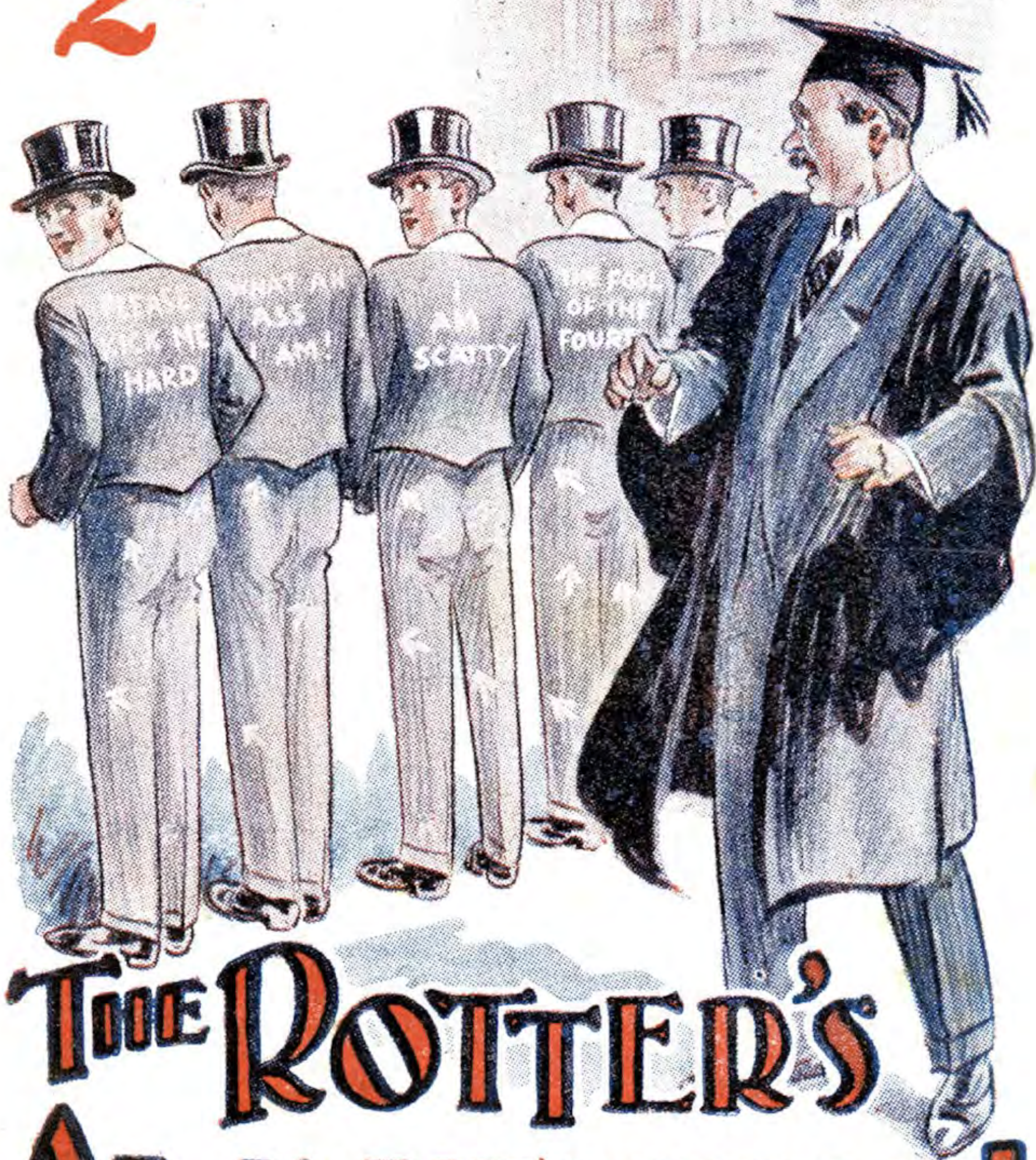


THE **NELSON LEE**
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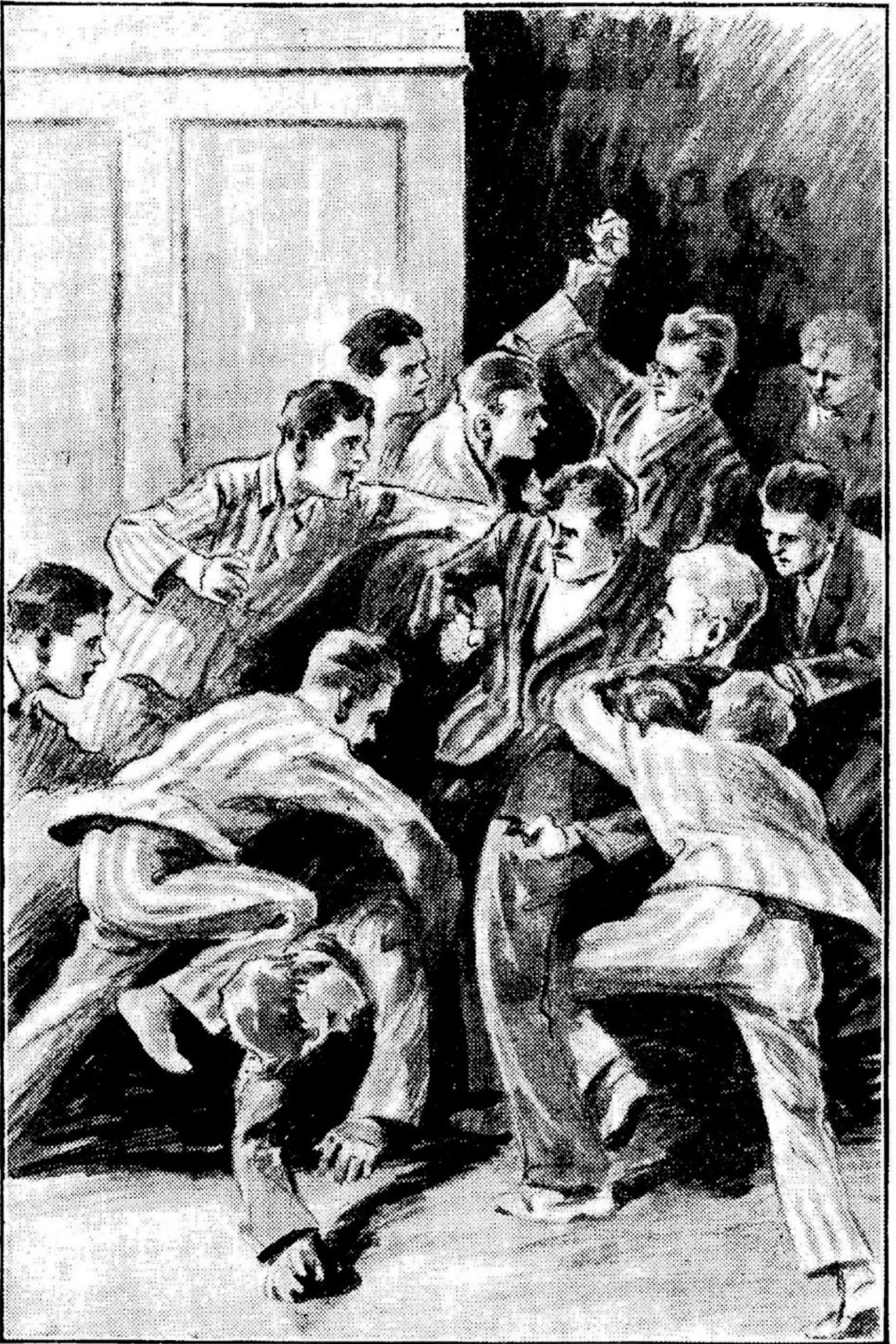
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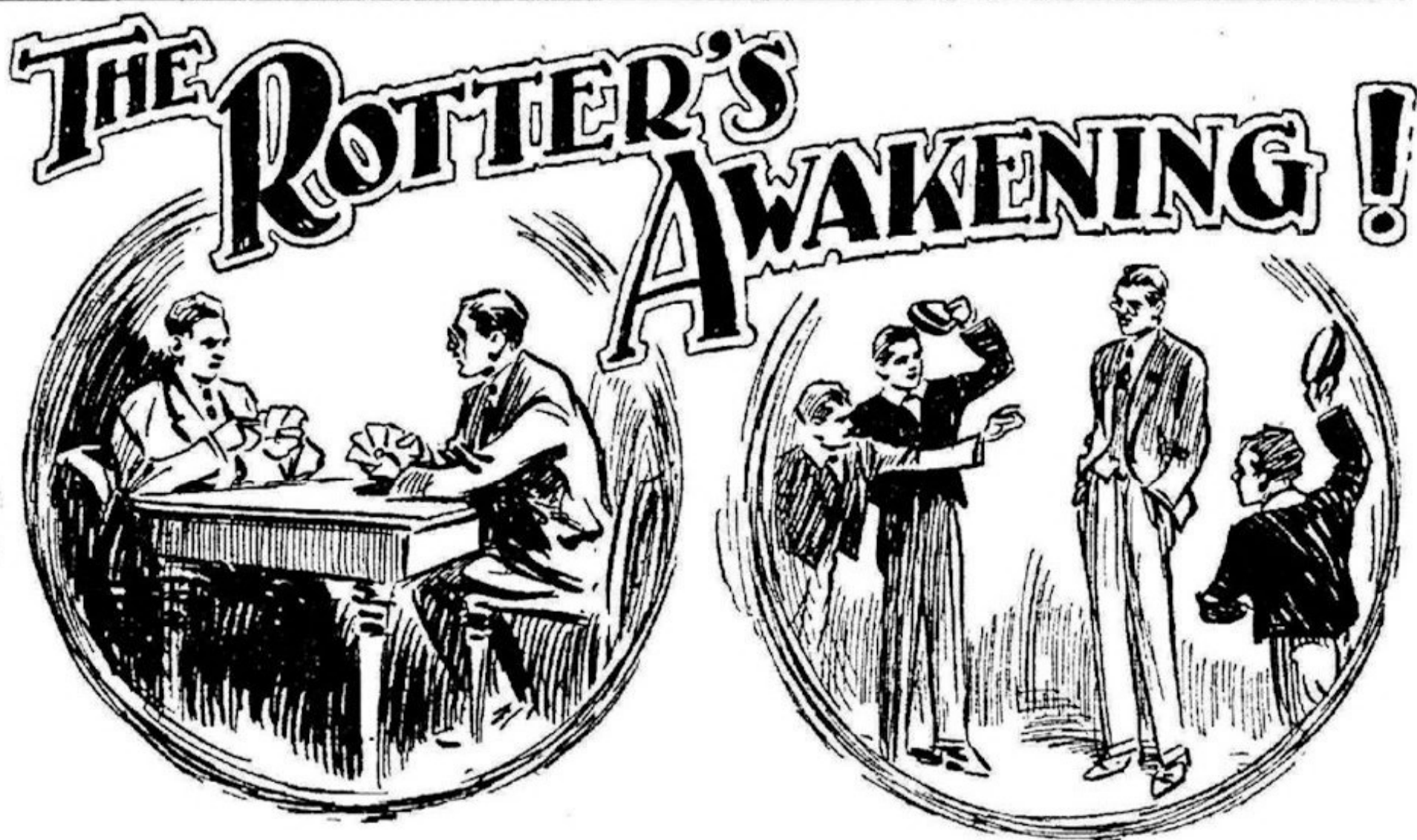
OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

December 1st, 1923.



The Remove raiders emerged from a side passage and ran right into the force of Fourth-Formers. "On 'em!" exclaimed Corcoran briskly. Next moment the Fourth-Formers had piled into Nipper & Co., and a wild scramble ensued.

You'll Enjoy Every Chapter of this School-Adventure, Fun and Sports Yarn !



By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

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

Instrumental in saving a number of Removites from getting into hot water, Simon Kenmore, in the guise of Walter Kenmore, finds himself the hero of the hour, popular in the eyes of the boys he has bullied, and detested. And Kenmore discovers that he likes being popular; his conscience smites him. Unknown to himself, a great change is coming over Simon Kenmore!—ED.

CHAPTER 1.

Something Doing !

THE door of Study C opened softly, and Harry Gresham, of the Remove, slipped into the little apartment like a shadow.

"You're last!" said Handforth accusingly.

"Sorry!" murmured Gresham. "Couldn't find my giddy running shoes!"

"Well, never mind," said Nipper. "We're all here now, aren't we?"

The cheery captain of the Remove peered round, flashing the light from an electric torch on the gathering of juniors. Eleven o'clock had chimed out shortly before, and the wintry night was cold and blustery.

Strictly speaking, all these juniors should have been in their beds. It was long after lights out, but for some reason the stalwarts of the Ancient House Remove were foregathered in Study C.

The light from Nipper's torch, going from junior to junior, revealed Tregellis-West and Watson, Nipper's own study-mates; it also revealed Edward Oswald Handforth and Church and McClure, of Study D; Vivian Travers and Jimmy Potts, of Study H, were equally in evidence. And the other two were Fullwood and Gresham. Ten of them altogether.

"Good!" murmured Nipper. "We might as well be making a move."

It was Saturday night, and the day had been more or less thrilling. Handforth, indeed, was the hero of the hour. For had he not made a great name for himself that afternoon by keeping goal for the famous Blue Crusaders, of Bannington? Handforth had deputed for the one and only Fatty Fowkes, and he had been so successful that the Blues had won.

Not that any of the juniors were thinking of that exciting football match just now. There was something even more important on the programme.

"Now, you chaps, we've got to go easy!" said Nipper warningly. "This is a tricky mission of ours, and everything will be ruined if we're collared. There are only ten of us, and we shall be at the mercy of those Fourth-Formers if we're surprised. So we've got to make no noise over this job."

Whether by accident or design, Nipper's torch light was full upon Handforth while he was making these remarks.

"Are you talking to me?" said Handforth suspiciously.

"I'm talking to all of you."

"Then why keep your light on me?" asked Handforth. "Do you think I make more noise than the others, or what?"

Nipper coughed.

"Well, old man, you are a bit careless at times," he murmured. "And I want to impress upon you the necessity for complete silence."

"Rats! You needn't worry about me!" said Handforth, with a sniff. "If it comes to that, all you fellows can go back to bed! I'll work this jape on my own, if you like!"

"I don't think we like, Handy," whispered Travers.

"Earlier in the week, Corcoran and his merry men japed us up to the eyes," continued Nipper. "Remember how they sent us a fake invitation, and how we went to Bannington Grange?"

"Do we remember it!" said Fullwood gruffly. "That was the best jape of the term—and we were the victims! I hope we'll even things up to-night."

"Somehow I think we shall," said Nipper genially. "This is going to be a very sweet revenge, you chaps."

Of late there had been a keen revival of the rivalry between the Fourth Form and the Remove at St. Frank's. Until a few weeks ago the Fourth had been regarded as a "wash out." John Busterfield Boots, the captain, was able enough, but he had had very poor support—especially from the East House section of the Fourth.

But now Lionel Corcoran was the leader of the East House juniors—and the great Corky was exceedingly hot stuff. As everybody knew, he was the schoolboy owner of the Blue Crusaders Club, and he was full of vim and enterprise, full of energy. Since his arrival at St. Frank's he had completely reorganised the juniors in the East House. Armstrong, the former leader, was now one of Corcoran's staunchest supporters. A great change had come over Armstrong; his former arrogance had gone, and he was no longer full of his ridiculous self-importance. Corcoran had opened his eyes for him, and he was now willing enough to follow Corcoran's lead.

"Ready?" asked Nipper briskly.

"We're all waiting for you, dear old fellow," said Travers.

"Good enough! Then let's be going."

Nipper switched out his torch, went to the window, and a moment later the ten juniors were creeping out into the West Square. As yet the moon was low down, and the night was very dark. In single file, the Remove japers crept through West Arch, and found themselves in the Triangle.

St. Frank's was asleep, except for one or two isolated lights here and there. Perhaps a master or a prefect was sitting up, reading. There was very little to be feared from these.

All the juniors were wearing rubber-soled shoes—a precautionary measure that Nipper had advised—and they were merely like shadows as they padded across the Triangle and passed through East Arch, and thus into the East Square.

The problem of getting into the East House was really no problem at all. For Nipper led the way to a little window at the very back of the dark building, a window that led into a disused store-room. And it opened quite easily.

This was readily explained by the fact that Nipper had casually strolled into the East House before supper-time, and he had left that window unlatched, but with an appearance of being secured. It had been a somewhat perilous undertaking, for Nipper might easily have been caught by the Fourth-Formers and hurled out on his neck. But, as it happened, nobody had spotted him.

So now it was easy enough for the raiders to gain admittance.

Once inside, the window was closed, and now latched in real earnest.

"Hold on!" murmured Harry Gresham. "Hadn't we better leave this window open—in case of emergency?"

"Just what I was thinking!" breathed Church.

Nipper chuckled.

"No good, my sons," he said. "If we have to bolt for it, this window will be too small. We want something bigger. My idea is to unbolt and unlock the back door. Then we can feel safe."

"That's pretty good!" said Handforth, nodding. "If there's a sudden rush, we can bunk out in next to no time. Funny thing you should suggest that, Nipper, because I was just going to say the same thing."

There were one or two soft chuckles, and Nipper led the way out of the store-room. The juniors soon found themselves in the rear lobby, where everything was dark and still.

But when they went to the rear door they experienced a little surprise. For, instead of being bolted and locked, as they had expected, it was merely on the latch! The bolts were already drawn, and the key, in the lock, had not been turned.

"Well, I'm dashed!" said Nipper, frowning. "This is jolly careless of somebody!"

"Leaving the door unfastened?" said Handforth. "I should think it is! We don't do things like that in the Ancient House!"

The juniors went about their business, wondering who could be to blame for this care-

lessness. After all, it was certainly astonishing to find that door unbolted and unlocked!



CHAPTER 2.

Not to be Caught Napping!

LIONEL CORCORAN suddenly sat up in bed.

"Hallo!" he muttered sleepily. "Who's there?"

He rubbed his eyes and looked round the little dormitory. It was very dark, and he could only just see the shadowy forms of Armstrong and Griffith in their beds. He could hear their regular breathing; Griffith, in fact, was snoring with considerable enthusiasm.

"Rummy!" muttered Corky, frowning. "Must have been dreaming, I suppose."

He could not quite understand why he had awakened, but he had a queer impression that somebody had been in the room. Apparently he had been dreaming. For there was nobody in the room now, except his own dormitory companions.

"Come out of it!" said Corcoran sharply. "You haven't fooled me, you know!"

Nothing happened. He had had an idea that if somebody was lurking in the deep shadows they would come out. Nobody came out, however, and the leader of the East House juniors was at last compelled to conclude that he had imagined it.

"Oh, go to sleep, you ass!" he muttered to himself.

But just as he was about to pull the bed-clothes over him he grew rigid. A creak had sounded outside—in the corridor—and in that second Lionel Corcoran knew that somebody must be out there; for there was a loose board just near the dormitory door, and Corky had heard it creak on other occasions.

"Oh-ho!" he murmured. "Perhaps I wasn't so silly, after all!"

He crept silently out of bed; and then he hesitated. Ordinarily, he would have taken no notice of that slight creak, merely thinking that somebody was passing along the corridor. But just now he was very much on the alert, and he could not rid himself of that notion that somebody had actually been in this bedroom.

"Wake up, Armstrong, my son!" he murmured, as he shook Armstrong by the shoulder. "You, too, Griffith! There's something doing!"

Armstrong sat up, heavy with sleep.

"Hallo! Anything the matter?" he asked, in alarm. "That you, Corky?"

"Shush!" warned Corcoran. "There's somebody prowling about outside in the corri-

dor. We might as well be ready for emergencies."

Armstrong seemed to think that it was a silly idea, and he said so with refreshing bluntness. He wanted to know what the dickens Corky meant by waking him up for nothing.

In the meantime, Corcoran had crept to the door, and he silently opened it. He peeped out, and he became attentive. At the end of the corridor, just at the bend, he could see a number of vague, indistinct figures. And a few whispers came to his ears.

"Better not, Handy!" came one of the voices. "Might be too risky!"

"Rats!" said another voice. "It'll be safe enough! None of these silly Fourth-Formers suspect that we're here——"

Corcoran did not wait to hear any more. He closed the door without a sound, and turned.

"Rouse up, you chumps!" he hissed. "It's a raid!"

"What!" gasped Griffith.

"Removites!" said Corcoran, as he grabbed his dressing-gown. "Handforth and Nipper and the others!"

"But—but how do you know?" asked Armstrong, staring.

"I saw them—and heard 'em, too!" replied Corky grimly. "So that's their game, is it? Stealing over here after lights out! They're up to some sort of monkey business, my sons!"

