this. He invited those village chaps up to the school in all innocence, and they took advantage of him. That's the long and the short of it, sir."

The Head nodded.

"That will do for the moment, Grayson," he said quietly. "Potts was very foolish not to tell me the full truth. And yet, now I come to think of it, he did deny being a member of the party."

"Naturally, sir, he didn't want to admit that he invited the chaps up to the school,"

said Grayson cunningly. "He would have condemned himself in a minute if he had done that."

The Head touched his bell, and when Phipps came he gave orders that Jimmy Potts should be brought to him at once. Five minutes later Jimmy arrived—very surprised and very pale.

He saw Grayson there, and he wondered what the bully of the Fifth could be doing. It occurred to him, for a moment, that Grayson had told the headmaster the truth concerning his real identity, but the Head's first words disproved this.

"Potts," said Dr. Stafford, "Grayson tells me that he witnessed the affair in the Triangle this evening. I understand that you invited a number of village boys to the school—to a perfectly harmless tea—and that afterwards these boys forced you, against your will, to remain on guard outside the woodshed?"

Jimmy gulped. He knew that Grayson had told a fairy tale—but he could tell, also, that this evidence would probably help him.

Grayson, shivering in his shoes, tried to appear unconcerned.

"Is this true, Potts?" went on the Head. "I cannot pretend to understand why you should desire to entertain these boys in the woodshed—but I am well aware, of course, that boys do the most extraordinary things."

"I—I didn't mean any harm, sir!" stammered Jimmy, hardly knowing what to say.

"This is the point I want to get at, Potts," said the Head. "Were you compelled to remain on guard outside the woodshed against your will?"

"Yes, sir," replied Jimmy promptly, knowing that he could answer this question truthfully. "I didn't want to be there, sir. They forced me."

"I saw everything, sir," put in Grayson hurriedly. "They grabbed Potts, and threatened to half-kill him unless he agreed. As far as I can see, sir, Potts is absolutely innocent."

"I am grateful to you, Grayson, for your evidence," said the headmaster. "Your sense of justice is splendid. In the circumstances, I shall naturally reconsider the whole matter."

"You see, sir, Mr. Pyecraft didn't come on the scene until the last minute," said Grayson. "He didn't know that Potts had been forced to do the thing against his will."

"I quite understand that," nodded the Head. "Grayson, you may go—and thank you again for your kindly action in coming forward in favour of this boy."

"That's all right, sir!" said Grayson. "I should hate to see Potts dismissed for something he didn't do."

He went out, congratulating himself, and breathing a big sigh of relief. The Head hadn't suspected anything! He had swallowed the story whole!

And when Jimmy Potts came out of the Head's study, five minutes later, he had been reinstated. He was cleared of suspicion, and

he was once again the boot-boy of the Ancient House.

But never for a moment did Jimmy believe that Grayson of the Fifth had come forward with this story of his own free will. In fact, Jimmy made haste to seek out Travers.

"It's all right, Travers!" panted Jimmy, in a low voice. "I'm not dismissed, after all!"

Vivian Travers beamed.

"Splendid!" he said, nodding. "Well, well! What big surprises we do get!"

"You did this, Travers, didn't you?" asked Jimmy.

"I?"

"Yes, you!" said the boot-boy baronet. "And you needn't look so jolly innocent, either! I'll bet you forced Grayson to go to the Head and tell that rignmarole, didn't you?"

"I don't know what the rignmarole was—but it seems to have been successful!" grinned Travers. "Yes, my lord, I plead guilty!"

"You're a brick!" said Jimmy Potts warmly. "In fact, Travers, I don't know what the dickens I should do without you here! Thanks ever so much, old man!"

Vivian Travers waved his hand.

"Rats!" he said. "Likewise, piffle! This is nothing, dear old fellow! Just you wait a bit!"

"Wait a bit?" said Jimmy, staring. "What do you mean?"

But Travers only smiled. And Jimmy, as he made his way back to the domestic quarters, had a vague feeling that Travers was still playing some deep game!



CHAPTER 14.

A Visitor for Travers!

MORNING lessons were in full swing, and everything was going well in the Remove Form-room.

Mr. Crowell, for once, was in an excellent temper, and he had even gone to the length of making several alleged jokes—at which the Form had dutifully tittered.

The second lesson was now in progress, and the wintry sunshine was pouring through the big windows.

A tap sounded on the door, and Mr. Crowell turned his head away from the black-board.

"Come in!" he said, frowning.

Mr. Crowell was a gentleman who detested being disturbed in the middle of lessons, and his good-humour deserted him for a moment. But his face cleared again when he saw that the visitor was only Potts, the Ancient House page.

"Well, Potts?" said Mr. Crowell. "What do you want?"

"There's a gentleman to see Master Travers, sir," said Jimmy.

"Indeed!" ejaculated Mr. Crowell, with slight sarcasm. "You had better tell the gentleman, Potts, that my pupils are not in the habit of receiving visitors in the middle of morning school."

The Remove listened with interest, and many glances were turned in the direction of Vivian Travers. But the latter was quite unconcerned, and he was in no way surprised. Indeed, if the truth must be told, he had been expecting this visitor for the past hour.

"The gentleman has come all the way from London, sir," said Potts. "He says that he must see Master Travers now. It's a very urgent business matter, sir."

Mr. Crowell turned.

"Do you know anything of this, Travers?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," replied Travers. "I invited the gentleman to come—although I didn't know that he would interrupt morning lessons."

"I greatly dislike these disturbances," said the Form-master tartly. "Perhaps you had better go, Travers—but get back as quickly as you can. And I trust that you will arrange matters, in future, so that you can attend to your business out of school hours!"

"I'll try to, sir," said Travers calmly.

He went out, and the Remove wondered what it could mean. But there was no chance of knowing, for the morning was only half over, and Travers wasn't the sort of fellow to come back and tell his business to all and sundry.

He made his way into the Ancient House, accompanied by Jimmy Potts. And Jimmy was now looking flushed and excited.

"What does it mean, Travers?" he asked tensely, as they crossed the Triangle from the School House to the Ancient House. "What have you done? This—this man is Mr. Grayson."

"I know it!" said Travers, nodding. "I told him to come."

"You told him to!" gasped Jimmy. "But—but—"

"Don't excite yourself, dear old fellow," interrupted Travers. "It's my affair, and I'm rather sorry that you know about it. Mr. Montague Grayson is the fellow who ruined your father. Please don't think that he's a friend of mine."

"I don't—of course I don't!" said Jimmy Potts. "But why is he here? What business can he possibly have with you, Travers?"

"Wait and see!" replied the cool Remove.

And he wouldn't say any more. He went to Study A, in the Remove passage, and walked in. Standing near the window was Mr. Montague Grayson, the father of Harold Grayson of the Fifth. Travers closed the door, and Mr. Grayson spun round.

He was a heavily-built man with a somewhat bloated countenance. He was well-dressed, and was spruce from head to foot. The expression on his face was one of anger and grimness.

"Are you—are you this boy Travers?" he demanded harshly.

"At your service, Mr. Grayson!" said Travers smoothly. "I see that you got my letter."

"You infernal young puppy!" said Mr. Grayson furiously. "What do you mean by sending me such an effusion? How dare you? Answer me! How dare you write to me that my son is in danger of being expelled? That you hold his good name in your hands? Give me an explanation this very instant!"

"You shall have it, sir," replied Travers. "But won't you sit down first?"

"I will not sit down!" shouted Mr. Grayson. "You have made a most outrageous statement in your letter, and I have come down especially to thresh the matter out. Come, boy—out with it!"

"You need an explanation, sir—and I'll give you one," replied Travers evenly. "But please prepare yourself for a shock—because I'm going to give you one!"



CHAPTER 15.

The Evidence!

MR. MONTAGUE GRAYSON fumed.

It exasperated him beyond measure to see his young host sitting

coolly on a corner of the study table, unfolding a paper that he had taken from his pocket. It was a double sheet of note-paper, and at last Travers looked up.

"Well, what is the matter with you?" snapped Mr. Grayson. "Do you think I can waste the whole day over you? What nonsense—"

"Just a minute, Mr. Grayson," interrupted Travers. "This is a copy of the letter that I sent to you. I told you that your son is in danger of being expelled in disgrace—and that his safety lies in my hands. I also told you that unless you came down to see me this morning, I should place certain facts before the headmaster, and so encompass your son's downfall. I am glad to see that you thought it fit to come down."

"I came because I mean to have you drastically punished for your outrageous effrontery!" retorted Mr. Grayson, breathing harder than ever. "I shall hear your story—and I have not the slightest doubt that it will prove to be a preposterous one—and then I shall go to the headmaster."

"Perhaps you'll change your mind before then, sir," said Travers coolly. "Well, we won't beat about the bush. There's nothing like the blunt truth. In a nutshell, your son is a thief!"

Mr. Grayson started as though he had been stung.

"How dare you?" he shouted thickly.

"I dare—because I have the proof!"



"Quick!" panted Jimmy, as Grayson opened the door of the shed. "Mr. Pycratt's coming!" As Grayson and the other occupants heard the news they turned pale, and next moment there was a wild stampede inside the shed.

"The proof!" echoed Mr. Grayson. "You are telling me that my son is a thief—and that you have proof of it? I wonder I do not strike you down! You insolent young puppy! You insulting——"

"Steady, sir!" interrupted Vivian Travers. "It won't do any good to get violent—or to get excited. I'm just telling you the simple facts. Grayson of the Fifth—your son—is a thief!"

"You are lying!" snarled the other. "I will not stay here for another minute! I shall go straight to the headmaster, and I shall report your infamous conduct!"

"You'd better wait, sir!" said Travers, his tone becoming grim. "Don't forget that I have the proof!"

"Lies—lies!"

"You don't like hearing this, of course, because the truth is generally hard to listen to," said Travers. "Briefly, Mr. Grayson, the facts are these: A few days ago the sum of twenty-five pounds was stolen from the Moor View School—a girls' college, a short way up the road."

"Twenty-five pounds!" said Mr. Grayson contemptuously. "A ridiculous sum!"

"It may be ridiculous to you, Mr. Grayson, but I don't think it's ridiculous to Miss Bond," said Travers. "You're practically a millionaire, and you're accustomed to dealing with sums that run into hundreds of thousands, so twenty-five pounds is just a drop in the ocean. But that makes no difference. The police are trying to trace this thief, and a word from me will put them on the track of your son."

"I don't believe you!" said Mr. Grayson, his voice harsh with fury. "I don't believe a word of this fantastic story!"

"Naturally, I have other witnesses," said Travers. "Your son stole that money so that he could pay off a bookmaker—a man named Sam Lloyd. I might mention that Lloyd is ready to give evidence, if I should call upon him to do so."

