

THE **NELSON LEE**

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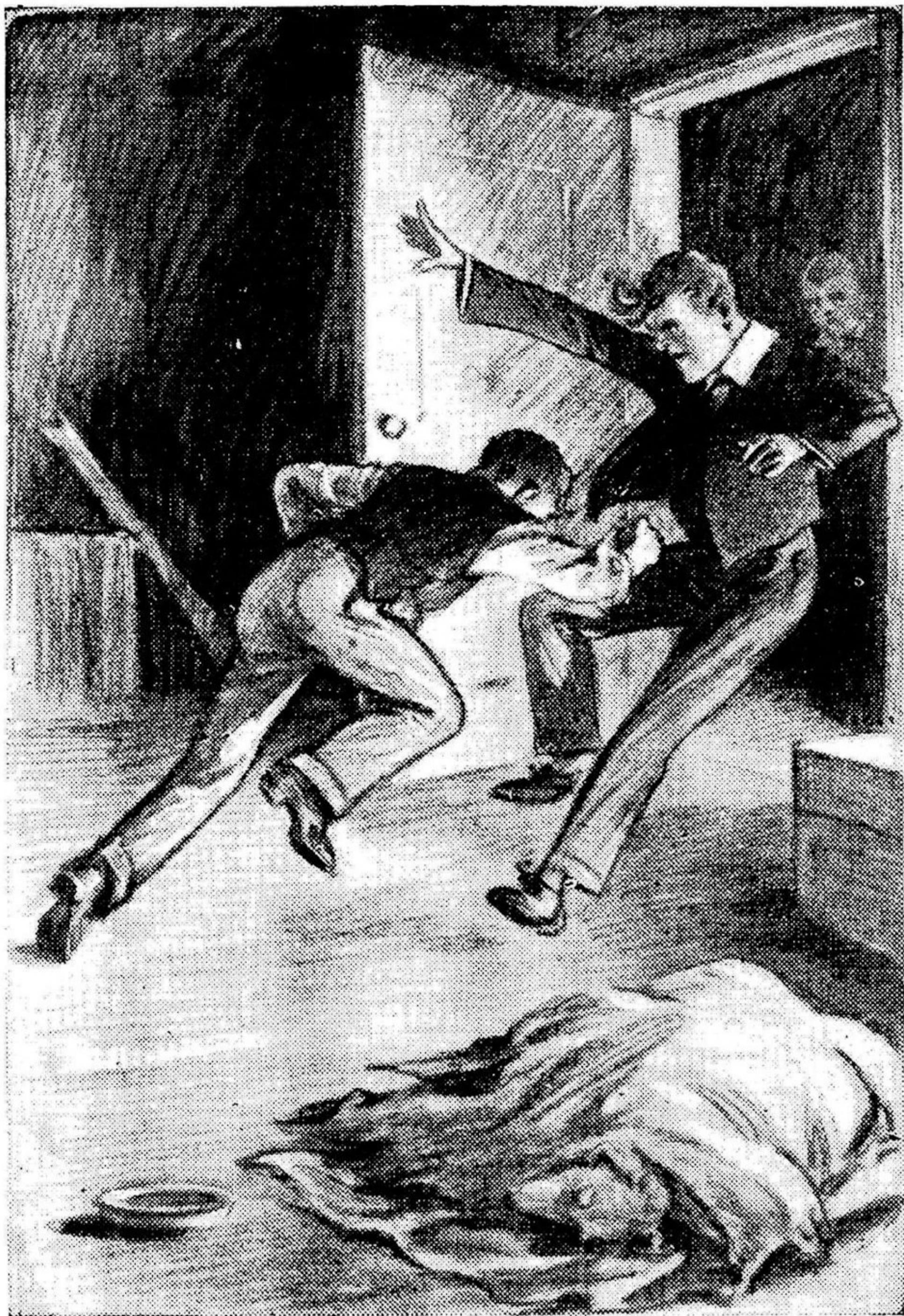


A stunning long complete yarn of schoolboy sport and adventure, featuring the famous Chums of St. Frank's,

New Series No. 128.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY

October 13th, 1923.



Willy Handforth wanted peace and quietness, and that, with Edward Oswald in the vicinity was, of course, impossible. So Willy acted promptly and drastically. He butted straight into his major, and forced him backwards out of the box-room and through the doorway. "Here, look out, you silly young ass!" hooted Edward Oswald.

First of a Grand New Series of School-life and Football Yarns !

GOING TO THE DOGS !



By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

(Author of the St. Frank's stories now appearing in "The Popular" every Tuesday.)

Just as greyhound racing is all the rage nowadays, so will this grand new series of yarns be all the rage with N.L.L. readers who enjoy stories with plenty of "punch" and a strong sporting interest—Ed.

CHAPTER 1.

The Latest !

CLAUDE GORE-PEARCE, of the Ancient House at St. Frank's, smiled contentedly as he walked out into the sunlit Triangle with Gulliver and Bell, his chums of Study A.

"Going to be fine this afternoon," he remarked agreeably.

"Yes, rather!" said Bell. "Good for the football."

"Hang the football!" retorted Gore-Pearce, frowning. "I was thinking of the greyhound racing."

"Oh!" said Gulliver.

Edward Oswald Handforth, the redoubtable leader of Study D, paused as he was about to pass the three Remove cads.

"What was that you said, Gore-Pearce?" he demanded coldly.

"I wasn't speaking to you," said Gore-Pearce.

"You cheeky rotter!" roared Handforth. "I don't care whether you were speaking to me or not! You said something about greyhound racing."

"What if I did?"

"I don't believe in greyhound racing!" said Handforth magisterially. "At least, not in the way they do it at that rotten Bannington place."

Gore-Pearce elevated his supercilious eyebrows.

"Oh, well, of course," he said sarcastically, "we shall have to go easy, you fellows; Handforth doesn't believe in greyhound racing."

"Terrible!" said Gulliver.

"Shocking!" declared Bell.

"Naturally, the Arena will have to be closed down," went on Gore-Pearce. "A place like that can't carry on while Handforth disapproves, can it?"

There were a good many chuckles. Nipper and Tommy Watson and Fullwood and Vivian Travers and two or three other Ancient House Removites were within earshot, and they were all grinning. Handforth, however, was looking hot and excited. He

took no notice of Church and McClure, his faithful chums, who were trying to edge him away.

"Look here, Gore-Pearce!" said Handforth ominously. "Are you trying to be funny?"

"Not at all!" replied the millionaire's son. "I leave that sort of thing to you!"

"All right!" shouted Handforth wrathfully. "Laugh at this!"

He was about to deliver a first-class right-hander, but Nipper and McClure and Travers grabbed him in the nick of time, and held him back. Handforth seldom allowed an argument to go far; it was his invariable practice to conclude it with a one-sided fistic display.

"Hold on, old man!" grinned Nipper. "You don't want to scrap in the Triangle!"

"Rats!" yelled Handforth. "I do want to!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, it isn't a wise policy," amended Nipper. "There are one or two prefects in sight, and you don't fancy being detained all the afternoon, do you?"

"Eh?" said Handforth, looking round.

"You must remember, old man, that we're relying upon you for our match this afternoon against Bannington Grammar School," went on Nipper gravely. "What should we do without our celebrated goalkeeper?"

Handforth calmed down.

"Oh, well, that's different," he said gruffly. "Perhaps I'd better not take any risks."

There were some more chuckles, and Claude Gore-Pearce breathed more freely. The presence of a prefect or two on the other side of the Triangle made him safe.

It was Saturday morning, and lessons were over. The early October day was bright and sunny, but a keen nip in the breeze betokened the arrival of autumn. The chestnuts and the elms were mellow, and leaves were already beginning to fall thickly.

It wasn't the first time that the juniors had heard of the new Bannington Arena. As a matter of fact, the place had been running for just over a week, and according to all reports, it was growing in popularity.

Greyhound racing was by no means new—but it was a novelty to Bannington. The Arena, according to the reports in the papers, was a well-equipped ground, and the electric hare was one of the latest and most efficient types.

"You fellows are not going to the dogs this afternoon, are you?" asked Travers interestedly.

"Yes, we are," said Gore-Pearce.

Handforth snorted.

"Huh!" he said. "That's nothing new! They've been going to the dogs for terms!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Very funny!" sneered Gore-Pearce, turning red.

"Don't take any notice of him, dear old fellow," said Travers soothingly. "Well, well! I must confess that I am interested. What time does the excitement commence?"

"Half-past two," replied Gore-Pearce. "We've arranged to meet Wellborne & Co., of the River House School, at two o'clock, and we're all going together. We're going to have some ripping sport."

"It sounds very attractive," said Travers.

"Well, why not come?" asked Gulliver eagerly.

Nipper butted in.

"Look here, Travers, don't be an ass!" he said gruffly. "You know jolly well that you're in the Junior Eleven, and that you'll be wanted at the Grammar School this afternoon."

Vivian Travers sighed.

"For the love of Samson!" he said. "I had nearly forgotten! Still, couldn't you manage to find a substitute for me?"

"No, I couldn't."

"That's bad!" said Travers. "Greyhound racing is rather fascinating, I've been told. I don't know much about it personally, but I'm always ready to learn."

"Well, you'll have a chance this afternoon, if you come along," said Gore-Pearce. "Of course, the Arena has only just recently been opened, and they're not quite shipshape yet. Still, they've already held two meetings, so they ought to be in good order by this afternoon. They've got some first-class dogs running, too."

Travers nodded.

"Yes; I was studying their form in the paper this morning," he said. "Domino appears to be the favourite for the big race."

"I'm having a flutter on Domino," said Gore-Pearce coolly.

"Then there's Monkeynuts!" went on Travers. "In my opinion, Monkeynuts is a bit of a dark horse—that is to say, a bit of a dark dog. He ought to be all right for a place. And what about Geranium?"

"Geranium is running in the second race," said Gulliver. "I don't think he'll do anything."

"Don't you believe it!" replied Travers. "Geranium is going to win."

"By gad! Do you really think so?" asked Gore-Pearce with interest. "You seem to know a good deal about it, Travers."

Vivian Travers shrugged his shoulders.

"Didn't I tell you that I've been studying form?" he said. "Take a tip from me, you fellows, and put your money on Geranium. He's a cert!"

Nipper and Handforth and the other fellows listened grimly. Travers was a member of the Junior Eleven, and it was perfectly scandalous that he should be taking all this interest in greyhound racing. Slowly and ominously the circle of Removites began to close round the greyhound racing experts.

CHAPTER 2.

Travers Changes His Mind!



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OOK here, Travers!" said Handforth hotly. "Eh? Speaking to me?" said Travers, glancing round.

"Yes, I am!" snorted Handforth. "You're not going to this rotten Arena place this afternoon, Travers! You're in the Junior Eleven——"

"Don't get excited, dear old fellow," murmured Travers. "Can't I change my mind if I like? I'm sure Nipper won't want me in the eleven if my interests are elsewhere."

"Don't be an ass, Travers!" said Nipper. "You can't fool me! You'd rather play football any day than go to a silly greyhound racing meeting!"

"Ah, well, we shall see," replied Travers. "But I must confess that I am greatly attracted. Think of the thrills, dear old fellows! The start! They're off! Whizz goes the electric hare, and then the greyhounds go shooting along in full cry. By Samson! What a picture!"

"The Bannington Arena is a scandal!" said Handforth hotly. "Why, everybody has been talking about it this week. It's a bookies' paradise! It only caters for the silly punters. There's no sport in a place like that!"

But Travers took no notice.

"Think of the sensational finish!" he said dreamily. "The dog you have backed comes in last, and then, with a jerk, you realise that another ten bob has gone west!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And so it goes on!" said Travers. "Race after race, each one lasting at least half a minute!"

"Yes; but what a half-minute!" said Gore-Pearce.

"A half-minute of tense anxiety, followed by a long half-hour of regrets," nodded Travers coolly. "But, then, you can't expect to have your pleasure without paying for it, can you?"

"Pleasure!" roared Handforth. "I dare say some greyhound tracks are run properly, but this one at Bannington is a dud!"

"How do you know?" asked Gore-Pearce unpleasantly. "Have you been there?"

"No, you silly ass!"

"Then you're not entitled to judge!" put in Gulliver. "You're only going by the gossip that you hear."

"True, dear old fellow—true!" said Travers, patting Handforth lightly on the back. "Wouldn't it be fair to give the thing a trial? How about coming with me this afternoon, for a little flutter?"

"Fathead!" said Handforth witheringly.

"Yes, cheese it, Travers!" said Nipper, with a smile.

"But why?" asked Vivian Travers. "There's no harm in greyhound racing, is there?"

"Not as a sport," replied Nipper. "But I'm afraid that a lot of these places are run merely because of the betting that goes on."

"But betting is merely a spice," argued Travers.

"Are you sticking up for betting?" demanded Handforth aggressively.

"Now, now!" said Travers. "Don't get excited, dear old fellow. I am ready to admit that there are greyhound tracks *and* greyhound tracks. And, by all that I can hear, the one at Bannington is probably a dubious sort of place. To begin with, it isn't run by the G.R.A., or any other reputable body."

"It isn't run by which?" said Handforth.

"The G.R.A."

"And what the dickens is that?"

"My poor innocent!" said Travers kindly. "Don't you know that the G.R.A. is the Greyhound Racing Association?"

"I'm not interested in racing!" retorted Handforth tartly.

"Well, perhaps it's a good thing that we all have different tastes," murmured Travers. "Greyhound racing, as a sport, is harmless, thrilling, and thoroughly entertaining. But, of course, I don't approve of real hares being used."

"I'm glad there's something you don't approve of!" remarked Fullwood.

"Electric hares are all right, though," added Travers. "There's no cruelty about the thing, and I rather think the dogs themselves enjoy the game far more than the spectators."

Claude Gore-Pearce nodded.

"It's all piffle to say that greyhound racing is harmful," he said. "Personally, I regard it as a first-class sport."

"Hear, hear!" said Travers. "You pay your admission money, and you go in. You are jostled here and there, you are jammed and you are squashed. Your feet are trodden on, and you probably lose your hat. And then, at last, you find yourself squashed against the railings, or jammed into a seat between two coalheavers."

"Is that what you call pleasure?" asked Handforth, staring.

"Coalheavers are as much entitled to be there as anybody else," said Travers stoutly. "One must take things as they come. A greyhound racing arena is a cosmopolitan spot. Well, after you get in, you are thoroughly entertained by the shouts of the bookies. You look east, and you see bookies. You look west, and you see more bookies. You look north and south, and the whole vista is thickly scattered with bookies."

"Oh, draw it mild!" protested Gulliver.

"There aren't so many as all that!"

"Bookies to the right, bookies to the left," proceeded Travers smoothly. "After a good deal of argument with your pals,

you shove ten bob on Lion's Tail, or whatever the dog's name happens to be. There is a long wait, and then half a minute of suspense, and Lion's Tail refuses to wag. At the end of the meeting, you fight your way out of the place, after having seen just over three solid minutes of actual racing—perhaps four minutes. You are two or three pounds out of pocket, but who cares?"

Nipper grinned.

"Somehow, Travers I rather think you prefer football," he chuckled.

"I shouldn't be at all surprised," said Travers, nodding. "At any rate, I'll turn out for the Junior Eleven this afternoon, dear old fellow. Somehow, this greyhound racing meeting doesn't quite appeal to me."

Claude Gore-Pearce scowled.

"You silly idiot!" he said nastily. "You've only been rotting!"

"That's all!" nodded Travers. "Just rotting!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Then you won't come with me?" said Gore-Pearce.

"If it's all the same to you, dear old fellow, no!" said Travers. "And I hope my little discourse has convinced you that greyhound racing, as served up at Bannington, is a waste of time. Now horse racing is different. In horse racing you have a full-blooded, virile sport——"

Clang, clang!

"Well, there goes the bell for dinner!" said Nipper briskly. "I don't think we'll hear your discourse on horse racing, Travers."

And the rest of the juniors were of precisely the same opinion



CHAPTER 3

Taking a Risk!

MR. NELSON LEE, the Housemaster of the Ancient House, rose to his feet in the dining-hall im-

mediately after the meal was over—and just before dismissal.

"One moment, all of you, if you don't mind," he said, addressing the whole House. "The headmaster has requested me to make an important announcement."

Seniors and juniors alike listened with interest. They rather wondered what was coming. They could guess, at any rate, that every other Housemaster at St. Frank's was copying Nelson Lee's example at this particular moment.

"The headmaster wishes me to tell you that the greyhound racing track, known as the Bannington Arena is strictly out of bounds," continued Nelson Lee. "Junior and senior Forms are included in this restriction."

"Good egg!" murmured Handforth, at the Remove table. "That's one in the eye for Gore-Pearce."

Gore-Pearce and Gulliver and Bell were looking rather blank and dismayed.

"The headmaster is very strict about this," went on Nelson Lee warningly. "He doesn't want anybody belonging to St. Frank's to patronise the Bannington Arena. So, once again, I must tell you plainly that the Arena is positively out of bounds. If any boy belonging to this school is seen there, or is reported to have been there, the consequences will be serious for him."

"How serious, sir?" asked Travers coolly.

"I do not think the headmaster will hesitate at expulsion," said Nelson Lee grimly. "Dr. Stafford is not opposed to greyhound racing as a sport, but he has heard, on the best authority, that this track at Bannington is virtually run for the benefit of bookmakers. It is, moreover, the resort of all the worst characters in the district. That's all I've got to say, so you can dismiss."

The fellows crowded out, talking animatedly. The majority of them were not in the least interested, for they wouldn't have patronised the Bannington Arena in any case. Football was more their mark on this fine, crisp autumn afternoon.

"Well, there's nothing like taking the bull by the horns," said Nipper, as he and a group of other Removites went out into the Triangle. "I don't think there'll be many St. Frank's fellows 'going to the dogs' this afternoon."

Gore-Pearce & Co were looking pretty sick.

"It's spoilt your precious game, hasn't it?" said Handforth, with undisguised satisfaction. "Serves you jolly well right, too, my sons! It's a pity you can't interest yourselves in something healthy! Why don't you come and watch us beat Bannington Grammar School?"

"Oh, go and eat coke?" growled Gore-Pearce savagely.

"What did you say?" roared Handforth.

Gore-Pearce didn't answer. He walked straight on, and Gulliver and Bell hustled him somewhat. They had an idea that Handforth would run after them, and get busy with his fists. But when they reached the gates they found that Handforth had turned away.

"There's no sense in asking for trouble," said Gulliver. "It's a silly thing to tell that hulking ass, Handforth, to go and eat coke. He's always liable to let fly!"

"Confound, Handforth!" snapped Gore-Pearce. "What are we going to do about our afternoon's flutter?"

"Do?" said Bell. "Do nothing, of course. We daren't go now."

"Of course not," agreed Gulliver. "It's not worth risking the sack. Anyhow, I'm not goin' to get bunked for watching a greyhound race."

"No, it isn't worth it," agreed Gore-Pearce, with a grunt. "Still, we'd better meet those River House fellows. We promised to, and they'll only kick up a fuss if we don't turn up."

So they strolled down towards the stile, where the footpath through Bellton Wood joined the lane. It was just about two o'clock when they arrived—which was the appointed hour. The plan had been to catch the afternoon train to Bannington.

"Hallo, you fellows!" came a hail, as the cads of Study A arrived. "You've just hit it nicely."

A group of River House "Honourables" came through the wood, and they were all looking cheery. The leaders were the Hon. Audrey de Vere Wellborne and the Hon. Bertram Carstairs and the Hon. Cyril Coates. Others included Delaney and Gadsby and Brampton.

"We're not coming," said Gore-Pearce bluntly.

"What's that?" said the Hon. Aubrey. "Not coming? Why not?"

"Because our dolt of a headmaster has put the Bannington Arena out of bounds," growled Gore-Pearce.

The Honourables looked surprised.

"Is that any valid reason?" asked Delaney. "By gad! You fellows aren't afraid of breaking bounds, are you?"

"Hang it!" protested Gulliver. "There's a chance of getting the sack!"

"Rot!"

"Our Housemaster made an announcement——"

"Blow your Housemaster!" said Wellborne. "We expect these sort of things from masters. They're proper spoil-sports, all of them. They always put racecourses out of bounds. And greyhound racing, in their eyes, is practically as bad as horse racing."

"Well, it's not worth the risk," said Gore-Pearce stubbornly.

"By gad!" sneered Carstairs. "I'm jiggered if these St. Frank's chaps aren't funky!"

"Confound you!" snapped Gore-Pearce. "It's not a question of being funky——"

"Then what is it?"

"Steady!" said Wellborne, with a grin. "We don't want to start any arguments. The train won't wait for us. Don't be an ass, Gore-Pearce. Of course you're coming."

"Yes, but——"

"All three of you," continued Wellborne lightly. "The Arena is out of bounds for us, too, but do you think we're stopping away?"

"But what if you're spotted?" asked Gulliver nervously.

"In that terrific crowd?" said Wellborne. "My dear asses, there's not a chance. As soon as we get to Bannington, we're going to buy some plain tweed caps—cheap ones for the occasion. As long as we're not showing any school colours, who the thunder will know us? We're not likely to meet any masters in the Arena, are we?"

"Do you think it'll be safe, then?" asked Gore-Pearce dubiously.

"Safe as houses!" said the Hon. Aubrey. "Come on! Don't be such blessed weaklings! Risk it!"