Armstrong and Griffith had no desire to remain in bed now. They leapt out, eager. The rivalry between the two Forms was so keen that the juniors were always ready for a tussle, and there seemed to be splendid possibilities here. It would be a feather in the cap for the Fourth if these Remove raiders were grabbed, and "put through the mill."

Lionel Corcoran opened the door again, and he took another peep. The corridor was now clear.

"Come on!" he whispered. "They've gone—down the next passage, I believe. We'll go into all the dormitories, and wake the chaps up. Then we'll sally out, and collar those beggars red-handed!"

It didn't take the three juniors long. They went from dormitory to dormitory, rousing the sleeping juniors, and very soon there was a big crowd of them—including Conroy minor, Kemp, Turner, Freeman, Steele, and some more.

"We'd better go easy!" murmured Freeman. "Old Goole is a pretty light sleeper, blow him, and if he collars us——"

"Not a chance!" interrupted Corky. "We'd better make one rush, and corner the raiders. It's the only chance we've got. If they get wind of us, they'll bolt!"

As it happened, the thing proved to be easy.

For the ten Removites found themselves in a trap. Just as they were emerging from one of the side passages, they ran right into the force of Fourth-Formers. It wasn't any good retreating, since there was no exit at the end of that passage.

"On 'em!" ejaculated Corcoran briskly.

"Down with the Remove!"

There was a wild scramble, a series of gasps, scuffings, grunts.

"By George!" said Handforth thickly. "They're on us, you chaps! Up, Remove!"

"Cheese it!" urged Nipper. "For goodness' sake, Handy, don't yell!"

"But—but these fatheads have collared us!" gasped Handforth.

"Can't help it! We shall have to take our gruel!" said Nipper ruefully. "If we make a noise, you chump, the masters will be down on us. And that'll mean a flogging, for breaking bounds."

"My hat!" breathed Handforth. "I'd forgotten that!"

"Better give in!" said Corcoran, with the utmost coolness. "I rather think we've spoilt your little game, my sons! It's like your nerve, breaking into this House and thinking that you can surprise us!"

"We're all liable to make mistakes, Corky," said Nipper, with a sigh.

"You'd better remember that we Fourth-Formers sleep with one eye open!" grinned Armstrong.

"Nearly all dogs do that!" agreed Handforth bitterly.

"Why, you silly ass——"

"Oh, let them say these things, if they want to," interrupted Corky. "It doesn't do us any harm, does it? Facts are facts, Armstrong. These Removites tried to raid us, and we've caught them. I rather think it's a Fourth victory!"

And the other Fourth-Formers rather thought so, too!

"What do I care what kind of ink it is?" breathed Handforth. "You're not going to paint me at all!"

"But it's a good idea, really," argued Corcoran. "If we shove ink on your faces, you'll be compelled to wash yourselves. And that'll be a bit of a novelty for you Removites."

"Why, you—you—you——"

"I think we'd better let 'em go!" said Clifton uneasily. "They're making too much giddy noise!"

Nipper had an idea that Corcoran had been bluffing, and he now gave a rueful smile to his companions.

"Well, you chaps, I suppose we'd better admit ourselves beaten," he said. "If we do that, they might let us go. Next time we'll make a better success of it——"

"Don't you believe it!" interrupted Armstrong. "We're top dogs at St. Frank's!"

"Oh, are you?" retorted Handforth. "Just you wait——"

"Listen!" gasped Griffith suddenly.

They all became tense and still.

"There's nothing!" whispered Corky.

"What did you hear?"

"A door opening," said Griffith. "I heard it creak——"

"Is there anybody talking out here?" came an impatient, testy voice.

"Old Goole!" went up a general gasp.

Mr. Barnaby Goole, the Housemaster, was on the track! As though by magic, the Fourth-Formers slid along the corridor and vanished into their dormitories. It was really cleverly done. The Removites found themselves left alone, and they were not very far from the head of the stairs.

"This," murmured Nipper, "is where we do a graceful little disappearing act."

They tumbled down the stairs in the darkness, but before they reached the bottom they heard Mr. Goole slopping along the upper corridor in his loose-fitting slippers.

"Who is that?" came the Housemaster's sharp inquiry. "Halt! Who is it down there?"

In the circumstances, the juniors thought it inadvisable to make any reply. The situation was now serious. For if Mr. Goole identified them they would be reported to their own Housemaster, and then the Head would get to hear about it. Nothing short of a flogging would be their lot.

"Halt! How dare you?" came Mr. Goole's angry shouts. "Who is it, I say?"

The ten raiders flew to the rear part of the West House, thankful indeed that the back door was unfastened. It had been an excellent precautionary measure of Nipper's—and now the wisdom of it was evident.

If only they could get outside, they would be safe.

For Mr. Goole would not venture out into the cold, wintry night, and they would be lost in the darkness. And before the Housemaster could get any inquiries afoot they would be back in their dormitories, and there would be no evidence.

CHAPTER 3.

The Alarm!



H

ANDFORTH gave an expressive grunt.

"Well, get on with it!" he said impatiently. "What

are you going to do with us?"

"I'm just considering," said Corcoran, with a thoughtful frown. "Shall we just let them go, and leave it at that, you chaps, or shall we tie them up, and paint their faces with blue-black ink?"

"Tie them up, and paint their faces with blue-black ink," said Freeman promptly.

The other Fourth-Formers chuckled, and Handforth gave another snort.

"You try it on, you funny idiots!" he said thickly. "By George! If you paint my face with red ink——"

"Blue-black ink!" corrected Corky.

Everything depended upon getting out quickly.

By this time Mr. Barnaby Goole, thoroughly aroused, was running hard. He had dashed down the stairs rather recklessly, and he was shouting as he turned out of the front lobby.

"Here we are!" gasped Handforth. "Thank goodness! We've done it!"

"Open the door, you ass!" urged Fullwood.

Handforth pulled at the handle, but nothing happened.

"It won't come open!" he ejaculated blankly.

"But it's unfastened!" missed Nipper.

"Oh, for goodness' sake be quick! He'll be here in a tick——"

"Dear old fellows, it's bolted!" said Travers. "Rather a rummy thing, but somebody has done the dirty on us!"

They were all startled. Both top and bottom bolts were shot home. Feverishly the juniors freed them. They were certain that the Fourth-Formers had not cut off their retreat, and it was a mystery how the door had become locked and bolted.

"Quick — quick!" said Nipper.

Handforth grabbed the key, turned it vigorously, and he was so energetic about it that it broke in half in his hands, leaving a portion inside the lock.

"The key's busted!" he gasped.

"What!" gurgled the others.

They wrenched at the door in vain. It was still locked, and now there was no way of getting it open. And, at the far end of the corridor, they could hear Mr. Goole's running footsteps.

"In here—all of you!" urged Nipper quickly.

He flung a door open, and they poured through. They were in a small cloakroom, and there was hardly room for them all. It wasn't the ordinary cloakroom, for this was situated in the front part of the building, near the big lobby. It was only a small place, seldom used.

"It's no good—we're done!" said Nipper. "He'll have us in less than a minute!"

The others groaned. It really did seem that all hope was lost. There was no escape from this cloakroom, for there was no window in it—nothing but a little grating,

high up in the wall. And it had been impossible for them to dash back on their own tracks, for they would have run right into the angry Housemaster. The unexpected locking and bolting of that door had made all the difference. They were trapped!

"He's bound to find us!" murmured Travers resignedly. "He knows we came this way, and he knows that we didn't double back. And when he finds the key broken in the lock he'll twig this door, and that'll put the lid on it!"

"Listen!" whispered Nipper.

He was puzzled. He had heard a firm footstep—and now he was aware of the fact that a light was gleaming underneath the door.

Then came Mr. Barnaby Goole's voice.

"Really, I—I— What is the meaning of this Mr. Kenmore?" ejaculated the Housemaster, in a breathless voice. "I had no idea——"

"I heard you shouting, sir, and I wondered what was the matter," said another voice. "There's nothing wrong, is there?"

The trapped juniors listened intently. It was that second voice which intrigued them. For they knew that it belonged to Mr. Walter Kenmore—the elder brother of Simon Kenmore, the Sixth-Former who was missing from St. Frank's.

Mr. Kenmore was a fairly young man, and he had arrived at the old school

early in the week, and since then he had been living in the East House, in his brother's quarters, at the headmaster's express wish.

The juniors could not imagine why this visitor should be up and about at such an hour of the night; but they vaguely began to hope. Was there a chance that Mr. Walter Kenmore would save their skins?

CHAPTER 4.

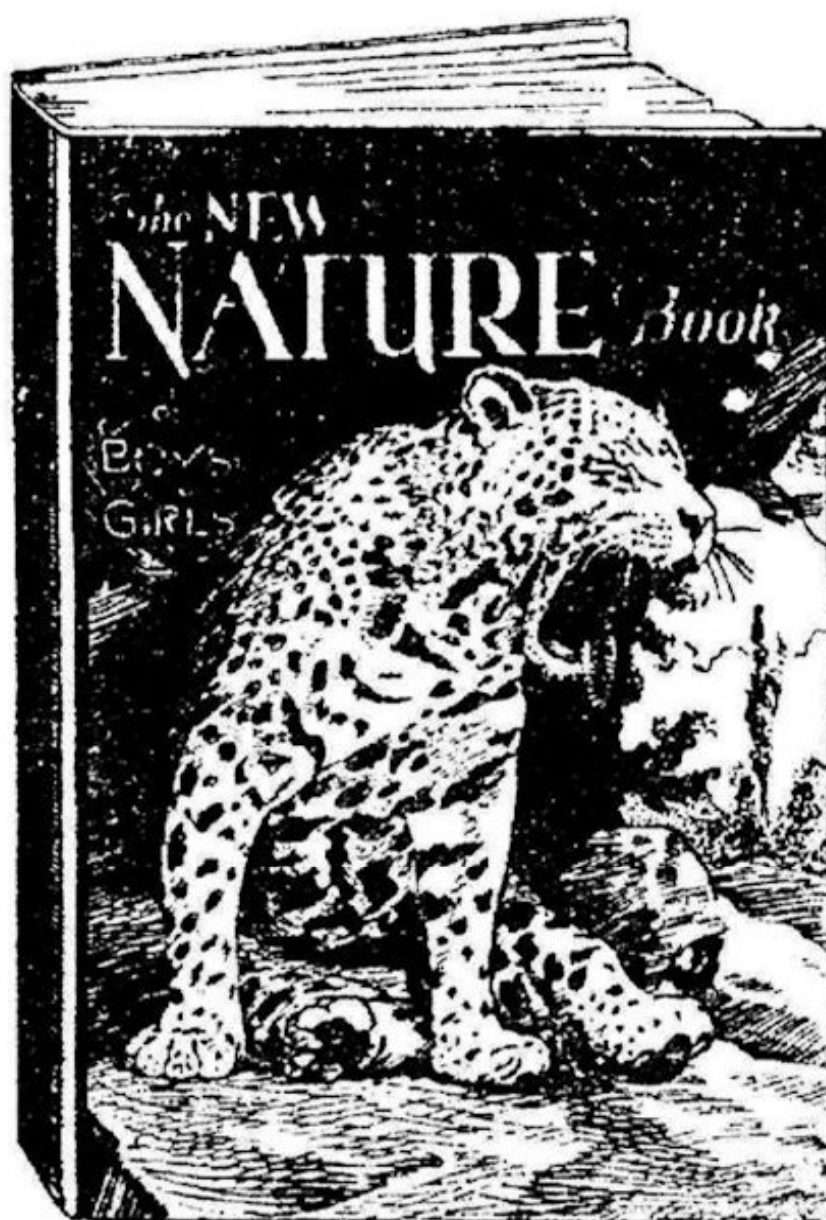
Thanks to Kenmore's Brother!



M

R. WALTER KENMORE was fully dressed, and he was looking slightly amused—although in-

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wardly, perhaps, he was not quite so comfortable. For Mr. Barnaby Goole was looking very irritable.

Mr. Kenmore was fairly tall, and he owned a short-clipped moustache, beneath which showed his somewhat prominent front teeth. Indeed, but for these prominent front teeth, he would have resembled Simon Kenmore quite a lot.

"May I ask the meaning of this irregularity?" asked Mr. Goole, with some heat.

"Really, sir, I don't quite understand you," said Walter Kenmore quietly. "As far as I can see, there is no need to get excited."

"I am not excited!" denied Mr. Goole. "But I heard noises, and——"

"I am very sorry that I disturbed you, Mr. Goole," said the other, "but I can assure you that there is nothing to worry about."

Mr. Goole grunted.

"It is not for me to criticise your movements, Mr. Kenmore, since you are a guest under this roof," he said tartly. "However, it seems strange, to say the least, that you should be up so late."

"I thought you understood that I should be out late," replied Walter Kenmore. "I definitely arranged it with you——"

"I did not imagine that you would make noisy disturbances in the small hours!" snapped Mr. Goole.

"Really, sir!"

"Well, it is very late, anyhow!" amended the Housemaster. "Let me advise you to get to bed."

"Am I, then, to be treated like one of your schoolboys?" asked the visitor, with some heat. "Is that what I am to understand, Mr. Goole?"

"Certainly not!" growled the Housemaster. "You may go to bed when you wish, sir! I am not really interested. But, for your own good, and for my own peace of mind, it would be very advisable for you to retire."

"Come, Mr. Goole, there's no need for these hot words," said Kenmore's brother. "I am very sorry if I disturbed you, and perhaps we had better let it go at that. I can give you my promise that there will be no other interruptions to your night's rest."

Mr. Goole was mollified.

"Very well, Mr. Kenmore!" he said. "Thank you—and I regret that I should have been short-tempered. Good-night to you, sir."

"Good-night, Mr. Goole," said Kenmore's brother.

The Housemaster turned on his heel and went shuffling away, back to bed. He was thoroughly satisfied that the disturbance had been caused by this visitor. It had been on the tip of his tongue to ask Walter Kenmore what he was doing downstairs when everybody else was in bed. Then Mr. Goole had checked himself; he remembered that Kenmore's brother was merely a guest, and he was naturally not subject to any of the school rules. If it pleased him to be

downstairs at this hour, then it was his own affair.

For nearly a full minute Mr. Kenmore stood perfectly still. He listened while Mr. Goole flopped upstairs; he heard the Housemaster close his bed-room door. Then Kenmore's brother turned his attention to the little cloakroom. There was a grim light in his eyes as he stepped across and turned the handle.

"Come out!" he said in a low voice. "And be sharp about it!"

The ten Ancient House juniors filed out, and found the electric lights glowing. Walter Kenmore was looking at them without any particular show of friendliness.

"Thanks awfully, Mr. Kenmore!" said Nipper.

"Yes, rather!" echoed the others.

"You're a brick, sir!" declared Handforth enthusiastically. "By George! We shan't forget this in a hurry!"

The young man looked at them as though puzzled, then he frowned.

"Don't be absurd!" he said shortly. "Who are you, anyway? You don't belong to this House, do you?"

"No, sir—Ancient House"

"Then what are you doing here?"

"Ahem! Just a little game of ours, sir," murmured Nipper. "Old Goole was after us, and——"

"I know all about that!" interrupted Walter Kenmore. "You can thank your lucky stars that he didn't get you!"

"I rather think we can thank you, sir!" said Gresham, grinning.

"I don't need your thanks!" said the visitor. "All I need is your absence. I might get into trouble if Mr. Goole takes it into his head to come back."

"That's true enough, you fellows!" said Nipper. "Come on! Mr. Kenmore has been a sportsman, and we don't want to give old Goole another chance."

"I say, sir, was it you who locked the door?" asked Jimmy Potts.

"It was!" said Kenmore's brother.

"Oh! So that's why we were dished!" muttered Handforth.

"I didn't know that you boys were in this House!" said the other. "I came in, and I naturally locked and bolted the door after me. It was left on the latch especially for my benefit, and——"

"Then that explains why we found it in that condition, you fellows," said Nipper, with a smile. "Well, everything's all serene now. I think we'd better trot along to one of the windows, and get out in that way. Mr. Kenmore will close the window after us, I'm sure."

"What are you talking about?" asked Walter Kenmore. "What's the matter with the door?"

"The key's broken in the lock, sir."

"Oh, I see!"

After a brief inspection, Kenmore decided that it would be better for the juniors to get out by means of a window. He led the way to the nearest one, and opened it.



The sound of the Housemaster's footsteps sounded alarmingly near as the Remove raiders reached the door. Handforth tugged frantically at the handle, but nothing happened. "The door won't open!" panted Handy.

Then, one by one, the juniors climbed through.

"Thanks awfully, sir!" they chorused. "Good-night!"

"Good-night!" growled Kenmore's brother.

It seemed that he did not want to listen to their words of gratitude. He was only too glad to get rid of them. And they could easily understand this, for there was always the chance that Mr. Goole would come on the warpath again.

Safely away from the East House, the ten juniors congratulated themselves. They crossed into the West Square, and got into their own House through the window of Study C.

"Well, that's that!" murmured Travers. "For the love of Samson! We're lucky to be back in safety."

"Rather!" said Handforth. "That brother of Kenmore's is a regular sport!"

"Hear, hear!"

"What a difference from Kenmore of the Sixth!" said Church wonderingly. "Kenmore would have taken huge delight in giving us away to old Goole."

"Rather!" said Tommy Watson. "Kenmore was a bully and a rotter, but his brother is made of the right stuff!"

They all became rather grave.

"There's still no news about Simon Kenmore," said Nipper, with a puzzled frown. "The police think he's dead, and poor old Fatty Fowkes is still in hiding. But we know jolly well that Kenmore is alive,

although it's an absolute mystery as to where he's gone, or why he's hiding himself away."

Vivian Travers yawned.

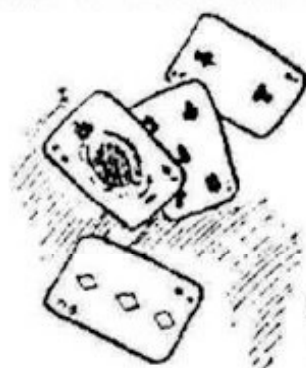
"Is it really necessary, dear old fellow, to go into these discussions just now?" he asked politely. "Don't you think it would be a brainy sort of scheme to get to bed?"

"Yes, I suppose it would," admitted Nipper.

He and the others crept upstairs to their dormitories, still thinking of the sportsmanlike behaviour of Walter Kenmore. And again they compared him with his younger brother, Simon.

They all concluded that there was a vast difference between the two.

Yet, if they had only known it, there was no difference whatever, for Simon Kenmore and Walter Kenmore were one and the same!



CHAPTER 5.

Double Identity!

IT was astounding, but true.

There was no such person as Walter Kenmore. He was a myth, an invention. And the mystery of Simon Kenmore's disappearance was no mystery at all, for Simon Kenmore was here, at St. Frank's, all the time!

In a way, it was an amazing piece of audacity.

If Simon Kenmore had not been a very capable amateur actor, he could not have gone through with it. The fact that he was posing as his own brother made it possible for him to use almost his own voice; for it is commonplace, rather than otherwise, for brothers to have similar voices.

Kenmore's make-up was trivial—another point which spelt success. Only his little moustache was false, and this added several years to his appearance.

But perhaps it is not correct to say that only his moustache was false, for his teeth were false, too. In this direction Simon Kenmore had employed an exceedingly astute dodge.

He had had the misfortune to lose four or five of his front teeth during the summer holidays, and even his most intimate friends had not known of this. He had been mixed up in a racecourse brawl, and in a fight with a gang of sharps his front teeth had been knocked out. So Kenmore had been compelled to make use of a dental plate.

It had been easy enough for him to have a duplicate plate made, but with exceedingly prominent teeth. They altered the whole shape of his mouth, the very look of his nose. With those prominent teeth in his mouth, he had no cause to fear detection. Any other facial resemblance mattered nothing, since he was posing as his own brother.

After the Ancient House juniors had departed he closed the window, and then return to the back lobby, scowling.

"Infernal young beggars!" he muttered. "They're more lucky than they think they are!"

He had adopted a different tone now. And little did those juniors realise that Kenmore's motive in shielding them from Mr. Goole had been a selfish motive! They had credited him with being a sportsman, but they were quite wrong.

Simon Kenmore was still himself, under his altered exterior.

He switched off the lights, and then moved quietly along to the Sixth Form passage, which was near by. He entered one of the very first studies, the doorway of which was perilously near to that back exit.

"You've been long enough!" said a voice.

Kenmore entered and found Guy Sinclair, of the Sixth, looking at him with frank curiosity. Sinclair was the only person in the whole of St. Frank's who knew Kenmore's secret.