"And who will believe this story?" asked Mr. Grayson contemptuously. "Who will take the word of a bookmaker against my son, a scholar of St. Frank's?"

"It doesn't merely rest with Lloyd's word—or your son's word, either," said Travers. "The numbers of all those notes were taken, and Lloyd's first action, on receiving the money from your son, was to send it all to me."

"You have this money now?"

"Yes," nodded Travers. "And please remember that the numbers of those notes were not only taken, but published in the local paper. The police know them—everybody knows them. And Lloyd will swear on his oath—in any witness box—that these

self-same notes were handed to him in discharge of a debt by your son. Isn't that evidence strong enough for you, Mr. Grayson? It is direct—not merely circumstantial."

For two or three minutes, Mr. Montague Grayson paced up and down the little study. He was still in a tearing rage, but, at the same time, he was now alarmed. There was something singularly impressive in Travers' coolness—something sinister in his air of determination. At last, Mr. Grayson



halted and stared at the scheming junior. "Well?" he barked. "What is all this to you? Why have you done this, boy?"

"Just a whim of mine," replied Travers. "I've been to a lot of trouble to get this evidence together, and I'm going to put a proposition before you, Mr. Grayson. If you agree, all well and good. If you don't agree, it will be in my power to have your son exposed."

"Do you think I fear this—this exposure?" shouted Mr. Grayson heatedly. "Who will

believe you and this infernal bookmaker of yours?"

"You seem to forget that the notes themselves will be dumb evidence," said Travers grimly. "When this story comes out, Mr. Grayson, your son will be in a pretty rocky position. In any case, he will be expelled from St. Frank's in disgrace—merely for having dealings with a bookmaker. And the theft? Your son will be exposed as a thief, and the authorities at the Moor View School will probably prosecute!"

"Prosecute!" Mr. Grayson started back. "Why not?" asked Travers. "Isn't it usual to prosecute in a case of theft? And what will happen to your precious son then? He may be sent to Borstal!"

As Travers mentioned the name of that celebrated institution, every atom of colour fled from Mr. Grayson's face!

seen presumptuous on my part, Mr. Grayson, to tell you to keep cool. But it will pay you to do so. Any undue excitement at this stage might be pretty costly."

It was with great difficulty that Mr. Montague Grayson kept himself under control.

"So far, I have been patient," he said, his words slow and tense. "But I warn you, boy, that I am nearly at the limit of my endurance. It is in my mind to take you by the scruff of your neck, and to thrash you within an inch of your life!"

"Too risky!" said Travers, shaking his head. "Don't do it, sir!"

"Why have you done this?" went on the stockbroker, taking a step forward and glaring into the junior's face. "Why have you done it? Tell me! What object can you have in collecting this—this evidence against my son?"

"I am going to give you a surprise, Mr. Grayson—and probably a shock," replied Travers, as icily cool as ever. "You might get very angry with me—even angrier than you are now. But if you do, always remember that a quarrel with me will spell disaster for your son."

"Go on!" said Mr. Grayson harshly. "I happen to know that you are nearly a millionaire," proceeded Travers. "I also happen to know that you handled the affairs of the late Sir James Potts."

Mr. Grayson started violently. At that second it seemed that he actually would lay violent hands upon this boy. Travers himself was aware that his heart was beating more rapidly than usual. This was the great moment.

It was the moment that he had been working up for—for weeks! All his scheming had aimed at this climax.

"Good Heavens!" panted Mr. Grayson. "You—you young hound! You have the audacity to pry into my business affairs, and to—"

"You'll excuse me, sir, but I haven't been prying into any of your affairs at all," interrupted Travers. "But I am interested in the affairs of Lady Potts and her son. I might mention that young Potts was a school-chum of mine, at Beccleston College. And I know that the Potts' fortune amounted to a sum well over fifty thousand pounds. The late Sir James did business with you—took your advice regarding speculations."

"You—you—"

"Wait a minute, sir!" went on Travers grimly. "This isn't easy to hear, is it? I can see that it has already touched you on the raw. Sir James lost his entire fortune, owing to your manipulations, and that fortune went into your own pockets. The blow killed Jimmy's father—and now Jimmy and his mother are compelled to work for their living."

"Have you done?" snarled Mr. Grayson.



"Quick!" panted Jimmy, as Grayson opened the door of the shed. "Mr. Pycraft's coming!" As Grayson and the other occupants heard the news they turned pale, and next moment there was a wild stampede inside the shed.



CHAPTER 16.

The Alternative!

"BORSTAL!" muttered Mr. Grayson hoarsely.

"It's not a nice word—but then, it's not a nice place!" said Travers. "It may

"Not yet!" said Travers. "Working for one's living is no disgrace, of course—but justice is justice. I don't pretend to be a judge, and, strictly speaking, this is none of my business. But if, by a little scheming, I can put things on an honest basis, I'll do it."

"Are you suggesting that I am dishonest?" shouted Mr. Grayson fiercely. "Are you hinting that—?"

"I don't want to hint at anything—and I'm not interested in any details," said Vivian Travers. "But I am going to put a suggestion to you, Mr. Grayson. Lady Potts is at the Moor View School, in the position of housekeeper. She is known as Mrs. Potts, for she has lost everything and prefers to be incognito, so to speak. Do you want to hear my suggestion?"

Mr. Grayson made an inarticulate sound, and Travers nodded.

"Very well, sir," he said. "Here it is. I want you to write to Lady Potts, and I want you to tell her that certain deeds and shares—I'll leave the little details to you—have come to light. You'll tell her that her entire fortune of, roughly, fifty thousand pounds is restored. You will make over the necessary securities, and you will also see that the Potts' estates are handed back to Lady Potts!"

Mr. Grayson gulped.

"And the alternative?" he asked, in a voice of thunder.

"The alternative is very simple, Mr. Grayson," replied Travers. "If you refuse, then I shall go straight to the headmaster, and I shall tell him of your son's guilt. Incidentally, I shall also telephone to the Bannington police, and within an hour Inspector Jameson will be here. I shall hand him the stolen notes, and explain exactly how they came into my possession. Sam Lloyd, the bookmaker, will give his own evidence, and the proof against your son will be absolute."

"You crazy young fool!" said Mr. Grayson, almost in a whisper. "Do you think I believe any of this? Do you think I take any heed of your preposterous threats?"

"Nevertheless, Mr. Grayson, you are in a trap," said the junior. "You don't like to admit it—but you know very well that you are in the trap. Either you make restitution to Lady Potts, or your son is expelled from St. Frank's in disgrace, and prosecuted for theft, with the chance of being sent to a reformatory. Quite simple, isn't it?"

The alternative was certainly a terrible one. And although Mr. Montague Grayson was beside himself with rage, he also knew that he would have to deal carefully with this cool schoolboy.

A sum of fifty thousand pounds was involved. It was staggering—stupendous. Unquestionably, Travers' nerve was colossal. How he had ever conceived this startling scheme was a mystery in itself. But as a piece of sheer audacity, it would have taken a lot of beating.

He had deliberately plotted against Harold Grayson of the Fifth. He had worked things so that Grayson had resorted to theft. He had all the evidence cut and dried—and now he had Grayson's father in front of him, and was coolly giving him this dramatic alternative.

Without Joubt, Vivian Travers was something novel in the run of Removites!



CHAPTER 17.

Corroboration.

HE sheer nerve of the thing was breathless. Not one boy in a thousand could have carried through with this game of bluff. For, at rock bottom, it was little else. How did Travers know that the Moor View people would prosecute? How did he know that there was any real chance of Grayson being sent to a reformatory?

Yet Travers was prepared for these eventualities. His cunning brain had thought of everything.

"You are mad!" said Mr. Grayson, at length. "You are stark, raving mad! Do you seriously think, you young fool, that I shall pay a sum like fifty thousand pounds to extricate my son from this—this trivial difficulty? Do you seriously believe that your nonsensical story has convinced me?"

Travers strolled to the window, and waved two or three times.

"Naturally, Mr. Grayson, you will want some corroboration," he said, turning. "I don't expect you to take my bare word."

"What are you doing?" demanded the other harshly. "Who were you signalling to just now?"

"It's all right—only Lloyd, the bookie," replied Travers. "I told him to be on hand this morning, and he is within sight of this window. He'll be here within a minute—and then you'll hear what he has to say."

Mr. Montague Grayson paced up and down the study like a man possessed. Never for an instant did he doubt the story of that theft. He was quite convinced, indeed, that his son had actually stolen the money. And there was something about Travers' attitude, too, that told him that Travers would keep his word.

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A tap sounded on the door, and a moment later Mr. Sam Lloyd strode in.

"Morning, young gent!" he said, smiling at Travers. "Hallo! Visitor, eh?"

"This is a gentleman that I want you to see, Lloyd," said Travers. "Let me introduce you to Mr. Montague Grayson. He's the father of the fellow who handed you that money the other day."

"Pleased to meet you, sir!" said Mr. Lloyd agreeably.

"You despicable rogue!" snapped Mr. Grayson. "Are you in this plot, too?"

"Plot?" said Mr. Lloyd. "Here, steady, sir! You'd better be careful what you're saying!"

"You mustn't be too hard on Mr. Grayson, Sam, dear old fellow," said Travers. "He's rather upset at the moment. All I want you to do is to tell your story."

"That'll be easy, sir," said Mr. Lloyd. "I took twenty-five pounds in notes from your son, Mr. Grayson," he went on, turning to the visitor. "The money was given to me in settlement of some I.O.U.'s that I was holding. But owing to Master Travers' word of warning, I knew that the money had been stolen. What was more, the numbers of those notes were known, and so I didn't want to touch the stuff."

"Why did you not inform the police?" demanded Mr. Grayson, glaring.

"Well, for one thing, the affair was pretty serious—and Master Travers here seemed to have some game of his own on," replied Mr. Lloyd. "He asked me to give him the notes, so I gave them to him. Just a little arrangement between ourselves. Not that it makes any difference to the main fact. The money that I received from your son was stolen from the girls' school. Yes, and I shall be perfectly willing to swear that in the witness box, if necessary."

Mr. Lloyd could easily make this statement—since it was the gospel truth. He had received that money from Grayson, and so he could truthfully say so under oath.

"Go!" panted Mr. Grayson, pointing to the door. "I want to hear no more!"

"Here are the notes, sir," said Travers, producing them from his pocket. "And here, on the table, is a local newspaper—with the numbers of the notes printed in this column. If you will compare these numbers with the numbers on the notes, you will find—"

"Enough!" snarled Mr. Grayson. "I can see that you have been plotting together—that you have been deliberately trying to encompass my son's dishonour."

"That's all, Sam, dear old fellow," said Travers quietly, turning to the bookmaker. "But don't go away just yet—not until I see you, anyhow. You may be wanted again."