And Gore-Pearce & Co., not wishing to look small in the eyes of their River House rivals, decided to risk it.



CHAPTER 4

A Disappointment!

"READY, you chaps?" sang out Handforth impatiently.

He was in the Ancient House lobby,

and his voice echoed up the stairs and down the corridors. Handforth was wearing football togs, under his overcoat, and he seemed to be ready for business.

"Keep your hair on!" came a voice from upstairs. "Just coming."

Two or three juniors appeared, and they all went out into the Triangle. The other members of the Junior Eleven were there—Reggie Pitt of the West House, and Buster Boots and Bob Christine of the Fourth, and Nipper and Travers and Fullwood and Gresham and the others.

Their bicycles were ready, too. Handforth had thought about going over to Bannington in his little Austin Seven, but Church and McClure had persuaded him that it would be more sporting to bike it, in company with the other members of the team.

"Are we all here now?" asked Nipper briskly. "Good! Then let's be going. We don't want to be late."

"Well, anyhow, we're going to whack the Grammarians hollow," said Handforth, with satisfaction. "On their own ground, too!"

"Don't you be so jolly sure," put in Reggie Pitt. "The Grammarians are hot this season. They haven't lost a match yet."

"They haven't played many," retorted Handforth.

"That's true," said Nipper. "Still, there's no sense in counting our chickens before they're hatched. In other words, we mustn't reckon on our goals before they're scored."

"Well, I should hope you forwards will be good enough for one goal during the game," said Handforth, staring.

"Well, one—yes," admitted Nipper.

"That'll be good enough for victory, then," said Handforth coolly. "Naturally, I'm not going to let the Grammarians score. I'm goalie, and——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good old optimist!" said Travers. "Well, well! That's the spirit, Handy, dear old fellow! But you must remember that even the best of goalkeepers can be beaten at times."

Handforth wasn't inclined to admit it, and he was still arguing when the whole crowd wheeled their bicycles towards the gates. A few other fellows—not in the

team—were going along, too, to watch the game.

"Just a minute, Ted!"

Handforth wheeled round, frowning, as he heard the familiar voice. His minor was leaning against the wall near the gateway, his bicycle handy. Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon, also of the Third, were lounging about near by, pretending to be interested in the distant view.

"I haven't got time to bother with you, Willy, my son!" said Edward Oswald curtly.

"No bother at all," replied Willy Handforth, the genial skipper of the Third. "All I want, Ted, is five bob."

"What!"

"It'll save a lot of time if you don't argue," continued Willy patiently. "In fact, you needn't say a single word. Whack out five bob, and the thing is done."

The other Removites and Fourth-Formers paused, grinning. Edward Oswald Handforth's face was a study.

"You can go and eat coke!" he said, glaring. "You're not going to get any five bob out of me!"

Willy held out a hand—a not over-clean hand.

"You—you—you——"

"Five bob!"

Willy was cool and collected. Indeed, there was something disconcerting about his air of quiet confidence. It was, as obvious as daylight that he was determined to get that money.

"Ha. ha. ha!"

The chuckles became louder, and Handforth turned red.

"Look here, you young fathead," he said thickly, "I'm not going to be black-mailed——"

"Better give it to him, Handy, and get it over!" advised Nipper. "You know what a sticker he is."

Handforth breathed hard.

"What do you want five bob for?" he demanded, turning to his minor.

"We're going to Bannington to see you fellows whack the Grammarians," replied Willy promptly.

"Oh!"

"And, naturally, we want a bit of money to spend while we're there," continued the cheery fag. "Chubby and Juicy and I happen to be broke just now, and five bob would come in rather handy."

"You're coming to see our match, are you?" said Handforth.

"Yes; we want to watch the faces of those Grammarians when you ruin all their chances of scoring," said Willy calmly. "My hat! I believe they're shivering in their shoes even now at the very thought of you, Ted!"

Handforth thawed.

"Yes, I expect they're a bit nervous," he admitted. "Five bob, eh? Oh, well, all right. Just this once!"

He took out two half-crowns and handed them to his minor. All the other juniors were cackling. "Just this once" was dis-

tinctly funny, for Willy was continually wangling similar sums out of his major.

However, Willy was not destined to see the celebrated Edward Oswald stopping any hot shots that afternoon. For when the Junior Eleven arrived at the Bannington Grammar School they were met in the quad. by one of the masters.

"Sorry, you fellows," he said, "but I'm afraid there'll be no game this afternoon."

"No game, sir!" echoed Nipper, in dismay. "Why not?"

"Most of our men are in quarantine," replied the master. "There's a suspected case of scarlet fever in the school, and the Head has decided to keep everybody indoors until the thing is settled."

"Oh, I say, what rot!" burst out Handforth. "I—I mean—— Sorry, sir! But surely there can't be any harm in the team coming out into the open air?"

"Personally, I don't think there's the ghost of a risk," said the Grammar School master candidly. "But you can't be too careful in these cases. Anyhow, there'll be no game. Frightfully sorry, and all that, but there it is. We would have rung you up, but we didn't know until a quarter of an hour ago. There's been a fine old stew going on here."

"But can't we wait a bit, sir—on the off chance?" asked Nipper. "It won't matter much if the game is delayed——"

"Afraid it's no good, young 'un," said the master. "The doctors are going to examine practically all the fellows who have been in contact with the patient, and it'll be a long job. I shouldn't advise you to wait—you'll only be wasting your time."

And the St. Frank's Junior Eleven had to swallow the pill, so to speak.

It was a decidedly bitter pill to swallow, too, since they had been looking forward to this game. And now it was too late to fix up any other.

They wheeled their bicycles out into the road again, and came to a halt, uncertain and unsettled.

"Well, what the dickens are we going to do now?" demanded Handforth, glaring at his companions as though they were responsible. "Here's a fine kettle of fish!"

"All dressed up, and nowhere to go, what?" murmured Travers. "It's a sad world!"

"Well, I'll tell you what," suggested Nipper. "We can't have a game ourselves, so how about trotting along to watch the professionals?"

"That's not a bad wheeze," said Reggie Pitt, nodding. "Bannington Town is playing Croydon to-day, I believe. It ought to be a decent match."

Within a minute the thing was decided.

Bannington Town was in the Third Division of the League, and it had quite a good reputation as a team. The previous season the Town had finished well up in the League table, although this season things seemed to be going badly.

"They need some encouragement, by all that I can hear," said Fullwood, with a grin.



The forward sent in a first-time shot which rose slightly, swerving at the same time. 'Bang! The ball was in the back of the net, and the goalie was left standing, arms outstretched, helpless. "Goal!" went up a roar.

"Bannington hasn't won a game yet this season."

"They haven't gained a single point," nodded Nipper. "Well, let's go along and encourage them. And perhaps we might be able to pick up a few tips. Professional football is jolly smart, as a rule."

And the disappointed Junior Eleven remounted their bicycles and pedalled off towards the big ground.

CHAPTER 5

Two Men and a Dog!



WILLY HANDFORTH frowned.

"Look at that!" he said ominously.

He and his two chums were on their bicycles, and they were just preparing to dismount as the pedalling became harder and harder up a sharp rise. It was the last rise on the Bannington road, the outskirts of the town being only half a mile farther on.

Yet, although Bannington was so near, the road was quite rural, with picturesque hedges and with scarcely any cottages or houses in sight.

"Look at what?" asked Chubby Heath, as he practically fell off his machine. "Phew! This giddy hill is always a twister!"

But Willy, as he dismounted, was not thinking of the hill. He was looking at two men who were walking briskly along, a hun-

dred yards ahead, up the rise. Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon failed to see anything to warrant their leader's gruff tone.

"I don't agree with it!" said Willy sternly. "It's a dirty trick on the poor dog."

And then the other two fags understood.

The men were walking along with a dog trotting between them. The dog was a greyhound, sleek and beautiful, and he was held on a leash.

"Come off it, Willy!" grinned Chubby, as they all pushed their machines up the hill. "What's biting you now? I can't see much to complain of."

"That dog is a greyhound!" said Willy fiercely.

"Go hon!"

"He's a greyhound!" repeated Willy.

"You don't say so!" remarked Chubby in a tone of surprise. "I thought he was a St. Bernard!"

"And it's as clear as daylight that he's being taken to that rotten meeting at the Bannington Arena," continued Willy, taking no notice of Chubby's sarcasm. "Blow the Arena! It ought to be closed up by Act of Parliament!"

Willy didn't believe in greyhound racing, and he was inclined to be strong in his views.

"You'd better go up to the House of Commons and kick up a fuss," suggested Juicy Lemon lightly.

"Look at the poor thing!" said Willy, with genuine distress. "All cluttered up with a silly sort of harness, and blankets and things. It's a wonder they don't wrap 'em in cotton wool!"

"It's to keep them in fit condition," said Chubby.

"Rot! No ordinary dog-lover wraps blankets round his pal!" said Willy sternly. "And look at that harness, too! If I had my way, greyhound racing would be finished for good!"

His chums did not argue. Willy was a passionate lover of animals. At times, indeed, he was inclined to go to extremes. He had all sorts of pets at St. Frank's—Marmaduke, the monkey; Sebastian, the snake; Rupert, the rat; and all the other members of the animal troupe. Willy spent quite half his leisure hours in looking after his beloved pets, and they, for their part, enjoyed a happy life. One and all, they were attached to their kindly young master.

In some strange way, Willy had a powerful influence over all animals. Savage creatures that would unhesitatingly attack other people were docile and tame when Willy approached them and spoke to them. He had a magic influence. Even Willy himself could not explain why. It was just a gift.

"Greyhounds, of course, are dogs that love to run," continued the leader of the Third. "But it seems unnatural to me that they should be compelled to race in these enclosures, fooled by an electric bit of trickery that pretends to be a hare. It's not playing square with the poor beggars."

"Yes, but they enjoy the fun," said Chubby.

"Lots of these dogs are being trained to give exhibitions for the amusement of the public!" said Willy magisterially. "And not only that! They're simply being used as an excuse for betting!"

"Well, you needn't get excited about it," remarked Juicy.

"I'm not excited!" said Willy. "I'm wild. Of course, a lot of greyhounds are well looked after, and they're treated properly. But what about the others? What about the poor things that are owned by men like these two in front? Anybody can see that they're a couple of rotters! And I've heard that this Arena in Bannington is badly run. The dogs fight, and some of the races have been farces. In the name of sport, they're endangering the lives of some of these ripping dogs."

"Ahem!" coughed Chubby. "Shall we be getting on our bikes again? We're late even now. I expect the match will have started —"

"Hallo! Look at that!" broke in Willy quickly.

Unexpectedly a young rabbit had dodged across the road, just in front of the men and the dog, and the latter, with a quick, excited yelp, was tugging madly at the leash.

"None of that, confound you!" shouted one of the men. "Keep quiet, you blamed fool! Down, hang you—down!"

The rabbit could be seen scooting across a neighbouring meadow, and the greyhound was leaping about in a fine state of excitement and frenzy.

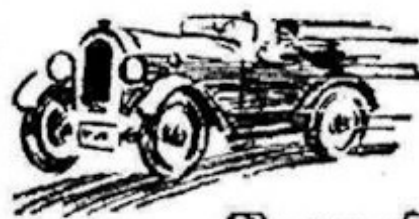
"Better hold him tight, Bill!" said the other man in an anxious tone. "He looks like getting free, and——"

"Look out!" roared the first man.

With a terrific jerk the greyhound had broken his harness, and now he was free.

But Willy hardly gave the dog a glance. His horrified eyes were fixed upon a motor-car which had just come roaring over the crest of the hill. It was a sports car—a two-seater with a long, rakish body—and it was travelling at terrific speed.

Both the men leapt to the side of the road, and the car swerved. At the same second the greyhound dodged right across the road towards the hedge—full in the track of the oncoming automobile!



CHAPTER 6

The Disaster!

THUD!

Willy uttered a hoarse, strangled kind of cry as he heard that sound. It

was a sickening, ghastly sound to his ears—for it had been caused by the unfortunate greyhound coming into contact with the car.

The car driver tried to avoid the accident; he swerved madly, running right on to the grass beside the road. But his speed had been so great that there was no chance for the poor dog.

As far as Willy could see, the wheels of the car did not actually pass over the dog's body; it seemed that the greyhound was struck by one of the dumb-irons, and he went flying beneath the car, to vanish.

Whooooom!

The three fags nearly jumped out of their skins as the car shot past them, missing them by mere inches. Willy's gaze was fixed on the road, and he saw the greyhound rolling over and over like a ball of dusty fur. Then it subsided into a still, silent heap.

"Oh!" muttered Willy brokenly.

There was agony in his tone—agony in his eyes. He threw his machine from him, and he was on the point of rushing forward, when Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon held him back.

"Steady, old son!" muttered Chubby hoarsely. "No need to butt in!"

"Let me go!" panted Willy.

"No!" said his chums in one voice. "What good can you do?"

Willy suddenly felt limp. What good, indeed? He suddenly turned and glared down the hill. The sports car was vanishing in a haze of dust which rose from the tarred, sanded road.

"The brutes—the brutes!" Willy said tensely. "They didn't even stop! They ought to be put in prison for a thing like that!"

He was touched to the quick; he was in mental agony. Chubby and Juicy couldn't

understand their young leader's pain. They, themselves, were rather distressed to witness this accident, but they were certainly not pale with the shock of it—as Willy was.

He stood quite still now, rather stunned.

"They've killed him, Bill—they've killed him!" one of the men was shouting.

"The young fools!" panted the other. "The dangerous maniacs! I'll find out who they are, or my name ain't Bill Brice. Yes, and I'll make 'em pay, too! They'll have to compensate me for the loss of this dog!"

Bill Brice was a big, unpleasant-looking man—now rendered doubly unpleasant by reason of his rage. He was coarse, and he was flashily dressed. He possessed a red, puffy face, with two or three chins folding themselves over his striped collar. The other man was of the same type—horsey-looking, and by no means prepossessing.

"My dog!" Bill Brice was shouting. "My Domino! By thunder! He's dead right enough!"

He looked down at the mangled, still form of the dog. But there was no anguish in his voice, only fury.

Willy's gaze hardened. This man was thinking only of his loss—in terms of money. He hadn't a thought for the poor dog. Even in a moment like this, when the animal was lying there, bleeding and pitiful, his owner could talk of nothing but compensation. Willy's blood boiled.

"It boiled even more when Mr. Brice gave the limp heap a kick. It moved slightly, but there was no sign of life. A pool of blood was beginning to form on the tarred road.

"No need to do that, Bill!" said the other man. "Calm down! We can't do anything."

Bill Brice turned, and shook his fist down the road. Apparently he did not even see the three juniors who were still standing there, watching, hardly knowing what to do.

The other man was now on his knees, and he felt the dog all over, and turned the limp body from side to side. At last he got to his feet and brushed his knees.

"It's no good," he grunted, "he's as dead as mutton!"

"Dead!" said Bill Brice thickly. "And I was going to race him to-day, too! Just as he was coming on so wonderfully! Why, in another couple of weeks he could have beaten every dog on the track!"

"Yes, but it's no good saying that——"

"That dog was worth a small fortune!" roared Brice, with mad fury. "And there's no redress! I don't even know who those fellers were in the car. But, by gosh, I'll find out! And I'll make 'em pay, too! I'll make 'em pay every cent!"

In his rage he turned back, and he looked down at the battered body of the greyhound. His foot went up, and so great was the force of his thrust that he lifted the limp animal on his instep and sent it slithering and sliding into the ditch near by. It fell with a dull thud into the dry bed.

"You're not going to leave it there, are you, Bill?" asked the other man wonderingly.

Bill Brice scowled savagely.

"What's the good of taking it?" he snarled. "He's dead, and that means he's no more good to me! What's the good of keeping a corpse? He might as well be buried there as anywhere else! Confound those reckless fools in that car!"

Without even another glance at the ditch, Bill Brice strode on, still scowling and complaining about his loss—in terms of cash.



CHAPTER 7

Willy Gets Wild !

WELL, let's be getting on," said Chubby Heath uncomfortably.

Willy Handforth started. He seemed

to come out of his dazed condition, and now his eyes were gleaming with cold anger. Bill Brice and his companion had vanished round a bend at the top of the hill, and the three fags had the road quite to themselves.

"The brute!" muttered Willy hotly. "Oh, the horrible brute!"

Juicy Lemon nodded.

"Yes, rather!" he said. "He ought to have stopped, at least. It was a dirty trick to drive on——"

"I'm not talking about the man who drove that car," said Willy coldly. "I'm talking about Brice!"

"Brice?"

"Didn't he shout his name out?" demanded Willy. "Bill Brice! And, by Jingo, I'll remember it, too! A brute, you chaps—a callous, inhuman rotter!"

His chums were astonished.

"Well, you needn't be so wild about it," remarked Chubby. "The dog is dead, and there's no sense in crying over spilt milk."

"And that man is allowed to own dumb animals," said Willy, taking a deep breath. "It's a shame—in fact, it's a sin! A man like that is dangerous."

"But what did he do?" asked Juicy staring.

"You heard him, didn't you?"

"Well, yes——"

"What did he care about his dog?" said Willy scathingly. "Nothing! Not a toss! Did you hear him say a single word of pity? Did he express any pain because his dog had been mangled to death in front of his eyes?"

"I don't suppose he did," said Chubby.

"He thought of nothing except the poor dog's value," said Willy, with contempt and scorn. "He thought of how much money he would lose, because he couldn't enter his dog for the races. He was only angry because he was out of pocket. But for the dog itself he didn't care a toss!"

"The rotter!" said Juicy, realising the truth of it.

"The hulking great cad didn't even bend down and make sure that his dog was really dead," continued Willy hotly. "And then, to cap everything, he kicked the poor thing into the ditch. Great Scott! I never saw anything so heartless in my life! The brute!"

Taking everything into consideration, Willy Handforth had every reason for his scathing comments. Bill Brice, the owner of the dog, had behaved with unjustifiable callousness. It was perfectly true that the loss of the dog, as a dog, had not affected him.

"It was really the man's own fault," said Chubby. "He ought to have caught hold of the dog and held him. But then, who could expect that that car would come shooting along at such a speed?"

"Oh, why talk about it?" growled Lemon. "Let's be getting on."

"Wait a minute!" said Willy quietly.

He had left his bicycle in the grass, and he was now walking forward.

"Here, I say," protested Chubby uncomfortably. "You're not going to that ditch, are you, Willy?"

"Yes, I am."

"But what for?" said Chubby. "You can't do any good. And I don't suppose that dog is a very pretty sight, after being mangled and——"

"I want to have a look at him," said Willy in a steady voice.

There was something in his tone which made it perfectly useless for Chubby and Juicy to argue. They knew Handforth minor well, but never before had they seen him so affected. Usually he was the cheeriest of mortals—always sunny, always smiling. But now a black cloud had descended over him, and the agony in his eyes and in his voice was intense.

Chubby and Juicy laid their bicycles down, too, and they followed their young leader. For a moment Willy stood on the brink of the ditch, looking down. The unfortunate greyhound was lying in a still, misshapen heap among the dead leaves and rotten bracken. His head was doubled under his body, and there was blood everywhere.

"My hat!" muttered Chubby, as he came up and looked down.

Willy dropped into the ditch and bent down beside the dog.

"Don't touch him!" murmured Chubby. "You'll only get messed up, Willy, and there's no need——"

He broke off, for his words were idle. Willy, with gentle care, had picked the dog up in his arms, giving no thought to the blood. Gently and tenderly, he laid the body down on the grass and stretched it out.

"Poor old chap!" muttered Willy brokenly. "What a shame! Such a fine dog, too!"

"Yes, he was a beauty," said Juicy. "But what a sight now!"

"Even if that rotter, Brice, didn't know his duty, there's something that we must do," said Willy. "We've got to give this dog a decent burial, you chaps."

"Yes, but——"

"Don't argue!" said Willy quietly. "You don't think we can ride on, do you, without burying the poor thing?"

"Nun-no, I suppose not."

"We couldn't leave him here, in the ditch—and make ourselves as bad as his owner," continued Willy. "That's another thing against Brice, too. Fancy! He didn't even possess the decency to bury his dog."

The others said nothing.

They were looking down at the greyhound. He really was an awful sight. The hair round his neck and near the shoulders was matted with blood. The little coat, or blanket, which had been on his back, was torn and tattered. A reddish foam was appearing at his mouth, and his eyes were half-open, showing the whites slightly.

"Oh, what a shame!" muttered Willy again.

He felt the dog's hindquarters, expecting probably to find the bones broken. But, rather to his surprise, the limbs were quite firm. Then his hand wandered over the body, and suddenly it became still.

In a flash Willy's whole attitude changed. A flush came over his face, and his eyes grew larger.

"Oh!" he whispered hoarsely.

"Why, what on earth——" began Chubby.

"His heart!" panted Willy. "It's beating, you chaps! His heart's beating!"

"What!"

"He's not dead!" went on Willy, a wave of wild excitement taking possession of him.

"Quick, get some water, one of you!"

"But—but there isn't any water here——"

"Get some water!" repeated Willy. "I don't care where you get it from—but get it! His heart's still beating! He's alive!"

With a tenderness that was astounding, Willy felt the dog all over, and his amazement and his excitement grew. There were no bones broken—not one!

And, without question, the dog's heart was beating—feebly, unsteadily. But it was beating!



CHAPTER 8

Willy's Resolve!