"Those confounded kids delayed me!" said Kenmore savagely, as he closed the door.

It was very comfortable in the study. The fire was still burning in the grate, and the atmosphere was warm. Sinclair was lounging at the table, smoking a cigarette. On the table there were playing cards and little heaps of silver.

"Why didn't you give the young sweeps away to old Goole?" asked Sinclair.

"Because I wasn't a fool!" retorted Kenmore. "The best thing was to get Goole

back to bed, and then send those kids off. If Goole had found them, he would have kicked up an awful fuss."

"Serve them right, too!"

"That's not the point!" said Kenmore, frowning. "Goole would probably have searched all these studies on the chance of there being any other raiders. And then you would have been discovered. How would you have liked that?"

Guy Sinclair pulled a long face.

"I dare say you were right in acting as you did," he admitted. "It would have been pretty rotten for me if old Goole had come in here. Rotten for you, too, if it comes to that."

"Why rotten for me?"

"Come off it!" said Sinclair tartly. "You're a visitor here—or you're supposed to be, anyhow. What do you think Goole would do to you if he found you setting me a wicked, bad example, and encouraging me to sit up after midnight, smoking and playing cards? Old man, you would have been politely requested to pack your grip and skeedaddle."

Kenmore sat down rather heavily.

"I've a good mind to do that, anyhow!" he said wearily. "What's the good of staying here? I'm sick of the whole rotten business!"

Sinclair was silent, and for some little time Simon Kenmore sat there, staring straight in front of him, puffing absent-mindedly at a cigarette.

There was every reason for him to be worried. He had no fear that his deception would be spotted, but he was very anxious to assume his own identity again at the earliest possible moment.

He felt that he would be safe for some little time yet. His parents were abroad, big game hunting, and it was impossible to get into communication with them; and there was nobody in England who would come along interfering.

Kenmore's trouble was serious enough.

Two or three weeks ago he had received a cheque for eight pounds from Mr. Matt Page, the Bannington bookmaker. Kenmore had had a lucky day. Later he had handed the cheque to a racecourse loafer named Sam Pointer, who had been winning heavily from him at billiards and cards. After handing the cheque over, Kenmore had thought no more about it.

But a fortnight later Mr. Matt Page had encountered him, and had accused him of forgery. To prove it, the bookmaker had produced that fateful cheque—now altered to "eighty" pounds, instead of the original eight! That cheque had been cashed, and Matt Page was quite certain that Kenmore had committed the forgery.

Kenmore had protested his innocence, but the bookie had laughed at him, and had threatened, point-blank, that he would give information to the police unless Kenmore paid him the full money.

As a matter of fact, Simon Kenmore was innocent. Sam Pointer was the culprit, and

he, being a wise man, had made himself scarce. Kenmore had found himself faced by the awful prospect of being handed to the police, charged with a forgery that he had not committed. This was the result of his own folly, for if he had kept away from race-courses and from bad companions he would not have been in that trouble.

In desperation he had made many bets at St. Frank's on one of the Blue Crusaders' football matches; then he had attempted to bribe Fatty Fowkes, the Blues' celebrated goalkeeper. And from that moment his troubles had been intensified.

For Fatty Fowkes, furious at the suggestion, had knocked Kenmore down. Unfortunately they had been standing on the deck of the Blue Crusaders' houseboat at the time, and Kenmore had tumbled into the River Stowe.

Fatty had not waited for the rascally Sixth-Former to get to the bank, and later the rumour had got round that Kenmore had been drowned. Then a big sensation had been caused by the police issuing a warrant for Fatty Fowkes' arrest! Even now the unfortunate Blues' goalie was hiding, certain of his own innocence, but determined not to let himself be captured by the police.

It was hardly surprising that Simon Kenmore was worried and haggard.

CHAPTER 6.

In a Nasty Mess!



WHAT about finishing this game?" asked Guy Sinclair, stifling a yawn.

Kenmore looked up.

"No thanks!" he said shortly.

"Hang it, we might as well play the hands that were dealt——"

"I don't feel like playing!" interrupted Kenmore impatiently. "I only started playing for your sake, Sinclair. Hang the cards!"

"No need to be so peevish," said the Sixth-Former. "What's the matter with you?"

"Everything's going wrong!" snapped Kenmore. "Long before this I was hoping that I should be able to resume my own identity; I was hoping that Fowkes would be a free man."

"Well, he is a free man, isn't he?"

"Free to move about as he pleased, I mean," said Kenmore. "I've no reason to love him, after the way he treated me, but I don't like to know that he's wanted for my murder. It's—it's so dashed unpleasant!"

"Yes, it's a rotten, awkward position," agreed Sinclair. "You can't come to life, can you? Because, if you do, Matt Page will know about it, and then he'll have you arrested for forgery. Hard lines, old man."

"I'm only safe because Page thinks I'm dead!" muttered Kenmore. "Directly I

show myself—as myself—Page will pounce on me. I can't pay that money, and he told me plainly that he won't wait. But as long as he thinks I'm dead—or, at least, as long as I've disappeared—he can't do a thing."

This was the reason for Simon Kenmore's masquerade. He was in mortal terror of Matt Page, the bookie. He wanted to get Fatty Fowkes out of his predicament, but if he did so as matters now stood, he would only get himself into a worse one. And Kenmore wasn't the kind of fellow to do that.

"I thought that dodge I wangled in the week would do the trick," he said grumpily. "I pretended to run away to sea, and sent a letter to you to prove it——"

"And then the confounded ship went and got itself wrecked off Shingle Head," nodded Sinclair. "That was a nasty one, Kenmore! When the police found that you weren't on the boat, and never had been on it, they were more certain than ever that you're dead. And now you're just marking time."

"That's right—marking time!" muttered Kenmore. "Marking time until I can lay my hands on Sam Pointer! That's the whole crux of the situation, Sinclair! Directly I can get hold of Pointer I shall hold the trump-card!"

He spoke fiercely, and his eyes were burning.

"Everything depends on that!" he went on. "If I can't find Pointer, then I shall have to remain 'dead' for good. And that's—that's unthinkable!"

"Well, it's certainly beastly awkward," admitted the other.

"I went to Helmford this evening," said Kenmore slowly. "I went into two or three pubs, and made casual inquiries. But nobody there seems to know Pointer at all. Never heard of him."

"If you ask me, you're going to be unlucky," said Sinclair, not without a little relish. "Pointer won't show up in this district again. After forging that cheque he'll keep right away. He's probably in London—or he may even be up in Manchester, or somewhere even further."

"I don't believe it!" said Kenmore harshly. "I can't believe it! It's too awful to believe. No; Sam Pointer is still in this neighbourhood—within a radius of thirty or forty miles. I'm certain of it. He's been hanging about in these districts for years, and it's not as though he runs any big risk. It was my cheque that he forged—and I dare say he's cunning enough to know that I should get the blame."

"But why do you think he'll be found in Helmford?"

"I've heard that he generally makes Helmford his headquarters," replied Kenmore. "It's only about twenty miles from here, and Pointer goes round to all the race-tracks. He was at the Bannington races a week or two ago, as you know. That's when he had that cheque from me. Well, they're holding the Helmford races next week, and I think there's a good

chance that he'll be there. Anyhow, it's my only hope, and I'm going to haunt Helmford every day next week—until I can get on the brute's track."

"And in the meantime you'll let everybody else think that you're still dead?"

"I can't help what everybody else thinks!" muttered Kenmore feverishly. "I'm not even worrying about Fowkes now. He'll be all right as soon as I've got hold of Pointer."

"How do you make that out?"

"Isn't it obvious?" snapped Kenmore impatiently. "Once I've found Pointer I'll force a confession out of him—I'll drag him to Matt Page, and make him confess to Page, too. Don't you see? I shall be safe then. Page will know that he did me an injustice, and if anybody gets prosecuted for forgery, it'll be Pointer."

"And your name will be dragged into the courts!" said Sinclair.

"It needn't be," frowned the other. "I don't suppose Page will even prosecute. He'll know thundering well that he won't be able to get any money out of a wretch like Pointer, and Page won't be keen on publicity, either. No; the main thing is to get hold of Pointer, and to make him confess to that bookie. Then I shall be as free as the air again."

He sighed as he thought of the possibilities. It would be good to be himself again!

And that was the position.

Everything hinged upon Simon Kenmore finding that miserable forger. So much more depended upon it, too. With Simon Kenmore "alive" again, Fatty Fowkes, of the Blue Crusaders, would be at liberty to join his fellow-players.

It was certainly very hard lines on the big, sixteen-stone goalie of the Blues.

Just because he had knocked Kenmore into the river he was suspected of being concerned in the Sixth-Former's death. But it so happened that Nipper and some of the other juniors had seen Kenmore—by accident, in the fog one evening—a day or two after he had supposedly perished in the flooded Stowe. So they knew perfectly well that he was alive, and the juniors had rallied round Fowkes; they had urged him to remain in hiding.

Yet now they were just a bit doubtful. They were wondering how long Fowkes would be called upon to remain hidden. He was quite comfortable at present—quite safe.

In fact, the Crusaders had taken the matter out of the St. Frank's juniors' hands. They were looking after Fatty themselves; and Fatty was tucked away in the caverns of the old moor quarry. With so many helpers, so many loyal friends, Fatty Fowkes had not much to worry about.

But neither he nor his helpers imagined that "Mr. Walter Kenmore" was really the rascally Sixth-Former who had disappeared. If they had known that all-important fact

they might have brought about a quick exposure.

However, as matters stood, Kenmore had every reason to make haste in his private investigations, and the sooner they were crowned with success, the sooner would his ordeal be over. With Kenmore's return to normal life, so would the signal be sounded for the ending of Fatty Fowkes' enforced confinement. The one was bound up with the other.

On the whole, looking at it broadly, it was a pretty nasty mess!



CHAPTER 7.

A Few Kicks for Corky :

"POOR old Remove!" said Lionel Corcoran sympathetically.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was a soft, subdued laugh from a crowd of Fourth-Formers in the sunlit Triangle. Loud, noisy laughter was inadvisable, since it was Sunday morning; and although it is just as easy to laugh on a Sunday morning as on any other morning, the authorities at St. Frank's were inclined to frown at any noisy demonstrations.

It was a gloriously fine day with a clear, blue sky, and with a fresh nip in the air.

Corcoran & Co. were sunning themselves in the Triangle, having just ventured out, all-dressed in their "Sunday best." On the other side of the Triangle groups of Removites were standing about, also spick and span and considerably uncomfortable. Smart clothes were all very well, but one couldn't be free-and-easy in them.

"Better luck next time, you chaps!" sang out Buster Boots, of the Modern House.

"Rats!" said Bob Christine. "The Remove's no good! The Fourth has got it whacked!"

Handforth, who was in one of the groups on the other side of the Triangle, glared ferociously.

"If it wasn't Sunday morning, I'd come over and wipe you up!" he said threateningly. "You silly asses! The Remove isn't so helpless as you seem to think! You wait until—"

"Cheese it, Handy!" said Nipper, with a warning frown.

"Eh?"

"We don't want to get too noisy," said the captain. "Besides, let these Fourth-Formers crow, if they want to. It's the habit of bantams to crow!"

There were many snorts from the Fourth-Formers, and many chuckles from the Removites. Nowadays the Triangle was always echoing to banter of this kind.

"Oh, let them prattle on!" said Corky indulgently. "If it pleases them to amuse themselves in this way, why should we interfere? It takes better chaps than the Removites to score over the Fourth!"

"Rather!" said the Fourth-Formers.

They strolled boldly across, and mingled with the indignant Removites. Handforth clenched his fists helplessly.

"Sunday morning, Handy!" murmured Church. "Don't forget your manners!"

"It's all right!" breathed Handforth. "I'm saving it up—that's all! I'm making a mental note of the punches that I shall hand out to-morrow!"

Nipper shook his head.

"Is that the right spirit, Handy?" he said, in a disappointed voice.

"Eh?"

"It is not for us to be humble and meek in the presence of our masters?" said Nipper sorrowfully.

"But there aren't any masters here!" said Handforth, looking round.

"What of these?" said Nipper, with a gesture towards Corky & Co.

"They're not masters!" said Handforth, staring. "You're dotty!"

"You take things a bit too literally, Handy, old fellow," said Corcoran smoothly. "Nipper naturally means that we, the Fourth, are the masters of the Remove!"

Handforth started.

"What!" he ejaculated. "You don't really mean that, Nipper, do you?"

"The proof of the pudding is in the eating!" murmured Billy Nation, of the Modern House.

"Who's talking about pudding?" snapped Edward Oswald.

"You mustn't take any notice of Billy!" said Corcoran kindly. "He brings out these old proverbs mechanically, without knowing it."

"The Fourth Form is novel to any kind of success," remarked Nipper. "So we've got to forgive them, Handy. It's only a flash in the pan, of course, and we'll soon shove them back into their old place."

"New dishes beget new appetites," said Billy Nation sweetly.

"In other words, the more success we taste, the more we'll want!" nodded Lionel Corcoran. "So you Remove fellows can look out! We've hardly started on you yet!"

Handforth raised his hand helplessly.

"And they come here and say these things to us on Sunday morning!" he breathed. "It's—it's an outrage! You wait until to-morrow, you rotters!"

"To-morrow never comes," said Billy calmly.

"There'll be no to-morrow for the Remove, at any rate," agreed Buster Boots. "The Remove's sun has set."

And all the Fourth-Formers took up a kind of chant:

"Poor old Remove!" they crooned. "Poor old Remove!"

There was such a thing as going a bit too far—and even a Sunday morning was not a positive guarantee of security—so the Fourth-Formers thought it advisable to drift across to their own side of the Triangle. The Removites breathed hard, and Handforth, in fact, was so full of suppressed rage that he seemed to be in danger of exploding. Church and McClure clung to him like a couple of warders in charge of a dangerous case.

Corcoran, chuckling, strolled off into the cloisters. Somebody had told him that Tich Harborough was to be found round there, and Corky wanted a word with the schoolboy Crusader. The fact that Tich was in the Remove made no difference; these two were the closest chums. At the same time, they were the keenest of rivals.

However, Tich was nowhere to be seen, and after a while Corky came round into the West Square. At the moment it was empty, and Corcoran passed the rear door of the Ancient House and made for West Arch.

"Hold on!" said somebody.

Corky looked round and found Chambers, of the Fifth, regarding him with a grin.

Chambers had just come out of the Ancient House, and he walked up.

Without the slightest warning, he raised his shoe and delivered a hefty kick upon Corcoran's rear.

"Certainly!" said Chambers blandly.

"Here! What's the idea?" gasped Corcoran, backing away. "You confounded idiot! What do you think you're doing?"

"Anything to oblige," said Chambers calmly.

He walked off, and Lionel Corcoran looked after him in amazement. Why on earth Chambers should have come up to him and kicked him was a complete mystery to the Fourth-Former.

He went through West Arch, and just before he got into the Triangle he came face to face with William Napoleon Browne, the cheery Fifth Form skipper.

"Ah, Brother Corky, greetings!" said Browne benevolently. "Correct me if I am wrong, but do I detect a light of battle in your eyes, or is it merely your normal expression? I have been told, on the best authority, that you are something of a fire-eater."

"It's all right!" said Corcoran. "I was feeling a bit wild, but I'm better now."

"No doubt the sunshine of my presence has wrought this change," said Browne, beaming. "It is a famous and celebrated fact that my smile is both soothing and comforting. Perhaps you have noted this fact, Brother Corky?"

Corcoran grunted, and turned his back.

"With the greatest of pleasure," said Browne promptly.

Biff!

He delivered an extraordinary well-placed kick, and Lionel was booted about a foot into the air. The Fourth-Former landed with a jarring jerk, and a gasp escaped him.

"You've hurt me!" he roared, twirling round.

"Really?" said Browne, in astonishment. "Alas, Brother Corky, if you will insist upon these little attentions, you must necessarily suffer the inconveniences."

And Browne, with a happy smile, walked away.



CHAPTER 8.

A Shock for Corky!

CORCORAN breathed hard. "They're mad!" he muttered. "Either that, or else those Fifth-Formers are japing me! It's a bit thick, on a Sunday morning!"

He heard footsteps behind him, and as he turned he was just in time to catch Reggie Pitt, of the West House, taking a running kick at him. He dodged adroitly.

"Silly ass!" said Reggie, pulling up. "What did you move for?"

"Were you trying to kick me?" demanded Corky.

"That was the general idea," nodded Pitt.

"Is it a plot—or what?" demanded the leader of the East House juniors. "I suppose you think it's funny?"

"But, my dear chap, I was only going to comply with your own request!" said Reggie mildly.

"My own request!"

"Exactly!"

"Don't be dotty!" grunted Corcoran. "I never requested you to kick me!"

He walked away, indignant. And he had hardly got out into the Triangle before Buster Boots—his own fellow leader of the Fourth—came up and delivered the hardest kick of all.

"Hi!" howled Corcoran. "Stop it, you idiot!"

"If you don't want to be kicked, why do you ask to be kicked?" said Boots, in astonishment.

"I haven't asked to be kicked!" yelled Corcoran, exasperated.

Buster Boots grinned.

"Sorry, old man; but I couldn't resist the temptation," he said, with a chuckle. "But I suppose I'd better save you from further trouble. If those Removites spot this, they may make you sore for a week!"

"If they spot what?" asked Corcoran amazedly.

"Take your jacket off," advised Boots. "Come on! Slip into the archway, here. Now, take your jacket off."

Corcoran removed his jacket, a suspicion suddenly leaping into his mind. He turned the jacket round, and then gasped. For right across the back of it, rudely scrawled in white letters, were the words:

"PLEASE KICK ME—HARD!"

"My only sainted aunt!" he gurgled. "So that's why all those chaps came along and kicked me!"

"Somebody's been having a game with you, old chap," said Boots. "You've been careless, too."

"You—you mean somebody has chalked this on?"

"Obviously!"

"But I don't remember it!" said Corky, frowning. "I haven't been in a crowd, or—or anything!"

He was rather relieved to have the little mystery explained. He proceeded to brush the chalk marks off, and then he discovered that they weren't chalk marks at all. In fact, the more he brushed the greater became his alarm. For he found that those words would not come off!

"I can't understand it!" he muttered. "These marks are right in the cloth, Boots. They won't rub out!"

"Rats!" said Buster. "They must rub out. Use a bit more elbow-grease."

Corcoran used all he had, but it made no difference. Upon examining his jacket closely, it seemed to him that the whitish letters were indelibly imprinted in the material. They appeared to be an integral part of the cloth. They weren't just put on, but they were *in* the coat.

"Well, I'm hanged!" he panted, at last. "It's no good, Buster! I can't make any impression. And I can't understand how the dickens these words got here. My best jacket, too! I haven't been in a crowd——"

He broke off with a gulp. And Boots, looking at him, saw that he was staring dazedly into the Triangle.

"Look!" breathed Corcoran. "Look at Armstrong!"

Timothy Armstrong, burly and clumsy, was standing with his back to them. Armstrong was chatting with Griffith and Freeman, and across the junior's broad back were the words:

"WHAT AN ASS I AM!"

Buster Boots started.

"Another of 'em!" he ejaculated. "Great Scott!"

Just then Harron, of Study No. 13, came up, and the others stared.

"Here, turn round!" said Corky desperately.

Harron jumped and turned.

"I thought so!" said Corcoran. "Oh, my goodness!"

"Is there anything on *my* back?" yelled Harron.

"Somebody seems to know you!" said Corcoran grimly. "You're labelled 'the fool of the Fourth.'"

"What?" howled Harron.

He ripped off his jacket and gazed at the fateful words. In exactly the same way as Corcoran's, the jacket was indelibly marked.

"Look at Steele!" breathed Lionel, in a hopeless kind of voice.

Steele, of Study 16, was strolling elegantly past, sublimely ignorant of the fact that his back proclaimed to all the world that he was "up the pole."

Just at this moment a commotion arose amongst the Fourth-Formers in the Triangle. Other juniors had spotted those inscriptions, too, and the news was spreading.

Holroyd and Munroe and Cobb, of Study No. 11, were looking dazed. One of them, according to the writing on his back, was reputed to be scatty, and another was inviting the world at large to twist his ears.

In fact, as Lionel Corcoran soon discovered, every East House Fourth-Former had a ridiculous inscription on his back. It was positively uncanny!

How had this startling thing happened?

Who had done it, and when? Not that these were points to be considered at such a critical moment. It was nearly time for chapel parade, and there would be masters and prefects on the scene within a few minutes. Something would have to be done, and done rapidly.

Corcoran slipped his jacket on again, and ran out into the Triangle.

"Here, you fellows!" he said urgently. "East House, ahoy! Indoors, everybody!"

