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CORCORAN OF THE BLUE CRUSADERS!

A magnificent long complete story of schoolboy sport and adventure,
featuring the cheery Chums of St. Frank's.

New Series No. 132.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

November 10th, 1928.



With extraordinary skill, Lionel Corcoran swung the leading horses round, and they went galloping through the big gateway, straight into the Triangle of St. Frank's. The coach rocked and swayed on two wheels as it swung round ; by bare inches the hubs missed the stone pillar. Then the coach was in the Triangle, and Handforth was blowing terrific blasts on his horn.

The First Yarn of a Stunning Series introducing a New Character!

CORCORAN OF THE BLUE CRUSADERS!



By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

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

The St. Frank's juniors thought Vivian Travers possessed any amount of "nerve," but Lionel Corcoran, a newcomer to the school, has even Travers beaten in that respect. Read all about him in this week's magnificent yarn of schoolboy sport and adventure.—ED.

CHAPTER 1.

Meeting the New Fellow!

"TRAIN'S late!" remarked Reggie Pitt, of the West House.

"Have you ever known any of these trains to be anything else?" grunted Handforth tartly. "They built this branch line in the year dot, and then forgot all about it! I expect the train is stranded somewhere between here and Bannington; the engine has probably sprung a leak!"

There were quite a number of St. Frank's juniors on the little platform of Bellton station. The November morning was rather raw, although very bright and sunny, and the train from Bannington—the local crawler—was overdue.

Nipper was on the platform, with Tommy Watson and Tregellis-West. Handforth and Church and McClure were much in evidence. Archie Glen thorne and Ralph Leslie Fullwood were there, too. Vivian Travers had condescended to come down with Jimmy Potts, and Reggie Pitt and Jack Grey and a group of other West House Removites were to be seen.

Handforth turned to Archie Glen thorne, and there was an accusing light in his eye.

"What's the idea of this chap coming by train, Archie?" he demanded.

"Eh?" said the genial ass of the Remove, gazing at Handforth through his monocle. "The idea of coming by train? I see what you mean! Why, in fact, is the chappie coming by train?"

"That's what I asked you!"

"Absolutely!" nodded Archie brightly. "Oh, rather!"

"What do you mean, ass? What's this 'Oh, rather!' business?"

"Kindly turn the good old baleful glare elsewhere," protested Archie. "I mean to say, it absolutely shoves me into a flutter, old cheese!"

"Rats!" said Handforth. "We want to know why this fellow Corcoran—or whatever his silly name is—is coming to St. Frank's by train? Why couldn't he have come by road?"

"Good gad!" ejaculated Archie. "To tell you the absolute truth, laddie, I don't know!"

By road, what? Well, you see, the railway's here, so I suppose the chappie thought he might as well use it. The dashed railway has to be used sometimes, you know!"

"You silly ass!" roared Handforth. "Isn't this chap a pal of yours?"

"Absolutely not!" said Archie firmly. "Never saw the blighter in my life! Don't know him from Adam!"

"Cheese it, Handy!" said Church gently. "Why bother Archie?"

"He's the only chap who knows anything about the new fellow," replied Handforth, with a grunt. "Here it's Monday morning, and we suddenly learn that there's a new chap coming into the Junior School! And we don't know which House he's going into, or—or anything!"

"Well, don't worry," put in Nipper, with a grin. "It won't be long before we get to know all the facts, Handy."

Morning lessons were over, and quite by chance Archie Glenthorne had happened to mention that a boy named Lionel Corcoran was coming to St. Frank's that day—and by the morning train, too. Questioned more closely, Archie explained that this chappie had been staying at Glenthorne Manor, near Bannington—his pater's place.

Not that Archie knew very much. He had had a letter that morning from his pater, asking him to meet the train, and to give the new fellow a bit of guidance. Unfortunately, Archie didn't know who the chap was, or where he had come from, or anything. He only knew that Corcoran was the nephew of a friend of his father's, and that he was definitely coming to St. Frank's.

The Removites had learned this only ten minutes before the train was due, so there had been no time to make any inquiries of the prefects or masters. On the spur of the moment, Nipper and a crowd of others had decided to accompany Archie to the station, so that they could give the new chap a fitting welcome; and as it wasn't known which part of the Remove he was to go into—Ancient House section or West House section—Reggie Pitt & Co. had come, too!

"There's a mystery about the chap!" said Handforth gruffly.

"You'd find a mystery in anything!" said McClure, with a sniff. "There's no mystery at all, you ass! I expect he'll turn out to be the usual sort of new chap—timid and scared. I'm jiggered if I know why we've all come down like this! Blow him!"

"Well, if the train's much later, we shan't get back in time for the dinner bell!" said Fatty Little, of the West House, looking worried and anxious. "Great pancakes! The signal isn't even down yet—"

"Hallo!" broke in Jimmy Potts. "What's all this?"

He was looking over the railings into the station yard, and all the other juniors soon found themselves staring also. A splendidly-equipped four-in-hand had just driven in with a flourish, in charge of a somewhat shabby ostler who looked incongruous on

the box of that splendid equipage. It drew up near the booking-office, the horses snorting and stamping their feet. The driver secured the reins, and leapt down from the box.

"Rummy!" said Handforth, frowning. "Who the dickens can have ordered a contraption like this? I haven't seen one of these giddy things for years!"

The juniors were very interested. They watched curiously as the ostler patted his horses, took a general look round, and then strode across the yard and vanished into the portals of the Railway Inn.

"A regular old-fashioned stage-coach affair," said Vivian Travers. "Well, well! I'm afraid Bellton isn't progressing very rapidly, dear old fellows!"

"Well, that four-in-hand is in keeping with the train service!" said Handforth tartly. "It's out of date! I think we ought to write to the railway company—"

"Cheer up, old man!" said Church. "Here comes the giddy train now!"

An elderly porter had appeared on the platform, as though from nowhere. He was now bustling about with an important air, and he regarded the crowd of juniors with a suspicious eye.

"Stand back, young gents—stand back!" he warned. "Train's now comin' in!"

"Plenty of time!" said Handforth. "The train won't be in for half an hour yet—it's still a hundred yards away!"

With an abundance of steam, for so small an engine, and with the maximum amount of grinding from the brakes, the local train drew into the station and pulled up. A heavy express train, with a tremendously powerful engine, would have pulled in almost without a sound. But these little local trains always liked to make a noisy announcement of their arrival.

"Here he is!" said Reggie Pitt, with interest.

One or two carriage doors had opened, emitting an aged countryman, an old lady with a market basket, and a youngster in Etons. The latter was obviously the new boy for St. Frank's.

"Corcoran!" murmured Nipper, with a little frown. "It's a rummy thing, Montie, but that name seems to strike a familiar note, somehow. It's not a common name, and I know I've heard it before."

"Strikes me in just the same way, dear old boy," said Sir Montie Tregellis-West, nodding. "Probably the chap is the son of some well-known public man."

The juniors crowded along the platform, and surrounded the fellow in Etons. He was clean-limbed, alert-looking, and quite cool. He was just about the same age as the average Removite, and there was an amused smile on his face as the juniors swarmed round.

"Are you Corcoran—Lionel Corcoran?" asked Nipper briskly.

"That's me!" nodded the newcomer. "St. Frank's chaps, eh? Good men! Pleased

to see you! I suppose the brass band is waiting outside?"



CHAPTER 2.

A Cool Customer!

NIPPER grinned. "Awfully sorry, Corcoran, but we quite overlooked the brass band," he said apologetically. "If we had only thought of it—"

"I'm not sure that I shall overlook the slight!" said Corcoran, with a frown. "And what about the red carpet? I take it that you fellows came down here to meet me?"

"Yes."

"You should either do a thing thoroughly or not at all!" said Lionel Corcoran, as they all moved towards the exit. "Hallo! What's all this?"

He had caught a glimpse of the four-in-hand, which could be seen through the booking-office, in the station yard.

"We thought perhaps it was yours!" said Pitt, with gentle sarcasm.

"And why not?" retorted Corcoran promptly.

"Great Scott! You don't mean to say—"

"Come on!" said the new fellow in crisp tones.

He surrendered his ticket, and pushed through the booking office with all the St. Frank's fellows crowding round him and after him. Handforth was looking indignant and excited.

"Hi! Hold on!" he roared. "Just a minute, you new chap! You've got too much nerve! I haven't been able to get a word in edgeways—"

"That's all right—plenty of time!" said Corcoran, as he got outside, and surveyed the four-in-hand. "Good egg! All aboard!"

"You're a caution!" grinned Reggie Pitt.

He and the others climbed into the coach, on the top of the coach, at the rear of it, and on the box. Lionel himself had leapt upon the box in one bound, and he had seized the reins.

"Come on, somebody!" he invited. "There's a big post-horn here! Who's an expert on the post-horn?"

"I am!" replied Handforth promptly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Edward Oswald took no notice of that yell of derision. He leapt up beside Corcoran, seized the post-horn, and prepared to give a preliminary blast.

Everybody took it for granted that the new fellow had made arrangements for this four-in-hand to be on the spot. It certainly looked like it. There was nobody else visible, and even the ostler had failed to reappear. Strangely enough, however, Lionel seemed to be in a great hurry to get off.

"All ready?" he sang out. "Hang on, there! Now then, my beauties! Off with you!"

He cracked his whip in the air, gave the reins a gentle tug, and the four steeds surged forward. With a swinging roll, the heavily laden four-in-hand tore over the gravel towards Bellton High Street.

Then came a tearing blast from the post-horn—an unearthly, weird, horrid sound. But it was a sound, and Handforth felt proud of himself.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"This new chap is a bit of a wonder!" shouted Fullwood. "It must have cost him a pretty penny to arrange for this coach to be on hand!"

"Yes, rather!" grinned Jack Grey.

And then a number of strange shouts rang out from the rear—indignant shouts, angry shouts, alarmed shouts.

"Hi! Come back, you young idiots!"

"Stop!"

"What the deuce—"

"Come back, you young demons!"

The juniors stared back into the station yard, and they gave a series of gulps. They beheld a number of queerly-dressed characters, and even in that first glance they recognised a few of the well-known personalities belonging to the Pickwick Club.

Mr. Pickwick himself, stout and red, was standing helpless. Racing after the coach were Mr. Snodgrass, Mr. Jingle, Mr. Tupman, and even Sam Weller. Mingled with these picturesque characters were a number of keen-looking young men in plus-fours, ordinary tweeds and light overcoats.

"What the dickens is all this?" gasped Handforth, as he stared round.

Corcoran took a hasty glance.

"They look like characters from Dickens!" he chuckled. "Members of a film company, I imagine. Can't be anything else."

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Nipper, from the rear of the coach. "Then this coach is theirs?"

"Naturally!" yelled Corcoran.

"But didn't you arrange for it to be at the station?"

"I?" shouted Corcoran. "Great Scott, no! I didn't know the thing was there until I spotted it! Rather a good jape, eh?"

Nipper fairly gulped.

"What, you—you—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Corcoran.

He cracked his whip again, and the horses broke into a gallop. In the rear came the strangely assorted pursuers.

"Wait a minute!" gasped Reggie Pitt.

"You'd better stop, Corcoran!"

"Stop?" repeated the new fellow. "What on earth for?"

"This coach isn't yours—"

"What does that matter?" interrupted Corcoran. "Possession is nine points of the law, and we're all aboard! Which way to St. Frank's? Hang on, everybody!"

The audacity of this new boy took the breath out of the Removites. Had they

known the real truth, they wouldn't have piled on that coach so enthusiastically. But even in the excitement they were compelled to admit to themselves that Lionel Corcoran was an exceptionally cool customer.

Through the village they thundered, and people came out of the shops to look at them, and to stare in amazement. Everybody wondered what all the noise was about. In the rear the commotion was getting louder. Men were running their hardest; a few of them had commandeered a butcher's cart, and were in full chase.

"Go it!" roared Handforth enthusiastically. "By George! You're a ripper of a new chap! Buck up—they're after us!"

"Let's have another go on that post-horn!" urged Corcoran. "Might as well let St. Frank's know that we're on the way!"

Behind, the chase was becoming stern and grim. As a matter of fact, Lionel Corcoran's assumption was correct. An enterprising film company had arranged for that coach to be outside Bellton Station, and the members of the company had been taking some refreshment in the inn before "shooting" commenced. Bellton Station was very old-fashioned and picturesque, and it had been selected by the production manager after much trouble. Certainly the people in charge had never imagined that the coach-and-four would be seized by a crowd of schoolboys. But the ostler, of course, was to blame for having left his charge.

Another tearing noise from the post-horn, and Handforth, standing on the box, seemed to be in a very precarious position. At any moment he was liable to roll off. But he didn't care; he was putting all his efforts into this work.

"It's all right—we're gaining!" grinned Lionel, as he took another glance round. "Tally-ho for St. Frank's!"

"Absolutely!" murmured Archie, from inside the coach. "Not to say Yoicks! Good gad! I rather think there's going to be a spot of bother later on, laddies!"

"A spot!" said Travers languidly. "Well, well! I imagine, dear old fellow, that it will be a pretty large spot! Still, it's the new fellow's funeral!"

"Absolutely!" replied Archie. "But if this dashed coach does much more swaying we shall all go in the ditch—and then it'll be our funeral, too, what?"

CHAPTER 3.

Arriving in Style!



BOB CHRISTINE, of the Fourth, cocked his head on one side as he was crossing the Triangle at St. Frank's.

"What's that rummy noise?" he asked.

"Sounds like a cat having a fit," suggested Talmadge.

It was nearly time for the dinner bell, and most of the fellows in the Triangle were waiting handily near their own Houses, so that they could make a dash indoors at the first clang of the welcome sound. Bob Christine and Roddy Yorke and Charlie Talmadge were near the Modern House, where Buster Boots was chatting to Crowe and Webb and Bray.

"Shouldn't be surprised if those Remove fellows are up to something," said John Busterfield Boots. "A whole crowd of them went out just after lessons, and——"

"Listen!" broke in Clapson, of Study No. 3.

On the air, vague and distant, came a number of queer sounds. Intermingled with the noise of a cat in a fit were yells of laughter, the cracking of a whip, and the grinding of wheels.

"It's something coming up the lane!" shouted Armstrong, from the East House doorway.

There was a rush across the Triangle, and crowds of Fourth-Formers went out into the lane. A number of fags swarmed out, too, with a few odd Removites.

"My only hat!" ejaculated Bob Christine blankly.

The four-in-hand was galloping up towards the school, the coach swaying giddily from side to side. Most of the juniors on it were looking alarmed, but they felt, nevertheless, that Corcoran was to be relied upon. He seemed to know what he was doing; he handled those horses in a masterly way.

"Who's that on the box—with the reins?" asked Boots, staring.

"Goodness knows!" said Yorke. "Never seen the chap before!"

All eyes were fixed on the newcomer. The ordinary Remove fellows were easily recognised—Handforth, Pitt, Nipper and the rest. But the fellow with the reins, immaculately attired in Etons, with a shiny topper on the back of his head, was a stranger. None of the Fourth-Formers had even known that a new fellow was due to arrive. The Removites had only discovered it by accident—because of a chance word of Archie's.

"Hi! Look out, there!"

The fellow in the shiny topper was shouting at the top of his voice, and his shout was taken up by the others on the coach.

"Stand clear!"

"Make way, you fatheads—you'll get run over!"

"Mind your backs!" bellowed Handforth.

There was a stampede. The Fourth-Formers and the fags ran for it. Some scooted into the Triangle, others dodged back into the hedge. All of them looked startled.

For they had now seen a kind of procession in the rear of the coach—men running, others in a trap, some in a butcher's cart, still more chugging along in an old Ford car. They all seemed to be chasing the four-in-hand.

"Here, steady!" gasped Handforth, in sudden alarm. "Look out, Corcoran, you idiot! This is St. Frank's!"

"So I thought!" nodded Corcoran. "These big gates?"

"Yes! You'd better pull up——"

"Is there a big space inside?" yelled the new boy.

"There's the Triangle, and that's big enough——"

"Good egg!" grinned Corcoran. "In we go!"

Handforth and the others gasped afresh. There was bound to be trouble if Corcoran took the four-in-hand right into the Triangle. It was against all rules, for one thing, and, besides, what about the pursuers? They would come in, too, and then there would be the very dickens to pay! The juniors couldn't hope to escape the attention of prefects and masters.

But they were rather helpless in the matter.

Lionel Corcoran held the reins, and it was a risky business to jump off that rapidly moving coach. The juniors were compelled to hang on, whether they liked it or not.

"Steady!" shouted Nipper. "You'll never get round, Corcoran! It's a sharp turn——"

"Whoa!" gasped Handforth.

With extraordinary skill, Lionel Corcoran swung the leading horses round, and they went galloping through the big gateway, straight into the Triangle. The coach rocked and swayed on two wheels as it swung round; by bare inches the hubs were saved from coming in contact with the stone pillar. Then the coach was right in the Triangle, and Handforth was blowing terrific blasts on his horn.

The commotion was tremendous.

All the juniors were yelling, and now seniors had come running out, to find out what on earth the noise was about. Two or three of the prefects were carrying canes.

Worst of all, the headmaster himself appeared out of the cloisters, strolling towards Big Arch on his way back to his own house. He was chatting with Professor Sylvester Tucker, the science master. He came to a sudden halt, his expression one of pained amazement.

"Good gracious me!" he ejaculated blankly. "What is all this—this commotion?"

Dr. Malcolm Stafford was a kindly old gentleman as a rule, but he could be stern and firm when necessary. He stood there, near Big Arch, gazing in absolute amazement. His glasses had dropped from his nose, and his jaw had sagged slightly.

"Precisely!" said Professor Tucker firmly. "As I was saying, sir, at this period of the year meteors should be seen in large numbers. This year, in particular, there will be some interesting phenomena in the region of that constellation known as——"

"One moment, professor—please!" said the Head hurriedly.

"I beg your pardon?" said the professor. "I can assure you there is no need for alarm. None of these meteors——"

Professor Tucker, whose hobby was astronomy, rambled on, totally unconscious of the fact that something unusual was tak-

ing place, and that the headmaster had left his side. Dr. Stafford was now looking very grim and angry.

The four-in-hand, in the meantime, had swung past the steps of the West House, and hurtled along the Triangle to the Ancient House, and then Lionel found that he was at the apex of the big space.

"Look out for yourselves!" bawled Handforth, in alarm.

The coach swung round at the top of the Triangle, lifting on two wheels for a single horrid second. Then it thudded back again, and Lionel Corcoran pulled the horses to a standstill with a kind of flourish.

"How's that?" he said triumphantly.

"You—you madman!" said Nipper. "You might have had us all over!"

"A miss is as good as a mile!" grinned Corcoran. "Well, here we are! So this is St. Frank's? Well, they can't say that we haven't arrived in style!"

CHAPTER 4.

Trouble for the New Fellow!



B

EFORE Dr. Stafford could get anywhere near the coach, a fresh sensation burst upon the school.

A butcher's cart came dashing into the Triangle, closely followed by a farmer's trap and a Ford car. All of them were filled with excited men, and a few of these latter were picturesquely attired in mid-Victorian style.

"You confounded young idiots!" shouted a red-faced man in plus-fours, who was among the leaders.

He leapt out of the trap, ran across to the coach, and stood glaring up at Lionel Corcoran. The other strangers came swarming round, too, and some of them seized the horses' bridles.

"Get down from there!" went on the man in plus-fours, his voice hoarse with anger.

"All right, keep your hair on!" said Corcoran. "It was only a jape."

"What do you mean—a jape?" shouted the man. "My name's Bradley, and I'm production manager for the Invincible Film Company, and I'm in charge of this work. What do you mean by running off with our coach?"

"Awfully sorry, Mr. Bradley—no offence!" said Corcoran soothingly, as he got down from the box and faced the angry producer. "I thought it would be rather a joke to ride up to the school in the coach, you know. There was nobody with it, and on the spur of the moment——"

"That's enough!" interrupted Mr. Bradley hotly. "I'm going to see that you get punished for this idiotic so-called joke! I've never heard of such infernal nerve in all my life!"