"Right you are, Master Travers, sir—I'm free for another hour," said Mr. Lloyd.

He went out, and Travers immediately turned to Mr. Grayson again.

"There's one thing that I want to correct, Mr. Grayson," he said. "There has been

no plotting to encompass your son's dishonour. The plotting has been for a different reason altogether. I want Lady Potts to have justice. That is all. If you do the sensible thing, not a single word of this scandal will come out. Your son will continue at St. Frank's as though nothing had happened and there will not be a breath of suspicion against him. The notes will be returned to the Moor View School anonymously, and the whole affair will naturally drop. It rests with you, Mr. Grayson."

"I want to see my son!" panted the other. "Before I decide anything, I want to see Harold!"

"That's easy," replied Travers. "If you'll wait here for five minutes, sir, I'll bring him back with me."

The junior quickly left the apartment, and he was back with Harold Grayson within four minutes by the clock. A word to Mr. Pagett, the Fifth Form-master, that Grayson's father was waiting to see him, had been sufficient.

"Pater!" ejaculated Grayson, as he came into Study A, and stared at his father. "What's brought you here? I didn't know—"

"Harold, this boy has been telling me that you are a thief!" interrupted his father bluntly.

Grayson staggered.

"A—a thief!" he faltered, turning white. "I—I don't know—"

"This is no time for beating about the bush, Harold!" panted his father. "Did you, or did you not, steal twenty-five pounds in notes from the Moor View School? Answer me, boy! I must know the truth!"

"You'd better answer, dear old fellow," drawled Travers. "Here are the notes—handed to me by Lloyd. The numbers on these notes correspond with the published numbers. You'd better make a clean breast of it."

And Harold Grayson, taken utterly by surprise—taken off his guard—crumpled up.



CHAPTER 18.

The Victory!

HAROLD GRAYSON was not a resourceful fellow at the best of times. His brain did not work rapidly.

He might have bluffed the whole thing out—he might have brazened it through—but he wasn't built that way.

For a moment or two he muttered and stuttered, and he became incoherent. Then, in response to a sharp command from his father, he blurted out his guilt.

"I—I was desperate!" he babbled. "Lloyd was pestering me—said that he was going to the Head! That would have meant the sack, and I—I had to get the money somehow!"

"And you stole it?" demanded his father, in a terrible voice.

"It—it wasn't my fault!" panted Grayson. "Travers was at the bottom of the whole plot! I really owed the money to him, and I gave him my I.O.U's. But he passed them over to Lloyd, and Lloyd came up here and threatened to give me away to the Head!"

"You see," said Travers easily, "I told you it was a put-up job, Mr. Grayson. But it doesn't alter the fact that your son stole the money."

"It was Travers who told me that the money was at the Moor View School!" went on Grayson, clutching at the slightest straw. "He put the idea into my head!"

"Enough—enough!" said his father. "I can easily see that this boy has been engineering the whole wretched business. But you stole that money, Harold, and you gave it to this bookmaker. The evidence against you is deadly."

"So you see, sir, it boils down to the

one alternative," said Travers. "Either you make restitution to Lady Potts, or I shall go to the headmaster and to the police and tell my story."

"Silence!" thundered Mr. Grayson, white with fury. "Let me think—let me think!"

Montague Grayson had not always been rich and influential. He was almost a millionaire now, and he had set great hopes in his son. The prospect of Grayson being expelled in disgrace from St. Frank's was an appalling one. And expulsion was absolutely inevitable if the truth came out. What-ever happened with regard to the police, Grayson would not be allowed to remain at St. Frank's.

"You young hound!" said Mr. Grayson at length, turning to Travers. "You have been very clever—very cunning! But, by Heaven, this scheme of yours shall not be successful!"

"Does that mean that you're going to let me tell my story to the Head, and to the police?" asked Travers.

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OUT ON FRIDAY!

PRICE FOURPENCE EACH!

"It does!" snarled Mr. Grayson. "I don't care for you—not a snap of the fingers! I shall interview the headmaster myself, and I shall tell him that you plotted—"

"Just a minute, sir," interrupted Travers. "It's quite likely that I shall get the sack for what I did—but so will your son get the sack! I didn't urge him to steal money from the Moor View School. That was his own idea. If he had had honest instincts, he wouldn't have taken any notice of my suggestions!"

"Bah! This affair has gone far enough!" said the stockbroker. "You cannot frighten me with your absurd threats! I shall interview the people at this—this Moor View School. There will be no prosecution—no police-court action."

"You can't be sure of it, though, sir," said Travers quickly. "Why should the people at the Moor View School be tender towards your son? He stole that money, like any common thief—and there is a distinct chance that they will let the law take its course."

"You—you won't let the police take me, pater?" panted Grayson, in horror.

"Silence!" said his father. "Even supposing the police do take you—you'll be safe, Harold. As a first offender, and as my son, it is more than likely that you will be only bound over."

"More than likely, eh?" echoed Travers mockingly. "Is it worth the risk, Mr. Grayson? Are you going to take all these chances? Just think for a minute! Expulsion for your son is inevitable—if I tell the truth. The people at the Moor View School *may* refrain from prosecuting. Or if they do prosecute the police *may* save your son from Borstal. But aren't there a good many doubts here?"

"There are none—none!" shouted Mr. Grayson, beside himself.

"I rather think you're mistaken, sir," said Travers. "Your only course is to look on the worst side—and to be prepared for disaster. If the Moor View School authorities prosecute, your son will be arrested. It is more than likely that he will be remanded—and put in the dock at the next Assizes. And even though you are a rich man, and even though you have influence, that won't prevent your son from going to Borstal. Rank won't make any difference to British justice. Your son has stolen twenty-five pounds—he had broken into the Moor View School like a common thief. The evidence is deadly against him. Are you going to risk all this, Mr. Grayson? Are you going to risk ruin for your son—disgrace for yourself?"

Vivian Travers was clever here. Mr. Montague Grayson was at his wits' end—he was tormented by anxiety and doubt—and Travers was pressing his points home cunningly. This was the time to strike—while the iron was hot.

"You'd better think carefully, sir!" went on the Removite. "The fate of your son is in my hands. And the alternative is easy enough, isn't it? All I ask you to do is to put things right for Lady Potts. What is it to you? The sum is a comparatively trivial one—to a man of your immense wealth. And it will mean the safety of your son. It will mean that no breath of suspicion will fall upon him. Your family name will not be dragged into the mud—dishonoured and disgraced. Isn't it worth it? What are you going to do?"

"Be silent, you young demon!" panted Mr. Grayson, swinging round on him. "Let me have time—"

"That's just what I can't let you have, sir," interrupted Travers calmly. "Either you tell me, now—on the spot—that you'll make restitution to Lady Potts, or I shall go straight to the headmaster, and start the ball rolling."

"Don't let him go, pater—don't let him go!" gasped Grayson, in utter terror.

Mr. Grayson sank down into the nearest chair, and his face was haggard—his drooping shoulders denoted that he was beaten!



CHAPTER 19.

Saints versus Visitors!

VIVIAN TRAVERS

was looking very contented and happy that afternoon. In his present frame of

mind, he almost forgot that the Big Match was to take place to-day—the match between the St. Frank's First Eleven and the Beliton Rovers.

Mr. Montague Grayson had gone.

The stockbroker had not actually said that he would restore the Potts fortunes, but Travers was convinced that everything would now work out right. He had seen that Mr. Grayson was beaten.

It was just a question of time now—perhaps a few hours, perhaps a day or so. It all depended upon how Mr. Grayson acted.

But Travers could see that Mr. Grayson was not willing to take the risk. If everything went well, the disgrace would be bad enough. Expulsion for his son—the sordid publication of the details concerning the robbery—a police-court appearance, and more publicity resulting, perhaps, in Grayson of the Fifth being bound over.

But the worst side of the picture was terrible, indeed—Expulsion—police-court proceedings—Borstal!

This latter was most unlikely, but, as Travers had said, it was an undoubted risk. And could Mr. Grayson afford to take that risk?

After he had cooled down, and had looked at the matter in a commonsense light, he knew that he was caught in the trap. For

the disgrace of his son would act like a boomerang, and it would come back upon himself. His own name would be dishonoured, and all his wonderful plans for his son's future would be wrecked. His very business would be affected, too. It might mean the loss of tens of thousands of pounds to him—perhaps hundreds of thousands. Even now, he was in the midst of gigantic financial undertakings. A breath of disgrace against his name would mean that his most influential customers would desert him.

So there was every reason for Vivian Travers' satisfaction that afternoon. He knew that Mr. Montague Grayson was a beaten man, and he knew that his plot had succeeded.

Strolling over towards Big Side, where most of the crowd was going, Travers found everybody talking excitedly.

"We're going to see a jolly good game this afternoon!" Handforth was saying.

"Have you heard the news, Travers?"

"I can't say I have, dear old fellow," replied Travers. "What news do you mean?"

"About Potts."

"Ah, good old Jimmy Potts," nodded Travers. "What about him?"

"He's playing for Bellton Rovers—against the First!" grinned Handforth. "What do you think of it? Our giddy boot-boy—playing against Fenton and all his merry men! A bit of a cheek, isn't it?"

"Good luck to him!" said Travers cheerfully.

"Rather!" agreed Handforth. "Jolly good luck to him! If it comes to that, he's too good to play for the Rovers! Young Potts is one of the finest players I've ever seen!"

"And he'll give our seniors some anxious moments, too!" said Church. "I say, wouldn't it be a lark if the Rovers won the match!"

Everybody was discussing the situation.

It had come as a surprise to find Jimmy Potts turning out with the Bellton Rovers. The seniors themselves were not merely astonished, but they were indignant. They felt that their dignity had been touched. The boot-boy of the Ancient House was in the opposing team! The very nerve of the thing tended to put the seniors on their mettle. In no circumstances could they allow this boot-boy to score a single goal!

"He won't do much," said Morrow, as he stood talking with Fenton and one or two other members of the First Eleven. "Potts played against the juniors a week or two ago, and he scored a lot of goals, too. But playing against the juniors is a different proposition to playing against us."

"He'll find that out before long," smiled Fenton. "There's nothing wrong with our defence, and if young Potts can get past it, he'll be a wonder."

It seemed that Fenton's words were thoroughly justified. For when the game started soon afterwards Jimmy Potts was not particularly noticeable. He played an excellent

game, it was true, but he had a hard time against the stalwart St. Frank's defence.

Jimmy was the youngest member of the Rovers' team. All the others, captained by Bob Catchpole, were burly youths—ranging from seventeen to twenty. Jimmy, in the forward line, was nippy enough—he was alert and eager.

But somehow he couldn't quite get into his stride. More than once he made a brilliant run, but before he could attempt to shoot, he was robbed of the leather, or he was beaten in other ways.