"What does it mean?" gasped Freeman. "These chalk-marks won't come out! Somebody's been having a game with us—"

"Never mind that!" interrupted Corcoran. "The masters will have a more painful game with us unless we get out of sight. We've got to change, and there's only just time before parade. Come on!"

The East House juniors needed no second bidding. Now that the alarm had spread, they were all filled with anger and consternation. Their one desire was to get out of public sight.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A long, subdued laugh came from the groups of Removites on the other side of the Triangle, but the Fourth-Formers were too worried to take any notice of that sound of hilarity. They swept into the East House, ran upstairs, and gathered in the corridor.

"What are we going to do?" asked Armstrong helplessly.

"There's only one thing!" said Corcoran. "We've got to get into our other clothes."

"But there'll be a row!" protested Griffith. "Old Goole is a positive demon on Sunday mornings! Unless we're spick and span, he goes for us bald-headed!"

"Can't be helped!" said Corky. "We can't appear publicly with all this writing on our jackets, can we? It won't take us two minutes—it's only necessary to change our coats."

"Wait a minute!" gasped Steele. "Look at my bags!"

The others started and looked, and they saw that Arthur Steele's trousers were liberally bespattered with broad arrows, after the fashion of an old-time convict!

Within about twenty seconds the rest of the Fourth-Formers discovered that their bags, too, were similarly adorned!



CHAPTER 9.

Mr. Barnaby Goole on the Warpath!

I really was a baffling mystery.

Five minutes earlier there had been no sign of those broad arrows. Now they had apparently appeared of their own accord. In some mysterious way they had developed, and even as the juniors inspected themselves they fancied that the arrows were becoming whiter and whiter, and more obvious to the eye.

"It's some sort of chemical!" said Armstrong, with a flash of inspiration. "Great Scott! When we put our clobber on, everything seemed all right. It's the daylight that must have done it!"

"You've hit it, old man!" said Corcoran, with a nod. "The same wheeze as invisible ink, you know. Just a variation of the old wheeze."

"But—but our suits are ruined!" howled Merrell, of Study No. 15. "I'm going to make a complaint about this!"

"So am I!" wailed Snipe. "My people won't stand it! The school will have to pay for a new suit—"

"Chuck it!" snapped Corcoran. "It's only a jape."

"What?"

"Those Removites!" said Corky grimly. "And we thought that they had failed last night!"

"Oh, my goodness!" babbled Armstrong, staring. "You—you mean—"

"It's as obvious as daylight!" grunted Corky. "No wonder they pretended to be so meek and mild this morning! They knew what was coming! Last night we thought we had scotched their game—but they must have finished when we cornered them!"

"My only topper!" breathed Turner. "The rotters! Ruining our clobber like this! If they think it's funny, I don't!"

"It all depends upon the point of view," said Corcoran gently. "I expect they'll laugh like hyenas later on!"

"And we were crowing over them!" groaned Armstrong. "I say, what a frost!"

"Never mind about the frost," said Kemp. "What about our togs? There's going to be an awful row about this wanton destruction! We can't wear these things again—and they're our best!"

They hurried into their dormitories, and, with the greatest possible speed, they changed into their every-day attire. And the majority of those juniors were startled.

Of a week day they put on this clothing without a thought, and they believed it to be perfectly presentable. Now, on the Sunday morning, they were horrified at the truth.

For the jackets were stained and crumpled—and even torn in odd places. There wasn't a pair of trousers that weren't baggy at the knees, and stained with red ink and blue-black ink, and dotted here and there with grease-spots.

"I can't believe it, you know," said Griffith. "Do we really go about like this in the week?"

"That's not the point," said Corcoran. "We've got to go about like it to-day. We can only hope that old Goole will be in a hurry, or something."

They all collected out in the corridor, and then they went downstairs and marched out into the Triangle. They felt horribly conspicuous. On other mornings they would go out free and easy, without a care in the world, but it was now Sunday morning, and it seemed to them that all eyes were turned in their direction. They would not have felt more conspicuous if they had appeared publicly wearing nothing but coal sacks.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

From the Ancient House and the West House came long and hilarious chuckles. The Removites were only too sorry that it was Sunday morning. They were unable to give full vent to their feelings. But as they looked at the unhappy Fourth-Formers, they grinned with happiness. This was a jape of the most exquisite kind!

And the Removites were enjoying their victory to the full.

Only with difficulty had they contained themselves hitherto. For they had known all along what would inevitably happen.

"Poor old Fourth!" went up a low chant. "Poor old Fourth!"

Nipper strolled out towards the centre of the Triangle.

"Really, Corcoran, I'm surprised at you," he said, shocked. "What do you mean by letting those chaps come out on a Sunday morning looking like this?"

"You ought to be ashamed of yourselves!" said Handforth indignantly. "It's a pity you can't wear your best clobber on a Sunday morning!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I've never seen such baggy trousers in all my giddy life!" went on Handforth, inspecting the East House juniors with

exaggerated horror. "And the stains, too! Haven't you fellows any sense of respectability?"

"You rotters!" hissed Turner. "You've ruined our Sunday togs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Revenge is sweet!" murmured Nipper. "You japed us over that Bannington Grange affair—and now we're returning the compliment."

"I'm not grumbling!" said Corcoran coolly. "All's fair in love and war, my sons! Congratulate on this jape. You've certainly done us brown!"

"Good man!" grinned Nipper. "That's the spirit, you chaps! Corky is a sport!"

The other East House juniors, following Corcoran's example, refrained from making the angry comments that were in their minds. After all, it was better to take the thing in this spirit.

"Freeman!"

It was a sharp command, and all the East House Fourth-Formers looked round. The Removites glided back to their own side of the Triangle, and stood watching the proceedings. Mr. Barnaby Goole had just appeared, and he was gazing at Freeman in an angry way.

"Yes, sir?" said Freeman nervously.

"What do you mean, Freeman, by appearing publicly in these—these atrocious things?" asked Mr. Goole, pointing an accusing finger at the unfortunate Freeman's trousers. "Why, good gracious! You are wearing your every-day clothes, are you not?"

"Yes, sir."

"Go indoors at once, Freeman, and change!" snapped Mr. Goole. "I am surprised at you!"

"But—but—"

"Do not argue!" said the Housemaster. "I will not have you out here like this, Freeman! Upon my word, you look like a—a tramp! Your appearance is positively disgraceful!"

"But I can't change, sir!" said Freeman desperately. "There isn't time, and—and—"

"Why, good heavens, what is this?" ejaculated Mr. Goole, as he caught sight of Clifton and Dallas and Steele. "You other boys are also in your every-day suits! Have you all taken leave of your senses?"

He looked round, and then started.

"This is outrageous!" he declared hotly. "Attention, all of you! Marriott! Turner! Come here at once! How dare you attempt to sneak off?"

The unhappy East House juniors collected in a line, and Mr. Goole went along it like an officer inspecting a platoon of recruits.

"I am amazed!" said the Housemaster at length. "You are all wearing your every-day clothes, and you know perfectly well that it is Sunday morning. You are a disgrace to the House! Go to your dormitories, this very instant, and change!"



"With the greatest of pleasure!" said Browne, as he saw the invitation written on Corcoran's back. Biff! Browne delivered an extraordinarily well-placed kick, and Corcoran was booted about a foot into the air.

The East House juniors inwardly groaned. They had half expected this, but now that the blow had fallen they were baffled.

For, if they changed, as Mr. Goole ordered, what would be the result?



CHAPTER 10.

Getting Worse!

MANY of the fellows looked at Lionel Corcoran for guidance. But, for once, the youthful owner of the Blue Crusaders was at a loss. However, after a moment or two, he made a valiant attempt to save the situation.

"Won't you excuse us for once, sir?" he asked. "It's getting near the time for parade, and—"

"Certainly not, Corcoran!" interrupted Mr. Goole. "I cannot possibly excuse such—such laxity as this. On Sunday morning my boys must look smart and tidy. During the week, I fear, you are exceedingly disreputable, but it would be a herculean task for any man to make you look otherwise. On Sunday morning, however, I insist—I positively insist—upon neatness."

"The fact is, sir, something has happened to our Sunday togs," said Corky.

"What do you mean—something has happened to them?"

"Something pretty bad, sir."

"Do you mean that you have lost your Sunday clothes, Corcoran?" asked Mr. Goole coldly.

"No, sir—"

"Then let there be an end to this quibbling!" said the Housemaster. "Follow me, all of you!"

"But look here, sir—"

"Follow me!" thundered Mr. Goole.

He led the way into the East House, and the Fourth-Formers, with helpless looks, were compelled to follow. As they vanished through the lobby they heard the faint echoes of hilarious chuckling from the Removites. They ground their teeth impotently.

There was very little time now, and Mr. Goole, who had strict ideas on punctuality, strode up and down the corridor whilst the juniors were changing. There was no escape for them. He had given them five minutes, and no more. And as it was impossible for them to turn out again in those old suits, they changed into the decorated Sunday togs.

"Well, it's Goole's own fault!" said Corcoran coolly. "He wouldn't listen to me—he wouldn't take a hint."

Armstrong grunted.

"It's all very well saying that it's Goole's own fault," he grumbled, "but what about us?"

"We shall get it in the neck!" nodded Corcoran.

"You don't seem very upset about it," said Griffith, staring.

"My dear chap, what's the good of getting upset?" grinned Corcoran. "The Remove fellows have worked off a jape on us—and a good jape, too. A swishing, or a few hundred lines, won't hurt us."

"You seem positively pleased!" ejaculated Armstrong.

"I am pleased—and that's why I seem pleased."

"Then you're mad!" said Griffith bluntly.

"No; only amused," smiled Corky. "I'm thinking of the next jape we'll work on those Remove fellows. We're going to have a very sweet revenge for this, my lads."

"A jape is a jape—but this is a bit too thick!" said Armstrong, as he inspected his trousers. "Look at 'em! The whole suit's ruined! I don't call it funny!"

"There are heaps of tailors," retorted Corcoran, with a chuckle.

"Why should our pocket-money go for buying new suits?" demanded Griffith indignantly. "That's what'll happen! We shall get new suits to replace these, but our pocket-money will be stopped for the rest of the term! Oh, it's screamingly funny. Just listen to me howling with merriment!"

They went outside, and found most of the other victims already there. Mr. Goole was at the end of the corridor, watching. The juniors were very glad that this corridor was rather dull. Mr. Goole had not yet detected the quaint decorative effects.

"Are you all here?" he asked impatiently. "Yes? Then follow me!"

He marched them downstairs, and as they walked through the lobby they passed "Walter" Kenmore. He was inspecting the notice board, and he appeared to be unaware of their presence. Kenmore generally did this, for he wished to avoid, as much as possible, any direct contact with these juniors who knew him so intimately. He felt that he was safe, but it was better to be cautious.

Out into the Triangle went the wretched Fourth-Formers, and, so far, Mr. Goole was unaware of the truth. But it wasn't long before the revelation came.

Mr. Horace Pycraft, the master of the Fourth Form, was the direct means of the Housemaster discovering the truth.

"Mr. Goole—Mr. Goole!" ejaculated Mr. Pycraft in alarmed accents. "Really, sir! Surely you cannot be aware of what you are doing?"

Mr. Barnaby Goole turned and looked at the Form-master in astonishment.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Pycraft?" he said acidly.

Mr. Pycraft came running up, flushed and agitated.

"These boys!" he panted. "Their suits!"

"What about their suits?"

"You cannot mean to tell me, sir, that you do not know about the state of their suits?" ejaculated Mr. Pycraft blankly.

"Of course I know!" snapped the Housemaster. "I took the boys upstairs personally, Mr. Pycraft, and made them change."

"Good heavens!" said the other.

"I quite fail to see the reason for your exaggerated distress," said Mr. Goole irritably. "What is the matter with you, Mr. Pycraft?"

Mr. Horace Pycraft stiffened. There was nothing the matter with him, but he was quite convinced that there was something very much the matter with Mr. Goole. He became sarcastic—which was his usual habit in such circumstances.

"Very well, Mr. Goole!" he said tartly. "Very well! I apologise for interfering. If you sanction these boys going into chapel with these—ahem!—rude inscriptions on their backs, all well and good. But you must allow me to remark, sir, that the procedure will be most irregular."

Mr. Goole looked amazed. Then he turned, adjusted his glasses, and gazed at Corcoran and the other juniors, who had halted in obedience to his command. They were all looking very innocent.

"Upon my word!" ejaculated Mr. Goole suddenly. "Corcoran! What have you done to your trousers? Griffith! You, too! Why, I declare you are all the same!"

"Just a little idea, you know, sir," said Corky brightly. "The fashions are getting more cheery nowadays, sir."

The other juniors marvelled at Corcoran's nerve.

"Fashions!" thundered Mr. Goole. "But this is ridiculous! Your trousers are positively hideous! What do you mean by chalking these absurd broad arrows—"

"I suggest, sir, that you should look at their backs!" put in Mr. Pycraft, with a certain amount of relish.

The Housemaster started.

"Boys—turn round!" he ordered.

They turned round, and Mr. Goole staggered. He found himself faced by all those remarkable inscriptions. He was invited to kick Corcoran, and he was informed that another junior was up the pole, and that still another had bats in the belfry.

And then Mr. Goole went off the deep end. He jumped to the conclusion that these juniors had deliberately played this practical joke on him—as a revenge for making them go upstairs and change—and for about two solid minutes Mr. Goole told the East House Fourth-Formers exactly what he thought of them.

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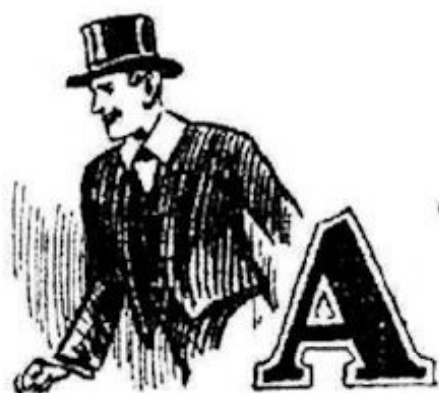
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CHAPTER 11.

A Little Magic!

At last Mr. Goole became short of breath, and he paused.

"I take this as a personal affront," he concluded, "and I shall see that you are all very severely punished. You will rub these chalk marks out at once!"

"That's just it, sir," said Corcoran patiently. "They're not chalk marks."

"Not chalk marks!"

"No, sir; and they won't rub out."

"Nonsense!" said the Housemaster. "How dare you say such things, Corcoran?"

He seized Corky by the arm, pulled him round, and commenced dusting his back. After about twenty seconds Mr. Goole paused, his eyes growing larger. He looked at Corcoran's back, and he looked at his hand.

"This is astonishing!" he ejaculated blankly. "Do you see this, Mr. Pycraft? These—these marks are indelibly imprinted on the cloth!"

"Some chemical, I assume, sir," said Mr. Pycraft.

"You young rascals!" exclaimed Mr. Goole, glaring at the juniors. "How dare you ruin your clothing in this way? The matter is far more serious than I had supposed."

And in that second, too, Mr. Goole realised that his recent lecture had been undeserved. The juniors had attempted to

explain to him why they had been wearing their every-day clothing, and he had refused to listen. It had not been a deliberate affront.

"I shall inquire very closely into this outrage!" he said, breathing hard. "You will all be heavily punished for destroying your clothing——"

"But we didn't do it, sir!" burst out Marriott. "It was a jape, sir—by those Remove chaps!"

"Dry up, you sneak!" muttered Freeman under his breath.

"Oh!" said Mr. Goole. "I am beginning to understand now!"

There was nothing left to his imagination. Some Remove boys had mutilated those suits, and the Fourth-Formers had been compelled to wear their every-day togs instead. It was a malicious trick—a destructive, unpardonable outrage.

"Don't take any notice of what Marriott just said, sir," urged Corcoran earnestly. "We're perfectly willing to face the music——"

"Silence, Corcoran!" said Mr. Goole, in a cold voice. "Mr. Pycraft, what do you make of this? Armstrong, turn round!"

Armstrong turned round, fuming.

"Chemical, sir—undoubtedly chemical," said Mr. Pycraft viciously. "I cannot comprehend how boys could be so utterly destructive. These are nearly new suits—and now, of course, they are hopelessly ruined. They can never be worn again."

"I am afraid you are right," said Mr. Goole, as he closely examined Armstrong's back and rubbed the cloth with his finger. "Appalling! This writing is not merely on

the surface, but actually in the cloth. A little dye, perhaps— But, no, I think not. Really, I am startled."

He ordered Armstrong to turn round, then he lined the juniors up and marched in front of them.

"I consider that this matter is altogether too serious for my own personal attention," he said gravely. "Therefore I can do nothing but acquaint the headmaster with the facts. The boys who caused this damage shall pay for it—and they shall be severely punished, too."

Corky and his companions were silent.

"I can readily believe that this wanton act has been committed by the boys of the Remove," continued Mr. Goole, "for it is obvious that you would not destroy your own clothing in this fashion. I am well aware that the Fourth Form and the Remove Form are at loggerheads. It must cease if this is the kind of idiocy it leads to."

"I quite agree with you, sir," said Mr. Pycraft approvingly. "By all means tell the headmaster! The boys of my Form are always getting themselves into trouble with the Remove. The whole position is ridiculous. It is high time that something drastic was done."

Mr. Goole waved a hand.

"I should not make any complaint about an ordinary good-natured—er—jape," he said, "but this is a destructive joke, and I consider it my duty to fetch Doctor Stafford without delay."

"You will bring him here?" asked Mr. Pycraft.

"Yes—here!" said the Housemaster. "Dr. Stafford shall see these young gentlemen with his own eyes!"

There were several of the East House fellows who thoroughly approved of Mr. Goole's decision. For they felt that the Removites would now "get it in the neck," and, moreover, the perpetrators of the jape would be compelled to pay the piper.

But Corcoran and Armstrong and most of the others were very uncomfortable about the situation. They wanted no inquiry. They had been japed by the Remove, and they were ready to stand the racket. They would far rather get their own revenge—in their own way.

"Look here, sir!" said Corcoran quickly. "Can't we just keep it to ourselves? It's not a very serious matter——"

"That depends upon the point of view, Corcoran," interrupted Mr. Goole. "I think it is a very serious matter. I do not object to high spirits, and, although you may not believe it, I have frequently winked my eyes at irregularities. But this is too much! This is altogether beyond a joke."

"But, sir——" began Corky.

"Enough!" said Mr. Goole. "I will not hear a word, Corcoran! My mind is made up, and I am determined. Mr. Pycraft, be

good enough to keep your eye on these boys until I return."

"With pleasure, sir," said Mr. Horace Pycraft promptly.

And he meant it. It gave him great pleasure to remain there, watching over the wretched Fourth-Formers. For Mr. Pycraft knew that trouble was in the air—and it always pleased him when somebody was on the carpet.

"That's done it!" murmured Handforth, who was on the Ancient House steps with a number of other Removites. "Old Barney Goole has gone for the Head!"

"My sons, we never hoped for anything so gorgeous as this!" chuckled Nipper. "You can take it from me this jape is going to be a regular scream!"

Handforth started.

"Oh, you call it a scream, do you?" he said. "What about us? Some of those East House rotters are liable to sneak. Merrell and Snipe, and chaps of that sort."

"That's true enough," said Fullwood thoughtfully. "When the Head comes, they'll probably tell him that we're responsible. And when the Head comes across and asks us, we shall have to own up."

Nipper grinned.

"Keep your hair on!" he said calmly. "The Head won't come across and ask any questions. Later on we're going to have a regular laugh at the East House, and it'll be a laugh at Corky & Co., at old Goole, and at Pycraft. Just have a look at the sun."

The other juniors glanced up into the sky, and then stared at Nipper.

"The sun?" said Handforth. "What the dickens has the sun got to do with it?"

"A lot, old man," said Nipper gently. "You think I'm dotty, eh?"

"I don't think anything about it—I know it!" grunted Handforth.

But Nipper only chuckled, and in his eyes there was a happy expression of serene expectation!



CHAPTER 12.

Very Remarkable!

MR. GOOLE was looking quite anxious when he encountered Dr. Stafford walking sedately across Inner Court. It was nearly time for chapel parade, and the Housemaster of the East House feared that there would be a delay, all on account of those mutilated suits.

"Good morning, sir!" he said stiffly, as he paused in front of the Head.

"Good-morning, Mr. Goole," replied Dr. Stafford. "Is anything the matter? You appear to be quite worried."

"A most unfortunate situation has arisen, sir," said Mr. Goole. "The Remove boys have been playing a trick on some of the juniors of my House."

"Indeed! On Sunday morning?" asked the Head, frowning.