"POOR old boy!" murmured Willy compassionately. "If there's any chance for you, we'll see what can be done."

He looked at the greyhound's mouth, and his excitement grew less as he observed the red foam that was issuing from between those white teeth.

"Where's that water?" he said suddenly.

"Chubby's gone for it!" panted Juicy Lemon. "He—he went through that hedge,

and— Oh, thank goodness! Here he comes!"

Chubby Heath came running up, carrying his cap. When he arrived, a small amount of water was still in the cap.

"Hold it down here!" said Willy quickly.

He opened the unfortunate dog's mouth, and some of the water was poured down his throat. Not that there was any effect. To all intents and purposes, the animal was quite dead.

"Are you sure he's alive?" asked Chubby breathlessly.

"His heart's beating—and that proves it!" replied Willy. "Of course, he's got some internal injuries. No bones are broken, but he's in a very bad way. Still, he's alive."

Then, abruptly, Willy's previous excitement turned to fresh anger—cold, bitter anger.

"Oh, those brutes!" he said fiercely. "This makes the case ten times as bad against them! They kicked this poor old chap into the ditch without even making certain that he was really dead!"

"But they thought he *was* dead," said Chubby.

"Thought!" echoed Willy, with fine scorn. "What's the good of thinking? Supposing you were run over, Chubby, and a doctor came along and *thought* that you were dead? What would your people say if you died for want of attention?"

"Yes; but that's different——"

"It's not different!" said Willy grimly. "It's just the same! A dog's life isn't as valuable as a human life, naturally, but the principle is just the same. That cad, Brice, didn't take the trouble to convince himself that his dog was really dead. And he kicked him into the ditch! I—I can't believe it! It's too horrible!"

Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon felt rather helpless in the face of Willy's vehemence.

"But, after all, it's only a dog——" began Juicy.

"Only a dog!" echoed Willy bitterly. "A poor, dumb animal! Get some more water, one of you! In fact, you'd both better go. The more water we can get, the better!"

They hurried off, feeling just a bit frightened, while Willy made another examination of the injured greyhound. He found that there was a nasty cut on the shoulder, extending towards the neck. The skin was badly lacerated, and a good deal of blood had flowed from the wound. It was only a skin wound, however, and had probably been caused by a projecting portion of the car's engine, since the edges of the wound were showing traces of black grease.

There were two other cuts on the dog's back, and one near his hindquarters, but they were quite superficial.

"My only hat!" breathed Willy.

It was now apparent that the dog had not been run over by the car's wheels. He had been hit by the number-plate, perhaps, and then by the engine sump, and perhaps by

the rear axle. He was internally injured, but no bones were broken.

Willy Handforth throbbed with indignation as he thought of it all. Bill Brice and his companion had walked off in a rage—convinced that the dog was dead. Although it was such a valuable animal they had callously left it in the ditch. Since it could not earn any more money for them, they had lost interest in it.

The dog's life—the dog's pain and suffering—meant nothing. With incredible heartlessness they had abandoned it to its fate. Other people might have said that there was some little excuse for them, since they believed that the dog was a corpse. But Willy would allow no excuse. He maintained that the men should have made sure, beyond any question, that life had passed away.

And Willy, of course, was right.

His two chums soon returned with more water. Willy bathed the wounds as well as he could, and he poured some more water down the dog's throat. Not that there was any sign of reviving animation. Only the faintest of heart-beats told him that the animal still lived.

"What are we going to do?" asked Chubby uncertainly. "We can't bury him if he's still alive."

"He'll die within a minute or two, I expect," murmured Juicy Lemon.

"He won't—he won't!" said Willy, kneeling there and looking down at the injured animal. "He's not going to die, you chaps! I won't let him! I'm going to nurse him back to health!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"I'm going to carry him back to St. Frank's now!" continued Willy. "One of you chaps can wheel my bike. This poor dog needs attention—he needs care. If his life is to be saved, I must remain with him until the crisis is over."

"But—but——"

"He's mine now!" continued Willy, his eyes blazing. "Do you hear, you chaps? *Mine!*"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Chubby. "The dog belongs to that man, Brice——"

"He belongs to me!" interrupted Willy, in a hard voice. "He's mine, by moral right. Those brutes left him in this ditch for dead. Perhaps he'll die, even now. And he certainly would have died, in any case, if he had been left there. So he's *mine!*"

Willy's vehemence was tremendous. Chubby and Juicy were awed. They had nothing to say.

"There's just a chance for him!" went on the leader of the Third. "First of all, he'll have to be washed, and then put into blankets. Yes, and hot fomentations must be applied. Poultices and things! He's all smashed up inside, I believe, and he'll go into a fever before long."

"But—but you don't know much about these things," said Chubby, finding his voice. "Wouldn't it be better to take him to a vet. in Bannington? We're only half a mile from the town——"

"This dog is mine, and he's going back to St. Frank's with me!" broke in Willy, speaking very deliberately. "I'm not going to trust him to any vet. I'll bring him back to life myself—with my own hands. And when he's well again he'll be my dog—and I'd like to see the man who'll take him away from me!"

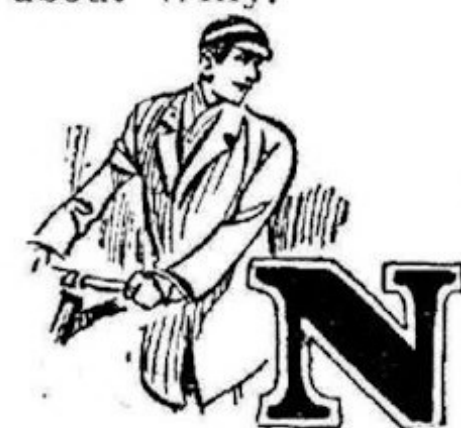
Never before had Willy's love of animals shown itself so passionately as now. Tenderly he lifted that poor limp body in his arms, and then, with steady footsteps, and with an almost inspired light in his eyes, he commenced walking back along the road towards St. Frank's.

Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon looked at one another, but they could not understand. This was beyond them. Yet, in their hearts, they were filled with admiration for their determined young leader.

There was something indescribably fine about Willy.

CHAPTER 9

Not in the Right Crowd!



NIPPER jumped from his bicycle, and gave a hail to the others.

"We'd better leave our jiggers here, you fellows!" he sang out. "We shall never get through that crowd. And there's no bicycle park here."

The Remove Eleven, and the other juniors, dismounted from their machines. They were now comparatively close to the Bannington Football Club's enclosure. The road was packed with people—the majority of them being men. As Nipper had said, it would be difficult to take their bicycles through that throng.

It was far better to leave the "jiggers" here, where they could be stored for the modest sum of twopence each. An enterprising tradesman had converted his front garden into a bicycle park, and he was doing a roaring trade.

The juniors soon got rid of their machines, and they pushed forward through the crowds towards the main gates and the turnstiles.

They had got over their disappointment by now.

As they couldn't have a game themselves, there was really no reason why they shouldn't watch one, and a professional game was a bit of a novelty for them. They did not often come to a League match. Moreover, they had heard so many rumours about Bannington Town's weakness this season that they were curious to watch the play for themselves. Croydon was an excellent team, and had been doing splendidly.

"Well, we shan't be alone!" remarked Handforth dryly. "My only hat! What a crowd!"

"I'm glad to see it!" said Travers. "It shows that the club's supporters are loyal.

It too often happens that when a team is doing badly the crowds grow less and less. That's not the right kind of loyalty."

"No fear!" agreed Nipper. "When a club is doing badly, the supporters should rally round in greater numbers than ever. It's when people are down that they need encouragement."

"Well, if Bannington Town doesn't buck up in face of all this loyalty, it deserves to go to pot!" said Reggie Pitt. "By the look of things it's going to be a record gate."

"Lots of them are Croydon supporters," said Fullwood, as he noticed the plum-and-blue-coloured favours in the buttonholes of some of the people.

"They're only a comparatively small minority," said Nipper. "Most of these people are local. Good luck to 'em!"

The whole road was packed with humanity. Men and youths were striding along, talking animatedly, filling the road from pavement to pavement, so that ordinary traffic was impossible. There were plenty of policemen on duty, too.

The St. Frank's fellows could not help noticing that a large number of men were very rough-looking specimens. Not all of them belonged to Bannington—since Bannington, alone, could not possibly possess so many undesirables.

Nipper was rather puzzled. League football did not generally attract such men. Possibly they had come in from Caistowe and Helmford and other surrounding towns. At the same time, of course, there were any number of decent, respectable townspeople.

"Here we are!" said Handforth briskly.

They had arrived at the main gates, and they paused wonderingly. Not many of the people were streaming in through the turnstiles. These latter were clicking in a desultory manner, the public going in in ones and twos. The main crowds were passing straight by, and continuing along the road.

"That's funny!" said Reggie Pitt, frowning.

"What's funny?" asked Handforth.

"Why, I thought all these people were coming to the football match."

"Of course they're coming to the football match!" said Handforth. "Did you think they were out for an afternoon stroll? There must be some other turnstiles farther along. This is probably the swagger enclosure."

"But it isn't!" said Nipper. "It's only a bob admission here."

He was looking farther along the road, and then his eyes opened slightly wider. For he could see that the crowds were entering a big gateway on the opposite side of the road, a hundred yards farther along.

"My only hat!" said Nipper slowly.

"What the matter?" asked Tommy Watson.

"Come along here, you fellows," said the Junior captain.

They all went farther along the road, following the big crowds. And it wasn't long before the little mystery was explained.

Handforth's face became red with indignation as he realised the truth.

"Great Scott!" he ejaculated. "They're not going into the football ground at all!"

"Well, well!" murmured Travers. "I fear their taste is slightly depraved."

"They're going into that rotten Arena!" said Handforth warmly. "Look at 'em! Crowding in by the hundred! And we thought they were football supporters!"

The crowds were entering the turnstiles of the new Bannington Arena—the greyhound racing enclosure. This was situated just past the football ground, on the other side of the road.

Nipper could now understand why there were so many rough-looking characters. Every greyhound racing track attracts such undesirables; but, of course, in well-conducted enclosures there are strict regulations. As Vivian Travers had said, there were greyhound racing tracks *and* greyhound racing tracks.

This one appeared to be of a very questionable character.

And, naturally, it attracted a questionable element. A fair proportion of the people were decent, law-abiding citizens. They may have been foolish, but that was no slight upon their honesty or decency. But it could not be denied that the arena was the haven of many young roughs, too.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" said Handforth suddenly. "Look over there!"

"Oh, rats!" said Church. "Let's get back to the football ground. We came here to see the match. We're not interested in this beastly place!"

"Yes, but look there!" said Handforth indignantly. "Can't you see who those fellows are?"

The others looked in the direction he indicated. A group of youths in overcoats and tweed caps were just entering the arena. A rear view was not very enlightening. But when those youths showed their faces Nipper & Co. easily recognised them.

They were Gore-Pearce & Co., of the Remove, and a crowd of Honourables from the River House School.

"Fatheads!" said Nipper contemptuously. "After the Head's warning, too! If they get sacked it'll serve them right!"

"Let's drag them back!" said Handforth. "We're not going to let them disgrace St. Frank's like this! Come on, you chaps!"

But they held Handforth back.

"Steady, old man!" said Nipper. "That won't do any good. We shall only start a brawl—at least, that's what people will think it is—and then we shall be involved, too."

"Yes, but hang it——"

"If those chaps like to be fools, it's none of our business," said Nipper. "We're not their keepers, are we? We shouldn't be thanked for our pains if we pulled them back and gave them some sound advice. They're old enough and big enough to know what is right and wrong."

"Hear, hear!" said Reggie Pitt. "Let's leave them alone!"

And all the other fellows agreed, much to Handforth's disgust.



CHAPTER 10

Feeble Football!

FIVE minutes later the St. Frank's juniors were in the grand stand of the football enclosure. They weren't too snobbish to mix with "the shilling crowd," but as they could obtain seats for an extra sixpence, they decided that it was worth while.

"There's heaps of time," said Reggie Pitt. "The teams aren't out yet."

"You ought to know this ground pretty well, old man," said Nipper, with a smile. "Do you remember the time when you played for Bannington Town as a professional?"

"Yes, rather!" replied Reggie dreamily. "And you fellows didn't even know me."

"Well, you browned yourself, and you called yourself 'Abdulla,' or some such name," remarked Fullwood. "I think the club has got a new manager since then."

"Yes; Mr. Page has gone, I believe," replied Nipper. "Somebody else has been in charge for the last two seasons."

"I saw his photograph in the paper last week," said Harry Gresham. "A stoutish, good-natured-looking man named Billings. He's the secretary-manager of the club."

"Mr. Billings is probably in a blue mood to-day," said Travers, as his gaze roved round the ground. "For the love of Samson! I don't believe there are a thousand people here. And it's a First Eleven fixture, too!"

"The place is nearly empty!" said Handforth gruffly. "And you chaps were praising the Bannington people for being such loyal supporters! Huh! They don't deserve to have a League team in this town! When it's doing badly they give it a miss! What sort of loyalty is that?"

"Well, it's a bit different now," said Nipper. "There's the competition of this greyhound business. It's a pity they can't hold the dogs' races in the evening, so as not to interfere with the football fixtures."

"They're probably doing it deliberately—so they can pinch the Bannington Club's crowd," said Fullwood. "It looks like it, anyhow."

A feeble sort of cheer from the crowd announced the fact that the players were appearing. They came out of the dressing-rooms at a trot—the home team following the visitors.

The Croydon players looked sturdy and workmanlike; and the Bannington Eleven was by no means unprepossessing. Yet some how they seemed to lack the necessary pep.

"Well, we ought to see some decent centre-forward play," remarked Reggie Pitt, as he ran his eye over the footballers. "I see that Fred Hearne is out to-day."

"And who the dickens is Fred Hearne?" asked Handforth.

"The skipper, of course," said Pitt. "Bannington secured him four or five seasons ago from a First Division club. He's an international, too."

Handforth didn't seem very impressed. But his interests, like those of most of the other fellows, were centred in school football. St. Frank's did not take the trouble to follow the ups and downs of the League clubs.

Bannington won the toss, although there was not much in it, since the breeze was light, and the sun was hidden behind the clouds.

There was a certain amount of cheering, but nearly all of it came from a small group of Croydon supporters. They, at all events, were enthusiastic for their own team. The Bannington spectators were frankly apathetic.

The Town had not won a game yet, and the local people were beginning to believe that they were incapable of even scoring a goal. All told, there could not have been more than twelve hundred spectators in that big enclosure. And Nipper could remember the time when he had seen fully fifteen or sixteen thousand people there.

"If things go on like this, the club will soon be bankrupt," remarked Reggie, with some concern. "They'll never be able to pay their way—"

"Dry up!" interrupted Handforth. "They're just kicking off!"

The referee had his watch in his hand and his whistle to his lips. He glanced at the linesmen, noted that the players were all in position, and then he gave a short blast.

"Go it, the Town!" said Travers encouragingly.

It was pretty obvious that the visitors were all aware of the home team's record. Croydon started with a tremendous rush—the general idea being, no doubt, to get a surprise goal, and thus put Bannington in a flurry at the very beginning.

The thing came off, too.

The Croydon centre-half neatly intercepted a pass, and he spun round like a flash. The leather went skimming over to the visitors' outside-right, and in a moment the man was away, running down the field at top speed.

With supreme ease he tricked one of the Bannington halves, and then he outran the home back, who came straight for him.

"Pass, Harry—pass!" yelled the Croydon supporters.

The nimble little outside-right sent in a truly glorious centre. In a flash one of the inside forwards was upon it, and he sent in a first-time shot which rose slightly.

The ball was in the back of the net, and the home goalie was left standing, arms outstretched, helpless.

"Goal!"

"Oh, crumbs!" said Handforth blankly.

"Well, that was pretty speedy, dear old fellow," remarked Travers. "Upon my Samson! I wonder if Bannington will get over the shock?"

"Well, it was hard cheese," said Nipper. "That back thought the referee was going to blow for off-side—"

"But the Croydon man wasn't off-side," put in Reggie.

"No; although it was pretty near," replied Nipper. "Oh, my hat! Look at that! Did you ever see such a feeble pass?"

The game had restarted, and the Bannington players were obviously at sixes and sevens. During the first five minutes they were run nearly off their feet. When they passed, they miskicked, and the leather invariably went to an opponent, instead of to a colleague.

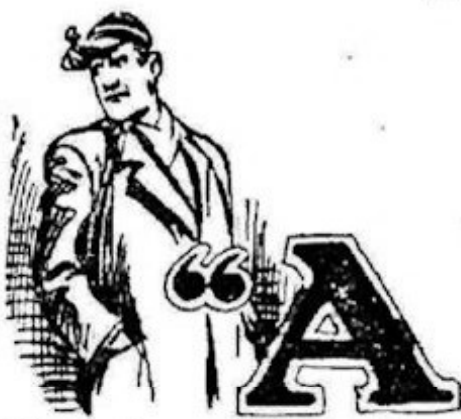
As the game progressed, so the Bannington play deteriorated. In common parlance, Croydon were "all over them."

Yet the Town was trying. There wasn't the slightest doubt about that. Hearne, the centre-forward, did his best, but he received no support from his wings; and the half-back line was too feeble for mere words.

It was small wonder that the Bannington Town supporters were soon uttering catcalls and disdainful yells. They had paid their money to see football—and, in their opinion, they weren't seeing it.

CHAPTER 11

Travers' Wheeze!



"WFUL!" said Handforth bluntly.

"For once, Handy, you haven't exaggerated," remarked Church. "My only sainted aunt! I never saw such a display in all my giddy natural! And these chaps are professional footballers!"

"Professional muddlers!" said McClure disdainfully.

The first half was nearly over, and the St. Frank's fellows found themselves passing the same kind of disparaging remarks as the Bannington supporters. The Town was three goals down, and their own forwards had not once found the net!

Judging by the run of the play they were never likely to find the net. Unless they improved very, very much, they would not be able to score a goal during the whole forthcoming season. There hadn't been one lively attack—not one feeble shot.

For the major portion of the time the Bannington players had been bottled up in their own half of the field, and they had been frantically and hopelessly defending their own goal. When the whistle blew for half-time they were still demoralised.

A feeble cheer went up—a cheer of derision. The Bannington players came running into the pavilion, listless and gloomy.

"Cheer up, Fred!"

"You're only three goals down—and we thought you were going to be a dozen!"



Handforth tipped the bottle, forgetting that there was no cork in it. A stream of "Syrup of Figs" descended upon Archie's head, and a quantity of the liquid poured down his elegant features. "Help!" shrieked Archie. "S O S!"

"Yah! You're no good!"

"You're rotten!"

"Why not give Croydon another three goals and call it a game?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

These and similar jeers were hurled at the Bannington players as they vanished from sight. Nipper was looking serious.

"It's too bad!" he remarked. "There's no need to be so nasty about it."

"But, my hat!" said Watson. "Don't they deserve a few jeers?"

"On the run of the play, they do," agreed Nipper. "But why can't these people realise that they're going the right way to demoralise the whole team?"

"The team doesn't want much demoralising!" said Handforth gruffly.

"It's generally the same in these League games," went on Nipper. "If a favourite player does something brilliant he is cheered to the echo. The supporters can't say anything good enough. But, by Jove, if he strikes a bad patch, and makes a mess of a few passes and shots, the crowd forgets all about his earlier record, and the poor fellow is jeered at and hooted."

"And that only makes him worse," said Travers, nodding. "It puts him right off his form, and, instead of bucking up, he goes backwards. That's what's been happening to this team. They haven't won a game this

season, and the supporters give no help or encouragement."

"Then they're not supporters!" said Handforth bluntly. "When a team is playing badly, it ought to be encouraged—not disheartened."

Most of the St. Frank's fellows were sensible on this point. They could see that the Bannington players were not really bad footballers. Individually, indeed, the men were quite clever. But, somehow, they couldn't get together. Every movement that had been organised during that first half had fallen to pieces. There was no cohesion. And no game of football can be won by individual effort alone. The team must work as a whole if it is to meet with success.

Sometimes it is the captain's fault; he may be too weak to keep his men together. But Reggie Pitt, at least, knew that Fred Hearne was an exceptionally able skipper. Hearne, too, had been working like a nigger during those forty-five unhappy minutes. Yet all his efforts had been in vain; the team had not once played as a whole.

"There appears to be something rotten in the State of Denmark, dear old fellow," said Travers. "I rather believe that the team has got into a despondent state. The men believe that whatever they do, they'll lose. And when that spirit gets into an eleven, it takes a lot of removing."

Handforth grunted.

"It strikes me we're wasting our time," he remarked. "We came here to see the football—to get hold of a few tips—and I'm jiggered if we couldn't teach these professionals a bit!"

"Dear old fellow, we could whack them—easily," said Travers.

"The St. Frank's Junior Eleven, you mean?"

"Exactly!"

"Of course we could whack them!" said Handforth, with confidence. "We could wipe them off the field!"

"By Samson!" murmured Travers. "Why not? An idea, dear old fellows! Why not ask Bannington Town for a game?"

"Cheese it, Travers," said Nipper. "I dare say we could give these professionals a decent game, but we shall never get the chance. Why, if we asked for a game, they would look upon it as cheek."

"Cheek accomplishes much in this world," said Travers wisely.

The others laughed.

"Well, why not find Mr. Billings and suggest it to him?" asked Pitt dryly.