At all events, when half-time came, Jimmy Potts had not distinguished himself as the juniors had hoped. He had not scored a goal, and he hadn't looked like scoring one, either.

But both Fenton and Browne had scored during that first half, and the Rovers had only replied once. So the score stood at 2-1 when the half-time whistle blew.

The St. Frank's seniors left the ground, feeling that the game was in their hands. During the second half, they would soon settle the villagers' hash.

Not that Jimmy Potts had any time to think of football, once he had left the field. For he had only just got to the pavilion when he caught sight of a figure near by. He started, he flushed, and then he ran forward.

"Mother!" he ejaculated, in delighted surprise.

Lady Potts was standing there—a dignified, quietly-dressed figure. Jimmy hadn't known that she was coming—he hadn't hoped for such good fortune.

"My boy—my boy!" murmured Lady Potts tensely.

And Jimmy knew that something had happened. He looked at his mother with anxious eyes. She was flushed, and she was even trembling!



CHAPTER 20.

The Wonderful News!

"MOTHER!" said Jimmy, clutching at her arm. "What is it? What's happened? Why are you looking so—so different? Tell me, mother!"

"Jimmy dear, I hardly know what to say!" replied Lady Potts, in a low voice. "Can't we go somewhere alone? Just for a few minutes? I want to talk to you, dear."

"It's all right, mother, we can walk up and down here," said Jimmy, as he led her away.

They found themselves alone, walking over the wide stretch of grass behind the pavilion, where the school grounds extended over towards Little Side.

"Now, mother, what is it?" asked Jimmy breathlessly.



Vivian Travers seized hold of Jimmy and dragged him forward before the juniors. "Allow me to introduce Sir James Potts, Bart.!" he said. "So far he's only been the boot-boy, but now—" A series of disbelieving shouts went up from the astonished juniors. They couldn't credit the truth!

"I don't know how to tell you, Jimmy!" replied his mother, pressing his arm. "It's too wonderful—it's too good to be true, almost! Sometimes I think I must be dreaming."

"Oh, mother, what is it?"

Jimmy was getting very excited now—particularly as he saw that his mother was more flushed than ever. Jimmy hadn't seen that look in her eyes for many months.

"This morning, just before the girls went in to their dinner, Mr. Grayson came to see me," said Lady Potts, at length.

"Mr. Grayson!" panted Jimmy, startled.

"You—you mean the man who ruined us?"

"I hardly know what to think, now, Jimmy," said Lady Potts quietly. "I always believed that Mr. Grayson ruined us, and perhaps I was right. Perhaps his conscience has been tormenting him. I can only tell you that he came to me to-day, and that he has assured me that our money is intact."

"Oh, crumbs!" ejaculated Jimmy, aghast. This piece of news was rather too much for him. And Lady Potts allowed it to soak in. They walked on over the grass, oblivious of everything and everybody.

"Intact!" said Jimmy at last. "Do—do you mean, mother, that we shall be able to go back to the old home?"

"Mr. Grayson told me that the Manor will be ready for us within a month," replied Lady Potts softly. "Certain securities have suddenly risen in value—or perhaps they

were shares. I don't know, Jimmy, I was never any good at financial matters. I left that all to your father. But Mr. Grayson has assured me that every penny of our money is now safe. We're rich, Jimmy dear—we're certain of a wonderful income for life! We shall go back to the Manor, and—and, oh, my boy, can't you realise what it all means?"

But Jimmy Potts was stunned. And, somehow, at the back of his head a vague idea was beginning to take shape.

Then, in a flash, he knew the truth.

It came to him almost like a blow. Vivian Travers! It was Travers who had done this—Travers who had engineered the whole thing! In a flood Jimmy remembered Travers' curious attitude of late. He had always told Jimmy to wait. And then, Mr. Grayson had come to see Travers that morning.

Jimmy had almost forgotten the fact, even though his mother had just told him; that Mr. Grayson had been to see her. Curiously enough, he hadn't connected the two facts at first.

But now he knew!

Mr. Grayson had come down from London to see Travers that morning—and within an hour or two Mr. Grayson had gone to see Lady Potts, and had told her that her fortunes were restored! It wasn't merely significant—it was conclusive.

Jimmy felt a little pressure on his arm.

"Isn't it wonderful, dear?" asked his mother softly.

"I'm thinking of something, mum dear," said Jimmy, his eyes shining. "No, I can't tell you yet—I don't know whether I ought to. But you mustn't think that Mr. Grayson has suddenly turned good. It isn't that at all! He has been forced to do this—he couldn't help himself!"

"Whatever do you mean, Jimmy?" asked Lady Potts in wonder.

"Perhaps I'll tell you later on, mother, when everything is really certain."

"But it's certain now, dear," said Lady Potts. "Don't you realise it? Mr. Grayson has given me a signed letter—a written statement, briefly telling me that the Manor is now my freehold property, and that certain definite stocks and shares and securities are mine. Early next week he wants me to go to London, to meet solicitors, and to

"Oh, I don't want to hear it, mum!" interrupted Jimmy happily.

"It's true, then—absolutely true! There's just one thing I want—only one! We're rich now, aren't we?"

"You know we are, Jimmy boy!"

"And we shall soon be able to use our real names," said Jimmy breathlessly. "You'll be Lady Potts, and you'll be back at the old home. It means that I shall be able to go to school again—doesn't it, mum?"

"Yes, Jimmy dear," said Lady Potts.

"You'll go back to Beccleston—"

"That's just it, mum!" said Jimmy eagerly. "Must I go back to Beccleston? Can't I come to St. Frank's—as a pupil?"

"Jimmy!"

"Why not, mother?" urged Jimmy.

"But you've been here as the boot-boy, and—"

"That doesn't matter!" panted Jimmy.

"Everybody will know about it—it's bound to be in the papers! And even if it isn't in the papers, we shan't be able to keep it secret. There's nothing I'd like better than to stay on at St. Frank's. Oh, wouldn't it be glorious if I could go into the Remove—and be on equal terms with Travers, and all the other fellows. They're fine chaps, mum—even better than the fellows at Beccleston! Please, please let me stay here!"

"We'll see about it, Jimmy," said Lady Potts, smiling. "There! Isn't that a whistle of some kind?"

"My hat!" gasped Jimmy. "I believe they're waiting for me! They're all lined up, ready!"

"Then hurry off—and play your best, dear," said Lady Potts. "I'll go to the headmaster—and I'll tell him everything! I'll ask him if you can stay. How will that do?"

"Do!" shouted Jimmy, leaping a yard into the air. "I shall wake up in a minute! These sort of things only happen in dreams!"

CHAPTER 21.

The Winning Goal!

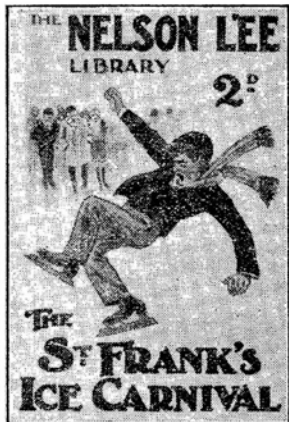


F

ENTON, of the Sixth, looked at Jimmy Potts somewhat impatiently as the latter came hurrying up. "Take your time!" said Fenton, not without sarcasm. "We're in no hurry, young Potts!"

"I—I'm awfully sorry, sir!" said Jimmy with a gulp. "I—I was talking to my mother, you know!"

NEXT WEDNESDAY! ~~~~~



"That's all right," said the St. Frank's captain good-humouredly. "Take your place, young 'un. We're waiting to start."

Several members of the Senior Eleven looked at Jimmy Potts curiously as he took his place. He seemed a changed fellow now. In some indefinable way he seemed to be more confident—more at home.

It was really a psychological change.

Jimmy, knowing that the family fortunes were restored, felt that he was the equal of these St. Frank's fellows. He was no longer the boot-boy—and if everything went all right he would soon be in the Remove.

During the first few minutes of the second half, Jimmy was really awful. He missed one or two excellent passes, and he seemed

to be playing like a fellow in a dream. His kicking was erratic, his whole play was at random.

He wasn't concentrating. He was thinking about his mother. Lady Potts had gone to see the Head—to make an arrangement, if possible, for Jimmy to remain at the school.

Then, as these thoughts followed their logical course, Jimmy suddenly realised that he was now, to all intents and purposes, a St. Frank's fellow, and it behoved him to play a good game—so that he would be able to get into the regular Junior Eleven.

The very thought thrilled him through and through. A place in the Junior Eleven!

Fun And Frolic On The Ice

It's Handforth's idea, and for once in a way an idea of his proves a great success. Irene and Co., from Moor View School, are invited, and everybody has a wonderful time on the frozen River Stowe.

Of course, Handy is well to the fore when it comes to racing and trick skating. His antics are a perfect scream—especially when he comes into collision with a cow!

But while the school is enjoying itself, a sinister figure is creeping about in the studies of the Ancient House. Who is this mysterious marauder? What is he doing?

You'll find fun, mystery and adventure in next week's corking extra-long complete yarn, which is entitled—

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"SONS OF SPEED!"

Motor-racing thrills in galore in the next thrilling instalment of Alfred Edgar's wonderful serial.

ORDER IN ADVANCE!

It was what he had dreamed about—a thing that had seemed unattainable.

From that moment Jimmy's play became electrified.

He forgot his mother—he forgot Travers—he forgot the wonderful news concerning the family fortunes. He only knew that he was playing football, and he concentrated every atom of his energy.

The Rovers were hard-pressed, and it seemed that the St. Frank's seniors were to get a third goal. But Jimmy, going to the rescue of his half-backs, trapped the leather and was off.

He was really like a fellow possessed. Down the field he streaked, tricking opponent after opponent. A roar went up from

all the spectators, for there was something thrilling, something exhilarating, in that run. Right through the St. Frank's defence went Jimmy Potts, and the swelling roar arose to a stupendous shout as he prepared himself to shoot.

"Look out, goalie!"

"Shoot, Potts, shoot!"

Slam!

Jimmy Potts sent the leather spinning into the back of the net, yards away from the reach of the beaten goalkeeper.

"Goal!"

"Oh, good shot!"

"Well played, Potts!"

The Belton Rovers had equalised, and Jimmy's success did not end there. He found himself shadowed by the amazed St. Frank's half-backs, but they were powerless against this live-wire.

Again and again Jimmy got through, and three times in succession he sent in first-time shots that the goalkeeper only just saved. Before long, the entire crowd was watching Jimmy—for he had become the most outstanding player on the field.

In spite of all their efforts, Fenton and his men could not score again. Jimmy's example had spurred the Rovers on, and they were packing their goal, making desperate efforts to stave off defeat. They were on equal terms now, and they meant to force a draw.