"Yes, now I come to think of it, it was a bit nervy," said Corcoran thoughtfully. "Still, there was no real harm in it, was there?"

"No real harm!" spluttered Mr. Bradley. "What do you mean, confound you? I was just ready to start shooting."

"My hat!" put in Handforth. "A highwayman scene, eh?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you're trying to be funny, young man, I'm not in the humour to appreciate jokes!" said Mr. Bradley, turning on him with ferocity.

"Funny!" ejaculated Handforth. "But you said that you were going to start shooting——"

"He means taking pictures, old man," said Lionel Corcoran coolly. "'Shooting' is a term they use in the film world, you know."

One of the other men came up, looking relieved.

"Everything's all right, sir," he said, addressing Mr. Bradley. "I don't think there's any real harm done."

"That's not the point!" said the production manager. "These confounded boys——"

"Leave the others out of it," interrupted Corcoran. "It was my doing, sir."

The headmaster arrived at this moment, the crowds falling away before his approach in considerable haste. He was in time to hear the new fellow's words.

"Oh, so you are responsible?" he said angrily. "Who are you, and what is your name?"

"I'm the new fellow for St. Frank's, sir," replied Corcoran. "I didn't mean any harm, you know. Only a joke. My name's Corcoran—Lionel Corcoran, sir."

"Yes, I remember," said the Head sternly. "Am I to understand, Corcoran, that you seized this coach without authority?"

"It was only a bit of fun, sir."

"Never mind that!" interrupted the Head. "Did you seize this coach without authority?"

"Yes, sir."

"And who were the other boys who assisted you in this—this outrage?"

"No other boys, sir," replied Corcoran promptly. "I told them to jump aboard, and they naturally thought that I had hired the coach. They believed it to be mine. But why all the fuss?" he added, in astonishment. "I haven't done any harm, and it was only a bit of a lark——"

"I must tender you my apologies, sir, for this boy's outrageous behaviour," said the Head, turning stiffly to Mr. Bradley. "I hope you will understand that he will be severely punished for this ridiculous escapade."

Mr. Bradley grunted.

"No need to be too hard on the youngster, sir," he said. "I was a bit angry—and worried, too. But there's no real harm done, and it's only meant a little delay for us. We were boys ourselves once!" he added, with a twinkle in his eyes.

A murmur of approval went up from the crowds of juniors. Mr. Bradley was a sportsman. Having got over his anger, he was

capable of seeing the humour of the situation.

"Er—yes," said the Head hastily. "No doubt, sir. It is an indisputable fact that we were boys once. However, that is neither here nor there. Corcoran took an unwarrantable liberty, and you can rest assured that I shall punish him."

"Well, he deserves a tanning, but don't lay it on too thick, sir," said Mr. Bradley briskly. "Everybody ready? We might as well get back to the location."

There was some bustling and commotion, and Mr. Bradley and all his assistants departed from St. Frank's, followed by some laughter and cheering from the juniors. The coach was driven out, followed by the tradesmen's carts and the Ford. In less than a minute St. Frank's was looking itself again, and the main part of the excitement was over.

The bells in the various Houses had been sounding for dinner, but nobody had taken any notice. The headmaster turned to Lionel Corcoran, and looked at him very severely.

"I cannot possibly excuse this conduct on your part, Corcoran," he said. "You are a new boy, but it is perfectly obvious that you knew what you were doing. I am going to cane you."

"That's all right, sir," said Corcoran. "I was expecting it."

"Good gracious! Then you admit that you deliberately perpetrated this—this outrage, knowing that you would be punished?"

"Why, of course, sir," said Corcoran, in surprise. "But I thought that the game would be worth the candle. I'm a new chap at St. Frank's, and there's nothing like arriving with a flourish."

All the other fellows stared hard. Lionel Corcoran's nerve was stupendous. He did not seem to be at all awed by the headmaster's presence, or by the fact that he was to receive a swishing. Yet there was nothing impudent about him.

"Wilson, lend me your cane!" said Dr. Stafford in a cold voice.

Wilson of the Sixth surrendered his cane in some astonishment; and everybody else watched in wonder. So the headmaster was going to give Corcoran his swishing here—in the Triangle—on the spot!

It was so unusual that the juniors were startled. They had at least expected the Head to take Corcoran to his own study for punishment. But no. Dr. Stafford felt that it would be more fitting to deliver the swishing here. He was determined to teach this new boy a sharp lesson.



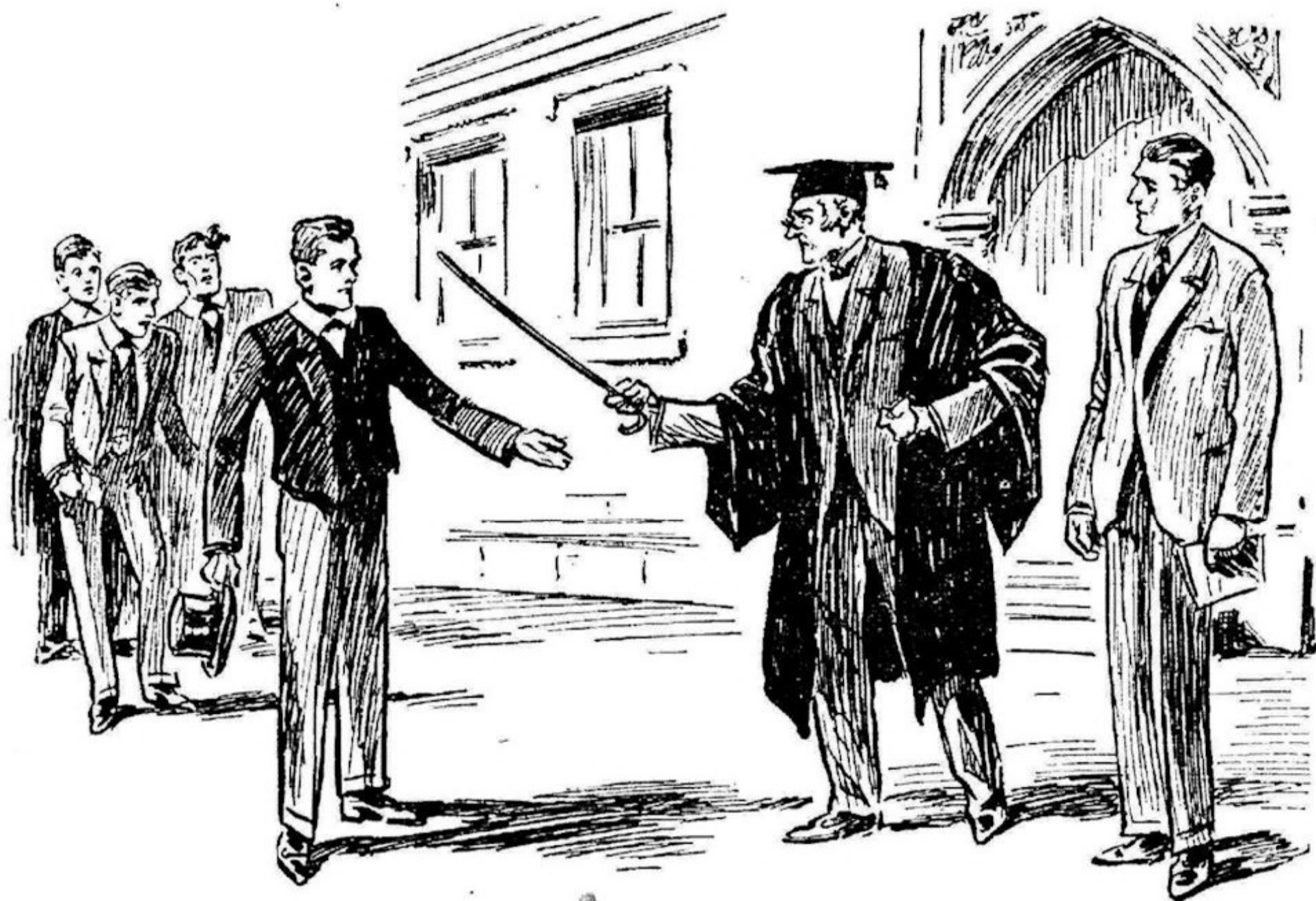
CHAPTER 5.

Corcoran—Of the Fourth!

OLD out your hand!" said Dr. Stafford curtly.

Lionel Corcoran held out his hand.

Swish!



"Hold out your hand!" said Dr. Stafford sternly. Lionel Corcoran did so; and received a rip-roaring six-hander. Corcoran was certainly something unique in new boys. He had only been at St. Frank's a few minutes and already he was getting the cane!

"The other!" said the Head.

Swish!

Without turning a hair, Lionel Corcoran accepted the punishment. The Head laid it on very thickly—a rip-roaring six-hander. When he had finished he was rather breathless, and he looked far more agitated than Corcoran.

"There!" he said sternly. "I hope that will be a lesson to you, my boy!"

"Yes, sir," said Corcoran in an even voice.

Dr. Stafford handed the cane back to Wilson, nodded curtly, and then walked away. The new fellow gently and tenderly rubbed his hands together.

"Well, that's that!" he murmured smoothly. "There's nothing like getting a thing over and done with. We're square now, and so we start level."

"My only sainted aunt!" said Handforth, staring. "You're a caution!"

The other juniors commenced crowding round, curious to make the acquaintance of this remarkable new fellow. Quite a few juniors had made an impression upon their arrival at St. Frank's, but seldom had a new boy arrived so spectacularly as Lionel Corcoran. It had all been done on the impulse, too, which made it the more meritorious. The junior school, in a solid body, was entirely in favour of Corcoran. He was a cheeky ass, no doubt, but he was made of the right stuff. The way he had taken his punishment had been worth quids to watch.

But before the juniors could really get near him Dr. Stafford came striding back.

"Now that this little matter is—ahem!—settled, Corcoran, you had better come with me," said the Head kindly. "You will have lunch with me in my house."

"Thanks awfully, sir!" said the new fellow.

He was perfectly sincere. He took this as a hint from the Head that the recent incident was over and forgotten. As he had said, things were now square.

So off he went with Dr. Stafford, much to the amusement and surprise of all the other juniors.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" said Buster Boots, scratching his head. "The Head swishes him and then invites him to lunch!"

"There'll be no holding him when he comes back!" grunted Handforth. "He'll be too big for his boots! I'm surprised at the Head!"

Clang-clang!

"We'd better go in!" said Nipper. "The bells have been ringing for a long time, and we're all late."

So they drifted away to their various Houses, suddenly conscious of the fact that they were very hungry. There was a nip in the November air which whetted their appetites.

"Well, Archie, your pal seems to be a novelty," remarked Nipper, as he went into the Ancient House with a number of other Removites.

"Absolutely!" said Archie Glenthorne. "My pal, what? Not exactly, laddie. I mean to say, I don't even know the blighter. Still, I've got to confess that he's a considerable sort of a lad."

After the meal was over lots of the juniors came out into the Triangle again, and they hung about waiting for Corcoran to return from the Head's house.

"Wonder which study he'll be shoved into?" said Handforth thoughtfully. "They'd better not try to put him into Study D!" he added aggressively. "There are too many of us in there already!"

"Yes, it would be much nicer for Church and McClure without you, old man," said Fullwood smoothly.

"Why, you silly ass——" began Handforth.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Handforth would probably have started an argument, but at that moment Lionel Corcoran appeared, strolling leisurely through Big Arch. A crowd of fellows immediately surrounded him. Removites and Fourth-Formers were mingled.

"Did you get a lecture?" asked Nipper.

"I got a good lunch—and that was better than any lecture," replied Corcoran. "No, children! The Head treated me as a pal. I was just like his long-lost brother. He even passed me the salt—twice! Before I came away we were positively hob-nobbing, and I nearly clapped him on the back."

"Ass!" said Nipper. "Well, it was decent of the Head to invite you to lunch—just to show that there was no ill-feeling. He's a good old sort at heart."

"With excellent muscles!" added Corcoran, carefully inspecting his hands. "I was so shaky when I started on the soup that I was on the point of giving it up as a bad job and asking for a sponge."

"Never mind about the soup!" said Handforth sternly. "You've had lunch with the Head, and I suppose he's told you which study you're going into?"

"Yes," nodded Corcoran. "He told me that."

"Well, which study is it?"

"Number twelve."

"Eh?" said Handforth, with a start. "Number twelve?"

"Yes."

"What rot!" said Edward Oswald. "The Remove studies are lettered—not numbered."

"Well, I'm not interested in the Remove," said Corcoran coolly. "I'm in the Fourth."

"What!"

"Aren't all you fellows in the Fourth?"

"We're Removites," said Nipper. "My name's Hamilton—generally known as Nipper. I'm skipper of the Remove. We understood from Archie Glenthorne that you were a new Remove chap."

"By the way," said Corcoran, "which of your merchants is Archie Glenthorne? I've been rather keen on meeting him——"

"Oh, he's taking a nap, I expect!" interrupted Handforth impatiently. "Well, I'm blessed! It's a swindle, you chaps! This—this fathead is only a giddy Fourth-Former!"

Buster Boots pushed forward.

"I say, is this a fact?" he asked briskly. "Are you in the Fourth, Corcoran?"

"Yes."

"Then put it there!" said Boots, extending his hand. "My name's Boots. I'm the captain of the Fourth. Welcome to St. Frank's, old man!"

"Thanks!" said Corcoran, as the Removites looked on in some disappointment. "And since you're so kind and considerate perhaps you'll escort me to Study No. 12?"

The Removites suddenly lost a lot of their interest in Lionel Corcoran. This new fellow was an exceptional sort, and it was a great disappointment to hear that he was going into the Fourth—the more so as they had been under the impression that he was booked for the Remove.

John Busterfield Boots was looking startled, however.

"Study No. 12?" he repeated, frowning. "Are you sure of this?"

"Positive."

"You haven't made a mistake about the number?"

"No mistake at all," said Corcoran. "There are two fellows in Study No. 12 now, I believe—named Armstrong and——"

"Griffith?" suggested somebody.

"That's the name!" nodded Corcoran. "Armstrong and Griffith. A weird sort of merchant named Goole told me their names. Goole, I understand, is my Housemaster."

"Oh, my goodness!" groaned Buster Boots. "He's in the East House!"

"Poor chap!" said Percy Bray, shaking his head.

Buster Boots and his immediate friends were very sad. They had naturally assumed, on hearing that Corcoran was in the Fourth, that he would be in their own House—the Modern House.

It was indeed a tragedy to learn that this corking new chap was to be shoved into the Battalion of Wash-Outs!



CHAPTER 6.

Among the Duds!

THE East House at St. Frank's was known by various impolite and insulting terms.

It was frequently referred to as the "Duds' Quarters," or the "Slackers' Paradise."

Both in the senior school and the junior school, the East House was distinguished for its abundance of nonentities. None of the really "big" fellows belonged to the East House. It was a place of no importance. It was generally regarded by the rest of the school as a sort of make-weight, which the school could very well do without.

Perhaps some of the blame lay with Mr. Barnaby Goole, the Housemaster. This gentleman was rather slow and old-fashioned, and he was slack, too. He went about in his

own little sphere, interfering with nobody, and taking very little interest in the doings of his House except for the recognised routine.

Then, too, the House had no able prefects. It was the stronghold of Kenmore and Sinclair and Parkin—all Sixth-Formers of questionable character. Even the Fifth could not boast of any first-class men. The East House Fifth-Formers were under the influence of Grayson and Shaw—rotters who were hand-in-glove with Kenmore and his set.

And when it came down to the Fourth, the East House section of the Fourth was practically beneath contempt. Timothy Armstrong was supposed to be the leader; but Timothy Armstrong was a big, blustering chump, who had a large idea of his own importance and a fine conceit of himself, but who possessed no real ability.

Yet there were a number of very decent fellows in the East House, really. The trouble was, there had never been a leader. And so, term after term, the House had gone down. It was fairly in the doldrums, and nobody seemed to care what happened.

Buster Boots, the captain of the Fourth, belonged to the Modern House, and he had done his best to put some spirit into his East House Form-fellows. But Boots was rather fed-up with the game.

As for sports, the East House might just as well have been non-existent. The Junior Eleven hadn't drawn a player from the East House for many terms, and the seniors were in very much the same state.

So it was with some little consternation that the juniors heard that Lionel Corcoran was definitely in the East House Fourth. The new fellows found the juniors looking at him strangely—even sympathetically.

"What's the matter with you fellows?" asked Corcoran, in wonder.

"Nothing," replied Reggie Pitt. "But we're a bit sorry for you, that's all."

"Sorry for me? Why?"

"Because they've shoved you into the East House."

Corcoran looked round, inspecting the various Houses.

"What's the difference?" he asked at length. "They all look very much alike."

"So do boxes of cigars, but the only way to judge them is by their contents," said Nipper. "I don't want to say anything against the East House, but you won't find yourself in very distinguished company, old man."

"They've shoved you amongst the duds!" said Handforth, with genuine regret. "Poor old chap! You'll have an awful time! They're dead in the East House—absolutely deceased as they walk about! They're just a lot of mummies, and they were embalmed years ago."

"That sounds cheerful," remarked Corcoran.

"The truth is, old man, they're not enterprising," said Reggie Pitt. "Of course, the Fourth, as a whole, is a bunch of duffers —"

"Oh, is it?" interrupted Boots curily.

"Prize duffers!" nodded Reggie Pitt. "This term they're not even any good at the footer! The Junior Eleven is practically composed of Remove fellows—and yet, strictly speaking, the Junior Eleven ought to be selected from the juniors of all Houses. But Nipper naturally chooses his best men."

"And all the best men are in the Remove!" said Handforth, with relish.

"Steady—steady!" chuckled Nipper, as Boots and the other Fourth-Formers commenced shouting. "We don't want to start a row in the Triangle."

"Certainly not!" said Corcoran. "As I understand it, the East House is a dead hole, eh?"

"Dead as mutton!" said Handforth.

"Good!"

"Eh?"

"I said 'Good!'" remarked Corcoran coolly. "It's the very House for me to go into."

"Well, of course, we all have our own idiosyncrasies," said Reggie Pitt. "This is yours, I suppose?"

"It's not an idiosyncrasy—it's just logic," said Lionel Corcoran. "There doesn't seem to be much chance for me in the Remove. Too many brainy chaps in that Form already. But in the East House I shall have a chance. Naturally I shall make it my life's work to buck the place up, and to put it on the map."

"Well, that's one way of looking at it," smiled Nipper.

"Oh, you'll put it on the map, will you?" said Freeman, of Study No. 16 in the East House. "Hi, you chaps! Where's Armstrong? He's our leader!"

"And he isn't here!" murmured Travers. "Exactly! That's just like Armstrong! Oh, a wonderful leader!"

Freeman turned red.

"Well, we're not going to have this new chap bouncing about in the East House!" he said darkly. "If he tries any of his rot, we'll soon squash him!"

"Better and better!" said Corcoran, nodding. "There's nothing like a little opposition to make the fur fly!"

"You ought to do well in the East House," said Nipper, with conviction. "I'm not sure that your point of view isn't the right one, Corcoran. They can do with you over there."

"If there's any fighting to be done, I'm the man for the job," said Corcoran coolly.

"And when it comes to a matter of generalship, I dare say I shall come up to the scratch. I come of a fighting family, you know."

"Is your father a boxer, then?" asked Handforth, with interest.

"My father was a major-general in the Army," replied Corcoran quietly. "Both he and my mother were killed during the War."

There was a short silence.

"Oh, I say—awfully sorry!" ejaculated Handforth. "I didn't mean—"

"That's all right," interrupted Corcoran. "You weren't to know, old man. My uncle is a colonel, too; he's my guardian."

"Colonel Corcoran!" ejaculated Nipper, with a start. "By Jove, I knew that your name was familiar, somehow! Do you mean Colonel Corcoran, of the famous Blue Crusaders?"

"That's the man!" said Lionel, with a nod.

"What!" went up a general yell of excitement.

"Hallo, hallo! What's the matter?" asked Lionel, looking round.

"By George!" roared Handforth. "Did you hear that, you chaps? This new fellow is the nephew of Colonel Corcoran, of the Blue Crusaders!"