Vivian Travers rose to his feet.

"Just what I am about to do, dear old fellow," he said, looking round.

"You silly ass!"

"Sit down, Travers!"

"You'll only get snubbed for your pains!"

But Travers took no notice of the comments, and he strolled away to the top of the gangway, near by. As it happened, he had already spotted Mr. Billings, the secretary-manager. This gentleman was standing near one of the grandstand attendants, looking despondently at the empty field.

Mr. Billings was a heavily built man, attired in an enormously large tweed suit. The trousers were voluminous, and the coat was correspondingly large. Evidently Mr. Billings believed in comfort.

"Good-afternoon, sir," remarked Travers, as he found the secretary-manager's gaze upon him.

"Good-afternoon, young man," said Mr. Billings.

"I think you are the manager, aren't you, sir?"

"I am."

"Mr. Billings?"

"Yes."

"Pleased to meet you," said Travers, extending his hand.

Mr. Billings took it, and he gazed at Travers with frank curiosity.

"It's a pity you St. Frank's boys couldn't choose a better day to come and see us!" he said regretfully. "I'm afraid we haven't given a particularly brilliant display."

"We're all liable to have our bad patches," said Travers. "At St. Frank's, our teams are sometimes excellent, and at other times they're rotten. We can't always be at the top of our form."

Mr. Billings cheered up slightly. The gloomy, despondent expression left his bluff, weatherbeaten face.

"Well, I don't get many encouraging words," he remarked. "I'm glad to hear that other teams can be rotten, too."

"Why not come and meet the fellows, sir?" suggested Travers, with a wave of his hand. "This is the St. Frank's Junior Eleven, you know. We came to Bannington for a game this afternoon, but it fell through. So we came to watch your boys, hoping to pick up a few tips. Afraid we haven't been very successful yet."

Mr. Billings grunted.

"Football?" he said. "There's been no football here this afternoon yet."

But he agreed to Vivian Travers' proposal, and he was soon in amongst the other St. Frank's fellows, nodding to them, and shaking hands here and there.

Their cheery faces seemed to do him a lot of good, for he expanded more and more, and revealed himself as a kindly, bluff old chap. He was the kind of man that one could take an instant liking to.

All the St. Frank's juniors were thoroughly at home with Mr. Sam Billings. In fact, they were so much at home that they did not hesitate to express themselves with painful frankness.



CHAPTER 12

The Challenge!

YOU'RE right, young gents—dead right!" said Mr. Billings, after he had heard one or two com-

ments. "The football you've seen to-day isn't worthy of a crowd of street urchins. The whole team is ragged, and they can't get together. Hanged if I know what's wrong, either! Goodness knows, Jock has done his best."

"Jock?" repeated Nipper politely.

"Our trainer," said Mr. Billings briefly.

"You haven't won a game this season," remarked Handforth, rather unnecessarily.

"Won!" said Mr. Billings bitterly. "We haven't even had a draw! It's no good beating about the bush, young gents—the club is going to the dogs."

"Because of the dogs, eh?" said Travers. Mr. Billings started.

"Yes by thunder!" he growled. "Because of the dogs! You've hit it there, young gent! You've hit it on the nail! That's just the trouble. I'm not saying anything against greyhound racing, as a sport, but the people who are running this Arena place are crooked."

"Isn't it a bit risky to say that, sir?" asked Pitt.

"I've said it before, and I'll say it again!" said Mr. Billings stubbornly. "They're up against me—up against the club. Why can't they hold their meetings in the evening, like so many other greyhound racing companies?"

Why choose a Saturday afternoon, when all the crowds are coming to this ground?"

"That's an easy one," said Travers. "They choose Saturday afternoon so that they can grab your supporters, Mr. Billings."

"They're a rotten lot!" said the manager angrily. "And they couldn't have started their game at a worse time. We've begun the season badly, and unless there's a pretty big change soon, we shall be bankrupt. We can't carry on like this!" he went on, waving his hand towards the empty terraces. "Look at it! Isn't it enough to make your spirits droop?"

"It's pretty bad, sir," said Fullwood.

"Even the few people who do come here don't give the players any encouragement," said Mr. Billings gruffly. "I'm always telling the boys to take no notice of the cat-calls and the jeers, but they're human, and they've got into such a state of nerves now that they can't do anything right. That's all it is, young gents—nerves. Just nerves. And until they can get a proper hold of themselves—until they can recover their confidence—we shall continue to do badly."

There was something very pathetic in Mr. Billings' voice. He did not grumble—he did not actually complain. He was ready enough with excuses for his players.

"Have you got a game next Wednesday?" asked Travers.

"No."

"I see the Arena is advertising a meeting for next Wednesday afternoon," went on Travers. "Why not play their own game, Mr. Billings? Why not fix up a game—a friendly—and pinch a good proportion of the Arena's crowd?"

Mr. Billings shrugged his shoulders.

"It wouldn't be any good," he replied. "Besides, I don't know of any game that we can arrange."

"That's quite an easy one," said Travers. "Let me introduce you to Richard Hamilton—otherwise known as Nipper. He is the captain of our eleven."

"Here, chuck it, Travers—" began Nipper.

Mr. Billings looked at him.

"I don't think I quite understand," he said.

"Then let me explain," said Travers smoothly. "Nipper is rather keen upon challenging your team, sir. We've been watching the game this afternoon, and we all believe that we—the St. Frank's Junior Eleven—could whack Bannington Town. Nipper has great pleasure in challenging Bannington Town on Wednesday afternoon."

Nipper held his breath. Travers' cool effrontery was startling. Nipper expected Mr. Billings to flush red with wrath, and to jerk out a curt refusal. But the bluff manager merely smiled, and stroked his chin.

"You can have a game with the Reserves, if you like," he said thoughtfully.

"By George!" ejaculated Handforth.

"Well, I'm jiggered!"

"I say, sir, do you mean that?" asked Nipper quickly. "As it happens, we haven't got a fixture for next Wednesday afternoon."

"I don't mind a friendly game," said Mr. Billings. "I think it could be arranged. There's just a chance, too, that we should take some money at the turnstiles. There would be a certain share for you young gentlemen—"

"No, thanks, sir!" smiled Nipper. "We don't want any money for playing football. But if we can do anything to help the club, we're only too glad."

"Just one moment, dear old fellow—just one moment!" interrupted Travers. "Haven't you forgotten that this challenge is to the First Eleven, and not to the Reserves? We want to play the men we've been watching this afternoon."

"Ye-es," agreed Nipper dubiously. "I suppose that's the idea, Mr. Billings."

Nipper was by no means scared at the prospect, but he possessed a sense of proportion, and it seemed to him that it was sheer effrontery to suggest a match against the Bannington Town First Eleven. Nipper did not lack courage or pluck, but he was certainly not possessed of Travers' utter nerve. For, without doubt, Travers' proposal was sheer impudence.

"Oh, so you want to play the First, do you?" said Mr. Billings dryly. "Is that it, young gents?"

"Well, we'd rather like a game," said Nipper, with a sidelong glare at Travers.

"Then you shall have it," said Mr. Billings.

"What!"

"You shall have it—if you beat the Reserves!" said Mr. Billings, with a chuckle. "There you are young gentlemen! That's a fair proposition, isn't it? Beat the reserve team next Wednesday afternoon, and I'll fix up a match with you for the First."

"That's very sporting of you, Mr. Billings," said Nipper heartily. "Done! It's a bargain."

"Good egg!" grinned Handforth. "When shall we have the game against the First Eleven, sir?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Handy takes it for granted that we're going to beat the Reserves!" chuckled Nipper. "But it's not always wise to count one's chickens before they're hatched."

"Well, the players are out again now, so I shall have to go," said Mr. Billings, rising to his feet. "But I'd like to see you young gentlemen again, after the match. Come to my office, will you?"

"Yes, rather, sir!" they chorused.

Mr. Billings went off, feeling decidedly cheerier. His little conversation with the St. Frank's juniors had done him a lot of good. They had acted as a tonic.

Travers smiled blandly as he looked round. "Well, dear old fellows, what about it?" he murmured. "That wasn't so bad, was it?"

"We bow before you, O worker of magic!" said Pitt humbly.

"Upon my word Travers, you've got a cheek!" said Nipper, grinning. "I didn't believe that it would come off."

"We've only got to beat the Reserves on Wednesday, and everything will be all serene," said Travers, with a laugh. "Naturally, we'll bring as many of the fellows as we can in order to swell the crowd. And if we don't beat the Reserves—well, we shan't deserve the game against the First Eleven."

The other members of the St. Frank's team were in thorough agreement. Incidentally, the St. Frank's junior team were supremely confident that they were in for a victory.



CHAPTER 13

"Stung!"

HANDFORTH shut his eyes.

"I'm not going to look!" he said, in agony.

"You silly ass!" said Church. "It's all over now!"

Handforth opened his eyes, and saw the Bannington goalkeeper picking the ball out of the net. Jeers were going up from the dwindling crowds on the terraces.

The match was nearly over, and Croydon had just registered their fifth goal.

That second half had been even worse than the first. Nipper & Co. had watched in sheer pain, for Bannington Town, far from recovering their *morale*, had cracked completely.

Only by wild kicking and running had they kept the score down. Indeed, if the visitors had exerted themselves to any extent, they might easily have doubled the score.

For Bannington Town was completely demoralised—a ragged, unconvincing side. This game, instead of restoring their prestige, had done a great deal towards ruining the club.

"If we can't beat this lot I'll eat my hat!" said Handforth, as the final whistle blew. "And they're professionals! I can hardly believe it!"

"You wait until the Cup-ties come on, my lad," grinned Nipper. "You'll see this same team—man for man—give a brilliant display. And they'll play splendid football in their League games, once they've got over this bad patch."

"What's the good of beating about the bush?" asked Reggie Pitt. "We've been the same ourselves sometimes."

"Eh?" said Handforth.

"Well, haven't we?" asked Pitt. "I remember when nothing seemed to go right.

There have been times when every one of my passes have gone to the wrong chap—and times when you've made an awful mess of things in goal, Handy. We can't always be at the top of our form."

"I suppose you're right," said Handforth reluctantly. "And that gives us a fellow-feeling for these players, doesn't it? By George! Why can't we get up some stunts to help the club?"

"Stunts?" said Nipper.

"Yes!" replied Handforth eagerly. "The Bannington people ought to know better! The one way to make the club buck up is to encourage it. We've got a personal interest in the club now, too. We're going to play the Reserves, and then the First Eleven—"

"If we beat the Reserves," murmured Travers.

"Of course we shall beat the Reserves!" said Handforth. "Well, why not exert ourselves a bit? Next Wednesday afternoon, for example. We ought to get up an advertising campaign, and parade the town."

"Splendid!" said Pitt. "You can dress up as the town crier, Handy, and go about shouting the news. Your voice is powerful enough for anything."

"If you're trying to be funny—" began Handforth.

"I'm not," said Pitt. "I'm trying to pay you a compliment."

Handforth wasn't quite so sure about it, but before he could start any argument the other fellows moved off. They made their way towards the manager's office. They wanted definitely to fix up the tentative arrangements that had been suggested.

In the meantime, the Arena further up the road was emptying itself. The afternoon's "sport" was over, and a large percentage of the crowd now possessed lighter pockets!

The dog racing, on the whole, had been unsatisfactory. None of the favourites had won, and in two or three of the races there had been a good deal of confusion. Once, the electric hare had stuck and the race abandoned.

Claude Gore-Pearce and his two chums of Study A were rather glad to get out of the packed enclosure. They had got separated from Wellborne & Co., and were not particularly keen upon finding them again.

"Let's be getting back home!" said Gulliver nervously. "I'm afraid we shall be spotted, you know."

"Rubbish!" said Gore-Pearce. "There's not a chance in a thousand. Once we're out in the road, we shall be safe, anyhow. Nobody can prove that we were ever in the Arena."

However, even he breathed more freely once they were out in the road, and well clear of the throng. They resumed their ordinary school caps, and felt rather safer.

Nevertheless, all three of them were looking despondent and glum.

"I don't think much of greyhound racing," said Bell bluntly.

"How much did you lose?" asked Gulliver.

"All I had—fifteen bob."

"Well, you needn't grouse," said Gulliver. "I've lost nearly two quid."

Gore-Pearce sneered.

"Oh, dry up with your silly grumbles!" he said. "What about me? When I came to this place I had a couple of fivers in my wallet. Now I've got about thirty bob left! I've had a rotten afternoon!"

The cads of the Remove had certainly been "stung." They hadn't backed a winner during the whole afternoon.

While they were walking along towards the centre of the town they were overtaken by a burly, flashily dressed man—an individual with two or three chins, and with a coarse countenance.

"Just a minute, young gents!" said this specimen. "Don't forget me if you're coming to the next meeting."

The three St. Frank's fellows looked round, and they regarded Mr. Bill Brice with unfriendly eyes.

"You'd like us to come to the next meeting, wouldn't you?" asked Gore-Pearce sourly.

"Well, it's up to you," replied the bookmaker. "I'm not particularly anxious one way or the other—"

"Cheese it!" said Gore-Pearce. "You've got all our money, anyhow."

"That's the luck of the game," said Mr. Brice. "It wasn't my fault that you backed losers, was it? Be fair, young gents! If you had put your money on the right dogs, I should have paid out."

"It's a funny thing to me you're not looking cheerful, Mr. Brice," said Gore-Pearce, staring at the man. "You've taken money all the afternoon—other people's as well as ours. But you don't seem to be particularly happy about it."

Mr. Brice scowled.

"I'm upset," he said bluntly. "In fact, I was upset before the meeting began."

"Had to pay out a lot of money to somebody?" asked Gulliver.

"No," said the bookie. "But I lost a dog on my way here."

"Lost him?"

"He was run over by a car," said Mr. Brice. "Domino—the best dog I've ever seen. As fast as the wind, and a cert winner in any race."

"How on earth did it happen?" asked Bell curiously.

Mr. Brice gave a brief account of the accident, and Gore-Pearce & Co. listened with pretended interest. Actually, they were not very concerned about Mr. Brice's troubles.

But it was rather curious that they should have learned of that accident to the dog; for, later on, they were to have reason to remember this incident!



CHAPTER 14

Very Mysterious!

SEEN Willy anywhere?"

Edward Oswald Handforth asked the question as he barged

into the Junior Common-room of the Ancient House at St. Frank's. Tea was over, and the October evening was drawing in.

The St. Frank's Junior Eleven had returned, after definitely fixing things with Mr. Sam Billings, and there had been general satisfaction in the Remove and the Fourth when the story had got about.

Indeed, quite a number of fellows wouldn't believe the yarn. It seemed incredible to them that a Junior school team could have fixed up a match with a big professional club. But, as Nipper pointed out, the circumstances were exceptional. Mainly owing to Travers' display of "nerve," the thing had been accomplished. Now it was up to the St. Frank's juniors to justify the daring challenge.

For, if the Juniors lost against the Bannington Town Reserves, they would be held up to ridicule by all and sundry. It was essential that they should draw, at least, and a win would entitle them to a match against the Town's First Eleven. That, indeed, would be a triumph.

"Anybody seen Willy?" repeated Handforth, striding into the Common-room.

There were only a few juniors there, and they all shook their heads.

"We're not interested in Willy," said De Valerie. "And you didn't expect to find him here, did you? Why don't you go to the Third Form quarters?"

"I've been there!" grunted Handforth. "I can't find the young beggar anywhere."

"I suppose he's out," said Somerton.

"Then you suppose wrong!" retorted Handforth. "He came in pretty early in the afternoon—one or two of the seniors saw him. But he seems to have vanished since then. Didn't even turn up for tea."

Handforth went out of the Common-room in an exasperated mood. In the lobby he found Church and McClure.

"Any luck?" he asked.

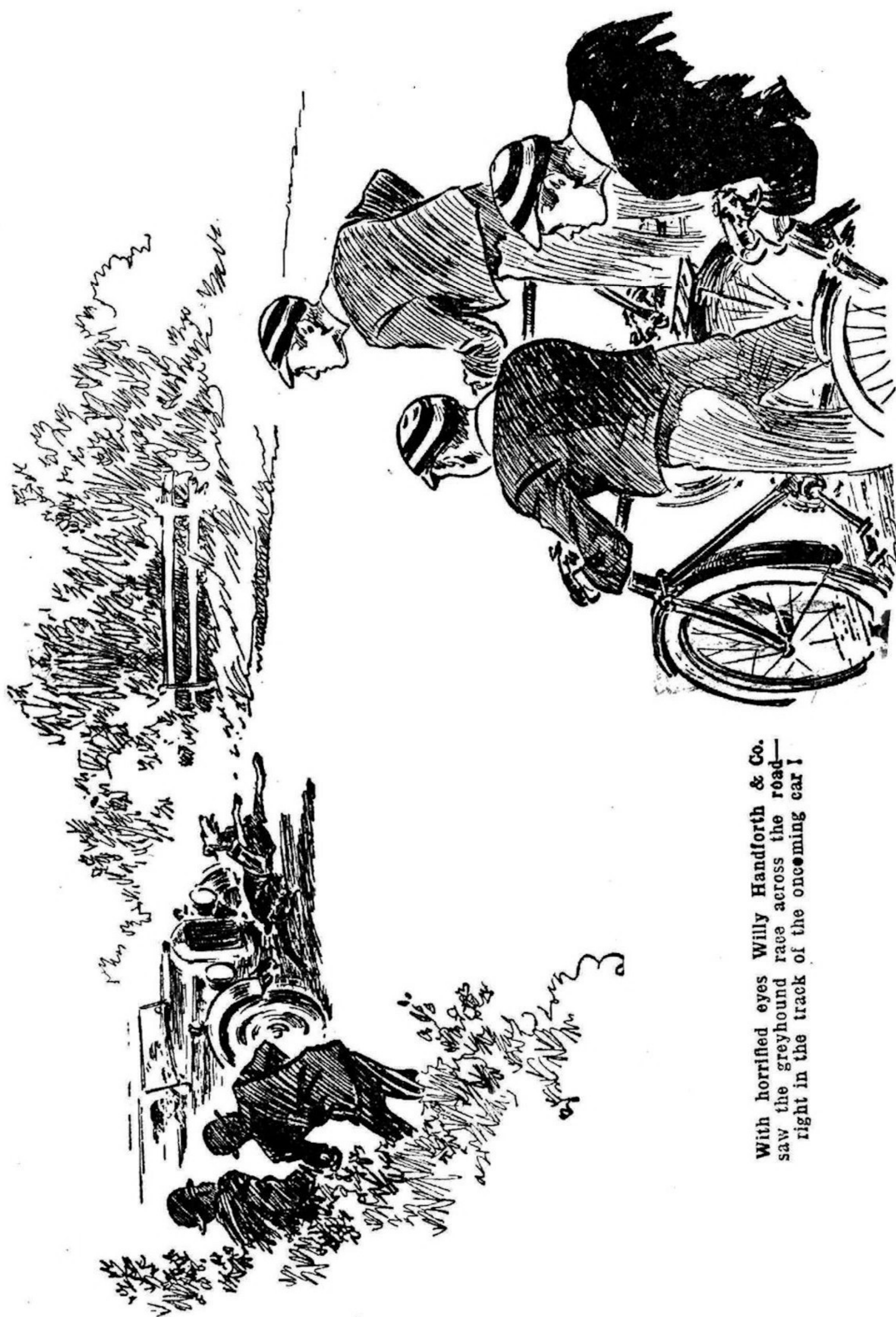
"No," said Church. "We can't find him. Blow the kid!"

"I'm going to find him!" said Handforth grimly. "Do you think I'm going to let my minor beat me? He's in the school somewhere, and I've got to locate him and give him a dressing-down."

"What's he done now?"

"When we got back from Barrington, I found a letter!" said Handforth impressively. "It was a letter from my mater."

Church and McClure listened patiently. They knew all about that letter, since Handforth had opened it in their presence, and



With horrified eyes Willy Handforth & Co.
saw the greyhound race across the road—
right in the track of the oncoming car!

had actually read out most of its contents. But it was perfectly useless to point out to him that they already knew all this.

"My mater tells me that Willy hasn't written to her for two solid weeks!" continued Handforth sternly. "Naturally, I've got to give him a good talking to about it."

"I hope you've given yourself a good talking to, too!" said McClure tartly.

"Eh?"

"I don't see why you should be down on Willy," went on Mac. "Didn't your mater say, in that letter, that you haven't written for three weeks?"

"I'm different!" said Handforth, with dignity.

"I'll bet your mater doesn't think so," grinned Church. "And it's like your nerve, Handy to growl at Willy when you're the biggest culprit yourself."

"Willy is younger—he's a fag!" said Handforth, with fatherly sternness. "Besides, he hasn't so much on his hands as I have. If I don't write, it's because I haven't the time. But Willy——"

He broke off, for at that moment Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon came pelting in from the Triangle. The instant they saw Handforth, however, they checked themselves, gave one another a quick glance, and then pretended to be unconscious of the Removites' presence.

They thrust their hands into their pockets and whistled carelessly. However, it was badly done. There was something very exaggerated about the fags' indifference. It was so obviously "put on."

"Just a minute, my sons!" said Handforth, advancing upon them. "Now, lemme see! You're my minor's special chums, aren't you?"

"Yes, I suppose so," said Chubby Heath.

You went out with him this afternoon?"

"Yes, I suppose so," repeated Chubby.