But Jimmy was after something better!

Ten minutes from the end, he accepted a pass from the left wing, and never for a second did he hesitate. Without even waiting for the ball to bounce, he met it as it came—and deflected the course of the leather. It swerved giddily, bewilderingly, and a roar of consternation went up from the St. Frank's spectators when the ball was seen to curl under the cross-bar, and drop at the back of the net.

"Goal!"

"Great Scott! He's done it again!"

"Well played, Potts!"

There was nothing niggardly in the shout of praise that went up. That goal had been against the St. Frank's team, but it had been such a wonderful goal that the spectators yelled with delight. The juniors, indeed, were by no means displeased to see the seniors in trouble. They rather enjoyed the spectacle of their boot-boy making rings round the lordly men of the Sixth.

The rest of the game was little better than a scramble. Unexpectedly, the seniors found themselves compelled to be on the defensive. The entire forward line of the Rovers was on the aggressive now, and it seemed that nothing could stop them. The amazing play of Jimmy Potts had instilled every villager with unbounded enthusiasm.

When the final whistle blew the Rovers left the field the winners. Three goals to two! And the St. Frank's First had undoubtedly been defeated by the play of Jimmy Potts, the boot-boy.

But Jimmy did not wait to receive any congratulations. He raced off like the wind, eluding all those fellows who tried to intercept him.

For he had seen his mother again—some little distance from the crowd. He went rushing up to her, and he clutched at her arm frantically.

"Well, mother?" he panted. "Have you seen the Head? Oh, mum, I can't wait for you to tell me!"

"Jimmy!" protested his mother. "You mustn't be so excited. It's all right—"

"You—you mean—"

"I have explained everything to Dr. Stafford, and he was wonderfully nice to me," said Lady Potts gently. "He has promised to make a public announcement later on, and you will enter the school as a pupil—"

But Jimmy didn't hear any more. His great dream had come true.

From this minute, he was no longer the boot-boy of the Ancient House—but a Removeite!



CHAPTER 22.

Introducing Sir James Potts, Bart.

VIVIAN TRAVERS grinned amiably as he saw Jimmy Potts running across the turf towards him.

Jimmy had spotted Travers a minute or two earlier, and he had lost no time in racing to his friend's side.

"Good man, Jimmy!" said Travers. "You played a marvellous game—especially in the second half."

"Never mind about the game!" panted Jimmy. "How did you do it, Travers?"

"Do what, dear old fellow?"

"Oh, you know what I mean!"

"Do I?" said Travers. "That's just where you're wrong. As far as I can make out, you're talking out of the back of your neck!"

"I mean about Mr. Grayson!" said Jimmy tensely. "Mr. Grayson came to see you this morning, and now my mother tells me that everything is all right. Our money is intact, and we're going back to the old Manor House, which has been in our family for centuries!"

"Splendid!" said Travers coolly. "Didn't I always say, Jimmy, that everything would come right?"

"But you've done it, Travers—you've done it!" insisted Jimmy.

"Rot!"

"Oh, why do you keep on pretending?" said the boot-boy baronet. "You can't fool me, Travers. And look here—mother has fixed up everything with the Head, and I'm going to stay on at St. Frank's! I'm coming into the Remove—with you!"

"Better and better!" said Travers contentedly. "Well, well! What a surprise for the chaps! Is this official, Jimmy?"

"Yes, of course; my mother has arranged it definitely."

"Then there's no reason why we shouldn't have a little fun!" said Vivian Travers, with a chuckle. "I suppose the Head is going to make an announcement of some kind, eh? Well, let's forestall him!"

Travers had seen that a number of Remove fellows were charging up. They were intent upon seizing Jimmy now, so that they could congratulate him in a fitting way. So far he had eluded them, but now he was within their reach.

"You're not going to tell them?" gasped Jimmy Potts in dismay. "Look here, Travers! Tell me about Mr. Grayson! What have you done? How did you work it?"

"As I mentioned before, you're talking out of the back of your neck," said Travers calmly. "Why should you think that I've worked anything? What could I have done?"

"Oh, but—"

Jimmy was not allowed to get any further, for just then the St. Frank's juniors came surging round. They slapped him on the back, they shook him by the hand, and they generally battered him about.

"Good old Potts!" said Handforth enthusiastically. "You're the kind of boot-boy to have! Be George, you made the seniors sit up, didn't you?"

"It's a pity you can't play for the Junior Eleven," said Nipper ruefully. "You're just the sort of fellow we need, Potts. Where on earth did you learn to play such marvellous football?"

"I can tell you that!" said Travers, with a grin. "He learned it at Beccleston College!"

"Eh?"

"Where?"

"Beccleston!" said Travers. "Jimmy Potts was junior captain at Beccleston."

"Junior captain?" said Nipper, staring. "But Beccleston is a great public school—nearly as big as St. Frank's!"

"Exactly!" nodded Travers. "Oh, and there's something else, you fellows! Kindly allow me to introduce a new fellow for the Remove!"

He dragged Jimmy forward.

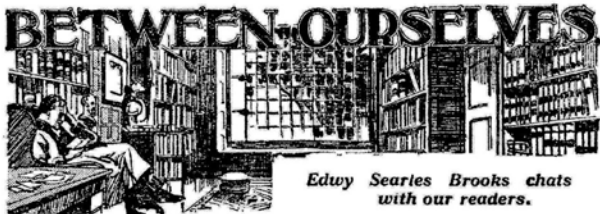
"Sir James Potts, Bart.!" he said whimsically. "Meet the chaps, Sir James. So far you've only been Jimmy, the boot-boy. But—"

"Good gad!" ejaculated Archie Glen-thorne. "Isn't this a bit below the line, Travers, old bird? I mean, hardly the sort of thing—"

"It wouldn't be the sort of thing if I were only spoofing," said Travers. "But it happens to be the truth. This is Sir James Potts, Bart.!"

"You silly ass!" frowned Handforth. "What do you want to spoof the chap for?"

(Concluded on page 44.)



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.

James W. Cook* (Poplar), J. S. Ricketts* (Hayle), J. D. Hosking (Johannesburg), Miss K. York-Palmer* (Brighton), Alfred Charles Davies (Liverpool), Kenneth Rawson* (Burnley), Stan Boland* (Dublin), I. M. Day (Weymouth), Alec Pleon* (Brixton), Frank Pennington (Bishop Auckland), Ruby Nicholas (Horsham), Jack Gray (Hadleigh, Essex), Frederick Rossiter Parks* (West Kensington), Harry Slater (Nelson), Bob Cumming (King William's Town, C.P., S.A.).

Thanks, Leslie H. A. Rickson* (London, S.E.17), for your loyal support. You say: "This last two weeks I have got three new readers for the 'N.L.L.' and they are all saying that they could kick themselves for not reading it before." Well, that doesn't exactly look as if I'm played out yet, does it? But here's the point. If those three readers said that, wouldn't thousands more be likely to say it when once the Old Paper had been brought under their notice? And, if that's the kind of thing they're going to say, why should any of you be backward in this introduction business? The chances are that you'll get warmly thanked, and at the same time you'll be doing the Old Paper a real service. Now, then, you timid enthusiasts, just take your courage in both hands, and follow Leslie's example! What on earth have you got to be afraid of?

Yes, "Reader" (Stockport), I wrote the short serials purporting to come from the pens of Archie, Handy, Willy and Browne. But don't let them know I told you.

No, Edward Sutton (Lincoln), I make no claim to being an artist, and I am not responsible for the illustrations in Our Paper—except in the sense that I describe the incidents which they depict.

You are quite right, Jean McClure (Faringdon), about Nipper. His real name is Richard

Hamilton. And Nipper and Reggie Pitt are both about fifteen years old.

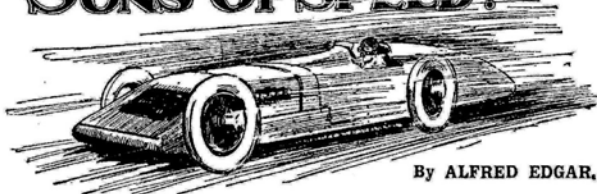
Would I consider it "the dickens of a cheek," W. A. Clifford (Epsom), if you asked me to draw you a rough plan or layout of St. Frank's? Not a bit of it. But I should consider it the dickens of a job if I had to do it—especially for you. That sectional map of St. Frank's and district is what you want. And when I say "you," I apply the word to most of you also. For, if I am to judge by the countless requests, that map is wanted all over the place. But it's been a long and arduous task to prepare it. That's why you've been kept waiting so long for it. Look out for it this year, lads!

"Ardent Reader" (Westminster), E. Wills (Weston-super-Mare), Elsie Louise Charley (Taunton), C. S. Raven* (Ulverston), Geo. Wm. Forrest (Liverpool), "Aussie" (Unley), Cyril Chamberlain* (Worksop), Tony Cooke (Exeter), W. L. Hope (Falkirk), F. Grove (Victoria, S.W.1.), "Wm. J. M." (Darlington, Sydney, N.S.W.), "King Alfred" (Unley, Sth. Aus.), A. Turck (Clapham Junction, S.W.11), E. Baldoock (Parley), P. Chatfield (Dartford), Laurie Godden (Hilton, Sth. Aus.).

You're behind the times, Doris Aldridge (London, S.E.1), because a serious quarrel between Edward Oswald Handforth and his faithful chums, Walter Church and Arnold McClure, has already happened. It was fully related in No. 261 of the Old Paper, dated June 5th, 1920, under the title of "The Split in Study D."

DICK'S THE BOY FOR SPEED! He thinks nothing of hurtling along at over 200 miles an hour—and he needs to go at that speed to beat Mark Lynch's record!

SONS OF SPEED!



By ALFRED EDGAR.

HOW THE STORY STARTED—

DICK BARRY proves his skill as a motor-racing driver by winning a big Continental event with a Kent car. In this race his brother—

BIG BILL BARRY, star speedman of the Kent racing team, is injured through the foul driving of his rival—

MARK LYNCH, who drives Ince Eight cars. The Kent and the Ince machines have long been at enmity, and both firms have built monster racing machines designed to break all records for speed. Lynch's car is called the Giant Ince, and he takes it up to Seacombe Sands and breaks

existing records by touching 205 miles an hour. Immediately, Bill and Dick go up with their Kent Flyer, intending to break Lynch's new record the same day. During a trial run, Bill crooks up through his injuries, and Dick takes the wheel. The wind has changed, the tide is coming in, and there is just time for Dick to make his attempt. If he fails, it may be days or weeks before the condition of the sands will permit another effort. It is neck or nothing for Dick; he swears that he won't let Bill down, and resolves to shatter Lynch's record!

(Now read on.)

Failure?