"Well, well!" said Travers smoothly. "We've had one of the world's greatest celebrities in our midst all this time, and we didn't even know it!"



CHAPTER 7.

Corcoran, of the Blue Crusaders!

SUDDEN wave of great excitement swept through the Triangle. The news spread like wildfire,

and bigger and bigger crowds came swarming round the new boy.

Lionel Corcoran—of the Blue Crusaders!

Corcoran had made an excellent impression already, but this was nothing compared with the new sensation. The very fact that he was Colonel Corcoran's nephew gave him an added importance. He was suddenly surrounded by a great glamour.

He found the fellows looking at him with excited interest, and with a sort of awe. The Blue Crusaders had always been a famous fighting team, but just recently there had been a lot of startling reports in the papers concerning the celebrated professional club.

As it happened, the Remove had been very much interested in professional football during the recent weeks. They had helped to revive the flagging interest of the Bannington townspeople in their own Third Division club.

Of late Bannington Town had had the competition of the Greyhound Arena, and it was largely owing to the efforts of the juniors that an interest in football had been revived. But Bannington Town was still practically at the bottom of the Third Division table, and now that the St. Frank's juniors had ceased their activities, the interest in the club was liable to diminish, unless, of course, Bannington Town bucked up and performed a few wonders.

St. Frank's had read the reports concerning the Blue Crusaders, the world-renowned Second Division club, of Browton, in the north, and had been very interested.

"Do you know anything about the Blue Crusaders?" asked Handforth eagerly. "I mean, do you know the players?"

"Well, I've got to admit I don't know them particularly well," said Corcoran. "I've met

them, of course—Fatty Fowkes and Dave Moran and Tich Harborough, and the rest —"

"Tich Harborough," said Nipper. "That's only a nickname, isn't it?"

"His real name is the Hon. Tom Silward Harborough," said Corcoran. "His pater is Lord Shevingham—a famous Old Blue."

"A Corinthian, too," nodded Nipper. "Your uncle is closely connected with the Blue Crusaders Club, isn't he?"

Lionel Corcoran grinned.

"Pretty closely!" he agreed. "My uncle owns all the shares in the club."

"All of them?"

"Every one," nodded Lionel. "In fact, the club belongs to my uncle completely. It's his."

"Yes, that's what I read!" said Handforth excitedly. "Colonel Corcoran owns the Blue Crusaders—lock, stock and barrel! And this chap is Colonel Corcoran's nephew!"

"Gaze upon me!" said Corcoran, turning slowly round, after the fashion of a mannequin displaying a Paris gown.

"Ass!" chuckled Reggie Pitt. "Cheese it, Corcoran!"

"I thought you wanted to look at me," said the new fellow. "Goodness only knows why, though! I can assure you that I'm human."

"The papers have been full of the Blue Crusaders of late," said Nipper. "Is it true that they've lost their ground—Moor Field?"

Lionel Corcoran frowned, and suddenly became very serious.

"I was in Browton last week," he said. "But practically all this trouble started after I had left. There's something very rummy about it. My uncle has gone back to Browton—to see what it all means. He's not very well just now—in fact, he's so seedy that I'm worrying about him."

There were a few murmurs of sympathy.

"I wanted to go back with him, but he wouldn't let me," continued Corcoran. "It was arranged that I should come to St. Frank's to-day, so I came. But I can tell you I'm a bit uneasy. My uncle worries too much about the club."

"Well, judging by the reports he has every reason to worry," said Fullwood. "The Blue Crusaders were mixed up in a lot of rioting last Friday—and I read somewhere that the whole crowd of players were arrested on Saturday night, after the match."

"There must have been some mistake about that—they were released almost at once," said Corcoran. "When my uncle comes back he'll tell me all the facts. But it seems to be true that the Blues have lost their ground. And it's a mystery to me."

If it was a mystery to Lionel Corcoran, it was a double mystery to all the St. Frank's fellows. They had most of them read the startling paragraphs in the newspapers; how the Blue Crusaders had found a gang of workmen at Moor Field, their famous enclosure; how they had thrown the men out, and had then held the ground, aided by a lot of their supporters. Eventually a Second

Division fixture had been played on the Saturday afternoon, after a lot of trouble. But in the latest reports it was definitely stated that Moor Field had been bought by a big American tool company, and that the Crusaders had lost it for good.

Nobody knew exactly what was going to happen now, and there was a lot of interest taken in the subject. Everybody throughout the length and breadth of the country, in fact, was discussing the fortunes of the Blue Crusaders. It was the sensation of the day—the general topic of conversation.

And here, in the East House Fourth, was the nephew—the heir—of the man who owned the famous Blues!

"There's one thing I can tell you," said Lionel thoughtfully. "My uncle has admitted that he has been neglecting business for a good few weeks—and he has become forgetful, too. He's been so confoundedly

seedy that he has taken very little interest in his affairs. So perhaps he's really to blame for all that has happened. I shan't know definitely until he comes back."

"It's a pity the Blue Crusaders are so jolly far off!" said Handforth, with a snort. "What's the good of us taking an interest in them? Browton is hundreds of miles away!"

"They come sometimes to the south—to play away matches," said Corcoran.

"Yes, but nowhere near here," argued Handforth. "If Bannington Town were a Second Division Club it would be different—the Blues would come to Bannington once in a season, anyhow. But there isn't a Second Division club for miles and miles!"

"You'd better ask Corcoran very nicely, and he'll probably suggest to his uncle that the Blue Crusaders should be shifted to the south of England!" said Nipper, with gentle sarcasm. "It's a pity you can't ever see them, Handy!"

"Are you trying to be funny?" demanded Handforth, glaring.

"In my feeble way, I thought I had succeeded!" murmured Nipper.

At that moment Mr. Horace Pycraft arrived on the scene. Mr. Pycraft was the master of the Fourth.

"Ah, so you are the new boy?" he said, adjusting his glasses and inspecting Corcoran with interest. "Your name is Corcoran, I believe?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then come with me, young man!" said Mr. Pycraft. "I wish to have a few words with you in my study before afternoon lessons commence. I trust that I shall be able to place you fairly high in the Form."

"I was hoping that the top seat had already been dusted for me, sir," said Corcoran gravely.

He went off with Mr. Pycraft, and the other juniors chuckled. It was the universal opinion that Lionel Corcoran was a distinct acquisition to the Junior School at St. Frank's.



CHAPTER 8.

Corcoran's Way!

CURIOSLY enough, the new boy found himself at the top of the Form when afternoon lessons commenced in the Fourth class-room. Mr. Pycraft had examined him, and had promptly placed him at the top—much to the indignation of the rest of the Form.

But Mr. Horace Pycraft was very much of a toady; he knew that Corcoran was a celebrity, and he wanted to please this new fellow. Later on, if Corcoran proved unworthy of his high position in the Form, he could be discreetly shifted down a position or two.

It was characteristic of Armstrong that Study No. 12 should be deserted at tea-time. During the morning Armstrong and Griffith had decided to go over to tea at the River House School with some friends. And the arrival of Lionel Corcoran had made no difference to Armstrong's plans.

Yet it would have been easy enough to stay behind, and to welcome the newcomer into Study 12 in a fitting way. But then, Timothy Armstrong was no leader, and in his own paltry fashion he believed that it would do the new boy good to leave him alone for a bit. Armstrong considered that it wouldn't have been wise to take too much notice of him to start with. It might give him swelled head.

So Corcoran cheerily accepted an invitation from Buster Boots, and his first tea at St. Frank's was partaken of in the Modern House, in Study No. 6.

Before tea, however, there had been a good deal of laughter out in the Triangle. The new fellow had occasioned it. Lessons over, Corcoran had a good look round the school while the daylight lasted, escorted by an enthusiastic throng of Fourth-Formers.

As they came back into the Triangle, through the West Arch, they beheld Hand-

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forth punting a football about near the gymnasium.

"Handy's an ass!" commented Bob Christine. "He'll lose that ball, the same as he lost the other one."

"Which other one?" asked Corcoran politely.

"Oh, it happened the other day," said Christine. "Handy was fooling about with his new football in the Triangle, here, and he kicked it into our lobby."

"The East House lobby?"

"Yes," said Bob. "Naturally, old Pycraft was coming along at the moment—masters always do come along at such moments—and he collared the giddy thing. He shoved it into his study, and won't part with it."

"Handy's going the right way to work to get another football nabbed," said Boots. "Not that it would matter much—it's an ancient-looking article."

"But even old footballs are pretty tough," said Corcoran.

Fatty Little, of the West House, was passing at the moment, and Bob Christine grinned.

"I wonder if that old football of Handy's would stand Fatty's weight being dumped down upon it?" he said, with a chuckle.

"No need to wonder!" replied Corcoran promptly. "We'll soon see."

"Eh?" ejaculated Bob. "But I was only joking—"

"And a jolly good joke, too!" nodded Corcoran. "Come on—lend a hand, you fellows. Six of us will be enough. Don't forget that the Fourth has got to keep its end up. Down with the Remove! That's our motto!"

The other Fourth-Formers grinned, and half a dozen of them were willing enough to assist this new chap—who seemed to make all his decisions on the spur of the moment.

Corcoran tapped Fatty Little on the shoulder, and beamed into his face.

"Just a moment, old man," he said kindly.

"Come this way, will you?"

"Rather!" said Fatty eagerly.

As it happened, Handforth and the football were near the school tuckshop now, and Fatty naturally fell into a little error. Lionel Corcoran went on in advance, nodded cheerfully to Handforth, and picked up the ancient football.

"Yours?" said Corcoran politely.

"Yes!" replied Handforth. "You leave it alone, you silly new Fourth-Former—"

"Keep your hair on!" said Lionel, as he carefully set the football on the ground.

"Ready, you chaps?"

"Yes!" yelled the Fourth-Formers.

They whirled Fatty Little up suddenly—unexpectedly.

Bump! Bang!

There was a thud and a violent concussion. Fatty Little sat in the Triangle, looking bewildered.

"Thought so!" said Corcoran, shaking his head. "Even the best of footballs won't stand that sort of treatment."

He and the other Fourth-Formers strolled

off towards the other side of the Triangle, as though the matter were ended. Handforth stared blankly, and Fatty Little roared with pain and indignation.

"Hi!" bellowed Handforth suddenly. "You Fourth-Formers have busted my football!"

Corcoran turned.

"Yes, I believe we have," he said solemnly.

"What's the idea?" bawled Handforth.

"Nothing much—we were only settling a little argument," replied Lionel. "Sorry about the ball, Handy."

He walked on, and the expression on Handforth's face was so funny that a roar of laughter went up—from Fourth-Formers and Removites alike.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"For the love of Samson!" murmured Travers. "This new chap is a cool customer!"

Before Handforth could recover himself all the Fourth-Formers had vanished. Lionel, in fact, remembering what his companions had just told him, was making his way to Mr. Pycraft's study.

He tapped on the door and entered.

"Ah, Corcoran!" said Mr. Pycraft. "I am pleased with the way you applied yourself to work this afternoon. I realise how difficult it is for a new boy to settle down."

"Oh, I generally take things easily, sir," replied Corcoran. "That's why I've come here, sir."

"I don't think I understand," said Mr. Pycraft.

"I've come to take Handforth's football away, sir," explained Corcoran.

Mr. Pycraft frowned.

"Really, Corcoran—" he began.

"I understand you confiscated it, sir," went on the new fellow. "Handforth is a bit upset about it—particularly as another football of his has just been busted by accident. Well, perhaps it wasn't by accident—but it was busted, all the same. May I take it, sir?"

Mr. Pycraft frowned; he didn't like giving up that football. Yet, at the same time, he wanted to be on the best possible terms with Corcoran. He hesitated a moment, and then took the ball out of a cupboard.

"Well, Corcoran, I'll let you have it, but I doubt if I would do this for anybody else," he said impressively. "When you return it to Handforth, do not fail to assure him that I shall confiscate it for good if he ever kicks it into the East House lobby again."

"Yes, sir," said Corcoran. "Thank you, sir!"

He had evidently spoken the truth when he remarked that he took things easily. He had certainly taken that football with supreme ease. He tucked it under his arm, and with twinkling eyes he marched outside into the Triangle.

After all, he had, in a spirit of fun, burst Handforth's other football, so it was only right that he should perform this friendly little service.

He emerged into the Triangle with the football still tucked under his arm, and he

found Handforth arguing hotly with Church and McClure, and with several other Removites.

"If you're going to punch the new chap in the eye, Handy, now's your chance!" Fullwood was saying. "He's just come out."

Handforth twirled round, and then with a roar he charged at Lionel Corcoran. But his gaze was fixed feverishly upon the football under Corcoran's arm.



CHAPTER 9.

Becoming Popular!

"EASY — easy!" said Lionel, as Handforth rushed up. "Sorry about that footer of yours, Handforth, but by way of compensation——"

"I'll get my own compensation!" roared Handforth, as he grabbed the football. "By George! Got it! Now I'll show you something, you funny East House fathead!"

"But wait!" urged Lionel. "That ball isn't mine——"

But Handforth took no notice. He ran off, shoved the football into McClure's hands, and then made a rush at Fatty Little, who was idling round the school tuckshop.

"Just a minute, Fatty!" said Handforth briskly.

"Hi! Look out!" ejaculated Fatty Little. "I'm sore——"

"That's nothing!" said Handforth. "Come on, you fellows—three or four of you! Mac, shove that football on the ground!"

McClure did as he was directed, and the innocent Fatty Little, much to his helpless rage, was seized by Handforth and three or four of the other Removites.

"Those silly Fourth-Formers busted my football—so I'll bust theirs!" grinned Handforth. "Come on! Fatty's a good buster!"

"Leggo!" hooted Fatty Little wildly. "You silly asses——"

Bump!

Fatty bounced amazingly, and the football remained intact.

"Next time!" panted Handforth.

Bump! Bang!

There was no mistake about it this time. The football collapsed, and Fatty Little again sat in the Triangle, howling at the top of his voice. Just then Lionel Corcoran strolled up, an expression of mild amusement on his face.

"That's what you get for being funny!" said Handforth triumphantly.

"Well, of course, you can do what you like with the football," said Lionel, with a careless wave of his hand. "But Mr. Pycraft told me to tell you that he'll confiscate it for good if you ever kick it into the East House again."

"Wha-a-at?" gurgled Handforth.

"It's yours, old man," nodded Corcoran. "I went and rescued it for you, you know. Rather a pity to spoil it like that. Such a good football, too!"

And Lionel, with another nod, strolled off amidst the yelling laughter of the Fourth-Formers, who were appreciating the joke to the full.

Handforth turned a sickly colour, and his eyes looked dazed.

"My football!" he breathed. "Then—then they're both busted!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You'll do, Corcoran, old man!" chuckled Buster Boots, clapping the new fellow on the back, and after that they went in to tea.

It wasn't until quite late in the evening that Corcoran encountered Timothy Armstrong.

It was in the East House Common-room, and quite a number of Fourth-Formers were present. Buster Boots and Bob Christine and a good few other Modern House juniors had come in with Corcoran, and they found Armstrong looking very important and positively strutting about.

Armstrong was big, burly and aggressive. He was very much of a wind-bag, and nobody really took any notice of him.

"Is this the chap I want to see?" asked Corcoran, nodding towards Armstrong.

"Yes, he's Armstrong," said Buster Boots. "Armstrong, this is Corcoran. I don't know whether you've met him yet."

Timothy Armstrong looked at the new fellow with disdain.

"I'm not in the habit of being too familiar with new kids," he said pompously. "As soon as you shake down, Corcoran, I might have a few words with you now and again."

"That's very kind of you—but what about a few words now?" asked Corcoran.

If Armstrong had been as aggressive as he pretended to be, he would have done something to squash the new fellow. As it was, he was merely taken aback.

"Now?" he repeated blusteringly.

"No time like the present," nodded Corcoran. "About the sports, for example. I've been hearing some very bad reports, Armstrong."

"What the deuce do you mean?"

"Serious reports, in fact," went on Corcoran. "You're the leader of the juniors in this House, aren't you?"

"Yes, I am."

"Then you've been leading everybody the wrong way," said Corcoran. "No offence, old man—but truth is truth. I understand that there's not a single East House fellow in the Junior Eleven. Is that right?"

"Hang you! I'm not going to answer your confounded questions!" roared Armstrong.

"Is it right?" insisted Corcoran.

"Yes!" shouted Armstrong, completely flustered.

"Then why aren't there any East House fellows in the Junior Eleven?" demanded Corcoran. "By the look of them, they're hefty enough, and it's only a question of training and sticking to it."

"Are you trying to pick a quarrel with me?" demanded Armstrong furiously. "I'm not going to stand this sort of dictation from a new kid! Mind your own beastly business, Corcoran!"

"But I'm rather interested in football, as you may know, and I'd like to see our House supreme——"

"You'll either shut up, or I'll knock you down!" bellowed Armstrong. "I'm the leader here, and I don't stand cheek from anybody!"

"You're the leader, are you?" said Corcoran, with steely calmness. "Can you tell me, off hand, what you've been leading in of late? Have you worked any japes on the Remove fellows? I understand they've played a good many practical jokes on you chaps. What about a little retaliation?"

"Hear, hear!" murmured the crowd.

"Good old Corcoran!"

"It's about time we bucked up in this House!"

There were a good many comments. Timothy Armstrong was startled as he heard them. He was staggered to find that the juniors of his own House were approving of this new fellow's "nerve." He quite overlooked the fact that Lionel Corcoran had come to St. Frank's with a glamour of fame round him. He had brought a name into the Fourth. He was Corcoran of the Blue Crusaders! And all the East House fellows felt that he was worthy of their support.

"We don't want to talk about knocking one another down," said Lionel soothingly. "We'd better get together, Armstrong. I'm a peaceful sort of fellow, but I like to see plenty of life in a House. When I was at Redcliffe, not long ago, I was always leading the chaps into japes, and we were keen on sports, too. Well, why shouldn't the East House be supreme? It may be a pretty long job, but there's plenty of time ahead of us, and if we only stick at it——"

"Rot!" interrupted Armstrong rudely.

"Is it rot to be ambitious about one's House?"

"You've got too much to say for a new chap!" blustered Armstrong. "And I'm giving you fair warning, Corcoran! I'm fed-up with you! If you talk any more of your rot, I'll knock you down!"

Lionel Corcoran shrugged his shoulders.

"It all depends upon what you call rot," he replied. "Personally, I think it's rather a good idea for us to work up a sporting spirit in this House——"

Crash!

Without warning, Armstrong brought his right fist round, and sent it thudding into Lionel Corcoran's face. The new boy staggered, slithered back, and toppled over to the floor!



CHAPTER 10.

The New Leader!

HERE was an immediate uproar.

Corcoran picked himself up, felt his face tenderly, and then dusted himself down. He was as cool

as ice. Timothy Armstrong was standing there, flushed, hot, and furious. And he was rather taken aback by Corcoran's cool demeanour.

"That's what you get for talking back at me!" he said thickly.

"I rather think," said Corcoran, "that there's only one way of settling this little affair, Armstrong. We'll have a fight, if you don't mind."

"A—a fight!" ejaculated Armstrong, startled.

"Just a little private mill of our own," nodded Corcoran.

A yell went up from everybody in the Common-room.

"A fight—a fight!"

"Well, Armstrong jolly well asked for it!"

"Serves him right!"

Armstrong backed away.

"Hang you!" he shouted. "I'm not going to fight you! I don't fight with new kids!"

"No?" said Lionel, stepping forward, and flipped Armstrong across the face with the back of his fingers. "Will you fight now?"

Armstrong winced under the stinging cut.

"Yes, confound you!" he grated chokingly. "And I'll show you your place, too. You—you beastly new kid! I'm the leader in this House!"

He peeled off his jacket, and Corcoran followed his example. There were shouts everywhere, and the excitement was tremendous. Yet the majority of those juniors were all in favour of Corcoran. They never had had any sympathy with Armstrong, anyhow, and his present behaviour was boorish, to say the least of it. Corcoran would have been a worm if he hadn't challenged Armstrong to a fight.