"I imagine that the damage must have been done yesterday," said Mr. Goole. "Not that that fact ameliorates the gravity of the outrage. All the Fourth Form boys of my House have had their Sunday suits ruined."

"This is certainly very serious, Mr. Goole."

"Before taking any action in the matter, I wish you to come and inspect these boys, sir," continued Mr. Goole. "They are at present in the Triangle, with Mr. Pycraft in charge. I feel so deeply on the subject that I wish you to come and examine the damage. There is very little time before chapel parade, and—"

"I will come with you at once, Mr. Goole," said the Head promptly.

"Thank you, sir."

They fell into step, side by side, and walked rapidly towards the Triangle.

"What is the nature of this damage, Mr. Goole?" asked the Head.

"The most ridiculous and insulting inscriptions have been marked on the backs of the boys' jackets," said Mr. Goole angrily. "Even their trousers have been bespattered with broad arrows."

"Upon my soul!" said the Head. "But is this really as serious as you imagine, Mr. Goole? Surely these marks can be rubbed out—"

"That is just the point—they cannot!" said the Housemaster. "They are fixed. Some sort of corrosive chemical must have been used—some liquid which, when painted on the cloth, destroyed the natural dye. The result is most appalling. These marks are indelibly fixed. All the suits, of course, are now unwearable."

Dr. Stafford looked very, very grim.

"The culprits shall be flogged!" he said sternly.

They found the Triangle more than half-full. The Third Form was in force, under Mr. Suncliffe; the Remove was being marshalled into shape by Mr. Crowell. Fifth-Formers and Sixth-Formers in all their glory were emerging sedately from all the Houses. And there, right in the centre, Mr. Pycraft was standing in front of the unhappy Corky & Co., keeping his eye on them.

Naturally, everybody was watching with keen interest, for such a scene as this on a Sunday morning was unusual. The chapel bells were chiming on the morning air, and everybody seemed cheery and contented—except those East House juniors.

"Thank you, Mr. Pycraft," said Mr. Goole, as he walked up. "The headmaster has very kindly consented to inspect these boys at once. Now, sir, I would like you to come to the rear of this line, so that you

can see the full extent of the malicious damage. Boys, stand just as you are."

Corcoran gave a sideways glance of helplessness at his companions, and they all stood still.

Mr. Goole and the Head walked round to the rear, and Mr. Goole waved an eloquent hand.

"There, sir!" he said impressively.

The headmaster adjusted his glasses, glanced along that line of backs, and then he started. He looked more closely. He even went up to one of the boys and peered at him in detail.

"Well, Mr. Goole?" he said, turning. "I must confess that I cannot see anything particularly wrong with these boys."

"You cannot see anything wrong!" echoed Mr. Goole, in amazement. "Really, sir— Why, good gracious! What is this?"

He nearly jumped a foot into the air. Gazing down that line of black backs, he beheld no insulting inscriptions. The juniors were standing in the full sunlight, and it was impossible to make any mistake. Every one of those marks had vanished—as mysteriously as though a magician had waved his wand over them!

"Boys!" gasped Mr. Goole. "Turn round!"

The juniors, as puzzled and as startled as Mr. Goole himself, obeyed.

"This—this is extraordinary!" muttered the Housemaster.

"As far as I can see, Mr. Goole, these boys are very smart and very neat," said the headmaster. "They are a credit to their House. How is it possible that you could have imagined such a truly remarkable—"

"But I did not imagine it!" broke in Mr. Goole, in bewilderment. "Mr. Pycraft! Have these boys moved since I left you?"

"They have not moved!" said Mr. Pycraft tartly.

"But has nothing been done?" insisted Mr. Goole. "Have they not made efforts to remove the marks—"

"I have seen to it that they have not even lifted a finger!" said Mr. Pycraft, as he adjusted his glasses. "But what is this? Good heavens! Boys, what have you been doing?"

"Nothing, sir!" said Corcoran happily. "We're ready for chapel parade. Is there anything wrong with our appearance, sir?" he added innocently. "Are our collars dirty, or our ties crooked, or anything? We always try to look our best on Sunday morning, sir."

The headmaster turned to the flabbergasted Mr. Goole.

"May I ask, Mr. Goole, what this means?" he said coldly. "Why should you bring me here on this—ahem!—fool's errand?"

Mr. Goole gulped.

"But I can assure you, sir, the boys—" He broke off, and rubbed one of the junior's backs. "Very singular!" he went on. "I



The man blundered into the road, right in the path of the Austin Seven! "Look out!" exclaimed Kenmore, in alarm. Handforth, who was driving the Austin, swerved, then applied the brakes. The car skidded wildly.

must confess I am baffled! The markings have entirely disappeared."

The headmaster gave Mr. Goole a very strange look—as though he had an idea, in the back of his mind, that Mr. Goole was slightly demented.

"There is nothing the matter with these boys, Mr. Goole," he said icily. "They had better join the rest of the Form at once. It is time for chapel."

"Yes, of course—of course!" babbled Mr. Goole.

He waved a feeble hand to Mr. Pycraft, and then bolted into the East House. Mr. Pycraft took charge, and there was an expression of keen disappointment on his face. The juniors themselves were nearly as bewildered as the masters until after chapel, when they had a few words with the grinning Removites.

"Simple as A B C!" said Nipper coolly. "We used a kind of invisible-ink stuff."

"But how did it work?" asked Armstrong blankly.

"When we put it on it was invisible," said Nipper. "It didn't come into effect until you had been in the daylight for some little time; that's why you noticed nothing when you first came down this morning."

"Oh, my hat!"

"But, you see, that chemical was perfectly harmless, and its 'life' lasted only about half an hour, at the most," proceeded Nipper genially. "Mr. Goole stood you all in the direct sunlight, and that speeded up the process. By the time old Goole got back with the Head the sun had done its work, and everything was all serene. You needn't worry about your clobber—it hasn't been harmed in the least."

And the Remove yelled with laughter at the discomfiture of the Fourth-Formers.

Without the slightest doubt, it was a great victory for the Remove!

He passed down the steps, and walked away towards the gates. He was very surprised at that greeting—for, in his own identity, these juniors had never troubled to bid him good-morning. They either scampered out of his way or just looked at him with indifference.

"Morning, Mr. Kenmore!"

Kenmore looked up; and found Handforth, of the Remove, doffing his cap.

"Good-morning!" said Kenmore shortly.

"Lovely morning!" proceeded Handforth.



CHAPTER 13.

Popular!



MORNING, Mr. Kenmore!"

Simon Kenmore, of the Sixth, started. It was Monday

morning now, and he had just emerged from the East House lobby. Two or three juniors on the steps politely raised their caps to him, and greeted him with smiles.

"Good-morning!" he said, nodding.

"Heard anything more about your brother yet, sir?"

"No, nothing."

"Hard luck!" said Edward Oswald.

"Thanks awfully for what you did for us on Saturday night, sir," he added warmly. "It was jolly decent of you. You're made of different stuff to your brother, sir. He wouldn't have—Eh? What the—"

He found that Church was jabbing him in the side, and he stared round.

"What's the matter, ass?" he demanded. "What are you digging me in the ribs for?" Church turned red. "Nun-nothing!" he stammered. "Let's be getting indoors."

Kenmore had walked on, and Church changed his tone.

"You ass!" he hissed. "No need to run Kenmore down in front of the chap's own brother! Where are your manners?"

"By George!" said Handforth, with a start. "I hadn't thought of that! Still,

the best japes of the term. The Removites felt that they had evened things up.

"Hallo, Mr. Kenmore! Lovely morning, sir!"

Simon Kenmore, at the gates, found Lionel Corcoran just outside, chatting with Tich Harborough. For the moment the Fourth-Former and the Removite had buried the hatchet, and they were chatting animatedly about their favourites, the Blue Crusaders.

Kenmore exchanged the greeting—which, by this time, was becoming somewhat embarrassing, for no less than a dozen juniors had bade him "Good-morning" within the last two or three minutes. It was an entirely novel experience for him.

"Anything we can do, sir?" asked Tich politely.

"Do?" said Kenmore, puzzled.

"If you want any errands done, sir, just say the word," explained Tich. "If you want us to run to the village——"

"No, no—of course not!" said Kenmore. "Thanks all the same."

He escaped, breathing hard. Not once within his memory had any of the juniors offered to run errands for him! Sometimes he had forced them to go, using all sorts of unpleasant threats; but never had they offered.

Now it was different. He could tell that they meant it—they were perfectly sincere. And the smiles they gave him were utterly friendly.

In fact, everywhere he went it was the same. Removites and Fourth-Formers treated him with the utmost respect and with keen friendliness. Simon Kenmore was experiencing a new sensation.

"What on earth does it mean?" he muttered to himself. "Why

should they behave like this?"

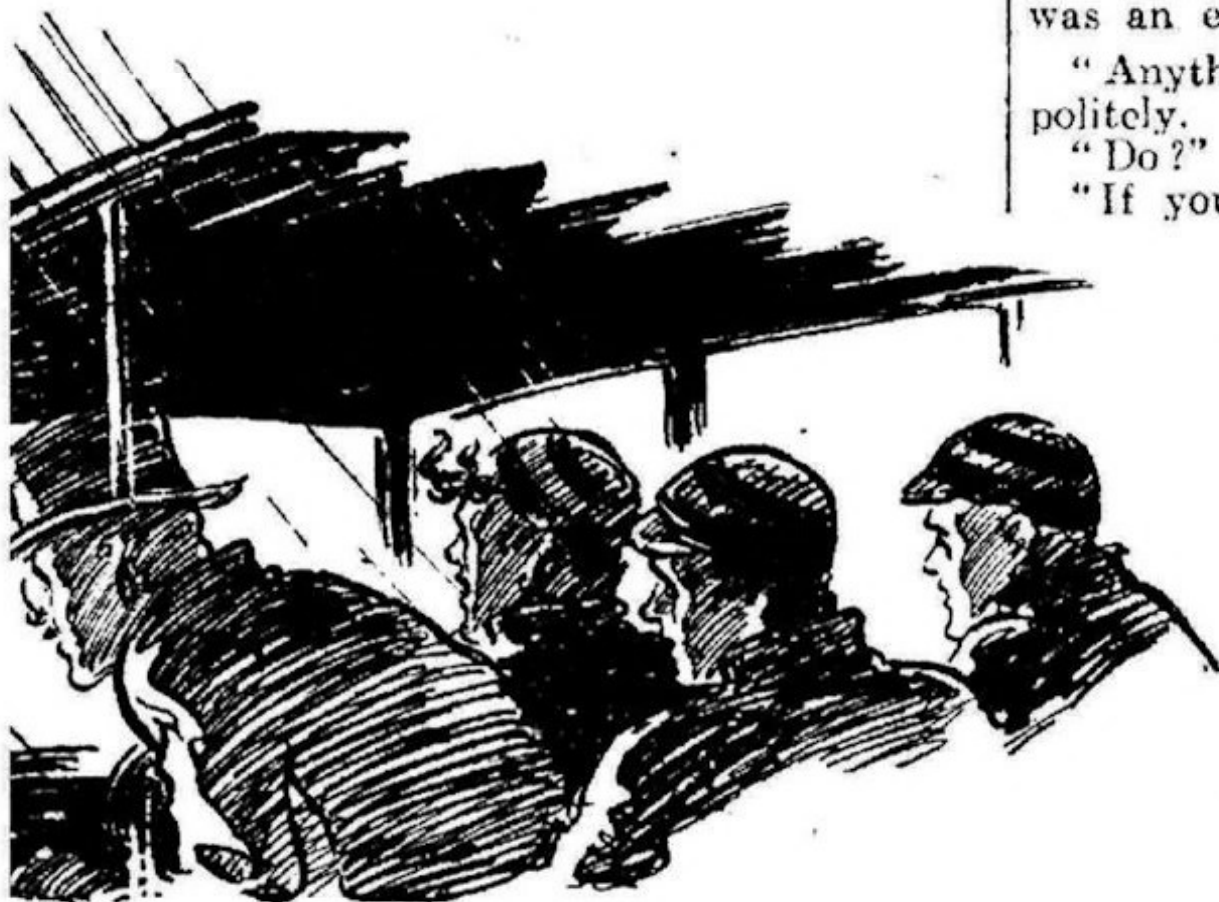
As a matter of fact, the truth had got round—or what the juniors believed to be the truth. Everybody was talking of the way in which he had saved the Remove raiders from Mr. Barnaby Goole on the Saturday night; and everybody voted that "Walter" Kenmore was a sportsman to his finger-tips.

It wasn't long before Simon Kenmore realised how the position stood. He received more than one direct hint. And he was astonished to find that his conscience was pricking him.

Hitherto he hadn't been aware that he possessed a conscience.

For many terms he had been a bully and a supercilious rotter. He was exactly the same now—in his own self. He knew it, too. He was merely playing a part—he was acting all the time; and, to give him his due, he was acting cleverly, brainily.

In his very walk he was different from himself; his voice was changed; he was ex-



The man blundered into the road, right in the path of the Austin Seven! "Look out!" exclaimed Kenmore, in alarm. Handforth, who was driving the Austin, swerved, then applied the brakes. The car skidded wildly.

what does it matter?" he added. "Mr. Kenmore must know that his brother was several kinds of a beast. Everybody in St. Frank's knows what Kenmore is! But his brother is made of different stuff!"

"Well, we all know that," said McClure.

And they looked at Kenmore as he went towards the gateway, little dreaming that they were gazing at their old enemy, the Sixth-Former.

Handforth & Co., as a matter of fact, were hanging about in the Triangle so that they could yell with laughter at the East House juniors when they came out. Lots of other Removites were on the spot for the same purpose. Yesterday they hadn't been able to give full vent to their hilarity; but to-day was a week-day, and they would be able to let themselves go.

Corcoran and his merry men were being chipped up hill and down dale over that jape. Even Nipper had not expected it to be so very successful. But, as things had turned out, it was written down as one of

ceedingly careful as to his manners. It gave him a bit of a shock when he realised that he was now false.

Everything about him was false—his appearance, his every actions.

In a subconscious way he was behaving like a gentleman in his new identity of his own elder brother. He did not let himself go, as was his wont; he did not answer people rudely and abruptly.

And just because he had done one little thing which the juniors interpreted as a sportsmanlike action, they were giving him smiles, offering to help him, and greeting him warmly every time he passed.

Something was stirring within Simon Kenmore's inner mind. He wasn't fully aware of it yet, but the very strangeness of his new experience was like a blow to him. It left him bewildered.

More than once he felt inclined to explain to the juniors that he had not saved them from Mr. Goole because he had desired to help them. But what was the good? Why should he spoil it like that? So he kept it to himself—and he gradually became accustomed to the new order of things.

At the same time, his very nature received a jolt. It was as though he had been brought up by a blank wall—as though something had suddenly pulled him up dead. He had something to think about—something to ponder over—in addition to his own great problem.

"Do you think that's going to save you?" he asked ominously. "Not likely! It's like your nerve to walk in here——"

"That's just where you're mistaken," said Corcoran gently. "It requires no nerve for a Fourth-Former to walk in amongst a crowd of Removites."

"Why, you rotter, you're making it worse!" said Duncan.

"Sorry!" chuckled Corky. "Only my joke. Fact is, I've come over to have a chat about footer."

"Oh!" said Handforth, cooling down.

"And you'll be wanted—on Wednesday afternoon," nodded Corcoran, addressing Handy. "The Blue Crusaders require your services for a big match."

"By George!" ejaculated Handforth, his eyes sparkling. "You mean this, Corky? No spoof?"

"No spoof at all."

"And it's a big match?"

"A cup-tie," nodded Corcoran.

"A cup-tie!" yelled Handforth excitedly. "Stand back, you fellows! Let Corky have breathing space! What the dickens do you mean by pressing round a visitor like this?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A minute earlier Handforth had been ready to knock Lionel Corcoran into the middle of next week; but now he was tremendously anxious that Corcoran should be treated with deference. For, when all was said and done, Corcoran was the owner of the Blue Crusaders Club, and in that capacity he had to be treated with respect. As a mere Fourth-Former, he was a nobody, of course.

Handforth eyes were gleaming intently. He had played for the Blue Crusaders already, and he had performed wonders. Almost as soon as Corcoran had come to St. Frank's he had got Handforth to sign amateur papers for the club, and Handforth was, in a way of speaking, a fully fledged Crusader.

Tich Harborough was looking even more excited than Edward Oswald.

"What's this, Corky?" he said, pressing forward. "A cup-tie?"

"Yes."

"When?"

"On Wednesday afternoon."

"But it's too early for the cup-ties——"

"This isn't for the English Cup," smiled Corcoran. "Nothing so sensational as that, Tich, old man. I ran over to see Mr. Piccombe this afternoon—got special leave for an hour—and he tells me that the Blues have entered for the Southern Counties Challenge Cup."

"Well, that's a pretty keen competition," said Nipper. "Some of the preliminary rounds have already been played——"

"Exactly," nodded Corcoran. "And, by a rummy coincidence, the Blue Crusaders have been drawn against Helmford Town for the first tie."

CHAPTER 14.

Handforth is Wanted!



LIONEL CORCORAN strode up the Ancient House steps at tea-time, and when he entered the lobby a

loud yell went up.

"Look out! Fourth-Formers!"

"Rally round, Remove!"

"Cheese it, you asses!" grinned Corky. "This isn't a raid. I'm all alone."

"Grab him!" sang out De Valerie. "Let's chuck this cheeky Fourth-Former out!"

"Hear, hear!"

"On him!"

Corcoran held his ground, and he raised a hand.

"Pax!" he said calmly. "Can't touch me! I've got my fingers crossed!"

Handforth pushed his way forward.

The **POPULAR**
Every Tuesday 2.

"At home?" went up a shout.

"No—at Helmford."

"Well, this is a bit of a novelty," chuckled Nipper. "They'll never be able to hold the crowds for a match like that."

"Why is it particularly novel?" asked Handforth, looking puzzled.

"Well, look at the teams—Blue Crusaders against Helmford Town!" said Nipper.

"What about it?"

"Are you dense, Handy, or have you forgotten that the Helmford Town Club had its headquarters, until recently, at Bannington?" asked Corcoran, grinning. "Helmford Town is the club's new name. Before the Blues came here, the club was known as Bannington Town."

"By George, yes!" said Handforth, with a start. "I'd overlooked that!"

There was a great deal of animated talk. The St. Frank's juniors had played against Bannington Town—a lowly club in the Third Division. Nipper & Co., in fact, had done a good deal to save the club from bankruptcy; and then, at the crucial moment, Lionel Corcoran and the Blue Crusaders had come along, and had bought the Bannington ground, lock, stock, and barrel.

Bannington Town, with all its financial troubles solved, shifted to Helmford—which, at one time, had boasted of a Third Division club. The latter, however, had done very badly a season or two back, and had failed to get re-elected. Since then Helmford had had to be content with an amateur club. Then Bannington Town came along, and immediately changed its name to Helmford Town.

Yet, strictly speaking, it was the old Bannington club, and the Blue Crusaders was the new club. This would be a match, indeed! Half the population of Bannington would naturally follow the Blue Crusaders—and they would be doubly keen because they would once again see their old favourites.

"It's not an important match, as things go in football," said Nipper. "I mean, the Southern Counties Challenge Cup doesn't mean much, and all the matches are played in mid-week."

"All the same, the Blues are anxious to win that cup!" said Corcoran in a determined voice. "In fact, the Blues are going all out to win everything—with a particular eye on the League Championship."

"First Division next year, eh?" asked Russell, with a grin.

"Rather!" said Corcoran. "Well, about Wednesday's match. You'll be wanted, Handy."

"Thanks awfully!" said Handforth eagerly.

He was regarding Corky now as the owner of the Blue Crusaders, not as a Fourth-Former. Corcoran was taking a very active interest in the doings of his club, and, although he never interfered with the management of Mr. Ulysses Piecombe, he nevertheless had his way when it came to the point.

"You did so well on Saturday, Handy," said Corcoran, "that even old Piecan is quite agreeable to you playing in goal again."

"Good old Handy!" said Tich, slapping Edward Oswald on the back. "You'll keep the colours flying, won't you?"

"Try me!" said Handforth, with glowing eyes. "But look here! What about Fatty Fowkes? I'm as keen as mustard on playing for the Blues, but half my enjoyment is spoilt because I know that Fatty is the real goalie. It's not as if he's injured—"

"Don't worry about Fatty!" put in Corcoran. "It's hard lines on the poor chap, but we're hoping that he'll soon be out of his trouble."

"He's still in hiding—with the police after him!" said Nipper thoughtfully. "I thought perhaps that Kenmore's brother would do something, but the position seems to remain the same."