EVERYTHING was blotted out for Dick, now, by an inferno of conflicting sound. The furious note of the exhaust was a stunning bellow, the sound of the wind past his ears and about the car was a tortured scream, and the speed-song of the straining engine was a smashing boom, paralysing in its awful intensity.

The car seemed to leap and buck under him, its fierce speed finding bumps where the sand had seemed flat. It became a bouncing, smashing red comet, terrifying in its hurtling recklessness.

The line of flags on either side turned to a blurred hedge, though they were placed a hundred yards apart. Of the spectators he saw nothing save a grey blotch. He fixed his gaze on the distant black and white post, holding the car straight with all his strength until the post slashed up to him and was gone.

He'd covered the mile! He eased his foot on the throttle, but he didn't touch

the brakes because there was plenty of time for him to slow.

What speed ~~had~~ he done? He felt that it must have been terrific. Probably he'd licked Lynch by a big margin; but there was still the run back to do, and it was just as well to have a bit in hand because, from the look of the sea, the wind was getting up.

The car was gradually slowing down now. Dick picked out more Kent mechanics standing near a patch of planks, and he had a glimpse of the motor-cyclist who was to advise him of his speed. The man was mounted on his machine, ready to move the moment that he got word from another official.

Dick turned back to watch the cyclist, and he saw the man suddenly shoot off towards him. He watched the man come after him, flattened along the tank of his machine and plainly hitting up a terrific lick; yet his pace looked slow to Dick, for the Flyer was still travelling at a great speed.

Dick touched the brake pedal now, pulling the car almost to the edge of the sea as he passed the waiting mechanics, then he brought it round in a wide turn and slowed to what seemed a mere crawl as the cyclist came storming up.

The man wrenched his machine round in a wild skid, then shot level with him, shouting something. But Dick was more than half deafened by the tumult in which he had been travelling, and he shook his head.

The man motioned for him to slow still more, then brought his bike up until he was within arm's length.

"One-eight-five!" Dick heard him yell.

A hundred and eighty-five miles an hour—that was all! Dick gasped. It was slow compared with what Bill had done with a busted rib on the test run. He'd imagined that he had been travelling at least fifty miles an hour faster than that.

"You—sure?" he roared at the cyclist, and again the man shouted:

"One-eight-five!"

Dick stared before him. This meant that, to beat Lynch's record, he must do at least 230 miles an hour on the run back. If he didn't do it, he would have failed!

Dimly, he realised that the mechanics by the planks were waiting for him to run up to them, but there was nothing to stop for—nothing to delay his second run.

He might as well do it straight off, and this time he'd put his foot hard down, all the way, never mind what happened.

Two hundred and thirty miles an hour! He'd got to do it—or admit that Lynch had beaten the Flyer!

The Result!

AS Dick trod on the accelerator pedal, the Flyer leaped forward with her rear wheels slashing sand backwards in a rising plume. As the machine gathered speed, he could see that the tide was coming swiftly in, and, at one point, the waves had already encroached to the seaward line of flags.

The wind, too, was drifting sand across the course, and that would make it all the more difficult for him.

As the roar of the engine lifted, he slammed the pedal down to the metal floorboard, using it to brace his back against the seat. He watched the needle of the revolution counter sweep up and around the coloured dial to the red strip

painted there, and he grinned a little as he saw it rise. Beyond that red line there was the danger of something going wrong—of something smashing, because at that point the engine would be straining to the peak of its power.

But he didn't care what smashed—Lynch wasn't going to lick them!

Once again everything merged to a blurred impression of speed and furious noise. Once more the red Flyer changed from a car to a streaking, crimson comet as she roared towards the measured mile.

Dick felt the car straining over as the wind caught it broadside. He remembered Bill's warning to oversteer when he straightened, and he did it this time. It was an age before the car answered, but he got it straight and, with all the strength in his wrists and hands, clamped his fingers on the wheel.

The black canvas of the timing strip whipped towards him. He felt the car buck at even the faint rise that the strip made.

To the side of his face came wind-blown sand, stinging with the prick of a thousand red-hot needles. He felt his goggles being tugged as though by unseen hands, then, quite suddenly, the whole of his windscreen was blotted out by a sudden smash of wet sand caught from the air.

He couldn't see. He shifted his head to look around the edge of the wire-meshed screen, and on the instant the wind caught him like something solid. It blew his head back and seemed to lift him clean out of the car ere it jammed the back of his head against the fairing behind.

He braced neck-muscles and shoulders to withstand it, and in the moment that he got a clear view ahead he saw that he was hurtling down on a faint dip in the course, and that the dip was flooded by sea-water less than an inch in depth.

But it might have been fathoms deep from the spray when he hit it. The water founted solidly, striking up on either side in a silvery screen that was gone the moment it was born—and out of it the car came in a sideways slither. The instantaneous check of the water had plucked the machine into the beginning of a skid.

Dick felt the car slithering towards the inside line of flags. He was into them—saw some go high—then he had the car back and straight and it was thundering on.

Thundering on in a perfect frenzy of mad speed with the wind snatching at it,

fighting to slow it or blow it sideways. Dick was numbed by the gale, deafened by the thunderous roaring, battered until every sense was numbed, and he fought instinctively to hold the Flyer.

He was driving with one goggled eye poked the fraction of an inch to one side of the wind-screen. Spectators slashed behind him. He marked the end of the run, fought another gust of wind, and then hurtled over the last timing strip, the run finished.

He eased the Flyer's speed, still fighting to keep her straight. He'd covered another mile before he had time to wonder at what rate he had travelled, and not until the car was ambling over the sand at a mere 100 miles an hour did he have it completely under control.

He made out Hurst and the other mechanics waiting ahead. They ripped towards him and swept behind as he used the brakes, and brought the car round. As he turned it, he saw a motor-cyclist coming towards him, moving full pelt to tell him what speed the car had done.

There might have been something at stake from the speed at which he was moving, but Dick guessed the man knew he would be anxious.

He headed towards the mechanics. He could see them shouting at the cyclist, but a gust of flying sand hid them an instant afterwards, and Dick couldn't see how they greeted whatever information the man had given them.

The motor-cyclist appeared again, went past, slithered in a quick turn, and then zoomed up alongside. Dick leaned over the side of the car. Once more his deafness defeated him as the man shouted.

Dick used his brakes desperately now, and, as they answered, the cyclist shot ahead, then turned. Dick was in a fever of anxiety as he waited for the man to get back to him.

Had he failed? Had he let Bill and the professor down? He couldn't face them again if he had. What a time that cyclist was getting—Ah, here he comes!

Once again the man swept up behind, and now his speed was so slow that he had to use his feet to keep his machine upright. He leaned over:

"Two—two—five!" Dick heard him shout.

Two hundred and twenty-five miles an hour! Did that mean he'd beaten Lynch or— His brain was too numbed to work the figures out, and he heard the cyclist shouting distantly again:

"Gives — two—nought — five — dead time!"

His average speed was 205 miles an hour!

It was exactly the same as Lynch's on the Giant Ince.

He hadn't beaten him—but he hadn't failed! He'd dead-heated with Bill's rival!

Captain of the Team!

HURST and the other mechanics came racing to the car, swarming round it to grab Dick's hands and to thump his back. He couldn't distinguish what they said, and when they all but dragged him out of the machine he found that he could not stand without support.

Little Joey Hurst shook his fist again and again, and Dick might have smashed the record with 250 miles an hour from the fuss the mechanics made. Although he didn't realise it, they had a lot to be pleased about, chiefly because he hadn't failed.

In addition, it was the first time that Dick had actually driven the car. He had done something during the last few minutes which most of those mechanics would frankly have admitted that they themselves were afraid to do—and nobody would have thought the less of them for saying it.

Dick had stepped into his brother's shoes without hesitation. They'd all known that he had plenty of pluck, but something rather more than pluck was needed to do what he had done—steel-hard courage.

Dick himself couldn't see that. Fellows who've plenty of nerve and daring just naturally don't realise it for themselves. A man who has won a V.C., for instance, can't easily be persuaded to talk about it, or to admit that he has done anything out of the way.

The mechanics heard Dick stammering that he was sorry he hadn't done better. That brought a lot more back-thumping and confused shouting, and then he saw a perfect fleet of cars racing across the sand towards him.

These were machines belonging to spectators. They came like a flood, and in front of the whole lot was a Kent tourer, with the professor at the wheel and travelling all out. The car came up and stopped in a long skid; a moment after, the professor was out of it and shaking both Dick's hands.

Then, from the rear of the machine, Bill climbed out stiffly, his injury hastily dressed. He grinned at the mechanics made way for him, some of them helping him forward.

"Good for you, young 'un!" he said. Dick faintly heard the words. "Good for you! We tie with Lynch, and that's the next best thing to beating him!"

A giant crowd of cheering spectators came swarming round, with camera men and cinematograph operators begging them to stand back while they took pictures of Dick and the Flyer.

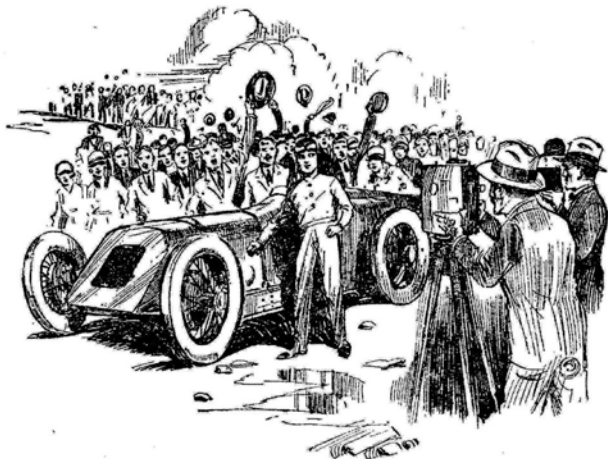
gave the Flyer's feat ascendance over that of the Giant Ince.

Around the world that afternoon, wires thrummed with the story of what had happened on Seacombe Sands, and London papers bore great headlines:

"BOY DRIVES MONSTER RECORD-BREAKER."

"Kent Flyer's thrilling 205 m.p.h. at Seacombe."

And others said:



A crowd of cheering spectators came swarming round Dick after his record-smashing ride, while camera men and cinematograph operators took pictures of him and the Kent Flyer.

From the dunes, more people came running, until the sand was black with them. Dick was seized by men whom he had never seen before, and he was chaired round and round the quiescent shape of the Flyer, while members of the crowd stared in blank amazement as they saw his boyish face, and wondered where he kept the strength to hold the machine.

Sight of the fact that he was only a boy set them cheering the more wildly, and it was the very fact that Dick, and not Bill, had driven the Flyer in an emergency and had done so well that

"BOY TIES FOR WORLD'S SPEED RECORD."

"Daring Drive on Wonder Speed Car."