The news spread, and before two minutes had elapsed Handforth & Co. burst in, and then Nipper and Watson and Tregellis-West arrived, followed by Reggie Pitt and Travers and Fullwood, and a few others.

"Where's the fight?" demanded Handforth briskly. "I'll be referee——"

"You'll be quiet!" interrupted Buster Boots. "I'm referee here! If you silly Removites want to watch, you can watch. But don't butt in!"

"Buster's right, Handy," said Church. "It's their affair!"

"Oh, well, I suppose it is!" admitted Handforth reluctantly. "But look here, Corcoran. You'd better buck up—it's getting jolly late."

"The fight won't take long," replied Corcoran calmly.

"About ten seconds!" snorted Armstrong. "By then you'll be senseless!"

But he didn't like the look of Lionel Corcoran's muscles; neither did he like the look of Corcoran's coolness. There was something very calm and confident about the new boy's manner.

Armstrong himself felt that he was acting strongly; he told himself that he was making a fine showing as a determined leader. He was blind to the truth—just as he was blind to the antagonism of ninety per cent of the spectators.



Handforth placed the football on the ground and then advanced towards Fatty Little. "Grab him!" roared Handy, and Fatty was seized by a number of Removites. Bump! Fatty descended on the ball, then bounced up. But the leather was still intact. "Try it again!" shouted Handforth.

"Time!" sang out Bob Christine, watch in hand.

A rough-and-ready ring was formed, and then Armstrong and Corcoran faced one another—with bare fists. There was no time for gloves. The crowd pressed round, eager and excited.

"Now's your chance, Corcoran!" shouted Handforth. "Knock this big fathead out, and you'll be leader of the East House juniors! It's about time they had a new leader, too!"

"Hear, hear!" went up a general shout.

"Are all you fellows siding with the new kid?" howled Armstrong wildly. "What's the good of me fighting if you're all against me?"

"Get on with the washing, and don't jaw so much!" said Boots. "You provoked this fight, Armstrong, so you'd better carry on with it."

"Time!" sang out Christine again.

Armstrong, confident of his own powers, rushed forward, his fist flaying the air like a windmill. Corcoran stepped quickly aside, his guard came up, and Armstrong's random blows were swept away.

Crash!

Corcoran's fist thudded upon Armstrong's nose, and the East House leader staggered, rocking on his heels.

Biff!

Before he could recover, Corcoran's knuckles crashed against his chin, and he went clean over.

"Go it, Corcoran!"

"That's the style, old man!"

"On the ball, Blue Crusaders!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You're whacked, Armstrong!"

Armstrong staggered to his feet, his face aglow with rage and fear. For in the first minute Corcoran had plainly proved that he was a forceful fighter. Furthermore, he knew a tremendous lot about boxing. Handforth and Nipper and the others were watching with keen, expert interest.

"It's not a fight at all," said Handforth. "Corcoran's got him groggy already."

"The sooner it's over, the better!" said Nipper. "There'll be a prefect here in no time."

Armstrong was on his feet again now, and he made another blind rush. Corcoran had expected a scrap of this kind, and he was ready. He had no real grudge against Armstrong, but he felt that it was necessary for him to prove his worth. He had already made up his mind that he would become the leader of the East House juniors; he would buck things up generally. So it was very necessary for him to beat Timothy Armstrong

in pitched battle. And it would be all the more to his credit if he got the job over quickly.

Crash! Biff! Thud!

Like lightning, Corcoran's blows went home—one on the chest, another on the point of Armstrong's chin, a third on Armstrong's left eye. The East House leader staggered about drunkenly, and not one of his own blows had got home. Corcoran hadn't even been touched.

Armstrong made a last effort, dizzy as he was—for he was no coward. He blundered in, panting, gasping, and nearly choking with rage. He gave Corcoran the very opening he needed.

Crash!

It was a knock-out! Armstrong sagged at the knees, and sprawled over backwards, to lie on the floor motionless.

Then, before any of the juniors could make a comment, before they could move, the door suddenly burst open.

"Cave!" breathed somebody.

Mr. Horace Pycraft strode in. And the juniors were amazed when he refrained from making any comment on the scene. Mr. Pycraft's face was grave, his eyes were troubled. For once he looked even kindly.

"Corcoran!" he said, in a solemn voice.

"Yes, sir?"

"It is my painful duty—that is to say, the headmaster has requested me to hand you this telegram, Corcoran," said Mr. Pycraft quietly. "It has only just arrived, and the headmaster sent it direct to me. Perhaps—perhaps it would be better for you to read it yourself."

There was such a world of solemnity in Mr. Pycraft's voice that a pin might have been heard to drop in the Common-room.



CHAPTER 11.

Bad News!

LIONEL CORCORAN moved forward, rolling his sleeves down as he did so. His face had lost its flush, for there was, perhaps, a suspicion of the truth in his mind. He took the telegram from Mr. Pycraft's hands, and Mr. Pycraft refrained from looking at him.

"Read it, Corcoran!" he said huskily.

The new boy took the pinkish form, opened it out, and read the words. Then he drew his breath in sharply, and his face became ashen. But in a moment he had recovered himself.

"Thank you, sir," he said, very quietly.

"I would like, Corcoran, to express my sympathy," said Mr. Pycraft. "This is indeed a tragic first day for you at St. Frank's. If you are in need of advice or help, please come to me."

The juniors listened in a dull kind of way; they had never heard Mr. Pycraft speak in

such kindly tones before. They were startled, too, by the whole dramatic occurrence.

Lionel Corcoran was reading the telegram again, and these were the words that swam and danced before his eyes:

"Headmaster, St. Frank's College, Bellton, Sussex. Please inform Lionel Corcoran that his uncle suddenly died late this evening. I will telephone at ten o'clock. Shevingham."

It was a shock, but not such a shock as it might have been. Lionel Corcoran knew that his uncle had been very unwell of late; when he had gone back to Browton, at the end of the previous week, he had looked a broken man. So this news, tragic as it was, did not come as a stunning blow.

"In the circumstances, I shall not—ahem!—make any inquiries regarding this disgraceful scene!" said Mr. Pycraft, with a slight return of his usual manner, as he surveyed the Common-room. "I must insist, however, that all of you shall be quiet. Corcoran has just received the tragic news that his uncle is dead. That is all I have to say."

And Mr. Pycraft retired from the Common-room.

As soon as he had gone, there was a subdued murmur. Everybody was trying to sympathise with Corcoran, and they knew that they were making a hopeless mess of it.

Armstrong, who had been dragged to his feet by Griffith and Freeman, was just beginning to recover his wits. He looked across at Corcoran in a bleary kind of way.

"Well, you've knocked me out!" he muttered. "I suppose you consider yourself leader now—eh?"

"If the chaps will have me—yes!" replied Corcoran quietly.

"Rather!" went up a chorus.

"Only it's hardly the time, just now, to talk about this," said Buster Boots. "We'd better all go to our studies as quietly as possible."

"What's all the mystery?" asked Armstrong, in a dull voice. "Have I been asleep, or what? I don't seem to remember—"

"Corcoran put you to sleep for an odd forty winks," said Bob Christine. "Don't make a fuss, Armstrong—"

"I'm not making any fuss!" grunted Armstrong savagely. "Only if Corcoran thinks he's going to boss me, he's made a mistake! I'm not going to take any orders from a rotten new chap—"

"Dry up!" hissed Griffith. "Corcoran has just had a telegram to say that his uncle died this evening!"

"Oh!" gasped Armstrong. "I—I didn't know!"

"What will you do, Corcoran?" asked Nipper.

"I suppose I shall have to go to Browton to-morrow," replied the new fellow. "Poor old uncle! At least he died in his own home—and near his beloved Blue Crusaders!"

"You don't seem very cut up!" remarked Merrell, with a sniff.

Some of Corcoran's colour returned.

"You don't expect me to blubber, do you?" he said quietly. "I suppose I can be cut up without making a display of it? Besides, I was half afraid of something like this; I knew how ill my uncle was."

"You'll come back to St. Frank's, though, won't you?" asked somebody.

"After the funeral—yes," replied Corcoran. "Why not? I've got to be at some school, haven't I? My guardian's dead, and—"

"Your guardian!" interrupted Turner. "Haven't you got any other relatives?"

"No—at least, only distant ones."

"Then—then you inherit everything that your uncle left?"

"I suppose so," said Corcoran, with a frown. "But why talk about that—now?"

"Sorry!" said Turner, colouring. "Only—only I was thinking about the Blue Crusaders! Your uncle owned the club entirely, didn't he? So it now becomes yours!"

There was an immediate buzz—a subdued one, but a buzz nevertheless.

"By George!" came Handforth's incautious voice. "What do you think of that, you fellows! A giddy Fourth-Former owning a professional football club! The Blue Crusaders club belongs to Corcoran!"

"My only hat!"

"Well, I'm jiggered!"

Everybody was startled. It had been sensational enough for Corcoran to be the nephew of the man who owned the Blue Crusaders club. But now, by the sudden and unexpected death of the Colonel, Lionel Corcoran was the absolute owner of the Blue Crusaders! This was indeed a sensation!

"Still, it doesn't make much difference," said Handforth. "What can Corcoran do? The Blue Crusaders are up north somewhere—in a big industrial town named Browton. The fact that he's the owner won't make any real difference. We can't go and see the Crusaders. We can't take any interest in the club."

"Shut up, Handy!" muttered Church. "This isn't the time to be talking about footer!"

"By George, no!" said Handforth, with a start. "Sorry!"

Nobody knew quite what to say. Corcoran himself relieved the situation by intimating that he would go to the headmaster. No doubt Dr. Stafford would be expecting him. Besides, it was necessary to make some sort of arrangements regarding his immediate movements.

After Corcoran had gone, the air felt clearer, and the juniors were able to talk more freely.

"He took it like a man!" said Nipper approvingly. "Anybody could see that he was dreadfully cut up."

"Yes, rather!" said Handforth dreamily. "And he's the owner of the Blue Crusaders! A giddy Fourth-Former at St. Frank's! The owner of a professional football club! Well, what next?"



CHAPTER 12.

Conjectures!

AT ten o'clock, in the headmaster's study, Lionel had quite a long talk over the telephone with Lord Shevingham—the distinguished father of "Tich" Harborough, the celebrated school-boy winger of the Blue Crusaders.

Lord Shevingham, it appeared, was Colonel Corcoran's executor, and it was he who was making all arrangements up in Browton. It seemed that the Crusaders were still at sixes and sevens; they had not been able to discover a new ground, and there seemed to be no chance of finding one.

Lord Shevingham urged Lionel to take it quietly, and to remain at St. Frank's until he—Lord Shevingham—communicated with him again.

After the headmaster had duly expressed his deepest sympathy, Lionel went to his own House, and found Mr. Barnaby Goole awaiting him.

There was another ordeal here—Mr. Goole was full of sympathy, too, and the new boy was heartily glad when he found himself in his dormitory. It was occupied by Armstrong and Griffith, and they were both awake.

"Sorry to disturb you, old sons," said Lionel, as he undressed. "But it's a bit exceptional, isn't it?"

"That's all right!" growled Armstrong. "Look here, Corcoran, I've been thinking."

"Yes?"

"I was a bit of a cad this evening, to bash you in the face as I did!" went on Armstrong, in a muttering voice. "You knocked me out, and now you're the leader of the East House juniors. Well, I want to tell you that I'll support you loyally. I've been thinking it over, and perhaps it's high time that we had somebody with a lot of brainy ideas."

Corcoran was surprised—pleasantly surprised.

"Good man!" he said heartily. "That's the spirit, Armstrong, old man! Let's call it quits, eh? We'll let bygones be bygones."

"That's—that's what I meant!" muttered Armstrong, awkwardly holding out his hand.

They shook, and then Armstrong's face cleared. That scrap in the Common-room had done him a world of good; it had revealed his own shortcomings more than any amount of talking could have done. Even Griffith was surprised; he had never believed that his study-mate had possessed such courage. For it required a good deal of courage for Armstrong to act as he was now acting. Perhaps Corcoran's bereavement had something to do with it.

It was early in the morning before Lionel slept. For hours he tossed about, thinking,

and it had occurred to him that he was now in a responsible position.

The Blue Crusaders were in a tangle up at Browton, and his uncle was dead. Therefore, he, as the new owner, felt that it was up to him to shoulder the club's problems.

Although he was so late in getting to sleep, Lionel Corcoran was up before the rising bell sounded. At eight o'clock he was down at the post office in Bellton. He was handing in a telegram.

It was a wire to Lord Shevingham, and in it he intimated that he would arrive in Browton the following day—Wednesday. He also hinted that he was prepared to take over the affairs of the club.

"Well, that's that!" he murmured, as he walked back towards St. Frank's. "It's pretty awful about my uncle—but I don't see why Fatty Fowkes and Dave Moran and all those other chaps should suffer. I'm the new owner, and it's up to me to look after them. The club's mine, and I'm going to take an interest in it."

He carried on as usual during the morning. He attended lessons in the Fourth-Form classroom, and everybody admired him for the way in which he took the blow. But, of course, there was no larking about—no joking with him.

St. Frank's itself went on in just the same way as of old—but in the Fourth, at least, there was a certain amount of reserve. Out of respect for Corcoran the juniors were less boisterous than usual.

He was absent during the afternoon. It appeared that a solicitor had telephoned him from Bannington, and he had gone over to meet the gentleman. He didn't come back, either. It leaked out later that Corcoran had telephoned to Mr. Goole, and had received the latter's permission to go straight on to Browton. For some reason Lionel had changed his plans, and instead of waiting until the morrow he had gone north to-day.

Now that he was definitely gone—with a certainty that he would not be back until late in the week—all the juniors felt that they could talk openly and freely.

"Well, to-day's Tuesday," remarked Handforth. "I don't suppose the colonel's funeral will be until Thursday—so it's more than likely that we shan't see Corcoran again until Friday or Saturday. I wonder what the dickens he's going to do about the Blue Crusaders?"

"Goodness only knows!" said Nipper. "You saw the newspapers this morning, didn't you?"

"Yes, rather!" put in Harry Gresham.

"Things are worse than ever! Now that the colonel is dead there's nothing but chaos. The papers are hinting that the Blue Crusaders will go out of existence. They're saying that the club will be wound up, and that it will die a natural death."

"I should hardly think that," said Nipper thoughtfully. "Of course, it's possible that Corcoran will sell his interest in the club."

"His interest!" echoed Handforth. "That's everything! He owns the club!"

"It's a rummy situation," said Nipper. "I mean, a schoolboy owning a Second Division football club!"

"Not that it affects us in any way," continued Handforth gruffly. "As I said before, Browton is hundreds of miles away. So what's the good of us talking about the Crusaders? We shall never be able to see them."

The Wednesday passed without any word from Corcoran, and on Thursday it was just the same. The newspapers had cut down their paragraphs about the Crusaders, and the whole affair was beginning to die down. Nobody quite knew what was going to happen to the club, and, according to the reports, the management had not found a new ground. There seemed a good deal of mystery about the Blues.

On Thursday night, late—just before the fellows were getting ready to go to bed—Lionel Corcoran unexpectedly returned. He was looking tired, and yet, at the same time, his eyes were glinting with a purposeful light.

"Jolly glad to see you back again!" said Armstrong heartily, as he welcomed him. "I suppose you've had a pretty tiring day?"

"We didn't expect you back until to-morrow at the latest," said Griffith.

"I thought it just as well to come away immediately after the funeral," said Lionel quietly. "What was the good of staying behind? There aren't any ties to keep me in Browton."

"What about the Blue Crusaders?"

"I've been thinking about them," said Corcoran, with a nod. "And I decided that it was better for me to come straight away. My uncle has gone now—the funeral went off very quietly and peacefully—and now I can feel that I am in a position to get busy."

But Corcoran did not explain what it was he was going to get busy on.



CHAPTER 13.

Corcoran's Staggering Proposals!

NEXT morning Lionel Corcoran, looking bright and fresh, presented himself at Study C in the Ancient House.

It wasn't breakfast-time yet, and St. Frank's was not properly awake. Within three or four minutes Corcoran had Handforth & Co. in Study C, in addition to the usual occupants.

"I want a quiet word with you fellows," said Corcoran briskly. "Perhaps it would be just as well for me to go to the Fourth-Formers—but it's a question of football, and

you're the leaders of football in the Junior School, aren't you?"

"Well, I suppose so," admitted Nipper.

"Good enough, then," nodded Corcoran.

"As you know, I got back last night."

"Yes, we heard."

"Well, I had a reason for rushing back to St. Frank's so quickly," continued Corcoran. "There was really no reason why I should remain in Browton—"

The door opened and Buster Boots entered, followed by Bob Christine and Armstrong and Griffith and four or five other leading lights in the Fourth.

"Then it's true!" said Boots sternly.

"What's true?" demanded Handforth.

"This—this new chap has come to you fellows for a consultation, instead of to the Fourth!" said Boots indignantly. "What do you mean by it, Corcoran?"

Lionel smiled.

"There's nothing private about it," he said. "I was going to tell you afterwards—but this has saved me the trouble. It's about football, you see," he added blandly. "Naturally, I have come to the fellows who understand football."

"You—you silly ass!" said Boots gruffly.

The Fourth-Formers crowded in, and the door was closed.

"I was just telling these chaps that I rushed back to St. Frank's because I had a reason," said Lionel. "I had better explain that there has been some tricky work up at Browton. There's a First Division club there—the Rangers—and I believe that their management has been doing its best to chuck the Crusaders out of the town for good."

"The scheming rotters!" said Handforth indignantly.

"Well, anyway, a lot of fishy things have been going on," said Corcoran. "For example, a dud solicitor rang me up on Tuesday, and got me to go over to Bannington. I practically agreed to wind up the Blue Crusaders—and then I found that he was a fraud."

"My only hat!"

"That's why I didn't come back to St. Frank's," went on Corcoran. "By the way, I've got my motor-bike here now, you know. I didn't bring it on Monday, because it was being tuned up in Bannington."

"Blow your motor-bike!" said Handforth. "What about the Blues?"

"Well, this dud solicitor went to Browton on the Wednesday and he pretended that he had been instructed by me," continued Lionel. "I meant to get there first, but there was a bit of an accident on the line, and I got a bash on the head. See this?"

He indicated a small patch of plaster which had been, until then, hidden by a tuft of his hair.

"My goodness!" said Nipper. "You've been having an exciting time."

"Yes, but I've done pretty well on the whole," said Corcoran reflectively. "I met all the players, and gave them some special

instructions. I'm the owner of the club now, you know, and I'm in a position to give orders. Well, after that I went on to Browton, saw Mr. Piccombe, the manager, and told him to mark time until he heard from me again."

"I don't suppose he liked that, did he?" asked Nipper.

"He hated it," grinned Corcoran. "Old Piccombe is a cranky sort of chap, and he's got the wind up properly this week. He thinks that the Crusaders are going to pot. Still, he didn't get anything out of me—and he won't get anything until I have definitely fixed up the new arrangements."

"What new arrangements?" asked Handforth bluntly.

Lionel Corcoran abruptly changed the subject.

"Look here, you were telling me something about the Bannington Town Football Club on my first day here," he said keenly. "It's a Third Division team, isn't it?"

"Yes; but—"

"Well, is it true that the club has recently been nearly bankrupt, and that you fellows have been helping them along?"

"Quite true," said Nipper. "They're still in a very rocky position."

"Then you think it's possible that the club might accept a tempting offer, and clear right out?"

"Clear out!" said Boots, staring. "Clear out of Bannington?"

"Yes."

"But that's dotty!" put in Handforth. "What would Bannington do without a big football team? They've always been used to one."

"Then they can have one!" said Lionel, nodding. "My idea is to bring the Crusaders down to Bannington!"

There was an instant's silence after Corcoran had made this startling announcement. He had spoken so quietly, so casually, that it was some moments before the juniors could grasp what he meant. Then there came a succession of startled ejaculations and gasps.

"Bring the Crusaders to Bannington!" ejaculated Handforth breathlessly.

"What rot!" said Boots.

"Cheese it, Corcoran!"

"It's not a subject to joke on!"

"Of course not!"

Lionel faced the storm with perfect calmness.