"Why doesn't Kenmore himself show up?" asked Handforth gruffly. "Where is he? He tried to spoof everybody that he was running away to sea, but that was a frost. What the dickens does he mean by vanishing?"

"There's no time to discuss that, Handy," said Nipper. "The police are looking for Kenmore, and we'd better leave the job to them. I expect they'll locate him before long, and, once they've got him—once they've proved that he's really alive—Fatty Fowkes will be safe."

"Supposing they find Kenmore before Wednesday?" asked Handforth. "I expect Fowkes will play in the Cup Tie then?"

"You bet he will," said Corcoran. "You're only a substitute, Handy, and you mustn't be upset—"

"Rot!" interrupted Handforth. "Who's upset? If Fatty Fowkes is able to play, good luck to him! He's a much better goalie than I am—and he ought to be, too, considering that he's a professional."

"Spoken like a man!" grinned Corky. "Well, that's settled, then. If things remain as they are, you'll be needed on Wednesday afternoon, Handy—so put in as much practice as you can."



CHAPTER 15.

Playing for the Blues!

NOTHING had happened by Wednesday. There was still no news of Simon Kenmore, and the unfortunate Fatty Fowkes was compelled to remain in hiding. Corcoran and Tich were getting uneasy, for they heard from Dave Moran, the skipper of the Crusaders, that Fatty was getting rapidly fed up; the Blues, in fact, were having a good deal of trouble with him. There was more than a chance that he would break out into open rebellion.

The news of the Cup Tie had made him worse. Fatty had no doubt that Handforth

would do well in the match, but he wanted to play himself. For Fatty loved football, and this enforced idleness irritated him enormously.

Kenmore's "brother" was still at St. Frank's, and he could hardly understand the attitude of the juniors towards him. They were so friendly that Kenmore was positively embarrassed at times. And he was on his best behaviour. He did not want to do anything that would rob him of this false reputation for being a sportsman.

After dinner on the Wednesday there was a tremendous bustle.

Practically all the Remove had decided to go over to Helmford on their bicycles. Handforth was ready with his Austin Seven, and while he was waiting in the Triangle Simon Kenmore came out of the East House with his overcoat on, and walked rapidly towards the gates.

"Going out, sir?" sang out Handforth cheerily.

It was an unnecessary question, but Kenmore could do nothing but answer it.

"Yes," he said.

"Going to see the football match at Helmford, sir?" asked Handforth.

Simon Kenmore hesitated. He was, as a matter of fact, going to Helmford; but he had no idea of seeing the match. He wanted to continue his search for Sam Pointer. But it had already occurred to him that he might be seen in Helmford by some of the St. Frank's fellows, and it was just as well to be on the safe side.

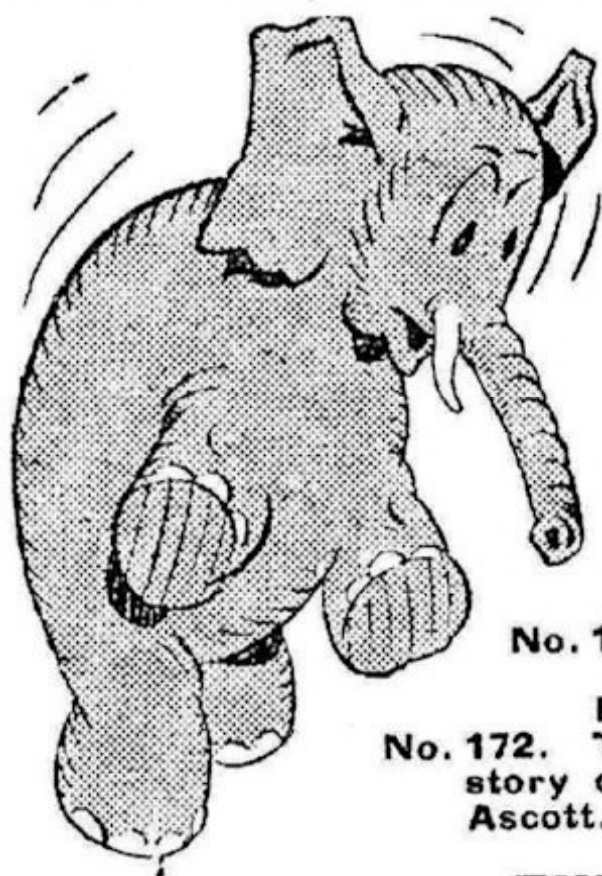
"Well, yes," he replied. "I've heard such a lot about this game that I thought I'd like to go along and see it."

"Good egg!" said Handy. "How about coming along with us, sir, in the car?"

"Well, I thought about going by train——"

"Bother the train, sir! Plenty of room in here—although it doesn't look any too big," said Handforth cheerfully. "Church and Mac can squash in the back."

Kenmore hardly knew what to say. The invitation had taken him completely by surprise. In his old character of Kenmore of the Sixth, Handforth would never have asked him to ride in the little Austin; indeed, Kenmore had an idea that Handforth would have laughed at such a suggestion with derision. For Handy was one of those juniors who had always been openly contemptuous of Kenmore.



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But as Walter Kenmore he was a different personality!

"It's very decent of you, young 'un," he said awkwardly. "I don't think you need trouble to take me—"

"No trouble at all, sir—a pleasure!" insisted Handforth.

He was so pressing that Kenmore couldn't get out of it. He had already admitted that he was going to see the match, and he rather regretted that slip. To refuse to travel in the car would be an uncalled-for affront—and Kenmore was very anxious to retain his present reputation of being a sportsman.

So it came about that Handforth & Co. travelled to Helmford accompanied by their arch-enemy of earlier days—Simon Kenmore of the Sixth! Handforth went out of his way to make himself extra friendly, and, long before Helmford was reached, Kenmore was vaguely wondering why he had always been so "down" on the bluff, good-natured junior.

The blunt truth was, Kenmore was finding life much more enjoyable in the rôle of a sportsman than he had found it in the rôle of a recognised rotter. He was not fully aware of this fact yet, but it was slowly and insidiously changing his character.

He began to fear the time when it would be necessary for him to re-assume his old position; he felt that he would rather remain known to all the fellows in this new identity of his. It was a novel experience for Kenmore to find himself respected and honoured; and it was an experience which he could not have gained in any other way but this.

For, no matter how much he tried to change his ways, no matter how much he proved that he wanted to be decent, everybody would be suspicious of him—and that would make his fight well nigh hopeless. But in the character of his mythical brother the change had come suddenly, and none of the other St. Frank's fellows knew of the trick that was being played upon them. They accepted this new Kenmore at his face value, and they had found him to be a decent fellow. Therefore, they gave him their friendship.

When Helmford was reached they found the Town ground fairly besieged. Not that this mattered much to the St. Frank's crowd, for on the Monday evening Nipper had organised a drive, and he had collected funds from all the juniors. These funds had been handed over to Corcoran, and he had arranged that reserved seats would be paid for and ready.

Multitudes of people were pressing through the turnstiles, and it was a positive fact that the Helmford ground had never been called upon to accommodate such an enormous gathering.

Helmford was so comparatively near that a large number of Bannington people had come, and, although it was a Wednesday afternoon, an astonishing number of enthusiasts had found time to be present.

"Well, here we are," said Handforth

briskly. "Have you got your seat reserved, sir?" he added, glancing at Kenmore.

"Yes!" said Kenmore promptly. "But you needn't bother about me, young 'uns. Thanks awfully for the ride."

"Don't mention it, sir," said Handforth. "What about going back? If you'll meet us outside the ground, after the match, we'd like to drive you home again."

"That's very nice of you," said Kenmore wonderingly. "Thanks very much, Handforth."

And to his own astonishment he found himself accepting the offer. Yet he assured himself that he held these juniors in contempt, and that he would welcome the opportunity of bullying them when he returned to his own identity. Perhaps this was only self-delusion. For, in his heart, Simon Kenmore was eager to cultivate the friendship of Handforth & Co.

Handforth & Co., after parking the Austin, hurried to the players' quarters, telling themselves, once again, that Kenmore's elder brother was a thoroughly good sort. And none of these juniors were obtuse because they did not see through the deception. Simon Kenmore had not only changed his appearance, but he had changed his character. It was this latter fact which rendered him so absolutely safe.

And it seemed that the longer Simon Kenmore kept up this deception the greater would be the permanent change in his nature.



CHAPTER 16.

Handy on His Mettle!

PLAY up, the Blues!"

"Hurrah!"

"Come on, the Town!"

The teams had just come out, and mighty roars of welcome rent the air.

The Blue Crusaders were a fine-looking crowd; Dave Moran, the steady, reliable skipper and centre-half-back; Ben Gillingham the rugged, bow-legged right-back, and George Scott, his sound partner. Then there were the others: Hales and Keane, half-backs; Rex Carrington, the cool, brilliant centre-forward; Wally Simpson, Penniworth, Andy Tait; and last, but by no means least, Tich Harborough and Handforth. The two schoolboys looked as businesslike and as reliant as any of the professionals.

Dave Moran warmly shook hands with Fred Hearne, the Helmford skipper. They tossed, and Helmford Town won.

"Who cares?" said Handforth. "All the better for us in the second half!"

There was a regular Cup-tie feeling in the crowd. And when the game started, it started with a rush. Both teams were as keen as mustard, and they forced the pace amazingly.

It was a knock-out struggle, this, and the homesters were naturally grimly determined to win. They had done very badly in the League, and they were hoping to mend matters somewhat by giving a good showing in other matches.

Of course, they were now facing very formidable foes. Not only were the Blue Crusaders in the Second Division, but they were famed for their brilliant football. They were at the top of the table, and they were renowned for their away-from-home wins.

Ordinarily, the Blues would have been "all over" the Helmford team. But to-day the Third Division club was playing football of a very different order to their usual game. Their attack was terrific, and their defence was stubborn.

During the first three or four minutes of the game, the Blues attacked with all their usual machine-like precision, but somehow the forwards could not put a finish to these movements. For the Helmford backs were like giants, and their goalie was invincible.

"Keep it up, the Town!"

Shouts of enthusiasm went up continuously, and Fred Hearne and his men were encouraged tremendously.

Then came a fierce raid on the Blues' goal. The Helmford men sliced through the visitors' defence, and for once Ben Gillingham and George Scott were at sixes and sevens. A glorious pass came from the wing, and Fred Hearne snapped it up like lightning. He was just within the penalty area, and there was nobody between him and the goal except Handforth, who was ready—keen-eyed, watchful, seemingly a bundle of springs.

Slam!

Fred shot, and the leather sped true and hard towards the corner of the goal. Handforth leapt up, his judgment being perfect. He got to the leather, pulled it down, and swung it out into play again.

"Oh, well saved!"

"Good old Handy!"

"Fatty himself couldn't have done better!"

"Hurrah!"

And then an even mightier roar went up from the Helmford crowds, for Scott had failed to clear, and one of the other Helmford forwards was taking a shot. The ball came back at Handforth, and he slewed round, clutching desperately.

Yet, owing to the rapidity of that movement, Handforth had insufficient time to place himself. He failed to hold the ball, and it bounced down close in front of him. He had saved, but with fatal results. For he lost his balance, and Hearne, leaping forward, breasted the leather into the net as it was on the bounce.

"Goal!"

"Well played, the Town!"

"Hard lines, Handy!" roared the St. Frank's juniors.

Handforth, picking himself up, looked disconsolate and unhappy.

"Well, I did my best, anyway!" he muttered.

"By gosh, young 'un, you did fine!" said Ben Gillingham. "I think Fatty might have been beaten there—although his size would have helped him."

The Helmford players were miraculously encouraged by this success. When the play restarted Fred Hearne and his men were like super-players. Again and again they swept through the Blues' defence, and if Handforth had not played with superb brilliance three or four more goals would have resulted.

As it was, that hectic period was overcome, and then Rex Carrington scored for the Blues, and equalised.

It was a splendid goal, and Tich Harborough was mainly the cause of it. With the speed of a hare, the schoolboy winger had hummed down the touchline, outpacing the Helmford half-backs and tricking the full-back who attempted to intercept him.

He centred with all his usual coolness and precision, and Rex made no mistake about the first-time shot that he sent sizzling towards the Helmford goal.

With the scores even, the play began to settle down a bit, but before half-time the homesters had scored again, and were leading. This goal had come from a corner-kick, and Handforth had been literally overwhelmed by the weight of the players who had surged in the goalmouth. Handforth and the ball had been pushed over the line together, and it was even necessary for John Smart, the trainer, to give the unfortunate Handforth a dose of the sponge before play could be resumed.

Helmford kept their lead until well into the second half, but it was seen that the Blue Crusaders were now rapidly assuming the mastery of the game. Helmford Town had been unable to keep up the pace; they had shot their bolt.

With twenty minutes of the second half gone, the homesters found it impossible to make any more attacks. The Crusaders were pressing so hard that the others could do nothing but concentrate on defence. So Handforth, at last, had a slack time.

It seemed that the equaliser would never come. The Helmford defence was grim and tenacious. Their half-backs were becoming backs, and their forwards half-backs. They fought desperately and frantically to keep their lead.

But it was no good.

The cool, steady play of the Blues earned its reward. For the Crusaders were now in complete charge of the game, and in spite of the stubborn defence the equalising goal came—from a swift, unexpected shot from Andy Tait. Tich had looked to be on the point of making a pot-shot, but at the last second he slipped the ball to Andy, and the latter volleyed it neatly over the heads of two or three Helmford players, and the ball eluded the goalie's desperate fingers.



Desperately, Sam Pointer threw himself back on the muddy road and kicked at the same time. His right foot came up viciously, and the toe of his boot caught Simon Kenmore on the side of the head.

There were no more goals after that.

During the remaining minutes of the game, Helmford Town played in a ragged, frantic manner. By scrambling and dashing, they succeeded in evading the defeat that seemed inevitable. They packed their goal, and they made it wellnigh impossible for the Blues to play their usual steady game.

When the final whistle blew nobody was particularly disappointed, even although neither team had won. It had been a splendid game from the spectators' point of view—thrilling, exciting, and spectacular.

And Handforth, the schoolboy amateur, had covered himself with glory.

"Don't you believe it, sonny!" grinned Dave Moran. "You played a splendid game!"

"I let them score twice!" snorted Handforth. "If I had kept goal better, the Blues would have won!"

There was no denying this, but everybody considered that Handforth had kept goal in a very masterly way. Even Mr. Piecombe came bustling down to shake Handforth by the hand and to thank him for his splendid performance.

"Don't take any notice of him, sir," grinned Tich, as Handforth started to protest. "He's naturally modest, you know. He thinks he made a mess of it!"

"Nonsense!" said Mr. Piecombe, in his booming voice. "There were periods when I feared that we should—er—inevitably lose."

"But I've spoilt the Blues' record, sir!" said Handforth unhappily. "The Blues have been winning game after game——"

"League games!" corrected Mr. Piecombe. "And that record is unbroken. This game is entirely different—it is an extra match. Until last week we had not even entered for the Southern Counties Challenge Cup, and it was only by the use of—er—excessive pressure on my part that I made the arrangements. It was, indeed, most irregular."

"And don't forget, Handy, that a draw means a replay," said Nipper contentedly.

"By George! I'd forgotten that!" said Handforth, with a start.

"A replay—at the Stronghold!" said Tich

CHAPTER 17.

The Man in the Dark!



"WELL done, Handy!"

"Congratters, old man!"

"Bravo!"

Edward Oswald

Handforth found himself clapped on the back, and congratulated on all sides, as he came into the big dressing-room at the back of the stand. But he was looking very glum and disappointed.

"Cheese it!" he grunted. "We should have won if I hadn't played such a rotten game!"

Harborough. "I expect it'll come off next Wednesday. And do you suppose that the Crusaders will lose on their own ground?"

"Not likely!" said Handforth promptly. "H'm! Now I come to think of it, I'm jolly glad that the Blues didn't win!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It means a big gate at the Stronghold, too!" chuckled Corcoran. "Haven't you noticed that Mr. Piccombe is looking happy?"

"Ridiculous!" frowned the manager. "I do not deny that we shall undoubtedly be financially—er—benefited by a replay. But I was very anxious for a win to-day. However, the team has done well, and I am very pleased with it."

"And that's real praise from old Piecan!" murmured Ben Gillingham.

After changing, Handforth joined Church and McClure, and then bade good-bye to the Blues and to the other St. Frank's fellows. It was beginning to rain, and Handforth was rather anxious to get home. There were signs that the winter's evening would become foggy later on.

Outside the ground they ran into Simon Kenmore.

"Oh, here you are, sir!" said Handforth. "Good egg! Have you been waiting long?"

As a matter of fact, Kenmore had only just arrived, and he had taken good care to learn the result of the match. For he had not seen it; he had been otherwise engaged.

"I was thinking that you might prefer to take one of your friends back in the car," he said diffidently. "Please don't consider me if you would rather——"

"Of course not!" interrupted Handforth. "We asked you to come back with us, sir, and we're sticking to it. Aren't we, you chaps?"

"Rather!" said Church and McClure enthusiastically.

They all respected "Walter" Kenmore; they wanted to show him, indeed, that his brother's reputation did not reflect upon him. Kenmore himself was quite convinced that the juniors had no suspicion of the real truth.

Kenmore had spent a weary, disappointing afternoon.

He had been to the Helmford racecourse, where active preparations were afoot for the steeplechase meeting that was due to start on the morrow. He had made a round of the hotels and public-houses, but all his inquiries had been futile. He had not been able to get on the track of Sam Pointer. His inquiries had been barren.

"How did you like the match, sir?" asked Church, after they had squashed into the limited accommodation of the Austin Seven.

"The match?" said Kenmore, with a start. "Oh, it was splendid. I thought that Handforth played a very wonderful game."

"Cheese it, sir!" grunted Handforth. "I allowed two goals to go through."

"In all probability, Fowkes himself would have done no better," said Kenmore.

He was trying to analyse his feelings. He did not quite know why he had come back—

why he had met these three juniors, so that he could travel back to St. Frank's in this little car. It seemed so ridiculous. For Handforth & Co. were three of the Removites he had always been particularly "down" on. At every conceivable opportunity he had bullied them.

Now he had deliberately sought the company of the chums of Study D. His despondency, caused by his afternoon's failure, was forgotten. He could not get over the vague astonishment that filled him—astonishment at his own conduct—at his friendliness

NEXT WEDNESDAY!



towards these juniors, whom he had always despised.

Troubled thoughts came into Kenmore's mind then. What would these juniors say when they found out the truth?

And he really wanted them to find out the truth—when the right time came. Otherwise they would never know that he had changed. If Simon Kenmore came back to St. Frank's, Simon Kenmore would be treated as of old. Kenmore wanted everybody to know that he was different now. Yet why should he be different? He was rather baffled by all these conflicting emotions. He was unaware of the fact that his nature was undergoing a transformation, owing to these dire troubles that had beset him.

He knew, deep in his heart, that all this mountain of worry had come about because of his folly—because of his love of gambling. Many, many times he had asked himself,

during this past week, whether the game was worth the candle. Wasn't it better to live decently, and to earn the friendship of the fellows he had previously sneered at?

All this was very surprising—in Simon Kenmore.

"Roads are a bit greasy!" said Handforth.

Kenmore started, and then found that the Austin Seven was bowling along the main road out of Helmsford. He had been so deep in thought that he had actually forgotten where he was. But sitting there,

"FOR HE'S A JOLLY GOOD FELLOW!"

Who's a jolly good fellow?

Simon Kenmore, of the Sixth; Kenmore the bully, the rotter, the prefect who is most hated by the Junior School!

But a great change has come over Kenmore. Whether it will last is a matter that only the future can tell, but for the present, at any rate, the Sixth-Former has realised what a rotter he's been, and he's going to turn over a new leaf.

Before this metamorphosis, however, many stirring adventures befall Kenmore in his efforts to remove the false accusation of forgery against his name. Read all about it in next week's gripping, long yarn.

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next to Handforth, he now peered through the rain-bespattered wind-screen.

It was a wretched evening, and rain was now falling in a steady drizzle. The roads were bad for driving, and Handforth was going cautiously.

It was tricky, too, just here, for the bright lights of the town had been left behind, and there were only a few street lamps, few and far between. They had the effect of nullifying the little car's headlights, and Handforth felt that he would be glad when he got out upon the pitch-dark road. Driving would be much easier, for he would not be dazzled by the street-lamp reflections.

"Thank goodness!" said Handforth, when the last street-lamp came within view. "We can speed up a bit now."

He pressed his foot upon the accelerator and the Austin hummed forward energetically. And at that very moment a man

came reeling off the pavement, not twenty yards ahead.

It all happened in a flash.