There was very little about Mark Lynch and the Giant Ince Eight! That car, and what it had done, didn't count against Dick's feat. By dead-heating, Dick had actually done better than if he had beaten Lynch, because it was plain that the Flyer would run again and would touch even greater speed.

The wind and the sand had been against him on both runs. Lynch had had perfect

conditions for his attempt. But for the wind Dick's speed would have been greater in both directions—ten or fifteen miles an hour faster at least, so the experts said.

Not that Dick worried much about what anybody said. The terrific nerve strain had made him feel more than a little limp, and he was glad to get away from the crowd to the little inn by the seashore.

The professor invited the timing officials to an impromptu dinner at the inn. Over the meal those men, who knew the sands well, told him that it would be impossible for another attempt on the record to be made inside a fortnight or three weeks.

For one thing it was unlikely that the wind would change for some days, and, when it did change, the tides would be all wrong and would not leave the sands clear for long enough by daylight for the course to be laid out.

"I don't mind that," the professor told them. "It will give me a chance to make one or two little alterations to the car. We won't make another effort, then, until after the British Grand Prix at Brooklands. Dick"—he turned to the boy—"will you drive a car in that race for me?"

"Thanks, I'd like to!" Dick told him.

"Then you'll have to captain the Kent team," Bill growled at his side, "because I shan't be able to drive."

"Why not?" asked Dick. But Bill did not answer; he jerked his head to the doctor who sat a little way down the long table, and the grey-haired man leaned forward.

"If he takes any chances with that fractured rib, I won't answer for the consequences," the medical man said slowly. "He's got to go very carefully with that for the next week or two."

"It won't stop me helping Dick to tune his car, will it?" asked Bill. "Anyhow, that's what I'm going to do. Dick"—he leaned across the table—"we'll tune our racing team up to wipe the floor with Lynch at Brooklands, then you can come up here and show him how fast you can make the Flyer go, when you really set your mind to it!"

Dick's Peril!

DESPITE all the vicious efforts of Mark Lynch to bring about the downfall of Bill and the professor and the Kent works, it certainly

looked as though the Kent firm might avert the ruin which had threatened it.

Dick's win in the Continental race, coupled with his feat at Seacombe, brought a perfect flood of orders for cars. Dick didn't need any telling that if he could win the British Grand Prix—the biggest motor-race held in England—it would still further strengthen their position, and the final capturing of the world's record for speed would mean the complete defeat of Lynch.

All the racing mechanics knew this, too, and in the days that followed, every man put his best into the work of preparing a team of three cars for the big Brooklands' event. It was definitely settled that Bill would not drive, and not a man begrudged Dick taking over the position of captain of the team.

This was more an honour than an actual job with any responsibilities, because Bill really remained the captain, attending to all the detail work at the replenishment pit and laying down the strategy for the race.

At the same time, the captain would have to set the pace in the race, and he would be right up against Lynch. Dick wanted nothing better than that.

The second driver was to be little Joey Hurst. Joey hadn't the strength and the "meat" for a gruelling road race, but he could stick five hundred miles of high-speed work at Brooklands, because the track was not so trying as a Continental road. He was struck almost dumb when the professor offered him a car, but Joey managed to find words enough to say that he'd drive.

The third driver was the man who had handled No. 3 in the Continental race. A sound man who could be relied on to do the right thing all the time.

Dick left the actual preparation of the car to Bill, because no one could do it better. The boy spent his time getting himself thoroughly fit, and in practising pit work with the man who was to act as his mechanic.

The professor also left the cars to Bill, and devoted himself entirely to fitting the Flyer for her next record-breaking dash.

Just a week before the race was due, the cars were taken down to Brooklands for final tuning up. They did everything that was expected of them, although Bill was careful to cloak their actual performances in order that Lynch should get no idea of what he was up against.

"He's certain to have one or two men hanging about specially to watch us," Bill

said. "He knows how much this race will count. Make no mistake about it, Dick, driving the Giant Ince is no easy job, and we've got the pull of him with the Flyer—it's a better car and she's faster, no matter how he makes the Giant go."

"Barring accidents, we've got him beat for the big record, and that's why he'll go all out to whip us in this race here at Brooklands. If he can do it, it won't be so bad for Ince cars even if we do get the big record. But if we get this race and the record, too, it'll be good-night for Lynch!"

For these reasons, Dick handled his racing machine carefully when he was on the track. The team of Ince Eights turned up for practice three days before the race was due, but they never came out on the track while the Kent team was using it. Or, if they did, Bill immediately called Dick and the other cars in.

The Kent speed machines were garaged in one of the old aviation sheds near the Byfleet banking, while Bill and Dick and the mechanics slept in a bungalow a little farther away. Three mechanics were on guard day and night over the trio of cars, each man being armed with a hefty-looking club—just in case Lynch did try any dirty work with the cars.

But nothing happened. On the night

before the race, the guard was doubled, and in the evening Dick lingered long over his machine with his mechanic. There was nothing more that they could do to it, because the car was as perfect as hands could make it.

But they dusted it down, polished everything that was polishable, and finally covered the car with a waterproof sheet, which they carefully pegged down, because the roof of the old hangar was more than a little leaky.

After that, Dick strolled across to the bungalow, had a light meal, and, just as the sun was setting, turned in.

His room was at the end of the building. It was not a very big apartment, and he spent some time sitting on the edge of his bed, going over his racing kit—rope-soled canvas shoes, white overalls with "Kent" embroidered in blue, back and front; peaked crash helmet and three pairs of fur-edged goggles which had unsplinterable glass lenses.

He set the whole lot out on a chair, together with chocolate and a little bag of thirst-quenchers which he would carry with him; then he did a few physical exercises, and afterwards dived between the sheets.

He remained awake for some time, thinking about the race that the morrow

(Continued on next page.)



TELL FATHER!

**A REAL
SHEFFIELD STEEL
BRITISH-MADE
RAZOR BLADE**

Presented with every copy of this week's

UNION JACK—2d. (The Great Detective - Story Paper)

You may not be interested in razors, but you will be in the enthralling story! Ask Dad or your big brother to provide the twopence, and then share the benefits. He will enjoy Sexton Blake, too!

"SONS OF SPEED!"

(Continued from previous page.)

would bring. He was to be pace-maker for the team, with the other two Kent cars sitting as close up to him as they could manage. He had a queer, quivery feeling at the thought that he was actually to be captain of the team, and that he would be racing against the world's best drivers, quite apart from Lynch.

He wondered if he would come through it all right; how fast Lynch's car would prove; whether the man would try any foul riding to balk him—he wondered about a hundred things connected with the race, and then he drifted to sleep.

Sleep brought him a strange and peculiar dream. He imagined that he was driving at terrific speed around the track, and his speed was such that all the other cars had cracked up in the race through trying to keep up with him—but he had seen nothing at all of Mark Lynch.

That worried him. He wondered where Lynch was when, suddenly, he saw him coming towards him on the track. Lynch seemed to be an enormous size, and he got bigger and bigger as he swooped down. In Dick's dream, the rival speedman filled the whole track—black and monstrous.

Dick shouted for him to get out of the way, and then the man seemed to swoop at him, one giant hand clapping over the boy's mouth. Dick struggled against him, fighting wildly—then suddenly awakened and found himself flat on his back in bed.

Above him a man was bending, with another holding Dick's legs. Both were shadowy, brutal-faced figures, and one had a pad pressed down over the boy's face.

Dick's nostrils were filled with a strange, cloying odour which seemed to clog his brain. There was a mad drumming in his ears, and massive wheels began to hum in his head. He punched out at the man, but felt his arm gripped and forced down.

The wheels spun faster and his ears were filled with a dull, throbbing sound.

"Got him!" grunted one of the men softly, as Dick's sinewy body went limp!

Escape!

VERY slowly and very painfully, Dick fought his way back to consciousness. It seemed a long time before his brain cleared sufficiently to record impressions around him, and then he found that he was staring

straight up through a broken roof to the sunlit blue sky beyond.

His head ached abominably. He felt more than a little sick, and his nostrils were still filled with the cloying odour of the stuff with which he had been knocked out. He could move neither arms nor legs, and he became aware that his mouth was filled by a ball of cloth, which acted as a gag.

For a space Dick closed his eyes. When he opened them again, he could see still more clearly. He discovered that he was lying on some old sacks in the corner of a tumble-down shed. Through the doorless opening at one side he saw bracken and, beyond that, the rough, slender trunks of pine trees. Obviously, he was in a shed in the middle of some sort of wood.

He became aware of sounds outside. Distantly, there came to his ears the mutter and growl of racing cars' exhausts—machines making ready for the start of the great race! Then he heard, much nearer, the roar and snarl of running engines and the mixed hooting of motor horns. That sound came from the cars of spectators hurrying along the roads towards the famous speedway, assembling for the race.

From all this, Dick realised that he was still in the grounds about the Brooklands track. On one side of the speedway are pine woods, and he guessed that the shed stood in one of these.

Just what time it was, he couldn't tell, but it must be somewhere near the start of the race. Possibly the racing machines were already assembling at the replenishment pits!

That thought did more than anything else to clear Dick's head. The ache seemed to be wiped away from above his eyes as he realised what it all meant to him. He'd been kidnapped, undoubtedly at the instigation of Lynch, to prevent him running in the race.

Dick wriggled slightly on the sacks, and then lifted his head to look around the shed. It was a dilapidated, mildewed sort of place: the floor was covered with dead leaves and twigs. There were holes in the walls, and in the shadow by the doorway sat the two brutal-looking men whom he remembered from the night before.

Dick wondered what Bill was doing. Probably his brother was about fighting mad, and looking for him. No doubt he'd put a substitute driver on Dick's machine.

He lay there, thinking it over. Supposing he got out of his bonds, what chance would he have of escaping past these two men? Not much! He felt too groggy for

words, and if it came to a scrap either one of them could just about eat him.

But there was nothing like trying it, and he began to test his bonds. So far as he could make out his arms had been bound by two or three turns of rope around his body, and the rope seemed to go down over his thighs and around his ankles, being secured there.

It occurred to Dick that, since he had been unconscious when they had tied him up, the men had not made a proper job of it. They'd lashed him just sufficiently to sort of discourage him from trying to get away, and, of course, they'd gagged him, so that he couldn't shout. Anyway, they probably reckoned that if he did start struggling, or did get loose, he could be very speedily subdued.

Dick realised that whatever he did would have to be accomplished without rousing his captors' attention, and after a few moments of cautious wriggling, he discovered that it would not be difficult to work his right arm up and out of the ropes. Once that was done, the bonds would practically fall off him.

He raised his head and looked down his body to make sure of this, then, by flexing and letting his right arm go limp, he gradually worked it up until one strand of rope slipped over his wrist and over his hand. Ten seconds later, and that arm was free, while the rest of the rope lay slack around him.