"As it happens, I'm not joking at all," he said, when the hubbub had died down.

"Not joking!" shouted Nipper. "You don't mean to say that you're absolutely serious?"

"Absolutely serious!" replied Lionel. "My wheeze is to buy up the Town ground, and then instal the Blue Crusaders in Bannington—for keeps."

"My only sainted aunt!"

"Great Scott!"



Crash ! Without warning Armstrong brought his right fist round, and sent it thudding into Lionel Corcoran's face. Corcoran staggered, slithered back, and toppled over to the floor !

"This chap's going to be the death of us!" said Boots, passing a hand over his brow. "He's too—too sudden! He takes my breath away!"

"I need to be sudden!" said Corcoran grimly. "It's Friday to-day—and to-morrow the Crusaders have got a fixture—a home match, mind you—against Devon Wanderers. And the Blues haven't got a ground! One must be found for them. That match isn't going to be postponed, as Mr. Piecombe thinks. I've made up my mind that the Blues' programme shall be carried on without a hitch!"

"But you'll never do it, Corcoran!" said Nipper earnestly. "It's—it's so outrageous! You'll never get the directors of the Bannington Town Club to listen to such a startling proposition!"

"Why not?" asked Corcoran. "Loo! here! I'll put it in a nutshell! Now that my uncle is dead I haven't got any interest in Browton. That's obvious, isn't it? And the Crusaders have lost their ground in Browton—and the Rangers are always scheming against them. The best thing to do is to clear the club right out. Shift it. Uproot it, and plant it somewhere else. And where else but in Bannington? I'm a St. Frank's fellow now, and I want to be near the club. I want to take a personal interest in it. I've made up my mind to go ahead with this scheme, and you've got to remember that money talks."

"Money?" repeated Handforth uncomprehendingly.

"Yes, money!" replied Corcoran. "And when it's big money, it does more than talk—it shouts!"

full price. It was a tremendous amount of money—running into tens of thousands. That money belongs to the club. And I'm going to use it for the club. I can buy this Bannington ground, lock, stock and barrel, and still have thousands and thousands left. I tell you, something *must* be done. The Blues are without-a ground, and there's no chance of getting one in Browton. Drastic ills need drastic remedies, you know."

"But isn't this a bit too drastic?" asked Nipper dubiously. "I mean, what about the Football Association? Will they allow it? Will it be possible for you to shift a club from the north to the south?"

"I don't see what there is against it," replied Corcoran promptly. "Everything will go on exactly the same—once we've got a new ground. The club will still keep its



Crash! Without warning Armstrong brought his face. Corcoran staggered, slipping.

CHAPTER 14.

The Surprise Packet!



ALL the juniors were thoroughly shaken by Lionel Corcoran's daring suggestion. Never for a moment

did they believe that it could possibly come to anything. But they were intrigued by the possibilities. The Blue Crusaders in Bannington—within a few minutes' cycle ride of St. Frank's! This, indeed, was something to justify their excitement!

And Corcoran was so capable, so cool, that it really seemed that there was hope.

"Have you got big money, then?" asked Nipper.

"Tons of money!" replied Corcoran. "I'm not talking about my uncle's personal fortune, which I naturally inherit. No. I mean the funds of the Blue Crusaders Club. It appears that my uncle gave an option on the club ground in Browton, and an American firm took up the option, and paid the

place in the Second Division, and every fixture will stand. What difference does it make where the club is situated?"

"No difference at all!" said Handforth enthusiastically. "Corcoran, old man, this idea of yours is a top-notch!"

"Some years ago the Woolwich Arsenal Club moved from Woolwich to Highbury," remarked Lionel, with a smile. "That wasn't such a big jump—but it was possible, wasn't it? And the Arsenal have been doing better than ever at Highbury. Why

shouldn't a change of location benefit the Blue Crusaders? And now that all my interests are down in the south, I want the club in the south."

"But there's Bannington Town to be considered," put in Buster Boots. "That's going to be the problem. Where are they going to?"

"That's for them to decide," replied Corcoran, without hesitation. "If I make them a tempting enough offer, they'll sell. You say

bit cranky. Far better keep him out of it till it's all settled. That's why I've left him up in Browton with Smart, the trainer. By the way, Tich Harborough is there, too, but he'll be down to-morrow with Piccombe and Smart. And by the time they get to Bannington I want everything to be fixed up."

"You're a speed merchant, aren't you?" said Nipper, with a smile. "Even if this thing is possible, I don't see how you can get it fixed by to-morrow, Corcoran. The notice is too short."

"There's nothing like money!" said Corcoran. "And I'm in a position to pay—I've arranged all that with Lord Shevingham. I told him what my plans were, and he thought the idea was a pretty good one—if it could be worked. He's my uncle's executor, and, with his permission, everything will be O.K. That's why I'm safe. And I've got a free hand to use the club's money."

"My hat! It's beginning to look possible!" said Bob Christine, with shining eyes.

"You know the manager of the Bannington Town Club, don't you?" asked the new fellow.

"Old Billings?" said Nipper. "Yes. He's a decent sort of chap, too—and he likes us. We've helped the club a bit, and he'd do practically anything we asked him—within reason."

"Then he's the man to approach first," said Corcoran promptly. "I'm going to ask for special leave this morning, and I'm going to see Mr. Billings. I shall want two or three of you fellows to come with me."

"We shan't be able to get off!" said Handforth, with a grunt. "Old Crowell won't excuse us from

lessons."

"I think he will!" replied Corcoran. "I'll have a word with my own Housemaster—and then I'll have a word with yours. You fellows must be with me. I'm a stranger to Billings, but you know him intimately. I shall need your support in this business."

Sure enough, Lionel Corcoran worked the oracle.

After breakfast he had a quiet talk with the two Housemasters. He explained something of the situation to them. Mr. Goole didn't pretend to know much about football, and he promptly gave Corcoran permission to be away from lessons. Mr. Nelson Lee, the Housemaster of the Ancient House, was perfectly reasonable. He guessed at once that Lionel had some scheme afoot with regard to the Blue Crusaders. And so Nipper & Co. and Handforth & Co. found themselves excused from morning lessons.

There were many rumours floating all about the school now, and there was a good



and sent it thudding into Lionel Corcoran's toppled over to the floor!

they're in a very bad way financially—and here's their chance to put their house in order. If I make it worth their while they'll soon find another location. There's nothing to worry about there."

"What does your manager, Mr. Piccombe, say about this?" asked Church.

"Nothing," said Corcoran. "I haven't told him yet."

"Oh!"

"No need to tell old Piecan," went on Corcoran. "He's a sound chap, but he's a

deal of excitement, too. Everybody was talking about Corcoran's plans, but hardly anybody would believe that the rumours could be founded on fact. It seemed too fantastic to credit that the Blue Crusaders were really to be brought to Bannington.

The party, when it was ready, consisted of Corcoran, Buster Boots, Armstrong, Nipper, Tregellis-West, Watson, Handforth & Co. and Travers. All the other fellows were tremendously jealous, but they could do nothing.

"There's one thing I've got to tell you," said Corcoran, before they set out. "The Blue Crusaders are now in Bannington."

"What!"

"It's a fact!" said Corcoran, with the utmost coolness. "They've been in Bannington since Wednesday. But I don't want to see them to-day—not till to-morrow, when old Piccombe is here. So when we get into Bannington we shall have to be pretty careful. If I spot any of the Blues I'll give you chaps the wink, and you'll have to crowd round me."

"But why all this mystery?" asked Nipper, staring.

"I've told all the players—Fatty Fowkes and Dave Moran and the rest—that they can rely on me!" said Corcoran stubbornly. "And I'm not going to let them down! I've assured them that everything will be all right. So we've just got to make these arrangements to-day. I've wiped the word 'failure' out of my vocabulary."



CHAPTER 15.

A Shock for Mr. Billings!

MR. BILLINGS, the manager of the Bannington Town Club, was in his office when the crowd of St. Frank's fellows arrived. They did not go immediately to the office, but, having entered the ground, they went on to the playing pitch and inspected it.

Lionel Corcoran was keenly interested.

"It'll do!" he said, taking a deep breath.

"It'll do fine! It's a first-class enclosure!"

"One of the best on the South Coast!" said Handforth, as though he owned it.

"Not so big as Moor Field, of course, but there's plenty of room for enlarging the terracing and the grand stand, if necessary," went on Lionel. "It's a full-sized playing

pitch, too. Any First Division club needn't be ashamed of playing here."

"But the Blue Crusaders are in the Second Division," said Handforth.

"They are—at present," nodded Corcoran. "But next season they'll be promoted to the First Division."

"There's nothing like being optimistic!" chuckled Vivian Travers. "I only hope that you'll be able to push the business through, and settle the deal. But you've got to remember that the directors of this club are local tradespeople, and they're liable to be slow."

"I shall have to wake them up," nodded Corcoran.

He took another look round the ground, and he was very pleased with it.

"A lot of money can be spent on this place," he remarked. "There's room for improvement, and fortunately my club has got plenty of capital. I can see this enclosure growing into one of the best in the whole country."

"Well, boys, this is a pleasant surprise!" came a cheery voice from the rear. "I thought you youngsters were at work at this hour on a Friday morning?"

They turned, and beheld Mr. Billings approaching them.

"Morning, Mr. Billings!" said Nipper briskly. "As a matter of fact, we're here on business. At least, Corcoran is. Let me introduced Lionel Corcoran."

"Why, bless my soul!" ejaculated the manager, staring. "Not the Lionel Corcoran?"

Lionel grinned.

"You fellows had better do a bit of salaaming—I'm famous!" he said dryly. "Awfully sorry, Mr. Billings, but I happen to be the chap you mention. I'm Corcoran, of the Blue Crusaders!"

"Put it there, young gentleman!" said Mr. Billings heartily. "Gosh! But I'm pleased to see you, sir! I never thought I'd have this pleasure."

All the St. Frank's fellows stood round, chuckling, whilst Mr. Billings enthusiastically greeted his distinguished visitor.

"Things are rather bad up at Browton, aren't they?" went on Mr. Billings, changing his tone. "Your club is in a pretty bad mess, by all that I can see."

"Not so bad as you might think, Mr. Billings," replied Lionel. "Financially we're all right—more sound than we've ever been. The trouble is we haven't any ground. That's why I've come here."

Mr. Billings looked puzzled.

"Why you've come here?" he repeated. "I've never seen Moor Field, but I've heard that it was a fine ground. Still, you'd have to go a long way to find a better one than this," he added loyally. "The trouble is, we've been having a lot of bad luck this season."

"Now, look here, Mr. Billings, I don't want to beat about the bush," said Corcoran quietly. "And I want to impress upon you, at the outset, that I'm in earnest. You know, don't you, that I'm the sole owner of the Blue Crusaders Club?"

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"So I understand, from the papers."

"Well, for once the papers are right," said Lionel. "The Blue Crusaders Club belongs to me. To-day is Friday, and we're booked to play Devon Wanderers to-morrow—at home. And we haven't got a ground."

"That's very awkward, sir," said Mr. Billings gravely.

"It's a problem that must be solved—to-day," replied Lionel. "Now, look here, Mr. Billings, I'm going to put it to you straight from the shoulder. Can you get in touch with your directors this morning, and can you give me a price for this enclosure, freehold?"

"A price?" echoed Mr. Billings, without comprehending.

"Yes, a price," repeated Corcoran. "I want to buy it."

"You want to buy——" Mr. Billings paused, catching his breath in. "You want to buy this ground?"

"For spot cash!" said Corcoran, nodding.

"Now, now, young gentleman!" protested the manager. "A joke's a joke, but——"

"I told you before I started, Mr. Billings, that I was in earnest," broke in Lionel. "I am in earnest. I'm prepared to buy this ground—the grand stand—everything connected with the entire ground. I want to buy it to-day, and I'll pay for it to-day. I'm not joking, because the position is serious. The Blue Crusaders must have a ground for to-morrow."

At last Mr. Billings realised that he was dealing with a solid proposition. He went red at first, then he turned quite pale. Finally he became agitated.

"But—but this is ridiculous!" he said, catching his breath in. "What you are proposing, Mr. Corcoran, is absolutely impossible!"

"Why is it impossible?"

"My dear young sir!" said the manager. "Surely you must realise! This is our ground—the Bannington Town ground! We're a Third Division club, and we can't shift out like—like a lodger going out of a bed-sitting-room!"

"Your team is playing away to-morrow, isn't it?" asked Lionel.

"Yes, but the Reserves are playing a friendly with Helmford Athletic."

"A friendly doesn't matter," put in Lionel Corcoran. "It can easily be postponed—or abandoned altogether, if it comes to that. Virtually this ground is available for to-morrow. The Blue Crusaders want it, Mr. Billings. And the Blue Crusaders are prepared to pay your own price for the ground. Not merely for to-morrow, but for always!"

"I tell you the thing is fantastic!" protested Mr. Billings. "You don't seem to understand——"

"If I am prepared to bring the Blue Crusaders down from Browton, then there's no reason why you shouldn't take Bannington Town somewhere else," said Lionel pointedly. "The Blue Crusaders are a Second Division club, and I'm proposing to shift them some hundreds of miles. Why can't Bannington Town go to some other town? I've been given

to understand that your club has been doing very badly this season, Mr. Billings. A change of location might do it good."

The manager scratched his head.

"There's that about it, of course," he admitted. "We've been doing rare badly."

"And you're in debt, Mr. Billings," said Nipper quietly. "We happen to know most of your troubles, because we've been associated with you for some weeks. And we know that the Bannington Town Club is in low water. There's a chance for you here—to pay all the club's debts, and make a handsome profit on the sale of the ground, and to have a good deal of money in hand after you have bought a new ground."

"A new ground!" echoed Mr. Billings. "Where? Not in Bannington! There's no room here for two clubs!"

"Why not Helmford?" put in Handforth eagerly. "Helmford Athletic! It's only an amateur team, but I've heard that the Athletic ground is almost as good as this."

And then Mr. Billings caught his breath in, and a gleam of excitement came into his eyes!



CHAPTER 16.

The Settlement!

"HELMFORD ATHLETIC!" muttered Mr. Billings. "Gosh! It's a queer thing that you should

mention that, Mr. Handforth!"

"Why is it queer?" asked Handforth.

But Mr. Billings did not explain. He was standing there like a statue, thinking deeply. He remembered the words of one of the directors at the last meeting. Tired of losing money, sick of the long, weary tale of trouble, one of the directors had impulsively suggested clearing right out of the town. And he had actually mentioned the Helmford Athletic ground. Some years earlier Helmford Athletic had been in the Southern League, but then, after a bad season, they had dropped out of it, and were now a merely local team. The ground was altogether too large for them, and they were never able to make ends meet. They were even in a worse position than the Bannington club.

"What I want you to do, Mr. Billings, is to call your directors together," said Corcoran earnestly. "There's no foolery about this. I was never more serious in my life. Just think it over, sir! I'm prepared to bring the Blue Crusaders to Bannington, but that means that Bannington Town must go somewhere else. If there is somewhere else, here's your chance to put your club on its feet."

"Wait—wait!" said Mr. Billings huskily. "There's just a chance—— But, look here, Mr. Corcoran!" he added, gazing fully into Lionel's eyes. "Is this absolutely on the square? Are you prepared to pay real, solid money for this ground?"

"Real, solid money—to-day."

"How can I be sure of that?" asked Mr. Billings. "I don't doubt you, sir, but my directors——"

"The Blue Crusaders Club is mine," said Corcoran. "Lord Shevingham is my uncle's executor, and, in a way, I suppose he can be called my guardian. I have his full authority for carrying on with this plan, and Lord Shevingham's solicitors have received full instructions. These instructions have been passed on to the Bannington branch of my club's bank. So you see, Mr. Billings, it will only be necessary for you to come with me to this bank, and the transfer will be definitely settled."

"Gosh!" said Mr. Billings. "You've got it all lined up properly!"

"I've had to do some hard thinking," said Lionel quietly. "The Blues must have a ground to-morrow. If I can't get this ground I shall go on to Helmford—and I haven't the slightest doubt that I shall get that one. The thing must be settled to-day—so if your directors are inclined to be pig-headed, they'll lose the opportunity."

"I'll see them at once!" said Mr. Billings hurriedly. "I'll collect them together. They're all in the town this morning, as I

know for a fact, and I'll have them here in my office within fifteen minutes."

He was as good as his word, too.

Before a quarter of an hour had elapsed, four gentlemen arrived—four of the local tradesmen. They were all looking startled and bewildered. And when they heard the proposition they were staggered. At first they pooh-poohed the whole thing as preposterous—as hopeless—as fantastic.

But Mr. Billings, who had been thinking the thing out, waxed enthusiastic.

"Listen, gentlemen!" he said keenly. "The boy's scheme sounds madness at first, but it isn't so. It's sound. He's willing to pay us our own price for this ground. We shan't need to rush him over it, but he's in such a position that he's willing to pay a high price."

"But there's no time——" began one of the directors.

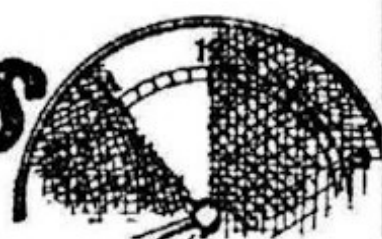
"The circumstances are peculiar," said Mr. Billings. "If we don't grab this opportunity with both hands, it will never come our way again. The club is in low water, as you know perfectly well. We are heavily in debt. If we accept young Corcoran's proposal we can pay every debt that the club has on its books; we can buy the Helmford Athletic



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ground and start afresh. We can start with a clean sheet—and with assets!”

“But if the club is shifted to Helmford it won’t be a Bannington club any longer,” said one of the directors.

“Does that matter?” replied Mr. Billings impatiently. “We shall still be known as Bannington Town, although, after a season or two, perhaps we can change our name to Helmford Town. What’s the odds? You all know perfectly well, gentlemen, that the Helmford people are enthusiastic. They would welcome us with open arms. They fill our enclosure regularly. Helmford is a big town, and it could easily support a Third Division club. We could enlarge the Athletic’s enclosure, and I know for a fact that we could buy that ground dirt cheap. It’s been a white elephant ever since it was constructed. It’s on the market for next to nothing.”

“I see your point, Billings, but it’s all so sudden,” said one of the other directors. “It’s—it’s an upheaval! It’s utterly revolutionary!”

“It’s no more of an upheaval for us than it is for the Blue Crusaders, sir,” replied Mr. Billings promptly. “If they’re willing to shift all the way from Browton, why should we mind shifting a matter of twenty miles to Helmford? We shall still be in the same district—we shall still be a local club. It won’t make a mite of difference to our programme. Yet we shall have a good ground, money in the bank, no liabilities, and a set of hearty supporters. Those Helmford people are enthusiastic football-goers. I tell you, the whole proposition is sound. It’s sound, gentlemen! I’m not trying to rush you into it. But, on the face of the thing, it’s the chance of a life-time. It doesn’t even need thinking about.”

The long and the short of it was that Lionel Corcoran was called in to the consultation. He again gave his assurances that all the arrangements had been made; the bank was even rung up on the spot, and Lionel’s statements were confirmed. After that the directors began to get excited.

Lionel was told that he would know something definite during the afternoon. So he and all the other St. Frank’s fellows went back to St. Frank’s to await the result.

In the meantime, Mr. Billings became intensely active. He got into communication with the Helmford Athletic Club; he even went over there, and placed his proposition before the officials.

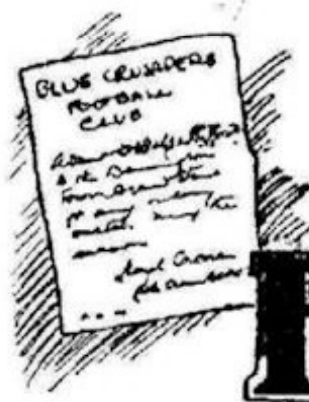
In the afternoon Lionel was urgently requested to go back at once to Bannington. He was invited into a big solicitor’s office; he signed papers and all sorts of legal documents.