The man, apparently, had just emerged from a footpath, the entrance to which was nearly concealed between big hedges. He came right out, and went blundering across the road. His very movements indicated that he was the worse for drink.

"Look out!" ejaculated Kenmore, in alarm.

But Handforth had seen the drunken man at the same second. He swerved, applying his brakes. The little Austin, skidding giddily, slewed round.

But for the camber of the road, which was sharp here, the little car would have shot well past the intoxicated man. As it was, that camber caused the car to slither helplessly towards the gutter.

Thud—crash!

There came the jolt of a heavy collision, a loud gasp, the buckling of metal, and the Austin Seven came to a standstill, with the drunken man lying outstretched in the road!



CHAPTER 18.

The Workings of Chance!

"I wasn't my fault!" said Handforth, with a gulp.

"Of course it wasn't!" agreed

Kenmore, as he fumbled for the door catch. "You couldn't help it. It's a lucky thing we didn't overturn. That fool of a drunken man—"

"It's the first time I've ever hit anybody!" muttered Handforth frantically. "Quick! Let's see if he is badly hurt."

He scrambled out, and Kenmore did the same, on the other side. Church and McClure followed. The headlights were still on, and the reflection from these allowed them to see the still form of the man, lying on the ground practically alongside the little car.

Handforth dropped on his knees in the muddy road; he lifted the man's head, and was relieved when he could perceive no injuries.

"No bones broken!" he muttered, as he felt over the man's limbs. "I don't think he's hurt much—only a bit bruised. The collision wasn't heavy enough to do any real harm."

"What about a doctor?" asked Church breathlessly.

They looked up and down in rather a helpless way. They were right on the outskirts of the town, and there was no traffic here. There wasn't a soul in sight. The drizzle came down on the wind, and the spot was very lonely and dreary. They were within sight of the last lamp-post of the town.

"There are some big houses two or three hundred yards back," said McClure

quickly. "It's a residential quarter, and there's bound to be a doctor somewhere near at hand."

"The police might come interfering!" said Kenmore. "Far better to keep them out of it——"

"But I wasn't to blame!" protested Handforth. "I've got nothing to fear from the police! This man was drunk, and he blundered right in front of my car."

"Let's have a look at him!" said Kenmore briskly.

He felt that it was up to him to take command of the situation. These juniors looked upon him as a man, and they would think it very peculiar if he hung back. He lifted the stranger's face, and examined it carefully. Then he experienced a terrific shock. It was so great, in fact, that he made no sound—he gave no sign. He was momentarily stunned. And this was very fortunate, for otherwise he might have given himself away.

Now that he saw the face of this drunken man, he recognised it. It was the face of Sam Pointer!

Here was an extraordinary trick of chance! All the afternoon Kenmore had been trying to get on the track of this rascal; and now, by a caprice of fate, Handforth had run into him and had knocked him over!

Yes, this man was Sam Pointer—the rascal who had forged that eight-pound cheque which Kenmore had given him, some weeks earlier. This was the man who could release Kenmore from all his difficulties.

"Well? Do you think he's hurt much?"

Kenmore started. His mind was working like lightning. He realised that he could not take any action at the moment. In front of Handforth & Co. he was helpless—for it would be fatal if he professed that he knew this man, and that he wanted him.

Besides, what could he do? Pointer was not only drunk, but he was unconscious. Then it came to Kenmore that his only chance was to find Pointer's address. Later, he could take advantage of that information.

"We'd better see who he is!" he said bluntly. "Then perhaps we can take him home."

Without hesitation, he dived a hand into Sam Pointer's inside coat pocket, and Handforth & Co. suspected nothing, since this was the usual procedure in such a situation. Kenmore found only one crumpled letter, but he noted, in the first moment, that the post-mark was recent. The letter was addressed to "Sam Pointer, 20, Bridge Street, Helmford."

"That's all we need!" said Kenmore, as he made a mental note of the address. "Do you juniors know where Bridge Street is?"

"Never heard of it!" said Handforth. "Must be a small street. This chap looks pretty disreputable, anyhow."

Kenmore tucked the letter back into the man's pocket, and then he had another idea.

"Look here!" he said crisply. "You boys had better rush away and find a doctor. We might waste a lot of time by trying to

find Bridge Street—and, for all we know, this man is more hurt than we think."

"That's what I'm afraid of!" said Church, looking down at the still form in alarm.

"Well, go and find a doctor!" said Kenmore. "All three of you! I'll stay here in charge until you get back."

"But why all three of us?" asked Handforth. "It's jolly good of you, Mr. Kenmore, but we don't want to drag you into this——"

"That be hanged for a tale!" interrupted Kenmore. "Hurry away!"

"But I'm the driver, and I ought to stay——"

"It doesn't make any difference!" insisted Kenmore urgently. "Run back along the road and knock at the first houses you see. Separate, and try in three different directions. It doesn't matter if you bring three doctors. This man must be attended to."

And Handforth & Co., perceiving the wisdom of this advice, left "Mr. Kenmore" in charge, and went dashing back along the dark, rain-swept road.

Kenmore, left alone, had a feverish gleam in his eyes. It would be five minutes, perhaps, before one of the juniors got back with a doctor; and during this period of time it might be possible for Kenmore to do something! He unbuttoned his overcoat, felt in his hip-pocket, and produced a flask of brandy.



CHAPTER 19.

A Dramatic Turn!

SIMON KENMORE had always felt very "big" because he carried a hip flask; it had seemed so manly of him. Now, for the first time, that flask of spirit was coming in useful. Hitherto it had been a mere sign of Kenmore's swank.

Yet he was foolish, perhaps, in making attempts to revive this man.

If he had not been so agitated, he might have considered the position more carefully. Cool, sound reasoning would have told him that his better policy would be to wait—to go along to Bridge Street later on, and to take Mr. Sam Pointer by surprise. Even if the man recovered now, it wouldn't matter so much—for it was dark, and Kenmore could conceal his identity. His very disguise would help this.

But in his eagerness he tried his utmost to bring Pointer to his senses at once. He wanted to find out about that cheque. More than anything else in the world, he was determined to wring a confession from this wretch.

It did not occur to him then that such a confession would be valueless, even if it was made. It was Matt Page, the bookie, who had to be convinced; and, to be of any use, that confession would have to be made in Mr. Page's presence.

"Ah!"

Kenmore uttered a long ejaculation of satisfaction. He had poured plenty of the brandy down the man's throat, and the effect was almost instantaneous. Sam Pointer was groaning, and his eyelids were fluttering.

"Steady—steady!" said Kenmore. "Take it easy. You'll soon be all right."

"What's wrong?" mumbled Pointer, trying to sit up. "Eh? What the thunder—Lummy! It 'it me, did it?"

The man seemed to be sobered. He looked round dazedly for the first second or two, but as soon as he caught sight of the car he became rational.

"Blamed motor-cars!" he snarled. "I might 'ave been killed, I might!"

"You're not hurt much!" said Kenmore, as the man struggled with considerable energy. "But a doctor is being fetched—"

"I don't want no doctor!" grunted Sam Pointer. "Lemme get up! 'Ere, what's the game, eh? What are you 'olding me down for?"

Kenmore, seeing that Mr. Pointer was scarcely hurt at all, had made a quick decision. Undoubtedly it was the man's drunken stupor which had caused him to lie so still on the ground. The knock he had sustained had probably only bruised him a trifle; and the whole experience had sobered him.

"Just a minute!" said Kenmore grimly. "I'm not going to let you get up until I've had a word with you—Sam Pointer."

The man started, and his eyes opened wider.

"'Ere, 'ow do you know my name?" he asked sharply.

"I know it!" replied Kenmore. "But you don't know me, do you? Have another look, Mr. Pointer."

The man, bewildered, stared into Kenmore's face.

"My name's Walter Kenmore!" said the St. Frank's senior. "Ah! That makes you start, eh? Two or three weeks ago my brother gave you a cheque—"

"He didn't—he didn't!" gasped Pointer frantically, giving himself away by the very vehemence of his denial.

"He didn't, eh?" rapped out Kenmore. "Don't lie to me, you hound! My brother has told me all about it. And you've heard rumours that he's dead, haven't you? Drowned, eh? Well, my friend, you're not so safe as you think! You forged that cheque, didn't you? You made it into eighty pounds, instead of the original eight! Eh? Didn't you?"

"No!" gurgled Sam Pointer. "It's a lie! I didn't! You're mad!"

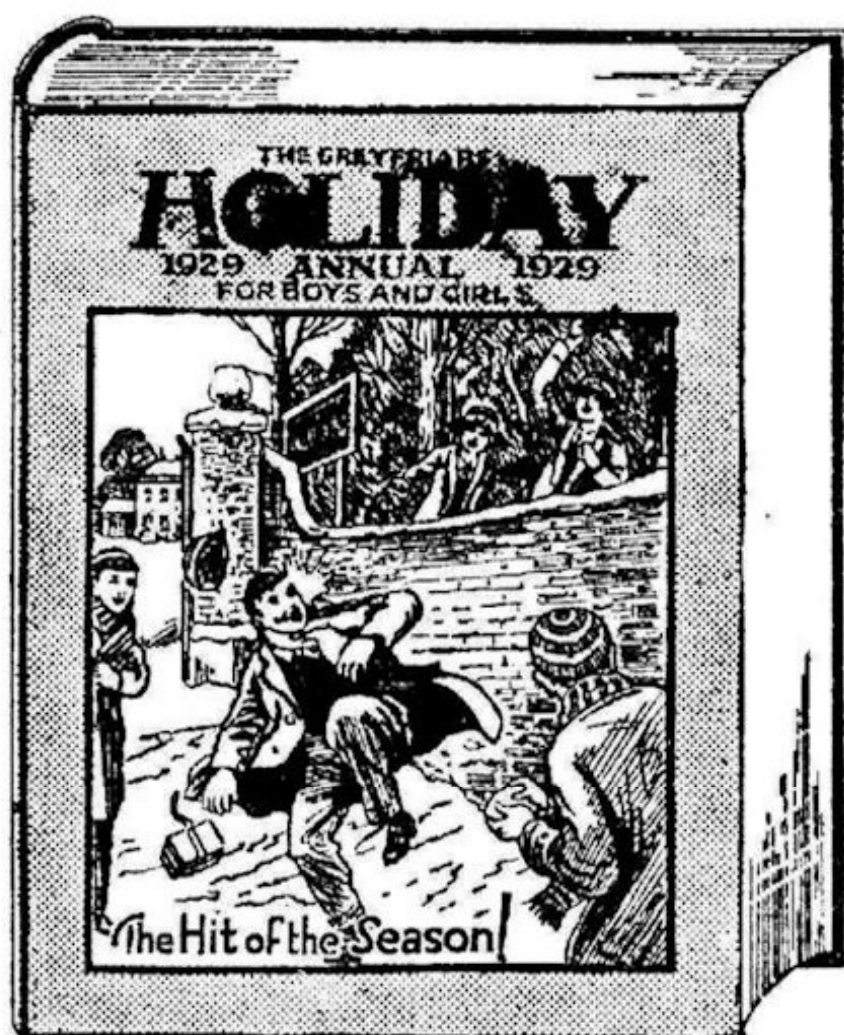
"No, I'm not mad—but I'm going to wring the truth out of you!" exclaimed Kenmore fiercely. "Now, you dog! Choke it up! Confess! You forged that cheque, didn't you?"

"I don't know anything about it—"

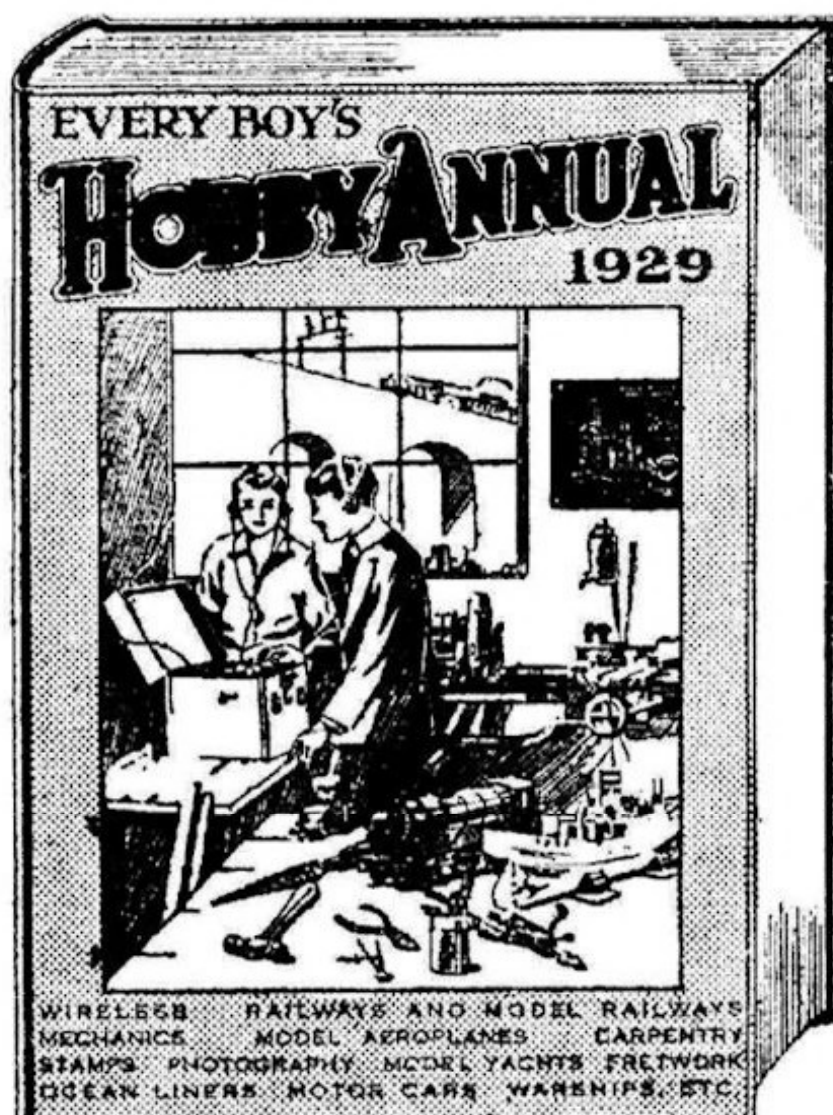
"You lying hound!" breathed Kenmore, seizing the man by the shoulders and forcing

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him back. "We're alone here, don't forget! If you're hurt in any way, it'll be thought that the car caused the damage. I've got you, Pointer—and unless you confess, I'm going to make you suffer! Now then—out with it!"

Kenmore pretended to make a grab at the man's throat. He could tell that Pointer was a cowardly cur, at the best, and this sudden ferocity of Kenmore's—purely assumed—had the desired effect.

"Stop!" gasped the man. "Yes! Hang you, I did alter that cheque! Your brother gave it to me, and——"

"That's enough!" broke in Kenmore triumphantly. "You've admitted it, Pointer! You took that cheque from my brother, and you forged it. All right, you crook! You're coming to Bannington with me—in this car. What's more, you're coming to Mr. Matt Page, and you'll make that confession to him."

Kenmore could see that his troubles were nearly over, and he could hardly contain his exultation. It was all so clear now—all so easy. When Handforth & Co. returned, they would bundle Pointer into the Austin and they would all drive to Bannington. It would be easy enough for Kenmore to make some sort of explanation, particularly as the juniors knew that he had come to St. Frank's in order to make investigations about his brother's disappearance.

As for Sam Pointer, he was desperate.

He had been having a very hectic time of it during the last three or four weeks—spending that ill-gotten money. He had avoided race-tracks, because he had had no need to haunt them. But now he could see disaster looming.

Pointer knew his own limitations, and he felt sure that if he were dragged into the presence of Mr. Matthew Page he would blurt out his guilt. And then the police would be called; he would be charged with forgery, and his past record was none too good. It would mean penal servitude for him.

Suddenly, with a wild plunge of desperation, Mr. Pointer threw himself backwards on the muddy road, and kicked at the same time. His right foot came up like a sledge-hammer, and the toe of his boot caught Simon Kenmore on the side of the head. It was a brutal kick.

Kenmore simply gave a soft groan, reeled over, and sprawled helplessly on the ground. He was stunned.

"You asked for it, blow you!" muttered Pointer, staggering to his feet. "Take me to Bannington, would you? 'And me over to the cops, eh? Not 'arf you won't!"

He glanced round sharply. In the distance footsteps were sounding. With a quick intake of breath, Sam Pointer dodged into the black shadows at the side of the road. He reached that footpath from which he had emerged earlier, and he bolted like a frightened rabbit!



CHAPTER 20.

The Wrong Patient I

HERE we are!" said Handforth briskly. "You there, Mr. Kenmore? Hallo! Where has he got to?"

Handforth & Co. had returned, bringing with them a businesslike-looking gentleman who was carrying a bag. They had found a doctor without finding it necessary to divide their forces—for they had noticed a brass plate on one of the very first houses they came to.

"This is the man you ran into, eh?" said the doctor, as he bent down over the still form beside the little car. "Let's have a look at him."

Handforth was staring up and down the dark street.

"Mr. Kenmore!" he called loudly.

"It's rummy! He's gone!" said Church. "Perhaps the man got worse and Mr. Kenmore rushed off——"

"Here!" shouted McClure suddenly. "Mr. Kenmore is on the ground, here!"

"What!" said Handforth, with a jump.

They gathered round the doctor, and the latter was just looking up, oblivious of what the juniors had been saying.

"It's not very serious! Only a blow on the side of the head——"

"But—but this isn't the patient, sir!" ejaculated Handforth. "This is Mr. Kenmore, the gentleman who was with us!"

"Come, come!" said the doctor sharply. "What are you talking about?"

"But it's true!" insisted Handforth.

"This man has received a very nasty knock on the side of his head!" said the doctor. "Are you telling me that he wasn't run into by your car?"

"Of course he wasn't!" said Handforth, in amazement. "Hey, Mr. Kenmore! Wake up! What's happened?"

"Steady!" said the doctor. "Don't shout like that. He'll come round within a minute or two, and then he will be able to tell us all about it."

Handforth & Co. waited, bewildered. And the doctor was right. Three minutes later, Kenmore revived, the doctor's methods being very successful.

"That's better!" said the medical man gently. "You'll soon be all right now."

Kenmore looked round in a dazed way.

"You hound!" he muttered fiercely. "You infernal brute——"

His voice trailed away, and he closed his eyes. Handforth gave his chums a startled glance.

"My hat!" he whispered. "Wasn't that just like old Kenmore's voice?"

"Exactly!" breathed Church.

But they suspected nothing. The truth was, Kenmore, only half-conscious, had spoken in his own normal tones. Handforth & Co., however, were unsuspicious because they deemed it natural that Walter Kenmore's voice should resemble that of his rascally brother's.

"What happened, Mr. Kenmore?" asked Handforth eagerly. "Where's the chap we knocked down?"

Handforth's voice had the effect of bringing Kenmore quickly to his full senses. He opened his eyes again, and then half-struggled up.

"Oh!" he muttered. "Yes, that's right! I was bending over him when something hit me on the head— He must have kicked me!" he added blankly.

He realised the truth then. He had had the faintest glimpse of Sam Pointer's foot as it had been aimed at him. Obviously the man had kicked him in the head and then had bolted.

"But why should he kick you?" asked Church wonderingly.

"Why?" repeated Kenmore, getting a grip on himself. "He was drunk. Soon after you boys went he came to himself a bit, and then I had a bit of trouble with him. He tried to attack me, and I held him down. Then he must have kicked me, I suppose."

"Well, there's no need for you to worry about the fellow," said the doctor. "If he could kick you like that and then run off, there's not much the matter with him. I should advise you to continue your journey and forget the incident."

"But what about Mr. Kenmore?" asked Handforth. "He's hurt—"

"A mere trifle!" said the doctor. "There'll be a nasty lump for a day or two, but nothing more."

Kenmore got to his feet, and, although he was rather unsteady, he pulled himself together.

"Thank you very much," he said quietly. "How much do I owe you, doctor?"

"You had better come back to the surgery," replied the medical man. "I'll give you a tonic, and then you'll be in much better fettle."

"Thanks," said Kenmore, and an idea came into his head. "You boys had better carry on," he continued, turning to Handforth & Co. "Don't wait for me."

"Oh, but we will!" said Handforth promptly. "We'll drive you to the surgery, and—"

"The walk will do me good—it will pull me together!" interrupted Kenmore. "And, really, I would prefer to go back by train. My nerves—"

"But we're not likely to have another skid, sir."

"All the same, I beg of you to excuse me" said Kenmore, forcing himself to speak politely and calmly. "I will go back to the doctor's surgery, have this tonic, and then come back by train."