"What do you mean—you suppose so? Don't you know?"

"Well, we did go out together," admitted Chubby.

"And did you come back together?"

"Yes, I suppose so."

"What!" roared Handforth.

"I—I mean, we did!" said Chubby hastily.

"Here, Handforth, what's the matter with you? Why are you so jolly inquisitive?"

"I want to know where my minor is!" said Handforth firmly. "Now, then, my sons! None of your tricks! Willy's up to something, isn't he?"

"Yes, I suppose—— Nunno, of course not!" gasped Chubby Heath. "He's—he's——"

"You can't find him, Handy," put in Juicy Lemon, coming to his chum's rescue. "You may see him later on in the evening—but, then again, you may not."

"He's in the school, isn't he?" demanded Handforth.

The two fags were silent.

"Is he in the school or not?" shouted Handforth.

"What's the good of asking us?" said Chubby non-committally. "We don't keep Willy in our pockets! You know what kind of a chap he is—obstinate and pig-headed."

"I do know it," said Handforth disdainfully. "Goodness only knows who he takes after! There's nobody else obstinate and pig-headed in our family."

"Ahem!" coughed Chubby.



With horrified eyes Willy Handforth & Co. saw the greyhound race across the road—right in the track of the oncoming car!

"What's the matter with you, you young ass?"

"I've—I've got a tickle in my throat!" said Chubby hastily.

"You'll have a tickle somewhere else in half a minute!" growled Handforth. "I'll tickle you up where it'll smart, my lad! Now let's have no more of this nonsense. You both know where my minor is, and if you don't tell me I'll slaughter you!"

"You can't do that, Handy," said McClure, shaking his head.

"You can't be a bully!" said Church. "It's not playing the game for a hulking great chap like you to attack a couple of fags."

"A what chap like me?" said Handforth, rolling up his sleeves.

"A—a handsome, well-built chap like you!" said Church sweetly.

Handforth grunted and turned back to the two fags. Then he let out a yell. Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon had taken advantage of the momentary diversion, and they had discreetly vanished.

It was quite obvious that the rank and file of the Third were in complete ignorance of Willy's whereabouts. Only Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon knew something. Their looks gave them away—and now these two bright specimens had disappeared, too!



CHAPTER 15

Willy, the Doctor!

PHEW! We've dodged him, anyhow!" said Chubby Heath breathlessly.

He and Juicy Lemon were in the cloak-room, hiding behind a number of overcoats. They could still hear Edward Oswald Handforth's voice out in the lobby.

"We can't keep it up!" said Juicy miserably. "Life isn't worth living! As soon as we show ourselves again, Handy will be on us. What the dickens are we going to do, Chubby?"

"We'd better see Willy and tell him that something must be done," replied Chubby in a determined voice. "It's all very well for him to tell us to keep quiet, but there are some things that can't be done."

"Well, we'd better go easy!" said the other fag. "That ass, Handy, is still raging about. Even if he finds Willy, he won't really want to see him."

The two fags were thoroughly exasperated.

On nine evenings out of ten, Edward Oswald hadn't the faintest desire to see his minor, or to have anything to do with him. But on this particular evening, just because Willy wanted to be quiet, his major had to rush about, making all sorts of frantic inquiries.

It was the worst possible thing that could have happened. For all sorts of fellows—particularly in the Third—were now beginning to think that there was some mystery. Willy had vanished! He had been seen to come into the school, but since then he had disappeared from mortal ken.

Thus, the whole thing was ruined. Ordinarily, Willy's

"Hi!" roared Handforth. "Where are you? Chubby! Juicy! Come here, you young fatheads! Where have you gone to?"

But the fags had completely vanished, and, although Handforth raged round for some time, he did not locate them again. And wherever he went his questions met with the same answers. Nobody knew where Willy Handforth was; nobody had seen him for hours.

absence from his usual haunts would not have aroused any comment. But now a large number of juniors were discovering that they badly wanted to see the leader of the Third.

"I'll find him before long!" came Handforth's aggressive voice. "By George! I'll show my minor whether he can dish me or not! This is just one of his little games! He's doing it deliberately!"



"Perhaps he's out with his pets?" suggested somebody.

"By George! I hadn't thought of that!" roared Handforth. "Come on, you chaps! Let's go and see!"

There was a scuffling of feet, and then silence. Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon glanced at one another.

"Come on!" muttered Chubby. "Now's our chance!"

To their relief they found the lobby empty. They scooted upstairs like a couple of rabbits, and they didn't even pause when they got to the landing. They shot down one of the corridors, and then whizzed up another staircase towards the attics.

Many of these attics were used as box-rooms, and Chubby and Juicy went down a long, winding corridor, and finally halted at the door of a box-room which was very seldom used.

It was in an odd corner of the Ancient House, rather inaccessible. For this reason, it was more or less disused. Furthermore, it had the disadvantage of being over one of the prefects' bed-rooms, so none of the juniors ever thought of going to that particular box-room for a rag.

Chubby Heath tried the handle, but the door did not budge.

"Hist!" murmured Chubby, putting his mouth to the keyhole. "Open the door, Willy."

"Go away, you idiot!" came Willy's soft voice. "Didn't I tell you not to bother me?"

"But we must come in!" said Chubby. "We've got to tell you something—important!"

There was a slight sound of movement from beyond the door, and then the key turned softly in the lock.

"Come in, then!" said Willy. "What is it?"

For a moment or two his chums did not reply. They looked at Willy, and at the little room, with wonder in their eyes.

Willy was in his shirt-sleeves and he was collarless. On the floor, on a couple of folded blankets, lay the injured greyhound. He was still—so still that for a moment Chubby and Juicy believed that he was dead.

Near by stood a spirit-stove, with a blue flame burning; there was a tin can on it, with steam hissing forth. There were a lot of rags, some of them wet, some of them dry. A pot of ointment stood open near the spirit-stove. The whole box-room was pervaded by an odour of drugs and herbs.

"Is—is he dead?" asked Chubby hesitatingly.

"No!" replied Willy. "But he will be—if you keep bothering me."

There was something very grim and unbending about Willy's voice. Chubby was rather startled, and he gave his young leader a sharp look.

Here was a changed Willy!

No longer did Handforth minor wear a cheery smile; no longer were his eyes agleam with fun; no longer was he ready with a joke. He seemed strangely older—and, too, he was unnaturally calm. His eyes were steady and intent, and there was a determined look about his jaw. Yet, at the same time, there was an air of quiet satisfaction about him.

"Still alive, eh?" murmured Juicy, lowering his voice to a whisper. "That's good! Do you think you'll be able to pull him round?"

"I don't know!" replied Willy, shaking his head. "The crisis isn't over yet. But I'm doing my best. Goodness knows, I can't do more than that!"

"Well, we've got to do something, Willy," said Chubby bluntly. "Your major has been going all over the place, asking for you—"

"Bother my major!"

"Of course, but what can we do?"

"Do?" repeated Willy angrily. "Do nothing! Do you mean to say that you've come up here, disturbing me, just to tell me that my major has been asking about me?"

"Well, you see—"

"I gave you credit for more sense!" snapped Willy. "Get out of here!"

"Here, I say—"

"Clear off!" said Willy tensely. "Don't you understand that it's a matter of life and death? I've got to be on the job the whole time—every minute! I don't care a toss for my major, or for anybody else, either!"

"But—but that's all very well!" protested Chubby. "But what are we going to do? Your major will come up to us, and we can't tell lies. He knows that there's something mysterious on, and—"

"He knows nothing!" interrupted Willy. "And, unless you fellows give the game away, he can't know. All you've got to do is to evade him."

"Have you ever tried to evade your major?" put in Juicy bitterly.

"What does that matter?" demanded Willy, his voice vibrating with impatience. "Tell him I've forbidden you to say a thing. But don't tell him where I am! Don't tell a soul!"

Chubby and Juicy moved towards the door, more than ever impressed by their young leader's vehemence.

"All the same," said Chubby, "I don't see why you should be so jolly secretive. You're not doing anything dishonest. What does it matter if we tell everybody where you are, or what you're doing?"

Willy spun round.

"If either of you breathe a word about this dog, or about this box-room, I'll never speak to you again!" he said, his voice

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throbbing. "Understand that, Chubby Heath! And you, too, Juicy Lemon! I'll finish with you for good if you give me away!"

There was such a note in his voice that his chums were startled—frightened. They knew perfectly well that he meant it; and when Willy meant a thing it was permanent.

"But—but why?" panted Chubby. "Of course, we won't say a word, Willy. But—but I don't see——"

"Get out of this room!" broke in Willy huskily. "I tell you I can't leave the patient for even a minute! And you come here, asking me why this and why that! Haven't you any sense? Do you think I want a crowd of inquisitive fellows nosing about here, knocking at the door, and barging in, and asking a hundred and one questions? Do you think I want my major butting in?"

"My hat!" said Chubby. "I—I hadn't thought of that! Perhaps you're right!"

He and Juicy Lemon dodged out, and they heard the lock click after they had closed the door. They were both perspiring, and they were both decidedly breathless.

CHAPTER 16

Still Missing!



"It's right, Juicy!" murmured Chubby Heath soberly.

They had reached the lower landing,

and had paused.

"Yes, I suppose he is," nodded Juicy Lemon.

"What asses we were not to think of it before!" went on Chubby. "Of course, if we told his major anything about it, he would be up in that box-room in two ticks, and half the Remove would be there, too! My only aunt! I—I can hardly believe that he's really Willy. He seems so different!"

"Another chap altogether," said Juicy Lemon breathlessly.

"He's forgotten all about his pets, too!" said Chubby, in wonder. "Hasn't even fed them this evening. I suppose he reckons that it doesn't matter for once. As he said, it's a case of life or death."

"Well, I jolly well hope he saves that poor old dog," said Juicy. "It would be a rotten shame if he failed, after all this trouble. I say, Willy's a brick, you know."

"He's a wonder!" said Chubby stoutly.

They were lost in admiration for their leader. They had always known that Willy possessed strange and unusual qualities, but Willy was always providing them with some fresh surprise.

It was very difficult to realise that Willy was normally an irresponsible fag—a mischievous youngster who was generally up to his eyes in every variety of japing.

Cautiously the two fags crept downstairs, but if they hoped to avoid Edward Oswald Handforth they were doomed to disappointment. For they had hardly entered the lobby before Handforth himself appeared like a jack-in-the-box.

"Hallo!" he said. "Where did you kids come from?"

Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon gasped.

"We—we——" began Juicy.

"Did you just come indoors?"

"Yes, I suppose so," said Chubby.

"What!" hooted Handforth.

"I—I mean, not exactly!" gasped Chubby, startled out of his skin by Handforth's roar. "That is to say, what does it matter, Handy?"

"It matters everything!" replied Edward Oswald. "You've just come from Willy, haven't you? And don't say 'I suppose so,' or I'll lose my temper!"

"Yes, I suppose so!" said poor Chubby, flustered to such a degree that he automatically uttered the words.

Handforth gave vent to a mighty bellow, and he reached forward a clutching hand. In the nick of time, Chubby and Juicy dodged back, and they scooted, with Handforth in full pursuit.

But as soon as they got into the Remove passage they were collared by Nipper and Archie Glenthorne and two or three other Removites.

"Good gad!" said Archie, adjusting his monocle, and gazing at Handforth with severity. "What's this, laddie? I mean to say, what's all this? Odds surprises and shocks! You're not going to tell me that you're chasing a couple of fags?"

"They've hidden Willy somewhere," panted Handforth, "and they won't tell me where he is!"

"You silly ass!" roared Chubby, exasperated. "Do you think we could hide Willy? You know jolly well that he's as stubborn and obstinate as you are!"

"Hear, hear!" said Nipper, before Handforth could speak. "If there's anything in this, Handy, Willy is the moving spirit."

Handforth stared.

"Don't be an ass!" he said. "How can Willy be a spirit? Spirits are chaps who are dead, and he can't be that, either, because I don't believe in spirits!"

"Well, I don't suppose he's dead," said Nipper—good-humouredly. "For goodness' sake, leave your minor alone, Handy!"

"Leave him alone!" roared Handforth. "How can I leave him alone when I don't know where he is?"

"Then don't try to find out where he is," said Nipper. "It's as clear as daylight that he's doing something important. Probably manufacturing a new go-car, or a patent motor-boat, or something. He doesn't want to be disturbed."

"But I've got to give him a message from the mater!" said Handforth. "And I'm going to see that Willy writes a letter to-night, too!"

Nipper grinned.

"My dear old ass!" he said kindly. "In ordinary circumstances you wouldn't care a toss about your minor, but just because he's conspicuous by his absence, you want to find out where he is. Why can't you respect his little game? Isn't it clear that he wants to be missing for a bit?"

"Yes!" said Chubby eagerly. "I don't mind admitting that Willy is—well, up to something! What's the good of keeping up this farce? I wish you chaps would talk to Handy, and knock some sense into his thick head!"

"Are you talking about me?" gasped Handforth.

"Yes, I am!" said Chubby recklessly. "Juicy and I are fed up with your questions."

"Why, you—you—"

"We can't tell you anything!" continued Chubby. "Willy has made us promise to keep mum. So if you try to drag anything out of us, and if you succeed, you'll make us break our words. And you can't do a thing like that."

Handforth looked startled.

"By George! You've got me there!" he admitted. "So that's what Willy has done,

is it? He's made you promise that you won't say anything?"

"Yes," said Chubby and Juicy, in one voice

"In that case, I won't question you any more!" said Handforth. "I've finished with you. You can clear off!"

Chubby and Juicy cleared off, congratulating themselves on their escape. After this Handforth wouldn't be after them, and it really had been necessary to tell him so much—although they had not broken faith with their leader.

"There you are!" said Handforth, after the fags had gone. "I knew it!"

"What did you know?" asked Nipper.

"I knew that my minor was up to some sort of dodge!" said Handforth. "What a tricky young beggar! Making those fags promise to keep mum! I'm dished now!"

"Well, that's frightfully good hearing," said Archie with relief.

"Eh?"

"I mean to say, there's nothing more to be done, what?" said Archie. "So you'll have to give up the good old ghost, and admit yourself whacked!"

Handforth stared.



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"Admit myself whacked?" he repeated incredulously. "Have I ever admitted myself whacked?"

"I rather think, old cheese, that you'll have to admit it this evening," said Archie, nodding.

"Oh, will I?" said Handforth, thrusting out his jaw. "We'll see about that! I'm not done yet! It's no good questioning those two fags, but I can keep an eye on them, can't I? I'm going to follow them—shadow them! Everybody knows that I'm good at detective work——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Removites chuckled and passed on, leaving Handforth alone, except for Church and McClure. These two juniors were grinning widely. At least, they were grinning until Handforth suddenly glanced at them. Then they became as solemn as owls.

"Well," demanded Handforth, "are you in the plot, too?"

"Plot?" said Church innocently. "What plot?"

"I believe you all know where Willy is," said Handforth, with suspicion. "It's just a jape! You're all doing it to fool me. But, by George, I'll soon show you what I'm made of!"

He turned on his heel and strode away, his idea being to locate Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon.

But his search was a vain one. Those two fags had very sensibly made themselves scarce.

CHAPTER 17

Becoming Serious!



MR. SUNCLIFFE, the master of the Third Form, wore a worried frown.

He was wandering aimlessly about the Ancient House. It was nearly bed-time and the mysterious disappearance of Willy was now beginning to claim widespread attention.

Handforth was not the only fellow who expressed astonishment and worry over the fag's disappearance.

Willy had not turned up for calling-over, and he had even missed his supper—which, in itself, was a phenomenal event. Now it was practically bed-time.

"Have you located him yet, sir?" asked Nipper, as he encountered Mr. Suncliffe in the Remove passage.

The master of the Third blinked, and came to himself.

"It is very worrying—very worrying indeed," he said anxiously.

"Oh, I shouldn't bother too much, sir," said Nipper, as he was joined by Tommy Watson and Fullwood and Travers. "I don't suppose it's of any importance——"

"No importance!" echoed Mr. Suncliffe, aghast. "Good gracious! What are you

talking about, Hamilton? I think the selection is absolutely wrong."

"The—the selection, sir?" said Nipper, bewildered.

"I cannot imagine how such blunders could have been made!" declared Mr. Suncliffe vehemently. "If we are to win these Test Matches, we must send our best available men to Australia. And yet our Selection Committee has committed the most gross——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A ripple of laughter went through the juniors. Mr. Suncliffe's one fatal weakness was cricket, and now that the cricket season was over at home, he was thinking of the Test Matches in Australia. It was the one topic that Mr. Suncliffe buried himself in, above all others.

"Ahem! Sorry, sir," said Nipper, "but I wasn't thinking about the cricket, sir."

"No?" said Mr. Suncliffe, in surprise. "Then what else can be of importance?"

"We thought, perhaps, that you had found young Handforth, sir."

Mr. Suncliffe started violently.

"Good gracious, yes!" he said, turning slightly red. "How remiss of me!"

"Yes, sir."

"Have none of you seen Handforth minor?" demanded Mr. Suncliffe sternly. "Upon my soul! I knew that I had come out of my study on some errand, but for the moment I had forgotten. Well, never mind, we must certainly find out where Handforth minor is. The young rascal! How dare he absent himself from calling-over, and from supper!"

Mr. Suncliffe went off, only too glad to escape.

"Well, it's getting a bit serious, you know," said Tommy Watson. "It's practically bed-time, and Willy hasn't shown up. Where the dickens can he be?"

Nipper looked thoughtful.

"We all thought that he was up to some jape or other," he replied. "But I'm inclined to doubt that now. Haven't you noticed how serious Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon are looking? They're going about with faces as long as fiddles. They're on the jump all the time."

"Yes, I saw that long ago," said Vivian Travers. "There's certainly something unusual in the wind, my dear fellow. Not that it really matters to us. I don't see why we should butt in. In all probability young Willy has his own reasons."

Handforth appeared at the end of the passage. He was looking even more worried than Mr. Suncliffe.

"Haven't you found him yet, Handy?" sang out Nipper.

"I've searched everywhere!" growled Handforth, as he strode up. "I've been into every House, and I've looked high and low. There's no sign of him. I don't believe he's in the school at all."

"Then he'll get into pretty serious trouble when he turns up," said Fullwood.

"Something must have happened!" said Handforth concernedly. "And every time I catch sight of Heath and Lemon, they dodge away."

"But I thought you were going to follow them—to shadow them?" asked Travers mildly.

Handforth grunted.

"I might as well try to shadow a flash of lightning!" he said crossly. "As soon as I go after them, they vanish. Never knew such tricky young beggars!"

Mr. Suncliffe came wandering back into the corridor.

"I think, perhaps, that you boys had better help me," he said. "Handforth minor is missing, and I have reason to believe that he is in this House. As it is within a few minutes of bed-time we must take drastic steps."

"Surely there's no need to make a search like that, sir?" asked Handforth gruffly. "Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon know where my minor is, but they won't tell."

"Oh, indeed!" said Mr. Suncliffe sharply. "Those two boys know where he is, eh?"

"Well, I think so, sir."

"Thank you, Handforth! I am much obliged!" said Mr. Suncliffe, compressing his lips. "Ridiculous! I'll find those two young rascals, and I'll ask them what they mean by it!"

He strode off, and, as luck would have it, he ran right into Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon in the lobby. They were just about to dodge upstairs, hoping against hope that they would not be observed, but they came to a sudden halt as they caught sight of their Form-master.

"Halt!" said Mr. Suncliffe sternly. "Heath! Lemon! Come here!"

Their faces were expressive of guilt and fear.

"Now, my boys, I want no nonsense!" said Mr. Suncliffe firmly. "I understand that you know where Handforth minor is."

"Well, sir, we—we—"

"Silence!" commanded Mr. Suncliffe. "Speak up! Where is Handforth minor?"

Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon thought it wise to ignore the Form-master's contradictory orders. They couldn't very well be silent and tell him where Willy was, at one and the same time.

"We can't tell you, sir," said Chubby unhappily.

"What! You cannot tell me?"

"No, sir."

"And why not? Is this impertinence, Heath?"

"No, sir!" said Chubby miserably. "But—but we promised Willy that we wouldn't let on. And you wouldn't have us break a promise, would you, sir?"

Mr. Suncliffe frowned.

"The whole thing is ridiculous!" he said. "You two boys know where Handford minor is, and you are well aware, also, that it is practically bed-time. I will give you just five minutes to decide."

"To—to decide, sir?" faltered Juicy.

"Yes," snapped Mr. Suncliffe. "Come to my study in five minutes' time and tell me where Handforth minor is to be found. Better still, bring Handforth minor with you. I have a mind to question the young rascal."

Mr. Suncliffe strode off, feeling that he would now solve the difficulty.

Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon looked at one another with blank, scared expressions.



CHAPTER 18

Tracked Down!

THAT'S right, old man—that's the style!" said Willy Handforth soothingly.

There was a happy note in Willy's voice. He was on his knees, and he was gently and tenderly continuing his ministrations.

Before him, on the blankets, lay the injured greyhound. There was a great change in the dog now. His eyes were open, and there was intelligence in their depths. He looked up at Willy with a steady, trusting gaze. There was something extraordinarily eloquent of understanding in those eyes.

"It's been a fight, old son, but I think we're winning!" continued Willy, as he reached one hand towards the spirit-stove. "We haven't got over the crisis yet, but we're doing pretty well, on the whole."