In a nutshell, the deal had been completed. Without hesitation, Lionel paid the full price that was asked for the Bannington Town Ground, and he considered that he had obtained a bargain. He was only using the money that had been paid to the Blue Crusaders Club for Moor Field, and not much more than a third of that money had been expended.

And now the Blue Crusaders had a new ground—a permanent enclosure. And they were in a sound financial position, with tens of thousands of pounds in the bank—much of this to be spent on new buildings and general improvements.

It was quite obvious that Lord Shevingham had sanctioned all this because he was an old Blue Crusader himself, and he hated the idea of the club going out of existence. He, like Lionel Corcoran, was ready to go to almost any length to save the club from extinction.

Now it was saved. The Blue Crusaders had a new home. The things was done, and Lionel was able to breathe freely.



CHAPTER 17.

A Present for the Head!

BUT the new fellow’s busy day wasn’t over yet.

His next task was to send a long telegram to Mr. Ulysses Piecombe, the Blues’ manager. Having attended to this, he got on the telephone and spoke to the manager of the Devon Wanderers. He made that gentleman fully understand that the Crusaders’ match with the Wanderers was not postponed. It was to be played according to the official fixture list, but the Devon Wanderers were to come to Bannington instead of travelling north to Browton. That was the only difference.

After that, Lionel paid a visit to one of the biggest printers in Bannington. He gave a rush order for hundreds of great posters to be printed—that very night. These posters were to be plastered all over the town on the morrow at the earliest possible moment.

Then Lionel tackled the editor of the “Bannington Gazette,” and gave that gentleman a large amount of special “copy.” He left no stone unturned, and he was proving, indeed, that he was an exceptional sort of youngster. He felt his responsibility, and he was proving equal to it.

When he got back to St. Frank’s and announced his news, he was literally mobbed. There were still a good many fellows in the school who believed that it was all a spoof—a gigantic jape. It was incredible to them that this new chap in the Fourth could really be the owner of the Blue Crusaders Club, and that he could have decided, off his own bat, to bring the celebrated Blues to Bannington.

But this impression was soon altered. Nipper and Travers and Handforth and Pitt and Buster Boots and a good many others went about giving assurances that Lionel Corcoran’s story was true. And it would be proved on the morrow when the Blue Crusaders played Devon Wanderers on the Town ground.

“The chap has worked a miracle!” declared Handforth firmly. “There’s no

other word to describe it. It's just the sort of thing that I might have done——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good old Handy!"

"It was accomplished through sheer determination and forcefulness!" continued Handforth. "The only regret I've got is that Corcoran should belong to that mouldy old hutch, the East House! Everybody had better be warned. Corcoran is going to make things hum at St. Frank's, and it's up to the Remove to be ready for him."

"Rats!" yelled the Removites.

"The Fourth has never done anything—and never will do anything!" said De. Valerie. "And even Corcoran won't be able to put life into the Fourth. You can't make bricks without straw!"

"Why not?" asked Handforth, staring. "I've never seen any straw in bricks!"

"It's just an expression, old man," said Fullwood patiently.

Amid all the excitement Corcoran himself sat in Study No. 12 in the East House, with Timothy Armstrong and Louis Griffith. Both these latter juniors were enthusiastic now—they had accepted Corcoran as the leader of their study, and they were ready to obey him in all things. The change in Armstrong was very remarkable.

A good deal of his bluster and swank had gone. That fight had knocked a lot of the conceit out of him. Privately, he was probably relieved to be free from the leadership, which had always been a farce. As a follower, Armstrong would probably be a very sound man.

Lionel, of course, was very pleased; he had hated the idea of being at loggerheads with his study-mates, and he even went out of his way to be very friendly with Armstrong.

"Haven't you finished yet?" asked Griffith, as Lionel sat at the table with a fountain-pen in his hand. "You've been on the go all day, and it's about time you had a rest."

"There are so many things to be done yet that I don't know where to start!" confessed Lionel. "For example, what about all the fellows? I want them to see this match tomorrow afternoon—and, as owner of the club, I'm going to give free seats in the grand stand all round."

"Good man!" said Armstrong heartily. "Do I get one?"

"You get the first!" nodded Corcoran. "Griffith gets the second. There's another idea in my head, too. I've a dashed good mind to give the Head a season ticket."

"What!"

"Why not?" mused Corcoran. "He ought to take it as a compliment. Besides, it'll give the club a good tone if the Head shows up now and again. It will definitely associate the Blue Crusaders with St. Frank's!"

"There's that about it," admitted Armstrong. "But how are you going to do it? Have you got a season ticket?"

"I've got paper—and ink!" replied Corcoran. "I'll make out a special ticket for

the Head. It'll do on a half-sheet of note-paper."

He drew the paper towards him, and wrote across the top: "BLUE CRUSADERS FOOTBALL CLUB." Then he added the words: "Admit Dr. Malcolm Stafford to the Bannington Town Grand Stand for any or every match during the season. Signed, LIONEL CORCORAN (Sole Owner, B.C. F.C.)."

"That ought to do the trick!" grinned Lionel, as he penned a swift note.

Five minutes later they sallied out into the Triangle, and Lionel collared a fag and gave him the letter. Chubby Heath, who was the fag in question, looked at it suspiciously.

"What's this?" he asked.

"I want you to take it to the Head—and deliver it to him personally," said Lionel. "And as it's rather important I'm going to give you a bob."

Chubby Heath's eyes gleamed.

"Where's the bob?" he asked promptly.

It was handed over, and then Chubby grinned.

"This is the easiest bob I've ever had!" he said cheerfully. "The Head's just coming through Big Arch, with Fenton of the Sixth."

Chubby went off, chuckling. With all the assurance in the world, he raised his cap to the Head, and held out the note.

"What, may I ask, is this?" said the Head, adjusting his glasses, and looking from Chubby Heath's face to the note.

"For you, sir!" said the fag. "I've been told to deliver it into your hands, sir."

The Head took it, and Chubby Heath vanished like a streak of lightning. Dr. Stafford opened the letter, adjusted his glasses again, and glanced at the "ticket" and the accompanying note.

"Upon my word!" he ejaculated, startled. "What—what is this? 'Shall regard it as an honour if you will be kind enough to accept this season ticket——' Good gracious! Corcoran! That boy again! This—this is too bad, Fenton!"

"Yes, sir?" said Fenton inquiringly.

"Insolence—sheer, outrageous insolence!" said the headmaster hotly. "Fenton, be good enough to find Corcoran of the Fourth, and bring him to me! You have a cane with you? Good! Give it to me!"

Fenton handed over the cane, and at the same moment he caught sight of Lionel Corcoran near the East House with Armstrong and a group of other Fourth-Formers. They were watching him, and he moved forward a pace or two and beckoned.

"Corcoran!" he called. "Come here! You're wanted!"

"Well, that's pretty prompt!" said Lionel, with a grin.

He hurried across the Triangle, and doffed his cap as he halted in front of the Head. Somehow, Dr. Stafford did not appear to be very grateful. His eyes were blazing, and his whole face was expressive of anger!



"My wheeze," said Lionel Corcoran calmly, "is to buy up the Bannington Town football ground, and then instal the Blue Crusaders in Bannington—for keeps!" A series of amazed shouts went up. The whole scheme sounded impossible!



CHAPTER 18.

A Slight Mistake.

R. MALCOLM STAFFORD thrust the note and the improvised season ticket in front of Corcoran's

eyes.

"Corcoran! Are you responsible for this—this trick?" he demanded, in a dangerous voice.

"Trick, sir?" repeated Lionel, in surprise. "It's no trick, sir——"

"Are you responsible?" demanded the Head.

"Yes, sir."

"Then let me tell you, Corcoran, that it is an impertinence!" said the Head angrily. "Hold out your hand! I am going to cane you!"

Corcoran was startled.

"Caning me in public, sir, seems to be a favourite pastime of yours," he said. "There's no impertinence——"

"Silence!"

"But you don't understand, sir!" urged Corcoran. "I was foolish, perhaps, in thinking that you would do me the honour to accept that season ticket."

"Season ticket!" thundered Dr. Stafford. "Have you the audacity, Corcoran, to stand there and maintain this—this nonsense? What do you mean by pretending that you have the authority to give me a season ticket for the Bannington Town Football Ground?"

"But I've bought the ground, sir——"

"Enough!" stormed the Head. "You are only adding to your impudence, Corcoran! Hold out your hand!"

"Yes, sir!" said Lionel quietly.

Swish! Swish!

Four times the cane descended—twice on either hand. When the punishment was over Corcoran dropped his arms to his sides, and stood there with compressed lips.

"I hope this will be a lesson to you, my boy!" said the Head sternly. "Do not dare to practise any of these ridiculous jokes again! You are apparently incorrigible!"

"Not at all, sir," said Corcoran. "You seem to have forgotten that I am the owner of the Blue Crusaders Football Club."

Dr. Stafford started.

"The owner?" he repeated. "Why, good gracious! Your uncle——Ahem! I am sorry my boy! I must confess that I had overlooked——"

"Now that my uncle is dead, sir, I am the owner of the club," said Lionel, as the Head paused. "So I've bought the Ban-

nington Town ground, and the Blue Crusaders will now make it their permanent home. I rather thought that it would be fitting, sir, if I made you a present of the first season ticket for the new ground. I am sorry you are so offended."

"Really, Corcoran, I—I—" The Head paused, looking startled and worried. "Good gracious! I really thought that this was an absurd practical joke!" He looked at the season ticket again, and then coughed. "Ahem! Then this—this document is—authentic?"

"Quite, sir," said Lionel. "I wouldn't dream of presenting you with a dud, sir."

"I am exceedingly sorry, Corcoran, that I should have so misjudged you," said the Head in some distress. "Really, I had no idea—Thank you, Corcoran. Yes, certainly I shall be very pleased to accept this season ticket. I appreciate the spirit in which the gift is made."

"Then it's all right, sir," smiled Corcoran cheerfully. "Thank's very much."

"It is not all right, Corcoran," frowned the Head. "I have—ahem!—severely caned you—"

"Oh, that's nothing, sir," interrupted Lionel. "We'll look upon that as not having taken place."

"You are a very remarkable boy, Corcoran!" said the Head, with some relief. "Yes, by all means! If that is suitable to you, I shall be most gratified. I entirely misapprehended your motives, and—I trust I did not hurt you severely?" he added, with concern.

"Nothing to speak of, sir," replied Lionel. "And as it wasn't actually meant, we'll look upon it as though it never happened. Thanks awfully, sir!"

He raised his cap, and cheerfully walked away—amid the discreet grins of a large number of Removites and Fourth-Formers who had heard the entire conversation.

The Head turned to Fenton.

"I am afraid I was somewhat hasty, Fenton!" he murmured regretfully.

"Corcoran doesn't mind, sir," said Fenton in a reassuring voice. "It's not the pain of a swishing that hurts—but the injury to a fellow's dignity."

But the Head continued to look distressed, and he vanished out of the Triangle rather hurriedly. There was a good deal of laughter after he had gone, and Lionel Corcoran was chipped endlessly by the juniors.

He was very much of a lion that evening, too. Even now the fellows could hardly believe that he had succeeded in his extraordinary project. It seemed altogether too good to be true—too fantastic.

Yet it was a fact. The Blue Crusaders—probably the most famous professional club in the country—were permanently coming to Bannington. It was their new home—their permanent address. And Corcoran, of the Fourth, was the sole owner of the club! This

was a novelty indeed—and the whole of St. Frank's could talk of nothing else.

The enthusiasm was even greater in the morning. For it was Saturday, and the Blues were to play their first match on the new ground to-day. There was much speculation as to how the players would take the new order of things.

"I'll bet they'll play an awful game!" said Tommy Watson. "They'll be in strange surroundings, and they'll be nervous and unsettled. Devon Wanderers will probably give them a terrific hiding."

NEXT WEDNESDAY!



"Don't you believe it!" said Handforth. "The Blues are going to win—and win handsomely, too. It'll be their first appearance in Bannington, and they'll be 'on their toes' for a win."

"That's my idea, too, Handy!" nodded Nipper.

Handforth, of course, wanted to be excused from lessons, so that he could accompany Corcoran to Bannington. But it didn't work. Lionel went off alone immediately after the mid-morning interval. It was an exceptional occasion, and Lionel had no difficulty in getting a pass. He had arranged to meet Mr. Ulysses Piccombe, the club manager, at the station. Smart, the trainer, was coming, too—to say nothing of Tich Harborough.

The morning at St. Frank's passed rather feverishly, and as soon as lessons were over a number of juniors wanted to dash straight

away for Bannington. But they were persuaded to think better of this hasty idea.

As Nipper pointed out, Corcoran would probably be very busy with the manager and with the members of the team. It was far better to wait until after dinner, and then arrive at the ground about an hour before the match was due to begin. They would then have plenty of time to find out how things had been going.

So it was nearly two o'clock before the crowds of St. Frank's juniors appeared in Bannington. When they arrived they could

"THE REMOVE CRUSADER!"

Two Blue Crusaders at St. Frank's! Lionel Corcoran in the Fourth, Tich Harborough in the Remove. And the Remove are inclined to think that they have the best of the bargain. There can be no denying, however, that in "Corky," the Fourth have got a corker of a leader!

Thanks to Corcoran—although Tich Harborough *doesn't* thank him!—Tich makes an amusing and amazing entry to St. Frank's. He arrives with a face covered with blue streaks—and doesn't know it! And when he goes to interview the headmaster—Dr. Stafford nearly has a fit. So does Tich, when he discovers the truth; and as for the Remove, they realise that the Fourth has "put it across" them!

In next week's yarn Edwy Searles Brooks has really excelled himself. It's a story all readers will thoroughly enjoy.

"WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE ROVERS?"