Dick's heart was thumping at the easiness of it. At any moment he could get to his feet and kick the ropes off—but he would never get past the men at the door! They were sitting sideways towards him, and they must spot any real movement that he made. Their attention was still held by the cars they could see, and neither of them spoke.

Down on the track, the chattering bellow of racing-car exhausts grew louder. Every little while one would roar out above the others, and Dick knew that was the sign of a car moving up the straight towards the starting line. He could tell, from the frequency with which these sounds came, that they were lining up for the race!

Again he stared round the hut. If he couldn't get past the men and out of the door, was there a chance of him getting through a hole in one of the walls? They were wooden, all green with damp. Damp wood is rotten wood; if he could find a hole big enough to get one shoulder through he might be able to force his way out.

Reflected sunlight shone through where a plank had fallen completely away. It was just to one side of him, and he saw

that the nearby planks looked weak on their rusted nails. That was the spot which promised most hope of escape.

Dick made his plans. He would work the rope down to his feet as silently as possible, get the gag out of his mouth, then dive for the opening. If the men collared him, he would shout like mad on the chance of someone hearing!

He set about the job. Very cautiously he slipped the loops of rope down to his thighs, then spread his legs apart until he made quite sure that they were fairly free. He raised one hand and eased the gag down until it slipped under his chin, then he jerked it away.

He filled his lungs with air, tensed, then jerked full to his feet in a single, sudden movement.

Instantly the whole shed whirled round him. He'd forgotten that he'd still be shaky from the dope. Automatically he kicked his legs to clear them of the rope, and, mistily, he saw the two men start off their boxes and leap towards him.

Dick hardly knew how he found the strength to fling himself at the gap in the wall, but he got there somehow. Head and shoulders went through in a shower of rotten splinters; he kicked wildly as a hand grasped his ankles, and an instant after he was rolling over and over amidst the damp bracken.

He got up. Everything was swimming about him. Trees and ferns, sky and ground were swaying and heaving and rolling as he stumbled blindly forward.

He heard one of the men shout behind him, then he cannoned into a tree. The crack of his head against the trunk seemed to shock his vision back to clarity. He glimpsed cars on a road not twenty yards away through the trees, and he rushed towards them.

The two men were coming after him, but he didn't look round at them. He rushed madly on.

Dick was near the road now. Desperately he ran, ploughed through the heart of a bush, felt springy turf under his feet, and a second after he was in the roadway.

He saw a long, low-built Lanci-Lambda tourer crawling in the string of traffic just in front of him. There was only the driver in the car, and he stared in blank amazement at Dick as the boy clawed at the side and gasped:

"Would you give me—a lift to—the paddock? I—I'm driving in the race!"

(Driving in the race, yes—but is he in time? The race may have started, for all Dick knows! Look out for next Wednesday's great instalment.)

HOW TO JOIN THE LEAGUE

ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE APPLICATION FORM No. 92.

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, 1ough House, 1ough 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 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 they have secured the requisite number of readers they can exchange their bronze medal for a silver one.

These Application Forms can be posted for £d., 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.

NOTICE!

The St. Frank's League has now attained such proportions that we are compelled to discontinue the offer of gold medals in connection therewith. The silver and bronze medals will still be available, however, as heretofore, to those who qualify for them in accordance with the rules.



Our Weekly Pow-Wow

By
The Editor.

Coming Attractions.

A SPECIAL bit of news this week concerns our new serial. In a few weeks' time the "Nelson Lee Library" will be starting this story and I have not the slightest doubt that it will appeal to all readers tremendously and send the N.L.L. up several pegs in popularity. I am not going to say much about the new yarn now. It is enough for me to point out that it deals with aerial adventures of some particularly plucky explorers who stick at nothing in their efforts to win what they are after. Perilous quests by land and sea have been common enough. A story of daring in the upper air-ways strikes a new note. The new serial will be the winner of 1928. Keep your peepers open for it, chums.

The Slackers!

An out-and-out supporter of the paper who lives in South India, sends me a bitter complaint about the correspondents whose procrastination in the matter of writing letters causes him considerable annoyance. I do not wonder at it. We all know the slacker who puts off doing a job which he ought in all reason to tackle at once. It is not playing the game. You think his reply is in the post and will pretty soon be rattling merrily through the letter flap of your door. Not a bit of it. The fellow has not yet bought a bottle of ink, or he has gone out for a walk, and forgotten all about it. Shame on him! This kind of laziness is extra bad in the case of a stamp collector who receives specimens. He has no right to put off the despatch of stamps in exchange. There is no excuse for omitting to do the civil thing.

Rhymes Wanted.

My next business is to deal with a request for a yarn in rhyme. My correspondent, who writes from Brecon, seems to have a hazy notion that a tale could as easily be written in verse as in prose, but somehow I do not think he is correct. He quotes the brook that goes on for ever, and it is tolerably clear that he thinks this brook is Mr. Brooks. But the fertile author of St. Frank's, though

we all hope he will go on for ever, like his singular namesake, is a story-writer first, last and all time. I do not fancy he would relish the job of turning out the amazing adventures of the great E. O. Handforth in rhyme.

Think of the difficulty of an author. He has, say, just got his hero in a ticklish position of acute peril, and then finds himself stuck for a word that will rhyme in all right! Not nice for the hero, that, say what you may. But, of course, I will mention the idea to E. S. B. and hear what he has to say about it.

The Indispensables!

A London football secretary blows in with a regular grouse about swankers who "stand out" at critical junctures just in order to show off, and emphasise their own importance. My chum has had a trying time, and his experience is nothing new. Every fellow who has had anything to do with football organisation knows about these "spoiled darlings" who take offence, or, maybe, from sheer cussedness try to kick up a shindy at the last moment. In the case specially referred to there is no doubt that the spoilsports are good players. They are wanted, and they know it. But is there anything more utterly unsportsmanlike than this ventilating some fancy grievance, or the assertion of personal importance at the eleventh hour?

In some cases, of course, a clever centre-half may by tip-top play have come to be regarded as a man who is indispensable, but one would not think much of his sense of sport if for some egotistical reason he risked queering his team's pitch at the vital time. He might win his own potty little game, but he would know in his heart that it was a pinchbeck victory not worth ninepence. No, the job of an efficient football manager is to wash out malcontents. You can't run a winning side with grievance mongers, or perpetual grouchers. Until they get it drummed into their heads that they are not indispensable there will be no sound progress.

A Note of Warning.

Members of the St. Frank's League are warned against having any dealings with any persons calling themselves "high officials" or "representatives" of the League.

(Continued overleaf.)

OUR WEEKLY POW-WOW!

(Continued from previous page.)

The St. Frank's League is run entirely from this office by correspondence, and the Chief Officer can take no responsibility for the bona fides of any person who may approach members personally with the object of organising camps, excursions, etc., under the auspices of the League.

CORRESPONDENTS WANTED.

D. G. W. Cooke, 2, Herbert Street, Sydney, nr. Crewe, Cheshire, wishes to correspond with readers anywhere and on any subject; all letters promptly answered. He wants, also, to obtain N. L. L.'s dealing with the adventures of the St. Frank's Boys abroad.

T. G. Hogan, "Belturbet," Victoria Road, Clontarf, Dublin, would like to correspond with readers interested in Transatlantic flights.

Eric Meakin, 21, Bristol Road, Ilkeston, Derbyshire, wishes to buy the first six numbers (new series) of the "Nelson Lee Library." Must be in good condition. He also wants to correspond with readers in New York, Peru, Sydney, Nova Scotia. All letters answered.

G. Tapping, 6, Bunstrux Hill, Tring, Herts, has 220 "Nelson Lee Library" numbers for sale from October 7th, 1922.

Eddie Fallows, 62, Norman Street, Middleton, nr. Manchester, wishes to hear from League members in his district.

H. Scott, 99, Mina Road, Old Kent Road, London, S.E., wishes to correspond with readers interested in freework, cycling and stamps.

A. Cobbett, 21, Cromwell Road, Camberley, Surrey, has a number of issues of the "Nelson Lee Library" for sale cheap. All in good condition.

W. T. Madeley, c/o G. Jones & Co., 164, Deritend, Birmingham, wishes to hear from League members in his district.

George Rudge, 26, High Street, Stonehouse, Plymouth, Devon, wants No. 1 (old series), "Nelson Lee Library."

Michael J. O'Brien, 6, Bank Place, Limerick, Ireland, wishes to correspond with readers anywhere.

2-NOW AND THE BIKE IS YOURS

I supply the finest Coventry bicycles on 14 days' approval, packed free and care paid, on receipt of small deposit. Lowest cash prices, or easy payment terms. Write for Free Bargain Lists Now.

O'Brien 35-36 COVENTRY

A LOW MONTHLY INSTALLMENT TO SUIT YOUR POCKET

"THE BOQT-BOY'S LUCK!"

(Continued from page 32.)

"I'm awfully sorry, you chaps, but it happens to be true," said Jimmy breathlessly. "I am Sir James Potts, and my mother is Lady Potts. I'm going to be in the Remove from now on."

"Welcome to the Remove!" said Nipper, grabbing Jimmy's hand. "Kindly allow me to fall on your neck, old son! So you're really going to join the Junior Eleven, after all?"

The fellows could hardly believe it at first. But they believed it all right when the headmaster made an announcement to the whole school a little later on.

And in all this excitement Vivian Travers was hardly thought of.

Yet he was the fellow who had brought it all about, and, by doing it, he had got himself a bad name in the Remove. Not that Travers cared in the least.

Jimmy had saved his life once, and this was Travers' way of trying to pay the debt.

Now that debt was paid. Later on that day, however, Travers met Harold Grayson, and when he saw the misery and utter abjection on the Fifth-Former's face he felt a momentary twinge. In that second he realised that two wrongs did not make a right. He realised what agony of mind his cunning, scheming must have caused the senior.

But the feeling did not last. In the exaltation at the success of his plan, Travers soon forgot it, and he passed, Grayson without a word. Travers went on his way down to the post-office, and he slipped a sealed package into the box. That package contained the missing twenty-five notes, and it was addressed to Miss Bond, at the Moor View School.

It signified the end of the episode.

The notes had been returned, and thus the search for the thief would end. Mr. Montague Grayson had taken the only course that had been open to him, and he had made restitution to Lady Potts and her son.

And Vivian Travers, of the Remove, was responsible for it all, although he received no praise. For nobody ever knew.

THE END.

(THE ST. FRANK'S ICE CARNIVAL)
is the title of next week's stunning exciting yarn; and you'll all enjoy reading about the amusing efforts of old Handy when he goes in for the figure-skating competition. It's a real scream! Order your copy NOW!

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D.R.

February 11th, 1923.