He applied a fresh poultice, and then he managed to pour a few drops of water into the dog's mouth. He gave it a little brandy, too—just a drop or so.

Willy had no notion of the time. Time meant absolutely nothing to him now.

The one thing that he did realise was that he was winning the battle. By dint of perseverance, of constant attention, he was bringing this dog back to life. Already he had restored consciousness, and the ebbing life was becoming stronger and more certain. The heart was beating just a trifle more steadily, and once or twice there had been slight movements of the limbs.

"Poor old fellow!" murmured Willy. "It won't be so very long before you're out and about. And you're mine now, old pal! Don't forget that—you're mine!"

Nothing could have been truer than that.

For if that unfortunate dog had been left in the ditch, he would have been dead within the hour. Willy was restoring its life—slowly but surely bringing it back. By all moral right it was his.

Tap-tap!

Willy glanced round, frowning. The faintest of light taps had sounded on the door.

"Who's that?" asked Willy, in a whisper.

"It's me!" came Chubby Heath's panting voice. "Open the door, Willy!"

"You silly young ass—"

Nipper opened the door silently, and all the juniors peeped in. There, dozing on the floor in a most uncomfortable position, was Willy Handforth. And there was an expression of happiness and contentment on his tired face. Just beyond him lay the greyhound, on a pile of folded blankets.



"No, it's urgent!" said Chubby. "You must, Willy—you must!"

Willy sighed, gently rested the greyhound's head on a little pillow, and then he crossed the box-room. The two burning candles flickered in the draught as the door opened.

"Well?" said Willy briefly.

"Do you know it's bed-time?" asked Chubby Heath.

"Bed-time?" repeated Willy. "What the dickens do I care about bed-time? If you've only come here to tell me that——"

"But everybody's looking for you!" put in Juicy Lemon. "Mr. Suncliffe has told us that we've got to go to his study in five minutes and tell him the truth! He wants to know where you are, and he won't be satisfied until we've told him!"

Willy clenched his hands.

"Oh, my goodness!" he said. "Did you ever know such a lot of fuss? What does it matter where I am, for once? Why can't they leave me alone? Don't you fellows understand that this dog——"

"Yes, we understand," said Chubby. "But think of us! What are we going to do? We told old Sunny that we'd given you our word, not to say anything, but he wouldn't listen. He says that we've got to tell him."

Before Willy could make any reply, there came a sudden shuffling of feet on the attic stairway. Then there was a rush of footsteps, and Edward Oswald Handforth burst into view.

"By George!" he bellowed. "Now I've got you, my lads!"

His voice was filled with victory as he pushed straight past Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon, and forced his way into the box-room. Willy was compelled to back away before his advance.

Chubby and Juicy said nothing—they were too startled. And there was a grim, cold light in Willy's eyes.

"Ted," he said quietly, "don't shout so much! There's no need to get excited. Keep your voice down."

But Handforth was too full of triumph to take any heed.

"I've been waiting for a couple of hours for this chance!" he said breathlessly. "And now, by George, I've got you! I saw those two young fatheads sneaking up these stairs, and I came after them. What's all this? What are you doing in this box-room? What the——"

He broke off, startled, as he caught sight of the still, silent form of the outstretched greyhound. The dog's head had sunk back on the pillow, and there was now no sign of life. He was altogether too weak to raise his head of his own volition.

"Well, you've seen," said Willy, more quietly than ever. "And now, Ted, perhaps you'll clear out?"

"I'm blown if I shall clear out!" retorted Handforth. "What the dickens are you doing here with that dog? Whose is it?"

"Mine."

"Don't be a young ass!" said Edward Oswald. "You don't own a greyhound."

"We won't argue," said Willy deliberately. "I don't own a greyhound. Satisfied? So, clear out!"

"But I want to know——"

"Then you won't know!" said Willy, his voice suddenly becoming sharp. "Ted, I tell you this is serious! You mustn't make a noise—and you mustn't stop here! Are you going, or are you not going?"

"I'm not going!" retorted Handforth indignantly. "My only hat! What do you mean by talking to me like this?"

"Oh, you're hopeless!" said Willy furiously. "I've been fighting here for hours—hours! And now, in a couple of seconds, you'll probably spoil everything! Why can't you leave me alone?"

There was a passionate, complaining note in his voice. And he did not hesitate any longer. He butted straight into his major, and forced him backwards out of the box-room and through the doorway.

"Here, look out!" gasped Handforth. "You silly young ass! What the——"

He tripped over the threshold, and sat down violently on the little landing.

Slam!

The door closed suddenly, but the slam was not a violent one. Handforth, rather dazed, heard the key click in the lock.

"My only hat!" he ejaculated. "Biffed out! Biffed out by my own minor! Well, of all the—the——"

"You'd better give it up, Handy!" said Chubby Heath nervously. "He's dangerous!"

"Dangerous!" gasped Handforth. "Willy?"

"Yes, he is!" said Chubby. "He's got that dog in there, and he won't listen to reason."

"Oh, won't he?" said Handforth, as he picked himself up. "By George! I'll soon show you whether he'll listen to reason or not!"

He was about to hurl himself at the box-room door, when Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon, after a hasty glance, grabbed him and held him back. And Handforth was so astonished that all the strength seemed to flee from his muscles.



CHAPTER 19

The Cat out of the Bag!

CONSIDERING everything, it was a very plucky act of Chubby's and Juicy's.

But they were loyal to their young leader. They were horrified at the thought of Handforth bursting that door down and creating a tremendous noise. Again and again Willy had impressed upon them the necessity for silence.

"Cool down, Handy!" urged Chubby Heath. "Honest Injun, your minor isn't up to anything wrong. He's got an injured dog in there, and——"

"I know that!" interrupted Handforth, partially recovering himself. "I saw the dog, and I want to know what it means?"

"But we can explain!" said Juicy frantically.

"You—you young fatheads!" snorted Handforth. "Lemme go! Of all the nerve! Grabbing me like this! Take your paws off me!"

"We won't!" said Chubby stubbornly.

"What!"

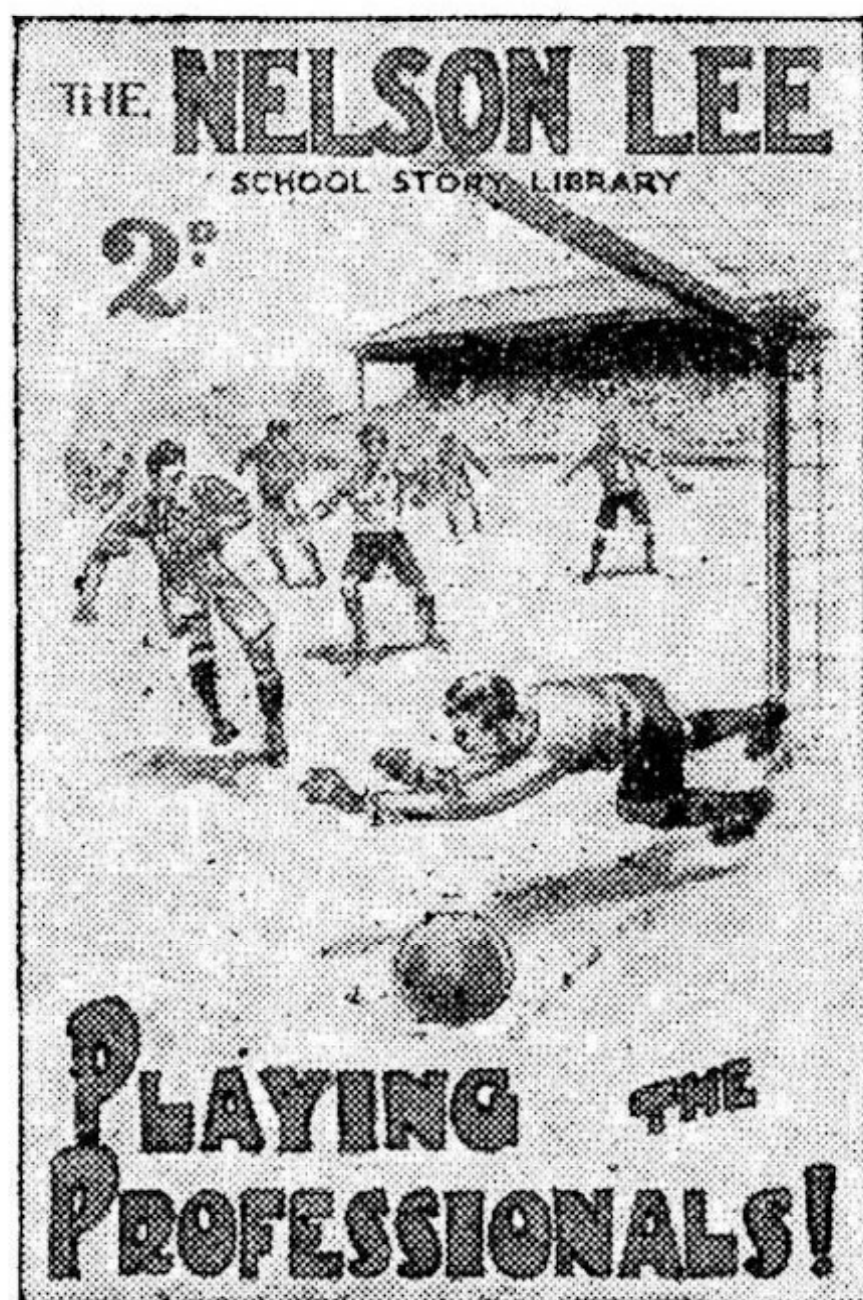
"You mustn't go into that box-room!" said Chubby. "Unless you promise us that you won't kick up a noise, we'll——"

"Well, I'm jiggered!" said Handforth blankly. "You—you cheeky young asses! If you don't let me go within one second, I'll wipe up the pair of you!"

"You'll do nothing of the sort, Handforth!" came a steady, stern voice.

Handforth spun round, and found Mr. Nelson Lee, the Housemaster of the Ancient House, just behind him.

NEXT WEDNESDAY!



"Oh, hallo, sir!" gasped Handforth. "I—I didn't know that you were there!"

"I can quite believe you, Handforth," said Nelson Lee. "What are you doing with these two Third Form boys?"

"Nun-nothing, sir," faltered Handforth. "They grabbed hold of me, and wouldn't let me go."

"Well, we will not pursue the subject," said the Housemaster. "Is your minor in this box-room, Handforth?"

Handforth opened his mouth to reply, and then he closed it.

"You prefer not to answer?" said Leo. "Very well!"

He went to the door, and rapped upon it.

"Oh, I say!" came a protesting voice from Willy. "Do go away, please, and leave me alone."

"It is I, Handforth minor—your House-master."

"I know, sir—I heard your voice."

"Open this door, young man!" said Lee sternly.

"I'd rather you went away, sir."

"I do not think you mean to be deliberately impertinent, Handforth minor, but I must insist upon your opening this door at once!" said the schoolmaster-detective angrily. "Come! Let me have no more of this nonsense!"

By this time Nipper and Travers and a few other Removites had advanced along

"PLAYING THE PROFESSIONALS!"

The St. Frank's Junior Eleven v. Bannington Town Reserves! Imagine it: schoolboys playing a team of professional footballers!

Of course, on the surface the result would seem to be a foregone conclusion and the game merely a farce. But don't you be too sure about that. There are some jolly fine footballers in the Junior Eleven: Handy in goal, Nipper at centre, Reggie Pitt on the wing—oh, yes, they're a formidable combination. And if they beat the Reserves they are entitled to play Bannington Town First Eleven. You can bet the St. Franks' juniors will go all out to win.

Next week's yarn is one that all readers will thoroughly enjoy. For, in addition to the football match, and all its excitement, there's the question of Lightning—Willy Handforth's new pet greyhound. Bill Brice means to have a say in this matter!

Look out for this magnificent story next Wednesday, chums!

"THE CRUISE OF THE BLUE BIRD!"