Another instalment of our amazing detective serial, featuring Nelson Lee and Nipper.

~~~~~ORDER IN ADVANCE!

not fail to see that the whole town was agog with excitement.

There was generally a good deal of activity in Bannington on a Saturday afternoon when there was a big football match on. But never before had there been such animation as this. It was phenomenal.

For the startling news had struck the town suddenly, abruptly—and without warning.

Nobody had known of the change until the local paper had come out that morning. And there, in the "Bannington Gazette," a whole page was devoted to the staggering news. Bannington Town had left—had migrated to Helmford. But in place of the old favourites came the celebrated Blue Crusaders!

After the first shock of it was over, the townspeople were unanimous in their opinion that they had gained far more than they had lost!



CHAPTER 19.

The Blue Crusaders!

THE sensational transfer of the Blue Crusaders from Browton to Bannington was not merely a local wonder. It was the wonder of the entire country. All the big London dailies had got hold of the story, and they had come out with startling headlines. East, west, north and south, the country was talking of nothing else but the great surprise. Lionel Corcoran's name was on everybody's lips; he had become famous.

Naturally, Bannington itself was the centre of all the animation. There were some people, perhaps, who regretted that Fred Hearne and his fellow players of Bannington town would not again appear on the local pitch. But the Blues were taking their place—so who cared?

It would have been different, perhaps, if the Blue Crusaders had been an ordinary Second Division Club. But this they were not. The Blues had a glamour all their own—a fame that was widespread. On the top of all this there was the recent trouble that the club had been passing through. Everybody wanted to see the Blue Crusaders playing.

Bannington counted itself lucky that it had secured this redoubtable club.

When the St. Frank's fellows got to the ground, they found that most of the gates were already closed; the turnstiles were idle. The enclosure was packed so tightly that there was no room for any further spectators—and there were still thousands of people eager to get in. Everywhere there was a sort of electrical tension in the air. The most vital Cup Tie had never caused such excitement as this.

Lionel Corcoran was in very boisterous spirits when he greeted his schoolfellows. All their seats had been reserved, but before going to them they were taken along behind the stand into the private quarters—where the manager's office was situated, and where the dressing-rooms were placed.

"Everything's all right, you chaps!" said Lionel happily. "All the Blues are here, and they're as pleased as Punch!"

"They're not sorry about leaving Browton for good?" asked Nipper.

"I dare say they'll feel the wrench a bit, but it'll soon pass," replied Corcoran. "They're here for keeps now, and before long I'll take you and introduce you to the players. They're a fine crowd. Sportsmen, every one."

And then Mr. Ulysses Piecombe arrived on the scene, and he gazed at the St. Frank's fellows with some suspicion. Mr. Piecombe was rather an extraordinary-looking individual. He was tall and gaunt, with a lean face. Perched on his long, thin nose

was a pair of pince-nez. His clothes hung loosely about his figure, and altogether he was a character. Incidentally, Mr. Ulysses Piccombe had, until fairly recently, been a sports-master at Halsbury—a famous Public school in the North.

"Mr. Piccombe—the chaps!" said Lionel, waving his hand. "Chaps—Mr. Piccombe!"

"Pleased to meet you, sir!" chorused the juniors.

"I am delighted to—er—reciprocate your greeting, my boys!" said Mr. Piccombe in a deep, booming voice. "You will, I am sure, forgive me just now. My hands are quite full. No doubt we shall become better acquainted in the—er—future."

"How do you like the new enclosure, sir?" asked Handforth.

"I must confess that I am considerably startled by all these—er—manœuvres," said Mr. Piccombe. "I can only trust that everything will turn out for the best. There is some consolation, at least, in knowing that we now have a permanent ground. But as to the advisability of this—er—drastic step, I cannot even vouchsafe an opinion. The responsibility, however, is not mine," he added, with a direct look at Corcoran.

"Don't you worry, Mr. Piccombe!" grinned Lionel. "I did this thing off my own bat, and I am willing to stand by the consequences."

"I hope the consequences will not be—er—disastrous," said Mr. Piccombe dubiously.

He bustled off, and most of the juniors were grinning.

"Queer old bird!" said Handforth.

"He's a bit cranky—but he's all there!" replied Lionel. "The players like him, too, and they get on well together."

"He looks a bit shaken up," remarked Nipper.

"The poor old boy is going about in a sort of daze," replied Lionel, with a chuckle. "He doesn't know whether he's on his head or his heels. He's a precise sort of man, and all this commotion has pushed him right out of his rut. Until this morning he hadn't the faintest idea that I had decided to shift the Blues from Browton to Bannington. He was knocked all of a heap."

"It was a bit thick to keep him in the dark, wasn't it?" asked Buster Boots.

"I couldn't do anything else," replied Lionel, becoming serious. "He would have kicked up the very dickens of a fuss if he had known about it; he would have done his best to stop it. But I'm the owner of the club, and I'm going to do jolly well as I like."

"You've proved that, old man!" said Nipper dryly.

Soon afterwards they were taken and introduced to the players.

All the St. Frank's juniors were at once impressed by the personalities of the Blue Crusaders. They were nearly all young men, and at present they were bubbling over with a fierce kind of joy. The week of uncer-

tainty was over, and now they were as happy as a lot of sandboys.

Fatty Fowkes was huge. He weighed sixteen stone, and Handforth, at least, was dubious as he regarded him. He could not understand how this cumbersome fellow could be a good goalie. Yet the fame of Will Fowkes was great. It was a recognised fact that he was the best keeper in the Second Division. Many, indeed, held the view that Fatty Fowkes was the finest goalie in professional football.

Then there was Dave Moran, the quiet, steady, resourceful skipper, who played at half-back. And Ben Gillingham, the right-back—ugly, bow-legged, rugged and blunt. A rare good fellow was Ben. And Rex Carrington, the enterprising centre-forward—debonair, dandified, but capable. Wally Simpson, Penniworth, Andy Tait, and the others. They were all likeable, cheery fellows. And last, but by no means least, the Hon. Tom Silward Harborough, known to all and sundry as "Tich."

Tich was a Halsbury schoolboy, of just about the same height and slimness as Reggie Pitt. He was always grinning, always ready with a joke. He had taken after his celebrated father, Lord Shevingham, who, in his day, had been one of the most famous Blues.

There was not much time for talking now. The players were almost due out, and Nipper discreetly suggested that he and the other juniors should go to their seats. After the game, perhaps, they would have a better opportunity of getting on friendly terms with the players.

So all the St. Frank's fellows went off, and took their seats in the stand.

They had an idea that they were booked for a fine display of football—and in this belief they were not mistaken!



CHAPTER 20.

Entertaining the Blues!

THE game, in truth, proved to be a glorious affair.

The Devon Wanderers' team was a capable, businesslike combination, but they were knocked off their game, run off their feet, by the overwhelming enterprise of the Blue Crusaders.

In the very first minute Rex Carrington ran through and scored. Then, after another quarter of an hour, Tich Harborough got a goal on his own. Then Penniworth scored, and Rex followed with another unbeatable shot.

By half-time the Blues were four goals to the good, and the Devon Wanderers had not been able to reply once.

In fact, the game was the best that had ever been seen on the Bannington Town

ground. Not that the Devon players were incapable. They were simply playing against a team that had them beaten in every phase of the game. They put up a tremendous struggle, but it was hopeless.

In the end the Crusaders walked off, amid tumultuous cheering, having won their first game in their new enclosure by six goals to nil.

The spectators went crowding out, overjoyed. The coming of the Blue Crusaders to Bannington had suddenly put that town definitely on the map! And there could be no doubt about the tremendous success of the Blues' first appearance.

Handforth and Nipper and Boots, and all the other St. Frank's juniors, stayed behind, and very soon after the last of the public had been ushered out of the exit, Lionel Corcoran came running on to the pitch, where the juniors were standing.

"I've got a bit of news, you fellows!" said Corcoran briskly. "Tich has definitely decided to come to St. Frank's!"

Immediately a chorus of amazed and delighted shouts went up. Tich Harborough coming to St. Frank's! By Jove, that was glorious news!

"Good egg!" said Handforth. "We can do with him!"

"He's been at Halsbury, you know," went on Lionel. "But now that the Blue Crusaders are here, and as he plays regularly for them, he'll naturally have to change his school. He wants to come to St. Frank's—with me."

"In the Fourth?" said Boots keenly.

"I'm not sure about that," replied Lionel. "He may go into the Remove——"

"Naturally he'll come into the Remove!" said Handforth. "It's likely that we're going to let you fatheaded Fourth-Formers have two Crusaders!"

Tich himself joined them shortly afterwards. He was eager and excited, and most of the juniors had already taken a big liking to him.

"My pater's in town this week-end," he said breathlessly. "I'm going straight off now—by the very next train! Old Piecan has given me leave, and I'm not delaying. By Monday I hope to be with you chaps again—as a St. Frank's fellow! I'm just going to force my pater to agree to it."

"Need you go in such a hurry?" asked Nipper. "We want the whole team to come over to St. Frank's. We're getting up a big feed, and we want to welcome the Crusaders."

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Lads, when you fetch your copy of The NELSON LEE Library, say to your newsagent: "Please reserve me a copy each week of The BOYS' REALM also." You will then be able to read the two finest boys' papers on the market!

In this week's REALM you'll find a startling long complete footer yarn, entitled,

The famous Blue Crusaders robbed of their ground! Fatty Fowkes and the others sent packing! Don't miss the thrills in this amazing yarn.

BOSS O'THE BLUES!

by EDWY SEARLES BROOKS



A St. Frank's schoolboy in charge of a league Club! How will he get on with old Piecan the Blues cranky manager? There's tons of fun and excitement waiting for you?

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THE BOYS' REALM

"That's jolly decent of you," said Tich uncomfortably. "But, if you don't mind, I'd rather be excused. You understand, don't you? If possible, I want my pater to fix the thing up this evening—he can easily ring up the headmaster. Then I shall be able to come down on Monday."

"Go ahead, then!" said Handforth promptly. "And we wish you luck, old man!"

"Hear, hear!" chorused the others.

Tich Harborough was soon off, bubbling over with animation. Lionel Corcoran was at St. Frank's, and he wanted to be at St. Frank's, too!

After he had gone, Fatty Fowkes came out with all the other players, and they cheerfully accepted the invitation to St. Frank's.

"Will we go, boys?" shouted Fatty, grinning all over his ample face.

"You bet we will!" said Ben Gillingham, with a chuckle. "There's going to be a feed, isn't there?"

"A regular royal feast!" said Lionel.

"Then it's settled," roared the big sixteen-stone goalie. "Where's St. Frank's? How do you get to it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If ever there's a feed anywhere, you can always be certain that Fatty will be on the spot!" smiled Dave Moran. "A feed attracts him like a magnet attracts a needle."

The more the St. Frank's fellows saw of the Blue Crusaders, the more they liked them. They felt, too, that they had a sort of personal interest in the famous club.

With Lionel Corcoran in the Fourth, and with every chance that Tich Harborough would come into the Remove, the St. Frank's juniors seemed to have a kind of ownership in the club. So they took the Blues to their bosom.

Fatty Fowkes was easily the most popular member of the team. He was so jolly—so free and easy. And later on, at St. Frank's, in the Junior Lecture Hall, the Crusaders were royally entertained.

They were feasted and cheered, and the entire junior school attended the function. Fatty Fowkes & Co. were the honoured guests, and they enjoyed themselves to the full.

For once the prefects and masters took no notice of the din that was proceeding from the lecture hall. They winked at it. They knew what was going on, and they conveniently turned their ears the other way.

At the end of all the festivities Edward Oswald Handforth insisted upon making a speech. He had already toasted the guests once, but he was not content with that.

"Gentlemen——" he began.

"Hear, hear!"

"Go it, Handy!"

"Only don't be too long, because we want Fatty Fowkes to do a bit of spouting."

"Good!"

"Go it, Fatty!"

"Here, wait a minute!" roared Handforth. "I have even started yet."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gentlemen, I regard this occasion as an important one!" bellowed Handforth. "It is the beginning of a new epoch!"

"That's good!" murmured Travers. "I rather like that!"

"The beginning of a new epoch!" repeated Handforth firmly. "Thanks to the enterprise of Corcoran, of the Fourth, the Blue Crusaders have come into this district. Of course, it's all rot that Corcoran should be in the Fourth. The Remove is his right place——"

"Cheese it, Handy!" roared the Fourth.

"But he's a St. Frank's chap, anyhow, and that's the thing that really matters," pursued Handforth. "He's one of the best, and we're glad to have him in the school. And we want all our guests to-night—all the Blues—to understand that they'll be welcome any time."

"Hear, hear!" shouted the crowd.

Then Nipper made a speech—a rather more sedate one—in which he welcomed the Blues to St. Frank's, and prophesied that the footballers and the schoolboys would always be the best of friends.

Then Fatty Fowkes was given no rest until he had replied, and the genial Fatty caused roars of laughter by his witty speech. He gave it as his opinion that the Blues had taken the most decisive step of their existence when they had uprooted themselves from Browton, and had planted themselves in Bannington.

"It's the beginning of a new era!" declared the big goalie.

"Epoch!" murmured Travers.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Epoch, then!" chuckled Fatty Fowkes. "The Blue Crusaders, instead of passing out of existence, are now entering upon the most successful phase of their career. Boys, listen to me! In Bannington, we're going to go from success to success, and I'm not boasting when I say that we shall be in the First Division next year."

"Good old Fatty!"

"First Division next year!"

And a hearty toast was drunk to that effect—in lemonade, ginger-beer, and similar beverages.

After the party had broken up, and the Blue Crusaders had returned to Bannington, St. Frank's became more like its old self.

But there wasn't the slightest doubt that—to use Edward Oswald Handforth's term—this day indeed marked the beginning of a new epoch!

THE END.

(How's that for a fine yarn, lads? Lionel Corcoran certainly is an amazing and likeable character, isn't he? And if his entry to St. Frank's was startling enough, that of Tich Harborough, who comes to the school next week, is sensational! "The Remove Crusader!" is one of the finest yarns Edwy Searles Brooks has written for a long time. Look out for it next Wednesday.)



E. S. BROOKS.

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 SCHOOL STORY LIBRARY, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.



O. W. PEARCE.

SINCE you seem so interested in my native town and where I live now—George William Forrest (Liverpool)—I might as well tell you that I was born in London, although I am of East Anglian parentage, and I reside at Halstead, in Essex.

I can't forgive you—C. W. Pearce (Lewisham)—because there's nothing to forgive. Write to me just when you feel inclined, and don't feel guilty if a few weeks slip by between each letter. You know that I am always delighted to hear from such old readers as yourself. Your photo appears this week, as you'll see above. There's no foundation in your fear that it will keep our readers from buying next week's copy.

So I don't write enough about football—Thomas Page (Manchester)—for your liking. Perhaps you'll be interested to know that I am now writing the "Blue Crusader" stories in one of our companion papers—"The Boys' Realm." These stories are all about professional football and footballers. There's plenty of fun and adventure in the stories, too, and they're extra long. They more than half-fill the story contents of the paper, and if you *do* decide to subscribe regularly to this periodical, you'll find that Nipper and Handforth, and lots of my other St. Frank's characters, will be appearing in these "Blue Crusader" yarns. As to your repeated request for the introduction of "The St. Frank's Questionnaire" in the Old Paper, if there is any general desire for this, it will ultimately become one of our regular features—a set of questions about St. Frank's one week, and the answers the next.

You don't need my permission to start an "All Nations Correspondence Club"—Thomas W. Hutt (Sydney).—You and your cobbler, Phil Methim can go ahead as soon as you like.

Long before this—B. R. Davis (Duffield)—you will have received my photograph in

exchange for yours. If you are really anxious to send me a photograph of your dog, "Tim," you're welcome to do so. But I'm much more interested in readers' photographs, and I certainly shan't send one of mine to your dog in exchange. He'd probably chew it up, or something. Oh, by the way, when sending it, you'd better mark it plainly "Tim"—otherwise I might think it's another one of you, in a different pose!

Thanks for your permission to publish your "dial"—Leslie S. Tarrant (Streatham Hill)—but this can't be "did" unless you send me another photo of yourself. The snap I already have in my album is of a group, and, although I am delighted to have it, it won't do for reproduction purposes. Snaps are seldom any good for such an exacting process.

Sorry to disappoint you—Peggy Wilson (Belfast)—but my hair is light brown, not dark, as you imagine. That's why I look nearly bald-headed in my photograph, and why specially pencilled eyebrows have been provided for me. Of course, I'm not really bald—I've got a considerable mop of hair. You needn't run down your own letters, for I found the one you sent me most entertaining. It's a very good idea to jot things down just as they come into your head. Thanks for your drawings, which are excellent.

Glad to hear that you will soon be returning to England again—Terence Sullivan (Adelaide)—and that you will then resume your regular weekly letters. You don't know how much I have missed this particular weekly tonic.

NELSON LEE AND NIPPER—DETECTIVES! START THIS SERIAL NOW!

What's Wrong with the Rovers?



The mystery deepens! Nelson Lee and Nipper find themselves floundering in a maze of extraordinary happenings which are akin to a jigsaw puzzle. They're all connected in some way—but how?

The Shot in the Night!

LEAVING the Harbour Hotel after dinner that night, Nelson Lee and Nipper turned up the collars of their overcoats against the thin, persistent drizzle, and set off for Edward Colton's house. Work on the wharves had ceased long ago. A red-sailed trawler was slowly making its way out of the inner basin, but the only sign of real activity was on the railway company's pier opposite, from which the night boat was about due to leave for Holland.

Nipper was feeling a little subdued. He had hurried back to the hotel with the news of his discovery—a discovery which definitely connected at least one of the Rovers with the men of whom Edward Colton stood in such fear—only to find that his chief had bought a photograph of the team at a local book-sellers, and had promptly recognised the burly centre-half as the man they had seen with Colton's shadower on the train.

He had been interested in Nipper's account of his meeting with Dick Ridley, but inclined to think his young assistant was prejudiced in favour of the young footballer who was such a hero to him. In a quite dispassionate way the famous detective had summed the situation up.

James Ridley had disappeared.

The police theory was that he had worried about the ill-success of the team in which he had taken so great an interest, and was wandering somewhere, suffering from loss of memory.

Colton's theory was that his old friend had been murdered, and that his nephew, Dick Ridley, was either directly or indirectly concerned with that murder.

"I wash out the police theory," said Nelson Lee, as they walked along together through dreary, almost deserted, streets. "There's obviously a lot more in this business than the fact that Northmouth Rovers are doing badly, so badly as to affect the brain of a man who appears to have been a pretty shrewd old boy. Besides, Ridley, on the verge of a breakdown, would not have gone to Colton and told him that there was something wrong with the Rovers. That must have been palpable to anyone who has taken the least interest in the team, let alone an influential director.

"Ridley spoke of some discovery he hoped to make, and that seems to me the crux of the affair. Someone had a very strong motive for that discovery not being made, and it looks as though that someone had succeeded."

"And it looks as though that someone was this Bert Barter," said Nipper, as they turned from the main street into a road of large, detached houses; a quiet, deserted road, with rain dripping from the leafless trees on the edge of the pavement.

"Or that Bert Barter was working with young Ridley, or someone else," put in Nelson Lee. "Colton may be able to throw some light on the situation. He was in such a blue funk yesterday that it was almost im-

possible to get a connected story from him, and I did not want to call upon him in daylight. I passed his house this morning; that's the place over there. You can see that this road after dark is eminently suitable for knocking a man over the head."

Nipper agreed. They had now reached a very lonely part of the road, with big, old-fashioned houses standing back in large grounds. On a dark, gloomy night like this, with rain pattering dismally from the leafless trees, with no street lamps, and not a soul about, a man whose life was in peril could scarcely have chosen a worse spot to visit.

"I wonder Colton doesn't move!" the boy said, with a little shiver, as they groped their way into a broad drive through an open gate.

"I shouldn't be in the least surprised if he does," replied the detective. "I shall advise that he—— What's the matter?"

Nipper was sniffing.

"There's a car standing somewhere near here."

It was still some distance from the house, but there was certainly the smell of warm oil, and the next moment they were upon a car pulled up close to the thick evergreens that bordered the drive. It showed no lights, but the radiator was hot. Nelson Lee's pencil-like electric torch ran over it. It was a Morris Cowley four-seater, with hood and side curtains up. He noted the number, and stooped to examine the tyres.

Bang!

The sharp bark of a revolver came from the direction of the house. Impetuously Nipper dashed off up the drive, his chief pocketing his torch and following him.

Crash!

A tinkle of glass, and a harsh voice in the darkness. Three shadowy forms racing down the drive. They were almost upon Nipper before he saw them. He hit out at a man, and his fist came into sharp contact with flesh.

In the distance he heard a girl's voice screaming for help, and then something came whizzing through the air, hit him full in the face, and sent him crashing backwards to the drive.

And as stars leapt before his eyes, and blackness was engulfing him, he was vaguely conscious that someone had pitched heavily on top of him!