Another intensely exciting instalment of this fine serial.

~~~~~ORDER IN ADVANCE!~~~~~

the corridor, and they were all watching with interest. They were astonished to find that Willy had been tracked to earth up here. Never for a moment had they believed that he would be in such an extraordinary spot.

Handforth was still indignant because his minor had literally thrown him out, but he could not very well express his feelings at the moment. And he was aware of a certain sense of satisfaction. Now Willy was going to get it in the neck. It would jolly well serve him right, too!

The key clicked, the door opened, and Willy stood there. A good many ejaculations went up. For the fag looked somewhat incongruous, in his shirt-sleeves, collarless, and with his hair tousled.

"Here you are, sir," he said resignedly.

"What are you doing in this box-room, Handforth minor?" asked Nelson Lee.

Willy stood aside, and waved a hand.

"Nothing particularly wrong, sir," he replied quietly. "All I ask you to do is to go away and leave me alone. The crisis isn't over yet. I've got to stay with him for two or three hours, and even then it won't be certain."

Nelson Lee looked into the box-room, and he took in the scene in one comprehensive glance. The Removites, further down the corridor, could see in, too, although they could not distinguish much.

"Whose dog is this, Handforth minor?" asked Lee sternly.

"Mine, sir."

"Yours!"

"Yes, sir."

"And how long have you owned this pedigree greyhound?" inquired Nelson Lee in some surprise.

"Since this afternoon, sir," said Willy steadily. "I hope you're not going to say he's not mine sir."

"It all depends," replied Lee. "I do not claim to be a dog fancier, but I do not hesitate to declare that this dog is worth a good deal of money."

"When I found him, sir, he was dying—"

"When you found him?" repeated Lee sharply. "Are you telling me, Handforth minor, that this dog is not yours? That you merely found him?"

Willy sighed.

"I'll tell you all about it in two ticks, sir," he said patiently. "Chubby and Juicy and I were cycling to Bannington, and, while we were going up a hill, we saw two men in front of us with this greyhound between them on a leash."

"Well?"

"The dog tried to run after a rabbit, sir, and broke away," went on Willy. "But a motor-car was coming along just at that same second, and it went clean over the poor beggar."

"And then?"

"The cads!" said Willy, a note of indignation and anger coming into his voice. "There were two young chaps in that car, and they drove on like the wind. They knew they had run over the dog, but they didn't stop."

"I am afraid there are quite a number of young cads of that breed about nowadays," said Lee, nodding. "But what of the dog's owner?"

"He was the biggest brute of all, sir!" said Willy hotly. "He was in a tearing rage, but all he spoke of was his loss—in money! How much the dog was worth—how much he would lose through not being able to race him. Oh, it was awful, sir! The man was an absolute hog! He didn't give a thought to the poor dog!"

"Steady, young man—steady!" said Lee quietly. "You mustn't excite yourself—"

"I can't help it, sir!" panted Willy. "I go hot all over whenever I think of it! There were two of those men, and what do you think, sir? One of them bent down and gave the poor dog a mere glance or two,

and then said that he was dead. The other man—the owner—kicked him into the ditch!”

“Do you mean that literally, Handforth minor?”

“Yes, sir!” said Willy. “He lifted the poor thing on the toe of his boot and kicked him into the ditch!”

“H’m! That was very callous of him.”

“It was horrible, sir,” said Willy. “The other chap did have enough decency to protest, but the owner—a man named Brice—said that the dog wasn’t any good.”

“And he purposely kicked the dog into the ditch to die?”

“He thought the dog was dead, sir.”

“That amounts to the same thing,” said Nelson Lee gravely. “And what happened after that?”

“The two men walked away, sir. They left that poor old chap in the ditch, sir—mangled and torn. Left him there in a huddled heap, without having made certain that he was really dead. Those men ought to be horsewhipped, sir! They ought to be sent to penal servitude!”

“And you, I take it, rescued the dog from the ditch?”

“Yes, sir,” said Willy quietly. “I thought it would be the decent thing to bury him. Then I found that he was still alive, so I brought him home, smuggled him up into this box-room, and ever since then I’ve been trying to pull him round.”

“And do you think you’ll succeed in this praiseworthy task?”

“I believe so, sir!” said Willy, lowering his voice. “He’s coming round, sir—he’s getting better. He’s looked at me once or twice with those big, pitiful eyes of his, and he seems to understand. He knows that I’m doing all I can to help him, sir. I think I’ll win in the end!”

CHAPTER 20

His Dog!



NELSON LEE patted Willy gently on the shoulder.

“Good lad!” he said kindly.

“Oh, go easy, sir!” protested Willy. “What else could I do? The dog was dying, and——”

“Yes, I know,” nodded Nelson Lee. “You carried him home, and since then you have been devoting yourself whole-heartedly to the task of saving his life. What of your tea, Handforth minor?”

“Tea, sir?” said Willy in wonder. “I never thought about tea.”

“How long have you been here?”

“Since about three o’clock, sir.”

Nelson Lee pursed his lips.

“Practically six hours,” he said, shaking his head. “It won’t do, Handforth minor. You must be relieved. You cannot go on

like this. You have done splendidly, and I am very pleased with you.”

Willy was silent.

“Needless to say, you will not receive any punishment for missing call-over,” continued Nelson Lee. “But now, young man, you must go to bed.”

“Go to bed, sir!” echoed Willy, aghast. “But—but I can’t! I can’t leave him here like this, sir! The crisis isn’t over yet! He’s my dog——”

Willy suddenly broke off and clutched at Nelson Lee’s arm.

“He’s my dog, sir, isn’t he?” he asked tensely.

“I rather think he is, my boy,” replied Lee. “He was left in that ditch to die—he was kicked into it—and since you recovered him and brought him here, there can be no doubt that he is your property. His previous owner had no further use for him. In law, perhaps, your ownership would not be recognised—but morally you have the finest of all claims. Personally, I do not hesitate to say that he is your dog.”

“Thank you, sir,” said Willy, with untold relief.

Nelson Lee pressed him gently aside, and then he went over to the blankets and knelt down. He made a careful examination of the canine patient, and when he looked up his eyes were grave.

“Well, sir?” asked Willy quickly.

“The dog is in a very bad way,” said Nelson Lee.

“But he’ll recover, sir—won’t he?”

“I don’t know,” replied Lee. “I hope so—but it would be foolish to make any definite statement at this stage. I can see that you have done wonders, Willy.”

“Wouldn’t it have been better if my minor had taken him to a vet, sir?” asked Handforth.

“No; I don’t think so,” replied Lee. “A veterinary surgeon would have done everything within his power, no doubt; but I question whether he would have lavished the tender care on the dog that your minor has done; and this is a case that calls for constant and continuous attention.”

“So I can’t go to bed, sir?” said Willy calmly.

“I didn’t say that,” replied Nelson Lee. “You can be relieved——”

“I can’t, sir!” urged Willy. “I couldn’t trust anybody else to look after the poor old fellow. I’ve got to do it myself! I’ve got to, sir! You won’t be cruel enough to order me away.”

“It might be cruel if I allowed you to stay,” said Nelson Lee. “I think you had better go to bed, and I will have a veterinary surgeon brought——”

“All right, sir—if you say so!” interrupted Willy steadily. “I’m not going to dispute your orders, sir.”

"I am very glad to hear you say that, Willy."

"But I might as well tell you, sir, that I shan't sleep a wink."

"Indeed!"

"Not a wink, sir," said Willy. "How can you expect me to sleep? And I ask you to think of my state of mind, sir. I shall be in the Third Form dormitory, among all the other fellows, and I shall be in a state of suspense all the time. Hour after hour I shall toss about, or walk up and down the dormitory. That would do me a lot more harm than staying up here, tending this poor old chap."

Nelson Lee's eyes twinkled.

"Young man, is this a threat?" he asked sternly.

"No, sir," replied Willy. "I'm only just telling you the plain truth. He's my dog, and I shan't be able to rest until he's well over the crisis. If you have any heart in you at all, sir, you'll let me stay here. In fact, you'll clear out now, and take all these other chaps with you. I want to be alone—and I don't want any more interruptions."

"This kid deserves a medal!" murmured Travers approvingly.

"What for?" asked Nipper.

"For his cheek!" said Travers. "For the love of Samson! I've always considered that I was pretty hot stuff when it came to 'nerve,' but young Willy beats me hands down!"

Nelson Lee only took a couple of seconds to decide.

"You may stay, Willy," he said briefly.

"Thanks awfully, sir."

"If you would like a cup of hot coffee and some sandwiches——"

"I'd rather not, sir—really!" said Willy earnestly. "Later on, perhaps—when the danger is over. But not now, sir. I haven't time."

"Then perhaps you would like somebody to remain with you—a companion?" asked Lee. "You may need further water, or——"

"Really, sir, I'd much prefer to be alone," said Willy. "I shan't be disturbed, then."

Nelson Lee patted him on the shoulder again.

"You're a good lad, Willy," he said kindly. "I wish you the best of luck, and I really believe that you will succeed. If you feel that you would like something to eat, after the crisis is over, you will find some sandwiches and a Thermos flask of coffee on the landing."

Nelson Lee turned away, and waved to all the others.

"Now, boys, we'd better go!" he said briskly. "Good-night, Willy! And good luck again!"

"Thanks awfully, sir! You're a brick!" said Willy gratefully.

They all disappeared, and Nelson Lee closed the door.



CHAPTER 21

Handforth Means Well!

EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH was inclined to be somewhat severe.

"The silly young ass!" he said, frowning. "Fancy making all that mystery about a giddy dog!"

"Good luck to him!" said Church. "Willy knew jolly well that he had to work undisturbed. He was sensible to get into that box-room, and to lock himself away from everybody else."

Most of the other juniors agreed.

They were in the Remove passage upstairs. It was bed-time, and the juniors were about to go into their various dormitories.

"Well, let's hope he cures the poor thing," said Fullwood. "It would be rather hard lines if the dog died after all the trouble Willy has taken."

"Besides, that greyhound must be valuable," put in Handforth. "Worth four or five quid, at least."

Nipper chuckled.

"You've forgotten the noughts, Handy," he remarked.

"Eh?"

"I'll bet that dog is worth forty or fifty pounds," said Nipper. "And there's just a faint possibility that it might be worth four hundred or five hundred pounds. Greyhounds are valuable nowadays, particularly those dogs which have been trained for the tracks, and which have won races."

Handforth allowed his jaw to gape.

"Fifty quid!" he echoed. "Five hundred quid! A—a greyhound?"

"Yes."

"Do you mean to say that this animal that Willy has saved might be worth all that?"

"After this accident, it may be worth nothing at all," said Nipper. "It all depends if it gets its stamina back. Not that we need stand here discussing greyhounds. There'll be a prefect along in a minute or two, and we shall get into trouble if we don't make a move. Good-night, you fellows!"

"Good-night!"

The juniors drifted away to their various bed-rooms, and Handforth and Church and McClure found themselves in their own dormitory. But Handforth made no attempt to undress.

"By George!" he said wonderingly. "I'd no idea that that dog could be so valuable! I thought it was only another of Willy's silly pets. He oughtn't to be trusted with it."

"Mr. Lee is willing to trust him," said Church pointedly.

"And the dog's dying," went on Handforth, in alarm. "We've got to do something, you fellows. What about some medicine?"

Church and McClure sighed.

"Oh, undress!" said Mac. "The dog is in Willy's hands, and he couldn't be in better hands, either."

"He could be in mine!" retorted Handforth, glaring.

"I said 'better hands,' " said McClure.

"You silly ass!" frowned Handforth. "If I wasn't in a hurry, I'd give you a slosh for that! But I'm going along to Archie's bedroom."

"What on earth——"

Handforth didn't wait for his chums to protest. He opened the door, strode out, and a moment later he entered Archie Glen-thorne's luxurious sleeping apartment.

The genial ass of the Remove was in bed, looking very cosy and comfortable. He turned his monocle upon Handforth with some apprehension. For Handforth's entry into a bed-room was, as a rule, a forerunner of some species of violence.

"What-ho!" observed Archie. "Absolutely. Come in, dear old thing!"

"I'm in, fathead!" said Handforth.

"In?" said Archie. "Oh, rather! I see what you mean"

"I want some medicine!" said Handforth bluntly.

"Good gad! Is somebody ill?"

"Jolly ill—in fact, nearly dying!" replied Handforth, as he walked across to a cupboard. "I've heard that you keep all sorts of medicines in your bed-room, Archie."

"Well, as a matter of fact, yes," admitted Archie. "Just a few bottles of this and that; don't you know, in case of emergencies, and all that sort of thing."

Handforth's eyes gleamed as he beheld an assortment of bottles on a shelf, in the cupboard. He secured an armful, and went over to the bed, so that he could see better.

"By George!" he said, with satisfaction. "This is jolly good! Cough mixture, syrup of figs, quinine tonic, blood purifier—Thanks, Archie! I'll take these, if you don't mind."

"It seems to me, laddie, that you're going to take them, whether I mind or not," observed Archie. "Of course, you needn't trouble to apologise, or anything of that sort. Odds horrors and fright! What the— Good gad!"

Archie's voice was vibrant with dismay. For Handforth, carelessly examining the syrup of figs bottle, was tipping it, unconscious of the fact that there was no cork in it, and a stream of sticky stuff was pouring glutinously on to Archie's beautiful eider-down quilt.

"Eh?" said Handforth. "What's the matter?"

He moved, and the bottle moved, too. Unfortunately, Archie sat forward at the same moment, the stream of syrup of figs descended upon his head, and a quantity of the liquid poured down his elegant features.

"Help!" shrieked Archie. "S.O.S."

"Oh, sorry!" said Handforth, with a grin. "Didn't notice that you were so near, Archie."

"You frightful fright!" roared Archie. "You horrible horror!"

"Don't be an ass!" said Handforth. "It's your own fault. You should have a cork in the bottle. Well, thanks! I've got all I want."

"And I, dash it, have got something I don't want!" said Archie feebly.

Handforth strode out, triumphantly carrying his bottles of medicine. When he arrived at the end of the corridor, he encountered Church and McClure, also Nipper and Travers and Fullwood and Gresham. They formed a barrier.

"Not to-night, Handy," said Nipper firmly.

"Eh?" said Handforth. "What's all this? Get out of the way, you fatheads!"

"Are you taking those bottles up to your minor?"

"Yes, I am," replied Handforth. "It seems to me that the Remove ought to help in this thing. That dog needs medicine, and——"

"The only medicine it needs is Willy's care and attention," interrupted Nipper, "and we're going to see that you don't go butting in."

Handforth bristled with indignation.

"But—but—— You rotters!" he went on, turning upon his two chums. "This is your doing!"

"Well, what about it?" asked Church defensively. "We knew we couldn't stop you ourselves, so we got some of the other fellows into it. Be reasonable, Handy! That poor dog needs every chance, and what chance would it have if you went up there?"

"Get out of my way!" roared Handforth indignantly.

But they did not get out of his way. Instead, they seized him with firm hands and thrust him into his own bed-room, and they made it quite plain to him that they were not disposed to put up with any nonsense.

Edward Oswald Handforth meant well, but the Removites saw no reason why the unfortunate dog's life should be ruthlessly thrown away.



CHAPTER 22

Lightning!

HANDFORTH sat up in bed, blinking.

It was not light yet, although a glimmer through the dormitory window showed that dawn would soon break. Within a moment or two, Handforth was fully awake. Church and McClure still slumbered on, for the rising bell had not yet sounded.

"That's rummy!" murmured Handforth, with a yawn. "Now, I wonder why the dickens I woke up? There must be something on my mind—— By George, yes! Willy!"

He jumped out of bed like a jack-in-the-box, and commenced dressing. He found that the time was just after six-thirty.

He had been prevented from going to his minor last night, but he was jolly well going to see Willy this morning! He was the first up, so there would be nobody to prevent him.

He hastily got into some clothes and then crept to the door.

"I'll dish them this time!" he muttered grimly.

Truth to tell, Handforth was rather concerned about his minor. In spite of his bluff and blustering ways, his heart was in the right place. He wanted, if possible, to be of some assistance.

The trouble with Handforth was that he generally made himself a nuisance, although this was quite unconscious on his part. He always meant well.

His idea now was to creep to the Third Form dormitory, and to make certain that Willy was soundly asleep. Then he would go up to that box-room and keep guard over the patient until Willy came on duty again. It was quite a praiseworthy object.

But Handforth had no sooner closed the door of his dormitory than he came to an abrupt halt. He found himself staring at Nipper and Vivian Travers. They were only

dressed in their trousers and shirts, and they were exchanging Handforth's stare.

"For the love of Samson," murmured Travers, "can it be possible? Handy is awake, and out, before the rising-bell!"

Handforth advanced towards the pair.

"What are you chaps doing out of bed at this time?" he asked suspiciously.

"Just going to have a look at Willy," replied Nipper.

"Oh!"

"Is that your game, too?" asked Nipper.

"Well, yes," admitted Handforth. "But I rather thought I should have the field to myself! It's like your cheek, getting up! He's my minor—not yours!"

Nipper chuckled.

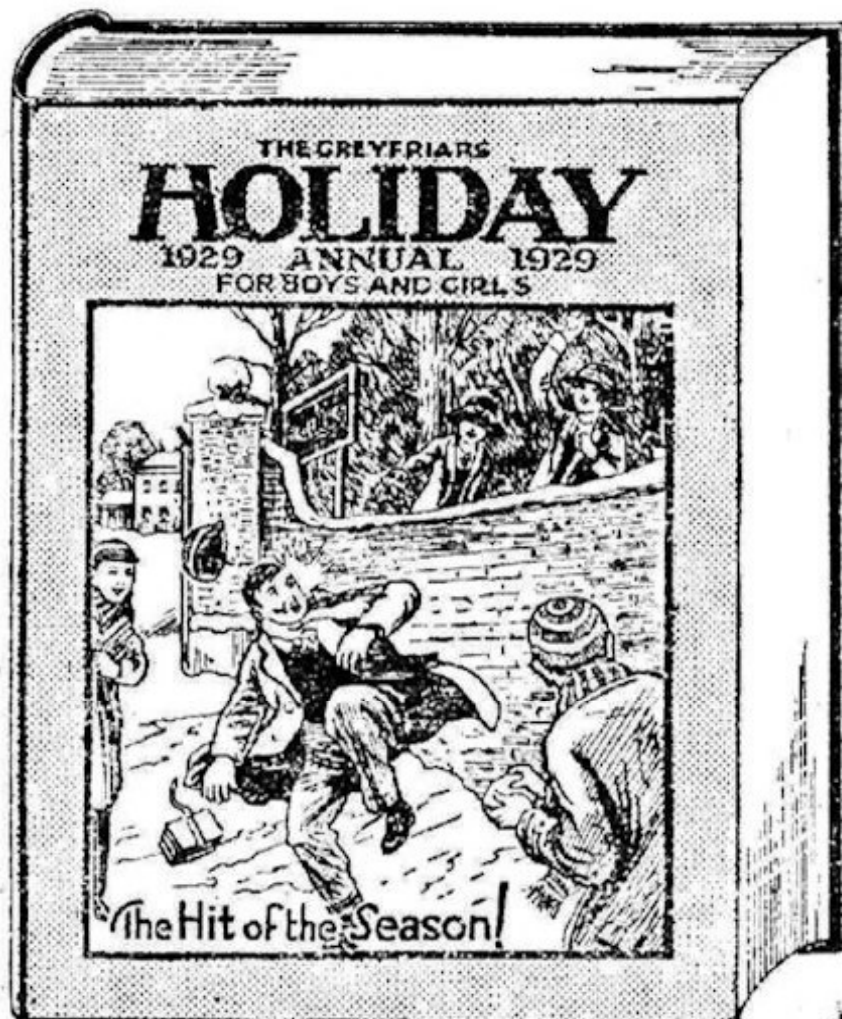
"Well, we won't argue," he said quietly. "There's no reason why we shouldn't all three go. I'm rather anxious about Willy. He's a good scout, but he's inclined to be rash. He's obstinate, too."

They went along to the Third Form dormitory, and softly opened the door. Everything was silent. At least, the only sounds were caused by an assortment of snores and grunts from the sleeping fags. None of them was awake, and Willy Handforth's bed was empty.

"By George!" said Handforth, staring. "Look at that!"

ANNUAL TREATS!

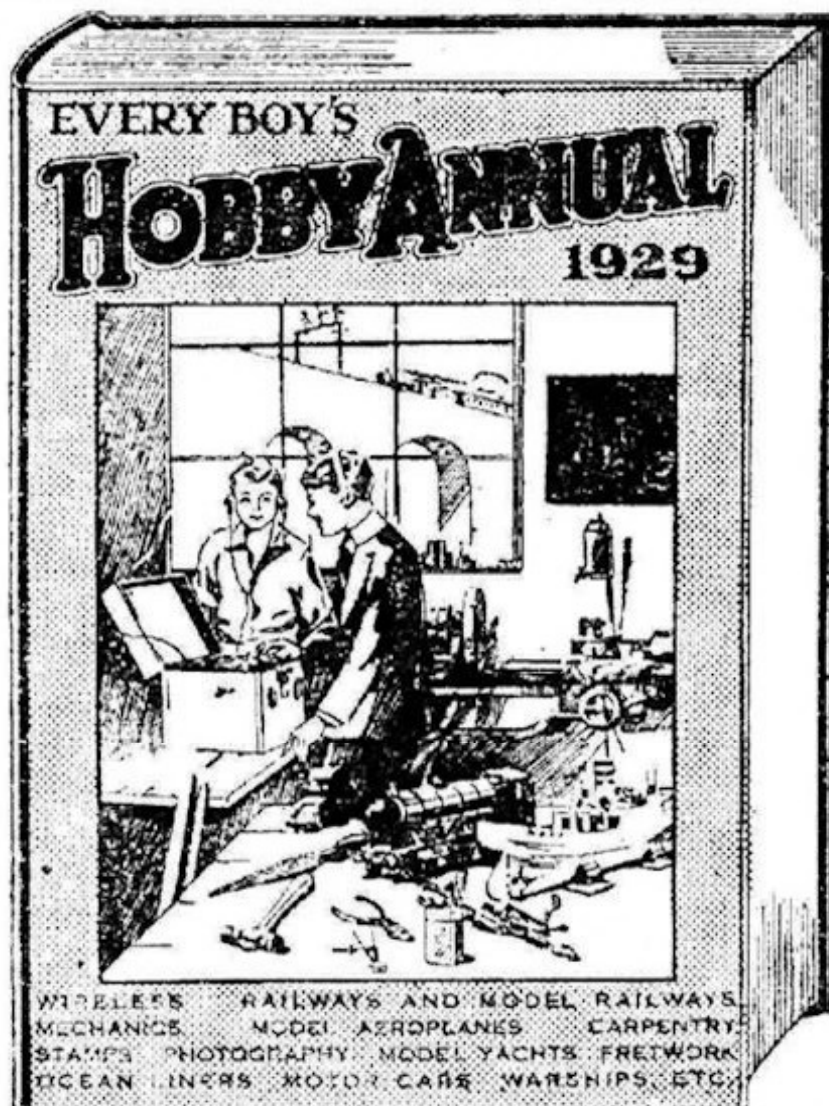
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Willy's bed was not only empty, but it had not been slept in.

"The silly young ass!" went on Handforth, frowning. "He hasn't been to bed all night! By George! He can't burn the candle at both ends like this! He'll only get himself knocked up!"

"Let's go up to that box-room," said Nipper quietly.

They stole out of the Third-Form dormitory, and a few minutes later they were at the door of the little box-room, in the top corridor. Handforth, of course, wanted to barge straight in, but Travers held him back.

"Easy, dear old fellow!" he murmured. "Don't forget the patient!"

Nipper opened the door silently, and they all peeped in.

There, on the floor, was Willy Handforth, lying in a most uncomfortable position. Yet he was dozing, one arm resting on an old box. And there was an expression of happiness and contentment on his tired face. Just beyond lay the greyhound, on his pile of folded blankets.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" murmured Handforth.

But Handforth's murmurs were akin to other fellows' shouts, and Willy immediately opened his eyes. He half sat up, yawning. Then, before addressing the visitors, he took a look at the patient.

"You silly young ass!" said Handforth gruffly. "What the dickens do you mean by this? You've been up all night!"

"Nearly," said Willy. "I dozed off about an hour ago."

"And the dog?" asked Nipper.

"He's all right!" said Willy softly. "No

need to worry about him now. The crisis is over, and I'm pretty certain that he'll soon be getting well. He's out of danger."

"Well done, old man!" said Nipper heartily. "If he lives, he'll owe his life to your devotion and care."

"Cheese it!" said Willy uncomfortably. "You don't think I could let the dog die, do you? And you don't suppose I was going to let a fatheaded vet. come here and play old Harry?"

"Isn't that rather hard on the vet., dear old fellow?" asked Travers.

"Oh, I dare say they're all right," admitted Willy. "In certain circumstances, they're necessary, but when it's a question of constant attention and continuous nursing, I'd rather trust to myself. Anyhow, here's my dog, peacefully asleep, without any trace of fever or anything. I believe I've done the trick!"

"Well, it's jolly surprising!" said Handforth, scratching his head. "I was pretty certain that I should find the dog dead this morning. I wanted to bring you a lot of medicines, but these fatheads wouldn't let me!"

"Thanks!" said Willy, nodding to Travers and Nipper.

"Why, you young ass——" began Handforth wrathfully.

"Chuck it, old man!" grinned Nipper. "The poor old dog is safe, and out of danger. And Willy has done wonders."

"I've done nothing!" denied Willy gruffly. "It's a pity you chaps can't talk sense!"

"What about your sleep?" asked Nipper.

"Sleep?" repeated Willy scornfully. "Do you think that I care about the loss of a night's sleep? My dog, Lightning——"

"Which?"

"I've called him 'Lightning,'" explained Willy. "It may not be suitable at the moment, but as soon as he's well, it'll fit him to a T. We're the firmest of pals, and we're going to be permanent pals, too."

"Well, jolly good luck to you, my son," said Nipper heartily. "But what if the original owner comes along, and claims him?"

Willy stared.

"You're talking out of the back of your neck!" he said. "This dog is mine! He was left for dead, and I brought him back to life. He's only got one owner now—and that's me! My only hat! I'd just like to see anybody try to take him away!"

And there was a world of expression in the fag's voice.

Yet, could he only have known it, he was in for a good deal of trouble in the immediate future! He and his dog, 'Lightning,' were not to have everything their own way!

THE END.

(What do you think of this new series, lads? The first yarn's a corker, isn't it? And next week's—which is entitled "Playing the Professionals!"—is better still. Look out for the "Nelson Lee," on the bookstalls next Wednesday. Write to your Editor and tell him your opinion of this series.)

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BETWEEN OURSELVES!

OUR AUTHOR 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.



J. M. PACKER.

YOUR weekly letters—Reg. T. Staples (Walworth)—are not only bearable, but exhilarating. I look forward to them as much as I do my Saturday night bath, and unless you're very, very careful you'll one day be blossoming forth as a humorous writer for the papers. So think of that fate when you write to me in future! The longer it is delayed, the better—for me. I'm selfish, you see. Because as soon as you get paid for your stuff, I shan't get any more for nixies. The trouble is, it's not so easy to be humorous to order as it is when it bubbles forth naturally. I've got another of your delightful letters in front of me, Reg, but I shall have to leave this until next week.

* * *

How many more times have I got to tell all you readers that I'm not the Editor? The majority of you know it, of course, but there are still plenty who write to me on purely editorial matters. This is all wrong. When you write to me, remember that I'm the author of the St. Frank's stories, and therefore I'm the chap to shoot at if your queries or comments are about the stories. Anything connected with the Old Paper itself—such as illustrations, advertisements, League Forms, serials, competitions, etc.—should be addressed to the Editor.

* * *

Sorry—R. Hedges (Bethnal Green)—but I don't write love stories. So when you ask me to include "love stuff" in my tales, I'm afraid I can't oblige. I can't even include a little bit, to please you, Dick—as it would probably mean displeasing ninety-nine out of every hundred readers.

* * *

The Eldorado series—James A. Hodge (Waterford)—appeared in 1920. To be exact, they started in No. 264, Old Series (June 26th), with the story called "Lord Dorrmore's Quest." Solomon Levi first appeared in the St. Frank's yarns in No. 285, Old Series (Nov. 20th, 1920), in "The Jew of St. Frank's." I shall be looking out for that long letter, Jimmy.

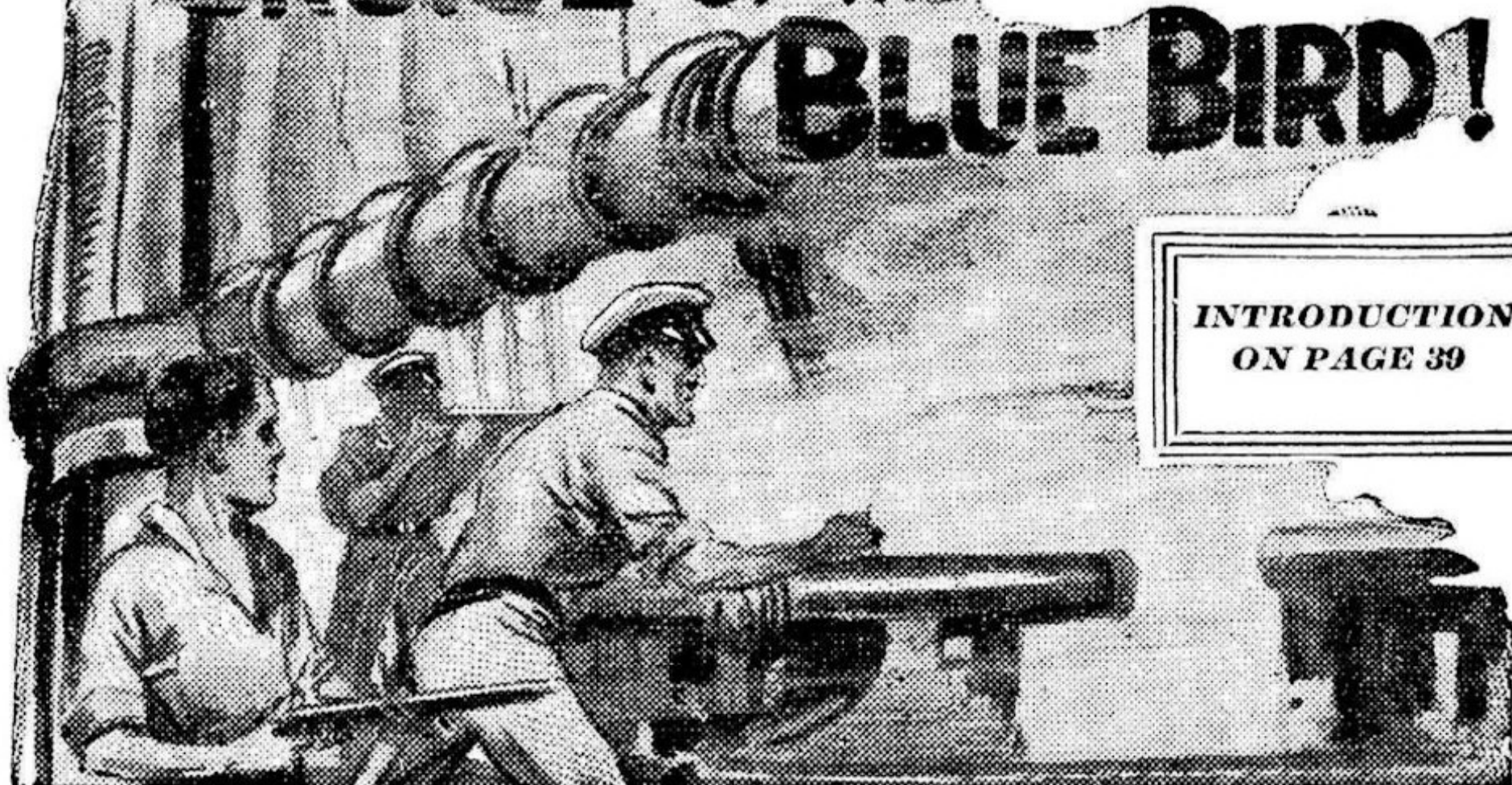
Here's a reminder. Lots of you have promised to send me better and more up-to-date photographs of yourselves, but very few have arrived, and considering that some of the snapshots I've had from you only measure about an inch square (about as big as a postage stamp) it's about time you remembered your promises. And if you postage stamp merchants want to see your dials at the top of this page, you simply *must* send me something which will bear a reasonable resemblance to a human being. It's hard enough to get a good likeness from the best of photographs (look at me at the top, for example!), but some of the snaps that I have received wouldn't make a likeness of any kind. Even when I'm looking at the original snaps I hardly know whether I've got them right side up or upside down. I think a few of you will feel your consciences pricking you a little when you read this—especially when I tell you that heaps of readers have sent me really splendid cabinet portraits. Still, I shall be quite satisfied with snaps if they are at all presentable. Hang it all, I want to see *your* photographs—not pictures of woodland vistas or meadows with a smudgy dot somewhere in the middle distance which you calmly tell me is you.

* * *

You're not the only one who has started reading the Old Paper by chance—Beryl J. Pilcher (Godalming). In fact, quite a large number of our girl readers started in the same way as yourself—by getting hold of the paper from their brothers. Brothers! Attention! Slap a copy of the Old Paper in front of your sisters at every opportunity. You never know, they may buy your copy for you next week! However, to return to your letter, Beryl. Yes, Nelson Lee is Nipper's legal guardian. Nipper only calls him "Guv'nor" in an affectionate way.

A GRIPPING YARN OF PERILOUS ADVENTURE IN SOUTHERN SEAS!

THE CRUISE OF THE BLUE BIRD!



INTRODUCTION
ON PAGE 39

By COUTTS BRISBANE

Captain Manby has had his schooner pinched by French convicts, but that doesn't mean they have seen the last of skipper Manby . . . Oh no, not by long chalks!

Fire!

TO a plane, a twelve-mile sprint is nothing. It seemed to Jack that they had hardly left the island before they were swinging round in a long spiral, the centre of which was the Blue Bird. He peered over the edge of the cockpit in which he sat with his father, and saw the schooner grow larger with each turn.

He saw men lying about her decks, and looked for them to rise and start firing, but they didn't stir. Only a couple of fellows with rifles shook their fists at the aircraft, while a third, running to the bows, flung up his hands as though in token of surrender.

Coombes, at the Lewis gun, looked enquiringly at Captain Manby. Trotter shut off the motor.

"How about it?" he called. "They seem to be mostly dead drunk. Shall we sprinkle them, or try to board?"

"I'll board," replied Manby.

"Right you are. Keep the gun bearing as well as you can, Coombes."

The plane slid down, took the water, glided towards the schooner. Thanks to her height above the surface, the four in her could see the ship's deck.

They saw the two men run forward to the rail and level their rifles. Put-put-a-

putttt! remarked the Lewis gun. One of the men sagged forward, slipped over the rail, and plunged heavily into the water. The other reeled back, shot through a shoulder, doggedly lifted his rifle with one hand—and out of the cabin darted a third figure. It was Mr. Sinclair. He made a long jump across the deck, grabbed the fellow, and wrenched the rifle from his grasp, even as he drew the trigger. The bullet sang towards the zenith; the man tried to draw a knife, then sprawled helplessly as Sinclair hit him on the jaw and kicked the weapon overboard.

"All right, sir. There are two more, but I'll look after them. Come aboard!" shouted the mate. "We've got 'em!"

He flung a rope, and Manby caught it, clambered down to one of the floats and swung himself aboard. Jack followed, while Coombes was a close third.

"What has happened to that lot?" asked Manby. "You haven't shot them, have you? They look dead."

"They are dead, but I'm hanged if I know how. Something they have eaten or drunk did the trick, I guess. Now there's one fellow forward and one below left alive beside this chap. He's out of action. Look after him, Jack, in case he tries any mis-

chief. The one forward seems to want to surrender."

"Please, dad, he's the chap that cut the rope on my hands when we were tied up on the reef. He deserves to be let off for that, doesn't he?"

"I don't want his blood. There seems to have been a holocaust already. I wonder—Great snakes, the ship's afire!"

Smoke was pouring from the foc's'le hatch. Manby ran forward.

"Look out, sir!" shouted Sinclair. "That fellow Durand has done it, I expect. *Look out!* There he is!"

Durand had made up his mind that he must die, and he had determined to do as much damage as possible before he passed out. He had dived below as he saw the plane coming—he knew the game was up and made for the part of the ship where his effort at destruction would be best attempted—the bo'sun's store-room.

Here were kept spare coils of rope of various sizes, spare blocks, and other bits of tackle, hanks of cord, fish-hooks, a multitude of small things, and a supply of paints, oils, turpentine, and varnish.

Durand opened a tin of turps, poured it over the floor, set it alight, then crept along the alleyway and up into the foc's'le. He heard voices; he peeped out, but not till the smoke advertised what he had done did he come racing out, knife in one hand, hatchet in the other. Like a Malay, he was running amok. He wanted to kill, and then himself be killed, for that was preferable to a lifetime of confinement which would be his lot if he were handed over to the French authorities of New Caledonia.

With a wild yell, he made at Manby. So sudden and unexpected was the attack that he might have hoped to get one blow home with the hatchet, at least. But it was not to be. Manby sprang aside as he rushed, dodging the swing of the weapon with ease, and hit out with the butt of his rifle—at the man's shins. Down went Durand, and before he could attempt to rise the skipper was on him, spread-eagling him to the deck. Sinclair fetched a bit of rope, and made him secure.

Then they turned to the greater danger, the fire below. The man, Achille Servet, who

had asked for quarter in the bows, came forward as Manby beckoned imperatively.

"Put him on the pump. Rig the hose. Lend a hand, Jack, and you, Coombes. It would be too bad to have the ship back only to lose her this way."

Handkerchief held over his nostrils, he dived below, to return in a minute half-suffocated, having located the seat of the fire.

"In the bo'sun's stores. It's well alight, but nothing serious yet. Pump! I'll take the hose."

For ten minutes it seemed touch and go whether the fire or water would conquer; then slowly the smoke gave place to steam, which died away under the stream that Manby directed upon it. The store-room was gutted, but, thanks to stout bulkheads, the fire had done no further damage, and the skin of the ship remained unhurt.

Blackened with smoke, his eyes streaming, Manby came on deck. Trotter, seeing the emergency, had moored the plane to the schooner's stern and come forward to lend a hand. Now they all paused in silence, looking about them.

The convicts' great effort had failed utterly after costing a score of lives. The Blue Bird was once more in her owner's possession, and all but three of the men who had captured her were dead. Captain Manby sat wearily down on the rail, staring at the bodies that littered the deck.

"It's fortunate for us, but I don't quite understand what happened," he said. "They're evidently poisoned, but how? Did that fellow"—he nodded towards Durand, who had now come to his senses, and lay glaring at his captors—"did he do it?"

"Murderers! Poisoners! English assassins!" snarled Durand.

"No, I can't quite understand it. D'you think they got hold of a can of meat that was off—full of ptomaines?" suggested Sinclair.

"Ah Moy told me to take care not to touch two big cans of kidneys, dad," put in Jack. "He was quite worked up about it. I'll look and see if they have been opened. Perhaps they had gone off. He said they were in the galley."

With averted face, he picked his way over the dead men and went into the

WHAT'S ALREADY HAPPENED:

CAPTAIN MANBY is skipper of the schooner Blue Bird, which is bound for the Malea atolls, in the Southern Pacific. He is accompanied by his son

JACK MANBY, and his nephew

NED SUTTON, two adventure-loving boys. From a native Captain Manby has learned that in these atolls is an uncharted island—supposed to be practically inaccessible—the lagoon of which is full of pearl shell. The captain is successful in finding this unknown island; and to his surprise discovers that it is inhabited by a number of French castaways. At first they are friendly, but later, when Captain Manby finds out what they really are—shipwrecked convicts—their attitude changes

and they capture the Blue Bird and its valuable cargo, and Mr. Sinclair, the mate, is made a prisoner. The schooner sails from the island, but is soon forced to anchor owing to dense smoke clouds caused by the volcano, which is in a state of eruption. Following a meal, practically all the convicts very mysteriously die. Sinclair is held responsible, and a man named Durand attacks him. The mate locks himself in a cabin—and at that moment the hum of a 'plane is heard. Captain Manby has arrived to recapture his schooner! Durand realises the game is up. He rushes below. At least he will baulk the Englishmen of their spoils!

(Now read on.)

galley. The place was in wild confusion, the floor littered with empty tins. The two convicts who had done the cooking lay collapsed and stiff in one corner; on the stove, now cold, were a couple of large pots, each still containing a little of the stew or hash which had been made by mixing tins of beef, vegetables, and curry indiscriminately.

Jack poked about amidst the litter, and presently found what he sought—two large tins labelled "Kidneys." He brought them out.

"These are the things, sir. The contents went into the pots along with a lot of other stuff."

"Then Ah Moy will probably be able to explain. You"—Manby turned to Achilles Servet—"attend to those fellows. Put them in the hold for the moment. You shall bury them ashore presently, which is more than they would have done for us."

The Squall!

ACHILLE understood the gesture, saluted, and began his work. Manby and Sinclair went aloft, and looked around them. The sea was dotted with various newly arisen rocks, so that at first it seemed as though the Blue Bird was trapped within a ring of them.

"If we ever do get the ship and cargo home safely, it won't be for lack of mishaps," grunted Manby, as he took in the situation. "It's one blamed thing after another. No sooner do we have a bit of good fortune than something turns up to nullify it, and make all our efforts futile. There's just a chance that we may scrape through over there. What d'you think?"

Sinclair looked doubtfully at the spot to which he pointed—a gap in the ring of coral, awash or stabbing up from the water, which hemmed them in.

"I don't know, sir. I'm afraid there's scarcely room. We'd better get a boat out and measure. I'm afraid it can't be done."

"If those brutes haven't used all the dynamite, it can and shall be done!" growled the captain. "Let's look, anyhow."

The quarter boat was lowered and, leaving the airmen aboard, the two men rowed towards the gap, Jack sounding in the bows.

"Five. Eight. It seems to be getting deeper, dad. Ah! Now it's only four. Deeper again."

The lead plunged, the line ran out till it marked twelve fathoms. Now they entered the mouth of the clear channel. Jagged masses of coral that had been heaved up from the depths by the volcanic convulsion flanked it, seamed with crevices. Jack sounded once more, and got fifteen fathoms.

"Deep enough, but not wide enough, I'm afraid."

Manby took the lead from his son and heaved it on to the nearest ledge. The boat was shoved to the other side. Thus they took a measurement. Sinclair shook his head.

"Done by a couple of feet. But if we put a charge or two in that seam there, I'd say it might split the coral off, eh, sir?"

Manby retrieved the lead with a jerk and hauled it in, then resumed his oar, looked to windward, and nodded.

"Yes, if we have time. I think there's another bit of breeze coming. If we're caught here, good-bye, Blue Bird! Pull!"

They urged the heavy boat back to the schooner, climbed aboard, and, finding the dynamite and detonators, hurried back with them. As yet there was but little beyond a small cloud on the horizon to show that wind was coming, but both men knew the caprices of Pacific weather too well to waste a moment. The wind might not come for a day; it might even not come at all. On the other hand, a howling squall might sweep down upon them within an hour. Caught amidst all those jagged teeth, with but poor holding ground for her anchor, the Blue Bird would have never a chance.

Swiftly Manby adjusted detonators to a couple of the cartridges, and connected the long, insulated wire with the battery. They selected a crevice in the face of the rock on the highest of the reefs, at the spot where the channel was narrowest, and pulled back to a safe distance, paying out the wire.

A little catspaw of wind played across the calm water and died away.

"It's coming. Plenty of time yet, but—Ready, sir?" said Sinclair.

"Right. Let her rip!"

Sinclair twirled the handle. There was an earsplitting roar, a red flare, a belch of black smoke. The boat shivered, as though she had been kicked by a giant foot, up rose a column of water, a wave rolled out and heaved her back a dozen lengths.

"That's done it!" cried Manby, coiling in the wire. "I guess we'll scrape through now. Anyhow, I don't think there's time for another shot. Pull!"

The dynamite had done its work well. A long section of the outer face of the rock had been split off by the violence of the explosion, and had slithered to the bottom, leaving the channel considerably wider than it had been before—wide enough for the Blue Bird to pass through, though with very little room to spare. So long as the sea was calm it could be done. Once the waves began to roll, passage would be impossible.

The boat came alongside the schooner.

"Stream her aft, Jack! No time to hoist her in," said Manby. "Get the motor started, Sinclair. Coombes, give me a hand with the winch. Trotter, you'd better get your craft under way. Hey, you!"

Achille already understood that "you" meant him. He jumped to assist at the winch. The anchor came up just as the motor auxiliary began to sputter.

"Get it home, Coombes," cried Manby, and raced aft to take the helm.

Away on the horizon the small cloud had become a large one. It was climbing the sky rapidly, its darkness laced by quivering flashes of lightning. The low, menacing



Durand came rushing out of the blazing foc's'le, a knife in one hand, a hatchet in the other. He was like a Malay running amok ; he wanted to kill ! With a wild yell he leaped towards Captain Manby, hatchet upraised.

rumble of thunder came rolling across the slowly tilting levels of the sea, touched here and there by the first breaths of the coming squall.

Sinclair, having set the motor running, came on deck and went to the bows to con the ship, which was now moving slowly towards the gap. If they could only get through it, they might hope to reach the island, for though there were new reefs in view, they were widely scattered.

"I'll try to give you a lead. I'm going up now!" bellowed Trotter, and a moment later the roar of his motor drowned the murmur of the rising storm.

"Stand by the jib, Jack, and you, Coombes. We'll get it on her if we make the passage," yelled Manby.

"Starboard a point! Now, as you go!" shouted Sinclair.

The schooner forged forward slowly. The auxiliary wasn't powerful enough to give her much speed, for it was intended only for use in crowded waters, or when negotiating an awkward channel. Still, it shoved her along at a pace quite sufficient to rip the bottom out of her if she should touch the sharp coral teeth.

"Starboard! As you go! Steady!"

Now she entered the channel, so close to the coral reefs that a man could have stepped on to them from the rail.

Jack's heart was in his mouth as he glanced to windward. Would they never draw clear of these terrible fangs waiting to crunch the vessel's timbers? They had passed the narrowest part of the channel. Now they were through. On their starboard or lee side stretched more reef, but they were running clear of it into open water beyond.

Overhead, Trotter boomed round in a circle, scanning the sea below. He settled on a course, shot away on it. Manby laid the ship's head in line with the direction given him. The seaplane was rising. Trotter put on speed. Suddenly he disappeared, blotted out by a rain cloud.

"Set that jib!" roared the captain. "Two reefs in it. Then hang on."

It was done, and, even as Jack hauled the sheet home, the first puff of wind filled the sail. Down came the rain. Coombes grabbed the boy's arm, hauled him aft a little.

"Hold on, young 'un! It's coming!" he shouted.

And with that it came!

(Next Wednesday's instalment is a real thriller, lads! Don't miss reading it.)

HOW TO JOIN THE LEAGUE

ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE APPLICATION FORM No. 99.

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, 5, Carmelite Street, 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, providing 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 1d., 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.

Your Editor welcomes letters from all his readers: send him one now. Address it to: The Editor, "Nelson Lee Library," Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

This Autograph Business.

SEVERAL disappointed collectors of signatures write to me on the subject. The trouble is that they have expected far too much. There is an idea abroad that celebrities such as kings, princes, marquises, great people in the worlds of art, music, science and sport simply jump for joy when the postman brings them little chumpy packets containing autograph albums with politely worded requests for their names. But really it isn't quite like that, you know. The man who has scored a fresh record does not cavort over the breakfast-table when he sees a huge mail. You can have too much of a good thing.

And, after all, this writing round to everyone for autographs is rather a dull method of collecting. It is too straightforward and easy. The sport of collecting is the delirious thrill of the chase; you may catch some prodigious person when he is off guard and nab his signature almost when he is not looking, anyway, before he has time to cough up a civil negative. If autograph collecting just resolved itself into circularising everybody who was anybody, it would not be worth carrying on with. The keen collector requires special specimens. He may be in wait for the signatures of speedmen, and he must act accordingly, watching for chances to run into these worthies—figuratively speaking, of course. Personally, I should be sorry to dash head-on into a record smasher when he was knocking large spots off the last achievement. The wise collector lies in wait and thinks out plans.

Everlasting Summer!

Perpetual summer sounds all right. When Lord Lytton made the gardener's son, disguised as a count, talk of palaces lifting to eternal summer, etc., it was just poetry pure and simple—though poetry is rarely that, more's the pity. But here is a scheme for making a section of England a place where it is always summer-time, no rain, no clouds, the sun always shining. One would live, in fact, in a huge glorified conservatory.

There would be artificial sunshine produced by violet rays, and tropical flowers would flourish the whole year round, thanks to an even temperature.

The ingenious scheme has been drawn up by an inventor at Dundalk. When one comes to think of it, however, there is a notion that the plan would not be a real success, for who wants to get soft and flabby, mewed up in a greenhouse. In this country you never know what sort of weather's coming. The learned think they know, but look how often the prophets are mistaken! It is really a jolly fine thing to have a chancy climate, never to know what's coming next. It makes you appreciate a few fine days all the more.

Weighing the Sun!

Among the numerous flooring questions to hand comes this prize. How much does the sun weigh? This does not seem respectful to Old Sol. It is too much like treating the august luminary as if it were a pound of cheese or the best fresh butter. But there is an answer to the query. The sun weighs 19,920,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 tons. There you are. You notice how neat it is, no odd hundredweights to complicate the calculation!

Big and Small Game.

That keen observer, Stacy Aumonier, says that the bold hunter of the future will sally forth and slay flies. This is a job that wants doing. There are otherwise useful tracts of the world which are impossible because of the activities of that poisonous little beggar, the tse-tse fly. This imp of mischief tickles the unwary to death, and it takes a plucky individual to go in for fly-swatting on a large scale. There are flies which are far more dangerous than the most rampageous lion. They come on you suddenly, and their one aim appears to be to slaughter any human being they meet. There are millions of these pests; the more you kill, the more there are. Perhaps the next big life story will be that of the intrepid fellow who plunged into

(Continued overleaf.)

OUR WEEKLY POW-WOW!

(Continued from previous page.)

the wilds, determined to make life safe for those who come after.

Going Without Breakfast!

A Scottish enthusiast has been alarmed by a suggestion that it is a wise thing to go without breakfast. He has to be at his job, which is an open-air one, right early in the morning, and he says he always has a good breakfast, and couldn't do without it. That's just as it should be. He can walk right past this new fad and take no notice of it. The advice might be O.K. for some of those people who never overdo exercise, and who take supper about three a.m., but they are in a minority. Pay 'em! After all, there's nothing to beat the British breakfast—porridge, rasher of bacon and a couple of fried new laids. It's the best meal of the day.

CORRESPONDENTS WANTED

Maurice Bartz, 29, Charles Street, Bloemfontein, South Africa, wishes to correspond with readers anywhere; interested in any subject except chemistry. All letters promptly answered.

C. L. Amos, 233, Cross Roads, Cabra, Adelaide, South Australia, wishes to correspond with readers anywhere.

E. L. Ashcroft, 88, Park Hill, Carshalton, Surrey, wishes to hear from overseas collectors of cigarette cards.

W. Robinson, 15, Sherborne Road, Highfield, Southampton, has back numbers of the N.L.L. for sale or exchange.

Robert Page, 17, Clarendon Road, West Kensington, London, W. wants N.L.L.'s containing the "Fresh Air Fiends" series, the first story excepted. Will any readers exchange?

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Norwoods (Dept A), 3, Finsbury Square, London, E.C.2.

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Stop Stammering! Cure yourself as I did. Particulars **FREE**.—**FRANK B. HUGHES, 7, Southampton Row, London, W.C.1.**

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