In the Dark!

NIPPER came out of the darkness with a feeling that he had suddenly come up out of a pitch-black pit by a very swift lift.

"Better now, old man?" a kindly voice was asking, and he knew it was the voice of his chief, though it seemed to come from some distance away.

"Yes," said the boy faintly.

He raised a hand and tenderly felt his aching nose. By the sense of touch he was inclined to think that he had some of his face left, though he had been inclined to doubt it.

He remembered something hitting him with terrific force, and then someone falling upon him. Now, with returning consciousness, he sat up hastily and looked round in the darkness, but could only see his chief kneeling beside him, dabbing at an ear that was bleeding a little.

"What's happened?" he asked.

"Sandbagged!" said Nelson Lee shortly. "Those fellows were experts with them. I just saw the one that smashed into your face, and then I got one on the side of the head that sent me down on top of you. I don't think I could have lost consciousness for more than a few moments, for I heard the car driving away, though I was too helpless to do anything. Feel fit enough to get up?"

Nipper felt like nothing on earth, but he pluckily staggered to his feet. Memory was working again; he remembered the shot and a girl's scream.

WHAT'S GONE BEFORE.

NELSON LEE, the world-famous detective, and his assistant,

NIPPER, are staying at a London hotel preparatory to leaving for the South of France—they are away from St. Frank's on holiday—when they are approached by

EDWARD COLTON, a director of Northmouth Rovers, the famous football club with a brilliant past history, but which is now doing badly in the First Division of the English League. Mr. Colton says his life is in danger, and that he is being followed by a man with a rat-like face. This is because he was the last man to see James Ridley, ex-chairman of the Rovers, who has mysteriously disappeared. Colton thinks Ridley has been murdered, and that

DICK RIDLEY, the ex-chairman's nephew, and amateur International centre-forward of the Rovers, is concerned in the affair. Nelson Lee agrees to investigate the matter, and accordingly he and Nipper travel to Northmouth. During the journey Nipper sees the rat-faced man who followed Edward Colton in conversation with another man. Arrived in Northmouth, Nipper signs on with the Rovers as an amateur. He is now known as Nick Parr, and Nelson Lee has taken the name of Mr. Nelson; they are supposed to be surveyors. As Nipper is leaving the Rovers' ground at Bleakridge, he nearly collides with a burly, ginger-haired chap. The boy recognises him as the fellow who was in conversation with the rat-faced man who followed Edward Colton to London! Nipper makes inquiries and learns that the ginger-haired man is Bert Barter, the Rovers' centre-half!

(Now read on.)

"Do you think there's been a murder, guv'nor?"

"I'm rather surprised there hasn't!" was the detective's grim reply, as they hurried along the drive. "Colton's either a crack shot, or a most amazingly lucky one, to fire into the darkness and wing one of the men."

"You think it was Colton who fired?"

"Obviously!" said Lee. "At least two of the men were armed with sandbags, which they were experts at using. That shows that they wanted no gun work. Colton must have been on the jump, seen them, and blazed into the darkness, and he got one of the men in the left arm. I saw it hanging limp as they came upon us. I don't know who the girl is, or why she screamed, but we soon shall know. I'll just give Colton a shout. We don't want to chance his luck holding in the matter of shooting."

Despite his aching face, Nipper grinned as they came out on to the lawn opposite a lighted French-window, and Nelson Lee called out his client's name with the assurance that it was all right.

The French-window with the smashed pane of glass was opened, and a man in evening-dress stepped out into the darkness.

"Thank goodness it's you, Mr. Lee!" said an agitated voice. "I was just going to 'phone you. Be careful what you say. My niece is in there, and must not know your real identity. You can never trust a woman with a secret. Come in—come in!"

Nipper followed Colton and his chief. The lawn was soft, and there ought to be footprints; but the men had obviously been wearing rubber overshoes, for they had not heard them on the drive until they were right upon them, so footprints would afford little or no clue to the identity of the men—nor would the car. There must be hundreds of blue Morris Cowley four-seaters in the district, and the numbers would be false, or else it would prove to be a stolen vehicle.

All Nipper knew was that he would like to meet the man who had made such a mess of his face. How big a mess that was he did not realise until he stepped into a brilliantly lighted and daintily-furnished drawing-room, and saw the startled grey eyes of a pretty girl in a white evening frock fixed upon him in horror.

"Clarice," the agitated Mr. Colton was saying, "this is my friend Mr. Nelson, the surveyor, and his assistant, Mr. Parr. They met those thieves in the drive. Mr. Nelson, my niece, Miss Clarice Colton, and— By Jove, young man, they did knock you about!"

Nipper stole a furtive glance at a gilt-framed mirror. His nose and upper-lip were bleeding, and there was an ugly red patch on his forehead, where the sandbag had struck him.

"It frightened me out of my life, Mr. Nelson!" said the girl with the dark, bobbed, wavy hair. "I didn't know uncle had got a revolver in his pocket, and suddenly, just as I was looking for a piece of music, he fired right through the window. I screamed, and

brought the servants in, but uncle wouldn't let them give chase, or telephone for the police."

"No, my dear, because I had put myself in the wrong by firing without giving warning. But we shan't see those scoundrels again. I think you'd better go to bed, Clarice, it must have been very upsetting for you. Come along, Mr. Nelson. I'm sure you two need a wash and a little first aid."

It struck Nipper that the pretty girl, who looked about nineteen or twenty, and who had quickly got over her shock, was laughing at the football director with the bulging blue eyes, in which fear had given place to a gleam of triumph.

In the bath-room Nelson Lee and his assistant bathed their wounds. Mr. Colton insisted upon them having a little brandy, and then, seated comfortably round the fire in his study, they discussed the situation.

The detective had been perfectly correct in his surmise; Colton, in his nervousness, had looked up a revolver he had not fired since he was a young man. Always on the watch, he had seen the men on the lawn and fired.

"That will have taught them something," he said complacently.

"But you mustn't do that sort of thing, you know," said Nelson Lee, as he filled his pipe, and settled himself comfortably in his deep easy-chair. "It's a miracle you haven't killed someone. Even if your life is in peril the law doesn't allow you to blaze away indiscriminately, even at night visitors. But let's drop that for the moment. There are several things I want to ask you. First of all, do you know anything about Bert Barter, your centre-half?"

"Only that he's a somewhat erratic player, very good when he's at the top of his form. Stephen Langton, our new chairman, was impressed by him, and secured him quite cheaply from some minor club."

"He travelled to Northmouth last night with the man who had shadowed you to our hotel in London!"

Colton's bulging eyes threatened to leave his head. There was fear in them again—that haunted fear the detective and his assistant had observed when he had entered the vestibule of that big hotel in the Strand—but Nelson Lee soothed him, and proceeded to question him relentlessly. He was convinced that Colton was concealing something, and had deliberately set out to frighten him. The director swore that he had never seen the rat-like man until he had observed him at King's Cross Station, that he had not the least grounds for suspecting Barter, with whom he had barely exchanged half a dozen words.

"But why do you suspect young Ridley?"

The question was flashed at him, and Nipper saw an uneasy expression come to their wealthy client's face.

"I have told you that on the night that James Ridley disappeared he came to me and spoke mysteriously about there being something wrong with the Rovers, and how he was on the verge of a big discovery. He also told

me that he had quarrelled with his nephew, and was going to stop his very handsome allowance. I connected the two things, and certainly the disappearance of his uncle enables him to go on drawing five hundred a year, apart from anything he may receive under a will that might have been altered."

The famous detective nodded, and blew out a cloud of smoke before replying.

"Admittedly there is motive there; but what motive would there be in killing or kidnapping you?"

"He knows his uncle visited me. He may think he told me a lot more than he did. And then there's Clarice!"

moment your friend disappeared. In fact, if you were dangerous, you would have been dangerous at the moment, not now. All that he has against you is that you have refused to allow him to visit your niece, and surely you don't suggest that because of that he would have you shadowed to London, and hire desperadoes to come to your house and sand-bag you?"

Mr. Colton looked a little sheepish.

"Put like that, I'll admit it does sound feeble," he said. "But there's a lot more behind it, and that's what I hope you will succeed in discovering. It's something to do with the Rovers, and you've confirmed that



The 'plane swung round in a circle, and then disappeared down into the Rovers' ground. "That must be our aviator chairman," said Nipper to Nelson Lee.

"Crumbs!" gasped Nipper. "Is she in it, too?"

Mr. Colton frowned at him.

"Young Dick Ridley has been paying great attention to my niece, but after what his uncle had told me, I stopped the young fellow coming to the house."

Nelson Lee puffed at his pipe. He had got the information he had been so keen on obtaining. It explained Colton's obvious prejudice against the young International, but helped little or nothing in clearing up the mystery he had been set to solve.

"But, Mr. Colton," said the detective, "if young Ridley is implicated in the disappearance of his uncle, and suspected that he had told you something that might prove evidence against him, it is reasonable to suppose that you would have gone to the police the

by discovering that Barter is in some way connected with the spy who followed me to your hotel in London."

Nelson Lee rose, and glanced at his watch.

"We'll be getting back," he said. "Buy some blanks for that revolver, Mr. Colton, though I doubt if you will need it. It's a hundred to one those fellows will put you down as a crack shot, a man to be left severely alone. By the way, do you know which way James Ridley went when he left you on the night of his disappearance?"

"Oh, yes," replied the football director. "He turned to the right, and somehow I thought he was going to the ground, though I could not think why he should go there so late."

Nelson Lee made no comment. But he and Nipper also turned to the right. The quiet

road became still more deserted. A few large houses, the fence of a private park, and then the road became little more than a cart-track across bleak, undeveloped building land.

"Easy enough to knock anyone on the head here," said Nipper. "Especially for anyone who is an expert at sandbag throwing."

He peered round a little uneasily into the darkness, and Nelson Lee laughed slightly and paused to take his bearings. Away down in the valley behind them twinkled the lights of Northmouth, the red and green lights of the harbour entrance standing out in the drizzle that came in from the sea. Away on their right a tramcar was starting away, its lights flickering as it crossed the points.

"That will be the Bleakridge tram terminus and that lamp-post just ahead of us will be the one at the entrance to the football ground," remarked Nelson Lee. "We ought to be in time to get a tram back to the harbour, and—Hullo! Night flying! But the chap's carrying no lights."

There was the drone of an aeroplane in the murky gloom above them, and both knew from the sound that it was dropping rapidly.

Then a dim shape appeared, and suddenly a light flickered from the lonely football ground ahead. An answering light flickered from the sky, and then, in the gloom, they saw the 'plane droning round in a circle, and disappear down into the Rovers' ground.

"That must be our aviator chairman," said Nipper, with great interest. "I suppose he's flown from Scotland. They said he was up there, and Dick Ridley told me they called him the Bat."

"He would appear to be a mighty good night flyer," remarked Nelson Lee. "I suppose that is his car waiting for him."

They had come out into the road in which the ground was situated. By the solitary lamp-post outside the entrance stood a small two-seater sports car, with side and tail lamps on. Even from the distance it looked pretty elderly. Before they could get near to it, however, two men appeared from the players' entrance, and stepped into the car; the engine roared, and the car was driven rapidly away.

"So the man in the leather coat was Stephen Langton," said Nelson Lee. "I wonder who the other fellow was."

"I can tell you," said Nipper, in a very small voice. "The other chap was Dick Ridley!"

The Bat!

NIPPER was one of the first to arrive on the ground at Bleakridge for training the next morning, and he had less of the new boy feeling. It was true that he could not juggle with the ball like the professionals, but he could score goals against useful players, whilst the Rovers had certainly done nothing in that direction just lately.

Groundsmen were fixing up goalposts and net, and as he walked to the dressing-room David Williams, the Welsh goalie, overtook him.

"I see you are keen, and, look you, that is a very good thing—indeed, it is what we need just now," he said, in his rather sing-song voice, as they walked along to the dressing-room. "There is too much leaving it to the other man, I tell you, and you will not win matches that way whatever! We shall be beaten by Broadwich to-morrow, and that will not help us!"

"I shouldn't think it's exactly helpful to expect a licking!" said Nipper bluntly.

The goalie looked a little offended, and went over to speak to the rather sulky-looking trainer.

Gradually the men rolled up, and Nipper was thoughtful as he changed, wondering whether the young amateur international would turn up. He had certainly been startied to see him leaving the ground with the airman about half-past ten at night; but his chief, though apparently mildly interested, had made no comment. It certainly struck the youngster that they had plunged into a baffling mystery. And, seeing that Colton had been attacked, though he was not really dangerous, the situation would certainly become too exciting to be pleasant if their identity and their real object in Northmouth came out.

Nipper had just finished changing when Dick Ridley came in, gave him a cheery good-morning, and, ignoring the way in which some of the players turned their backs to him, stopped to talk to the goalie and Sims, the left-half.

As they were going out on to the playing-pitch, Nipper spotted the big, burly, ginger-haired centre-half walking slowly towards them, and felt a sudden thrill.

Bert Barter's left arm was in a sling!

"Hullo, Bert!" called a man. "What have you been doing now?"

The big man frowned.

"Some fool left something on the stairs last night, and I fell and dislocated my shoulder. Sickening, isn't it? The doc. says I mustn't play for a week at least."

"Indeed to goodness that puts the lid on it, I tell you!" said the pessimistic little Welshman, brushing back his mane of long black hair. "This is a bad business, look you!"

But Nipper was not thinking of the troubles of the Rovers. Bert Barter had travelled with the spy who had shadowed Colton, and last night Colton had shot a man in the left arm. Nelson Lee had only caught a glimpse of him in the darkness, but he had seen he was a big man, with a limp left arm!

The discovery put Nipper off his work at the start, and someone laughed at the feeble way he took a kick. That spurred Nipper on. He would show 'em! Audaciously he took the ball from the toe of a player with quite a big name in the football world, raced past two men who were half afraid of falling over him, and sent in a stinging shot

that had David Williams, dancing about in goal like a Dervish, completely beaten.

At that moment Nipper became aware that the manager was watching the kick-about, and that someone was with him. It was at the man with him that Nipper stared with frank curiosity.

A man of medium height, clad in a rather shabby grey suit, with a leather waistcoat. He wore no hat, and his face was the most striking the boy had ever seen. His dark hair was close cut, and a high forehead gave the impression of baldness, his nose was large and curved, his eyes dark and penetrating, his face curiously pale, and his lips thin and tight.

"Parr!"

The manager was calling him, and Nipper turned and went up to the two men.

"Parr, this is Mr. Stephen Langton, the chairman of the club. I have been telling him that you have signed on as an amateur."

The man with the hawk-like face held out a curiously cold hand.

"You play very well for a youngster," said the chairman in a harsh, metallic voice. "What is your usual position on the field?"

Nipper thought of the injured centre-half; that would mean the reserve man playing against Broadwich, and a vacancy with the reserves.

"I'm fairly useful at centre-half, sir," he

said, omitting to mention that his usual place was in the forward line.

"Oh, well, stick to it!" said the man whom they called the Bat. Then, with little Mr. Minter rubbing his hands as though dry-washing them, he left Nipper, and walked away towards the hangar under the terrace at the end of the ground.

The youngster went on with his training, a great hope at his heart. But at the end of the morning's work that hope was dashed. There were some alterations in the team lists on the notice-board, but his name was not there. A man named Jones came in in place of Barter, and another man took his place in the reserves, who were playing in a town some thirty miles away.

Nipper changed, and seeing that Dick Ridley was undergoing masage, put football aside for the moment. He wished he could go into the hangar where Stephen Langton was apparently at work on his machine. Knowing that to be impossible, however, he set off back to the hotel to tell his chief that he was firmly convinced that Bert Barter was one of the men concerned in the attack on Mr. Colton.

(The mystery seems to get deeper and more baffling with each chapter. What is Bert Barter's connection with the plot, and how much is young Dick Ridley implicated? Don't miss next week's gripping instalment, lads.)

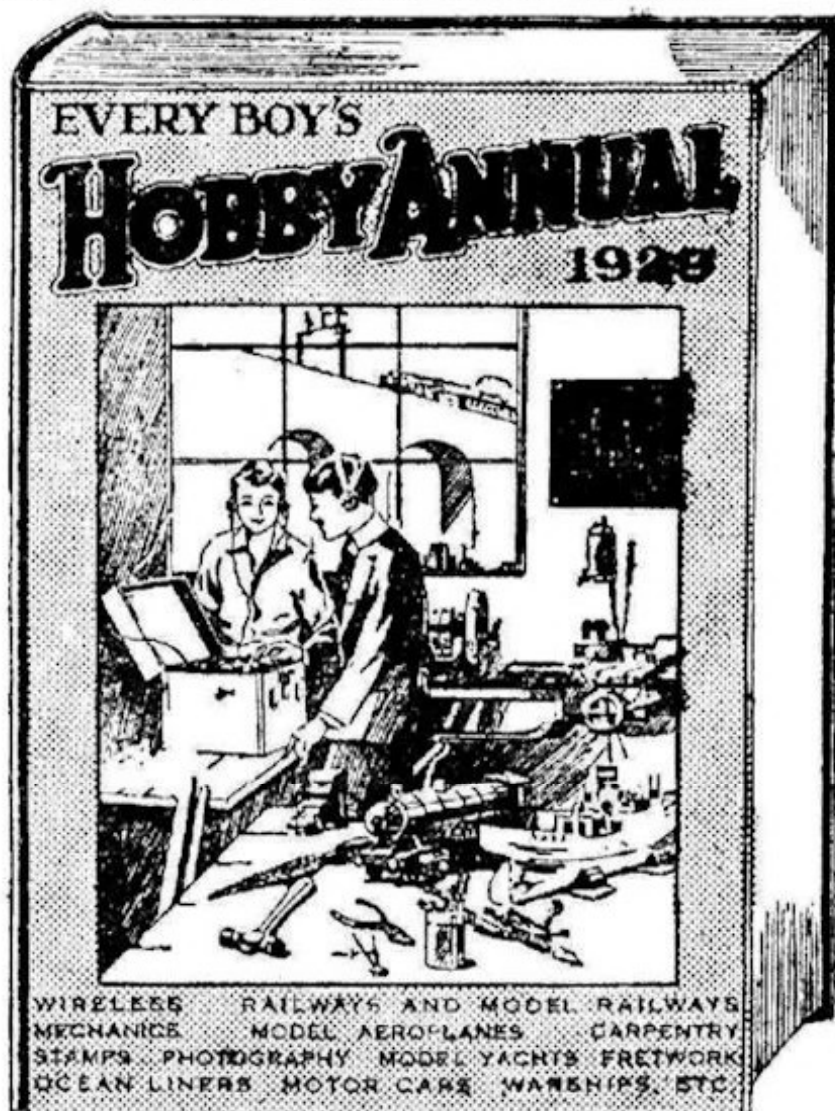
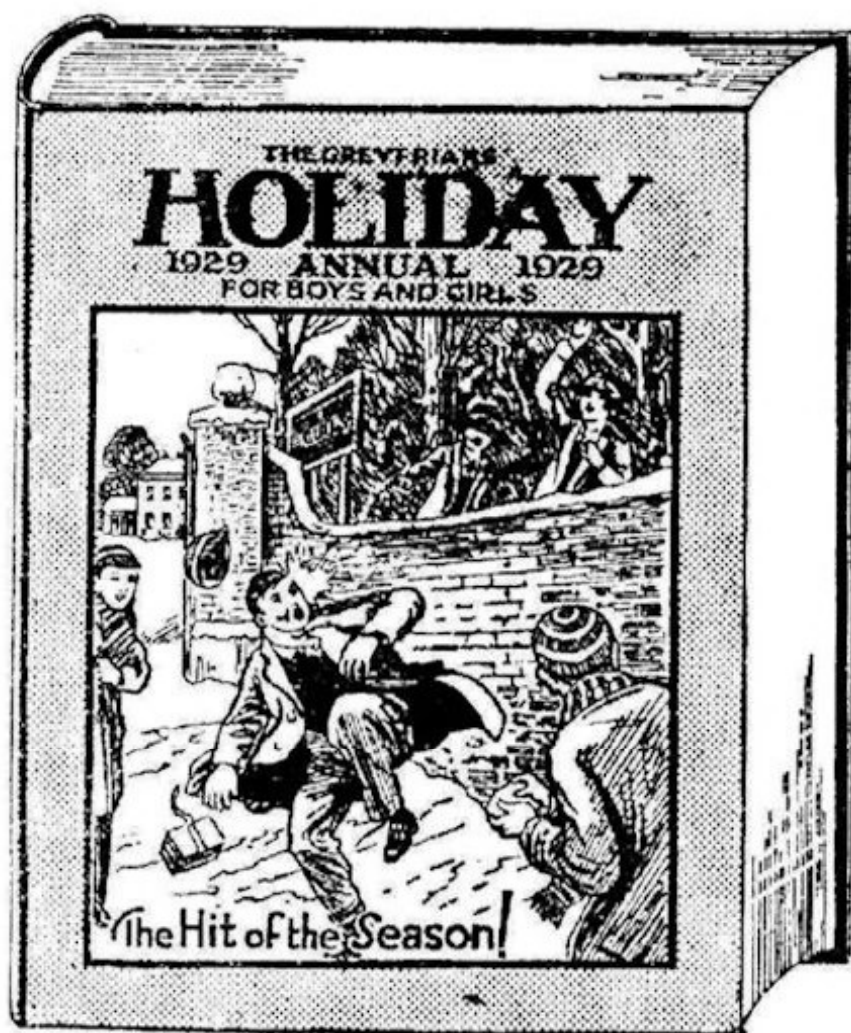
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A

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B

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C

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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 School Story Library," Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

Stories by Edwy S. Brooks!

ARE you reading Edwy Searles Brooks' yarns in the **Boys' Realm**, lads? These long complete tales of sport and adventure are about the Blue Crusaders, a famous football team. The players are as cheery a set of sportsmen as you could wish to meet. You all ought to make pals of them, just as you've made pals of Nipper and Handforth and Archie Glen-thorne and the other St. Frank's fellows.

As all N.L.L. readers know, Edwy Searles Brooks is at his very best when writing about football, so you can guess that his Blue Crusaders' yarns in the **Boys' Realm** are really top-notchers. If you haven't done so already, why not buy a copy of this grand paper and see what you think of it? In addition to Edwy Searles Brooks' yarn there are many other features that are bound to interest you. Altogether I can assure you that the **Boys' Realm** is a splendid two-pennorth. Trot round to your newsagent and get a copy, for this week's issue is now on sale.

Can You Tell Who's Who?

An ingenious and enthusiastic reader of the Old Paper sends me information about a new kind of sport he has discovered. This is guessing what people are doing for a living.

You see a crowd of individuals in the street or on the railway, all looking much alike, but there are fine distinctions. The smartly-dressed fellow is not necessarily a millionaire out taking the air, and the extra quiet person with a well-brushed coat and shiny elbows may not be a hard-working clerk. More likely it is he who has the millions. Millionaires are very careful people often enough, and they don't like throwing away good cash in heavy tailors' bills. The interest of the new game lies in the fact that in those cases where it is possible to discover the truth of a guess, the latter would generally be found to be wrong. The truth is, it is extremely difficult in these days to tell what professions are followed by the people one sees.

It was not always so. In the past there

were distinctive dresses. The butcher always wore a blue get-up. The dustman had a funny hat, rather like that of a miner. Now he may sport a fashionable Trilby, or a bowler. Things are far more level. The "gentleman" has dropped his tall silk hat. Matters are mixed.

It is the same on the stage. In the old plays you could always get the villain in a twinkling. If he were a very bad fellow he always swanked on to the stage in faultless evening-dress. Perhaps this was to make up for his own faults. The man looked as if he had just come from the outfitters' in his white waistcoat, and his handsome cloak which was unbuttoned so as to reveal his shining shirt-front, and the flashing diamond stud. Nowadays the scamp in a play is content to romp on in a lounge suit or any old thing.

They say that it is easy to "fix" the callings of most people. So it may be to a trained detective who sees certain creases which mean that the man who is spotted spends most of his days sitting at a desk. But a poet is not invariably long-haired, and sporting a tie which flops out behind. The cook has abandoned his white cap; a soldier goes out in mufti, and he might pass for an athlete; the same with a policeman in "civvies." Personally, I think there are many difficulties about this game.

How does one tell the winner in a competition? By his expansive smile, perhaps!

For Winter Evenings.

Now that good old summer-time is a thing of the past one wants something light and amusing for the long evenings, and maybe it is just as well that a thoughtful individual has dug up a bunch of the old problems which entertained folks in the back ages.

Some of these beguiled the time in the Ark. There is one whiskered wheeze: Sisters and brothers have I none, but that man's father was my father's son. Another fine old crusted joke is: If Jack's father is John's father, what relation is Jack to John?

The best of these delightful queries is that after they have been comfortably tucked up

(Continued on next page.)

OUR WEEKLY POW-WOW!

Continued from page 43.

with what seems to be the correct answer, some interfering and misguided person unkindly suggests another way out. This sets the ball rolling again. It is just as if somebody had banged open a door to let in a noisy family party of fresh arguments for and against the solution. Other people chip in with their theories, and the whole business may end in a dog fight.

There are mild-mannered folk who contend that some of these questions concerning relationships ought to be kept dark. Hush 'em up. The thing is dangerous. Friendships may be broken in the heat of the excited controversy. Why, one has known the ceiling threatened by some pretty little question such as this: If a blind beggar had a brother and the brother died, what relation was the brother to the one who died? This is venerable, but it will set some touchy individuals by the ears, and when the fat is once in the fire—well, there's no stopping the mischief. Still, for those who can keep cool under intense provocation and are able to take a joke, the pastime has its merits.

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