His tone was final. Handforth & Co. were not very pleased about it, but they could

understand. After they had gone, Kenmore had his tonic, paid the doctor's bill, and assured the medical man that he was now quite all right.

He was in a tremendous hurry.

His one desire was to get to No. 20, Bridge Street. Perhaps he would arrive before Sam Pointer got back. If so, all the better. He would wait for the man—and this time he would make no mistake.

"No, I've got a better idea than that!" he told himself, after a while. "I'll go to Bridge Street, make sure that Pointer is there, and then I'll ring up Matt Page. Gad! That's the best! I'll ring up Page, and get him to come here. Then we'll face this brute together!"

It was a very sound scheme, but, unfortunately, it came to nothing.

For when Kenmore found No. 20, Bridge Street, and made his inquiries, he was informed that Mr. Pointer had packed up and had gone!

No. 20, Bridge Street was a common-looking lodging-house, and the landlady was a slatternly woman, who eyed Kenmore with suspicion. She spoke heatedly of Mr. Sam Pointer. It appeared that the man had rushed into his lodgings, had packed up his few belongings, and had fled. Furthermore, he had left the landlady in debt to the extent of a day's rent.

So Simon Kenmore was forced to take his leave, baffled.

"Ten minutes earlier, and I should have been in time!" he muttered hopelessly. "There's no telling where Pointer is now! What's the good of searching for him? He's probably in the town, but I shall never be able to find him to-night."

Yet Kenmore was a different fellow now. The false life he was now leading made him appreciate the good things that he had hitherto scorned.

He swore to himself that he would find Sam Pointer again, by hook or by crook, and he would establish his innocence with Matt Page. Then, with his name cleared, he would return to St. Frank's, as himself. And, although he didn't quite realise it, he felt, in an elusive way, that this lesson had been a stern one, and he told himself that he would be different in future.

His only clue was that Sam Pointer was injured—although this clue was practically valueless, since the extent of Pointer's injuries were not known to him.

But Kenmore had got on the man's track again—and he was full of hopes.

These hopes were justified, too—for, in the very near future, Simon Kenmore was destined again to cross swords with Sam Pointer!

• THE END.

(Edwy Searles Brooks has written another brilliant yarn for next week, chums—the last story of the present series. It's entitled, "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow!" and tells how Simon Kenmore succeeds in clearing his name. And also look out for announcements concerning the coming stories in which Ezra Quirke is re-introduced!)



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.



LILIAN MAY MARKS.

SORRY, but I'm afraid you'll have a bit of a job to get early back numbers of THE NELSON LEE SCHOOL STORY LIBRARY—Les. Walters (Newcastle, N.S.W.)—but many of the early adventures of the St. Frank's boys are appearing in the POPULAR, one of our companion papers.

* * *

Yes: George Holland, of the Fourth, is still at St. Frank's—Guy Buck (Ricarton, N.Z.)—and shares Study No. 2 in the Modern House with Hubert Churchman and Ernest Lawrence.

* * *

If anything I have ever said on this page—Tom Hopwood (Wakefield)—has given you the impression that Handforth is disliked by “a great many readers,” please let me correct this impression. Those readers are very few and far between. The House colours of St. Frank's are: Ancient House, Red and Blue; West House, Mauve and Yellow; East House, Black and Orange; Modern House, Green and Gold. The fifth House at St. Frank's is the School House, and is used by all the boys, for work only. Your suggestion that the Old Paper should be thicker and priced at 3d. leads me to assume that you don't know of THE BOYS' REALM. If you really *do* want to read some more of my stories, they're in the REALM, brand new, hot from the pen, fresh every week. What's more, you'll find Nipper and Handy and the other chaps in them, too—although they're mainly about the Blue Crusaders Football Club.

* * *

The titles you require—“A Constant Reader” (Burnley)—are: Old Series, Nos. 1 and 2—THE MYSTERY OF LIMEHOUSE REACH and THE CASE OF THE SECRET ROOM; New Series, No. 61—ST. FRANK'S IN THE CONGO.

* * *

Here's a word to all of you. If you send me your photos, and express a wish to have them reproduced on this page, please tell me,

at the same time, if you would like your full names and addresses mentioned. These are never printed without permission, and it has occurred to me that some of you might like overseas readers to correspond with you, and the printing of your addresses will probably bring lots of letters.

* * *

So you would like a series featuring William Napoleon Browne of the Fifth—Connie Smith (Portsmouth). I wonder if this would be popular? The general run of readers may like Browne to be brought in now and again, but I doubt if the majority would like to see him holding the centre of the stage for a whole series.

* * *

I shan't be fed-up with your weekly letters—Matthew H. Chanachan (Glasgow)—even if you carry them on until the Christmas after next. I know it is “a hard thing to write a weekly letter” (a great deal harder than many blithe readers, who have promised to do so, realised), but it's only a matter of determination. What about writing the weekly St. Frank's story? There'd be a fine old rumpus if I lost my determination for a bit, wouldn't there? So if you have any trouble over these weekly letters, just think of me.

* * *

Our reader's photograph this week is of Lilian May Marks, of Ryde, Isle of Wight. Don't be impatient, all you other readers who have given me permission to publish your dials. Your turn will come sooner or later.

What's Wrong with the Rovers?



"Northmouth will be an unhealthy place for us if our real names are known," Nelson Lee has told Nipper. His words prove only too true, for when a Detective-Inspector from Scotland Yard comes and unwittingly lets the cat out of the bag, Nipper finds himself mixed up in a whole heap of trouble!

Another Startling Discovery!

PRACTICE was in progress at the Rovers' ground. From foot to foot went the ball, sometimes in short passes, sometimes in long; but always swift, and almost always accurate. Then, at a command from the somewhat surly-looking trainer, the ball would be in the air, going from head to head; and here Nipper could scarcely hold his own with the professionals, though his headwork was improving.

At the moment, Nipper was longing for the morning's work to be over. It was the Thursday morning before the match at Midbury, and he wanted to get to the notice-board, to see if he was included in the team that was to play against the City.

There had been no new developments in the case upon which he and Nelson Lee were engaged, save that Dick Ridley, who was now racing along with the ball, was certainly regarded with more suspicion; that the police, on making further investigation, had come to the same conclusion as Nelson Lee with regard to the discovery of James Ridley's overcoat—that its finding on the cliffs had been faked—and on going to question its discoverer, had found that he

had left his squalid lodgings. So the mystery was as great as ever.

Pheecep!

That was the whistle for a breather, and the players collected in little groups. Nipper leant against a goalpost beside Dave Williams, who was pulling off muddy gloves.

"Land of my fathers, you've kept me busy this morning!" he said. "Indeed, you work very hard, yes, you do, I tell you. It would not surprise me if they played you on Saturday instead of Barter, even if he is fit, which, look you, is very doubtful, as he's only in light training. The reserve is still laid up with a chill, and— Look you, here comes Barter, and he looks most angry!"

"I can guess the reason," said Dick Ridley, who had strolled up with Sims, the left-half, and Rutherton, the veteran back.

Bert Barter, the centre-half, had his arm out of sling now—the arm he was supposed to have dislocated, though Nelson Lee's capable young assistant knew well enough that the injury was caused by old Colton's chance shot at the man in his grounds.

"This is a nice thing!" Barter said furiously to Nipper. "I shall be quite fit

THE MYSTERY
so far is briefly explained
on Page 38.

by Saturday, but they're playing you against Midbury, and I'm at home with the reserves. What's your game in pushing a pro. out? Some sort of surveyor, you are! Able to spend half your time on the football-field. You perishing amateurs would be better out of the game!"

"Don't get shirty," said Nipper mildly. "My boss likes to encourage me in the game, and gives me a lot of time off. You see, he's busy making calculations and filling in forms in the morning."

"Anyway, it's nothing to do with you, Barter!" snapped Dick Ridley. "If you've any remarks to make about amateurs, perhaps you'll make them to me privately in a suitable place for the only sort of argument you'd be likely to understand!"

Barter looked a little taken aback.

"Oh, I wasn't including you, Ridley," he said quickly. "I suppose you're a sort of director, now that your uncle has gone, but I object to being stood down in favour of this young pup!"

"Look here!" cried Nipper indignantly. "If you want a punch on the—"

"That will do!" said the bald-headed, veteran back, stepping between them. "You buzz off, Barter, or you may not be able to play with the reserves. The little 'un's got pluck, and——"

Pheeeep!

Nipper's fists were clenched, and he was ready for anything, but just then the whistle went, and work had to be resumed. It struck him that Barter's indignation had been feigned, that he had been out to pick a quarrel. But why?

He had not found an answer to his own question when, after changing and glancing at the team list, he set off to walk back to the Harbour Hotel. Nipper had almost reached it when a newsboy with a placard of the midday edition of the local evening paper ran along Town Quay.

"ANOTHER ROVERS" DIRECTOR MISSING!"

Hastily Nipper purchased a paper and turned to the blurred stop-press news. Mr. Mark Mayhew, the wealthy timber importer and a director of the Northmouth Rovers F.C., had left home the previous evening to keep an appointment. He had not kept it, he had not returned home, and nothing had been heard of him since.

Carrying the paper, still damp from the press, Nipper hurried into the Harbour Hotel, only to learn that his chief was still out.

"This is a rum case about Mayhew," said a local man to a friend, as they came out of the smoke room. "They say he was almost a millionaire, though he had no big financial interest in the Rovers, and took very little interest in the club. Funny he should go off just like Ridley did!"

"Can't make it out!" said the other man.

"Nor can I," murmured Nipper to himself.

Nelson Lee had not turned up by a quarter-past one, and Nipper, a little uncomfortable about it, went into the coffee-room for lunch. The soup had no sooner been placed before him than, with a sigh of great relief, he saw his beloved chief walk calmly in and make for his table.

"So we've more excitement in Northmouth," said the great detective, as he pulled up his chair to the table.

"Have you heard anything fresh about it, guv'nor?"

"I don't know what you call fresh," said Nelson Lee. "The slightly embarrassing fact is that the wife—or perhaps widow now—is a woman with a lot of influence, and that Scotland Yard is to be called in!"

Nipper whistled, and his spoon nearly dropped into his soup.

"That's awkward, guv'nor."

WHAT'S GONE BEFORE.

NELSON LEE, the world-famous detective, and his assistant, NIPPER, have promised to assist

EDWARD COLTON, a director of Northmouth Rovers—the famous football club which is now doing badly in the English Football League—in clearing up the mystery surrounding the disappearance of James Ridley, the ex-chairman of the club. 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. Certainly some of his movements are suspicious, especially those with Stephen Langton, the new chairman of the Rovers, who is known as the "Bat," owing to his aerial activities. Nipper signs on as an amateur for the club. He is now known as Nick Parr, and Nelson Lee has taken the name of Mr. Nelson; they are supposed to be surveyors. Following investigations, Lee suspects Bert Barter and Mr. Minter, centre-half and manager of the Rovers respectively, of being concerned in the mystery. James Ridley's overcoat is found on the edge of a cliff by a man named Wilson. The detective, however, is of the opinion that Ridley's overcoat was deliberately "planted" on the cliff by Wilson to give the impression that the ex-chairman committed suicide. Lee himself suspects that Ridley has been kidnapped. He and Nipper visit Colton, who informs them that he has examined Dick Ridley's bank account, and found that Langton paid the centre-forward £1,000 three days before the ex-chairman disappeared!

(Now read on.)



The surly-looking trainer, entering the 'bus, missed his footing on the step and stumbled. "Twinge of rheumatism!" he exclaimed to one of the players. But Nipper knew it was because the trainer had heard that a detective from Scotland Yard was in Northmouth!

Nelson Lee shrugged his shoulders.

"It means that we must do our best to keep clear of the man they send from the Yard, or we're going to be severely handicapped in a case which is just becoming really interesting!"

The Cat Out of the Bag!

NIPPER left the Harbour Hotel immediately after breakfast on the Saturday morning, and on the Town Quay boarded a tram going to the football-ground at Bleakridge. He wanted to forget the problems of the case, and concentrate upon the match that Northmouth were to play with Midbury City upon the latter club's ground.

The City were, so far, unbeaten at home, and none of the experts expected the Rovers, despite their revival of form last Saturday, to lower the Midbury club's proud record. Nipper, however, hoped for the best, and certainly hoped that he would justify his inclusion in the team.

It was a raw, cold morning, with a hint of fog to come, and he was glad to leave the tram and step it out briskly to the ground, which was a short distance from the terminus.

Nothing had been heard of Mayhew. His disappearance was as complete and as mys-

terious as that of James Ridley, and everyone said that it must be more than mere coincidence that both men should have been wealthy, both directors of the Rovers, and that both should have vanished at much the same time.

Colton knew the man well. His ships had carried a good deal of timber for Mayhew, and the little shipowner was in a panic. He said that there was some vendetta against the directors of the Rovers, and that none of them was safe. With fear in his bulging, mild blue eyes, he had begged Nelson Lee to redouble his efforts, but the detective was groping in the dark.

Minter, the Rovers' manager, and Bert Barter were under suspicion. The man named Wilson had deliberately tried to mislead the police, and then had disappeared before they could find out how he had really come into possession of Ridley's overcoat.

Then Stephen Langton had paid Dick Ridley a thousand pounds, and Nelson Lee and Nipper had identified the young centre-forward as the man who had left the football-ground with Langton when he had descended after a night flight.

"It's a giddy jig-saw, and the pieces won't seem to fit!" murmured the youngster to himself, as he entered the ground by the players' entrance. There was only one thing

to do—to work quietly on, unsuspected by the men they were watching.

A big, green, closed bus stood by the stand. The players were assembling with their bags to make the journey to Midbury, and Nipper hurried into the dressing-room to get his own bag. The Welsh goalie entered close on his heels.

"We shall be late in getting away, look you," Dave Williams said dismally, "and that will mean lunch being rushed. The police are with Mr. Minter. Indeed, it was not a rumour about Scotland Yard, for Detective-Sergeant Stone is here with the local inspector."

Nipper made no comment. He and his chief knew Stone well, and the youngster realised that he must keep out of the way of the bluff, genial man from the Yard.

But luck was against him. He and Dave Williams stepped out of the dressing-room just in front of Stephen Langton, Minter, and a shortish, thick-set man in a blue melton overcoat, who had a bowler hat set at a somewhat aggressive angle upon his close-cropped head.

"Why, young Nipper, what are you doing here?" boomed a genial voice. "How's the chief? You don't mean to tell me that you're working on this case!"

"Who's this boy?" demanded Stephen Langton sharply.

"Don't you know him? I thought he was one of your players, Mr. Langton," said Detective-Sergeant Stone of Scotland Yard. "He's young Nipper Hamilton, assistant to Nelson Lee, the man who can beat the Yard!"

A Secret Out.

NIPPER knew that Detective-Sergeant Stone of the C.I.D. had always lacked tact, and that it had kept him back in his profession. At the moment, Nelson Lee's young assistant devoutly wished that it had kept him back still further, and that the burly man had been doing patrol duty in the streets of London, instead of being on the Rovers' football-ground, blurting out the thing that he and his famous chief were so particularly anxious to have kept quiet.

Even in his annoyance Nipper was watchful of the effect the speech would have upon Stephen Langton and Mr. Minter. He saw the former glance at him with mild curiosity, but the Rovers' manager paled slightly, and could not succeed in repressing a start.

"What on earth do you mean?" Minter demanded sharply, and Nipper could have sworn that there was fear in his voice. "I understood they were down here on a survey."

"As good a name as any for it," said the Yard man, with a short laugh, and then he turned a little apologetically to the youngster. "Sorry if I've blurted out anything you wanted kept quiet. You ought to have tipped me the wink."

A lot of chance he'd given him to do that, thought Nipper. And that last speech was making things rather worse. But the youngster was not the sort to lose his head in a crisis, or he would not have been Nelson Lee's assistant, and, angry and apprehensive as he was, he turned smilingly to the two men.

"Oh, it doesn't matter in the least about you two gentlemen knowing, but I feel sure you will keep it to yourselves," Nipper said. "My chief dislikes publicity, and it is often a handicap. We are here investigating the mysterious disappearance of Mr. Ridley."

Stephen Langton laughed.

"With so much talent on the scene something ought to be discovered," he said dryly. "In fact, the sergeant has already made quite a startling discovery, it seems!"

Detective-Sergeant Stone flushed slightly. He felt the chairman of the Rovers was pulling his leg, a process he disliked; and he had an uncomfortable feeling that Nelson Lee would give him a very bad quarter of an hour when they met.

Nipper turned to the astonished Dave Williams, who was staring blankly from one to the other.

"I suppose we'd better be getting to the bus," he said calmly, and they moved along the corridor, leaving the three men together.

"Land of my fathers!" gasped Dave Williams. "So you are a detective! Indeed, this is most extraordinary——"

"Look here, don't make a song about it, Dave," interrupted Nipper quickly. "That ass has blurted out something that my chief wanted kept quiet. Will you promise me to keep this to yourself?"

"Indeed, if you wish I will say nothing at all; no, I will not say a word, look you!" said the talkative goalie, but there was deep regret in his voice.

Most of the players had entered the bus, and the driver was glancing impatiently at his watch.

"Where on earth has Minter got to?" asked Dick Ridley. "It's quite time we were off."

"There's a detective from Scotland Yard talking to him," said Dave, who felt free to speak about the C.I.D. man, though his lips were sealed with regard to Nipper and his chief.

Thud!

Men glanced round. The surly-looking trainer, entering the bus, had missed his footing on the steps and had stumbled. The bag he had been carrying fell to the ground.

"What's the matter?" asked Rutherton, the veteran back.

"Nothing. I'm all right now," said the trainer hastily. "Had a twinge of rheumatism which properly doubled me up."

Nipper took his seat between Dave and Dick Ridley, and there was a thoughtful expression upon his face. It was not rheumatism, but fear that had doubled up the trainer. To the unobservant it might have

looked like pain, but to Nipper's trained eyes it was fear—sheer fear. But why should the trainer of the Rovers be so disturbed at the presence of Detective-Sergeant Stone?

Hang Stone, anyhow! He had properly complicated things. Langton seemed to regard it as a joke, but the manager had clearly been troubled by the news Stone had blurted out, and the mere mention of the presence of a Scotland Yard man had jarred upon the trainer of the Rovers. Keen as he was on football, Nipper wished that he could get back to the hotel for a talk with Nelson Lee, instead of going off on the long drive to Midbury to play against the City.

And he wondered whether, now the truth was out, he would ever play for the Rovers again.

Mr. Minter came hurrying out alone.

"Isn't the chairman coming, sir?" asked a man, as the manager got into the bus.

"No," was the short reply, and then the bus was crawling out of the ground and descending the long hill into Northmouth.

Always a busy place, it was exceptionally so on a Saturday morning, and progress was slow. To Nipper's embarrassment, young Ridley insisted upon treading on dangerous ground. He said he supposed the man from London who had been called in to try and find out what had happened to Mark Mayhew, would also try to solve the mystery of his uncle's disappearance.

"I only wish he could," Ridley said, "but I've precious little faith in detectives!"

At those words the Welsh goalie was attacked by a most distressing cough. Nipper glared at him, and managed to change the conversation. But he was puzzled. Though he could not credit that this big young man, who was such a fine footballer, was responsible for the disappearance of James Ridley, he knew the methods of Scotland Yard, knew their first rule was to search for motive.

And so far as had appeared at present, the one man who had any real motive was the big young International sitting beside him. The C.I.D. man would not be long in discovering that, though Nipper felt fairly certain that he would want to work with Nelson Lee.

The bus passed along bleak roads, slowing down through towns. It was a long, dreary ride, and Nipper was thankful when, just after half-past twelve, it pulled up in front of a pleasant-looking country hotel, where lunch had been ordered.

Entering the long room, where a cheery fire was burning, he determined to forget the problems of the strange case, and concentrate upon the game they were to play at Midbury. He was anxious to retain his place in the team, and he knew that his only hope of doing so was to play a very good game that afternoon.

When the meal was over some of the players drifted into the billiards-room to watch a couple of local champions, and

others stood round the fire in the dining-room. Nipper had noticed that the driver had come out to his bus, and had the bonnet up, so, being interested in engines, the lad decided to go out and have a look.

He had donned coat and cap, and was making for the entrance, when he heard a harsh voice in the smoke-room that was forbidden to the men so shortly to meet Midbury City.

"You fix it with Grogan. The quicker he's crocked and out of the way the better!"

Nipper hurried out into the chilly air.

"Now that's very nice of them!" he said to himself.

He had recognised the voice as that of Minter, the manager, although he did not know to whom Minter had been talking. Grogan was the burly left-back, and Nipper had not the least doubt that he himself was the person to be crocked and put out of the way.

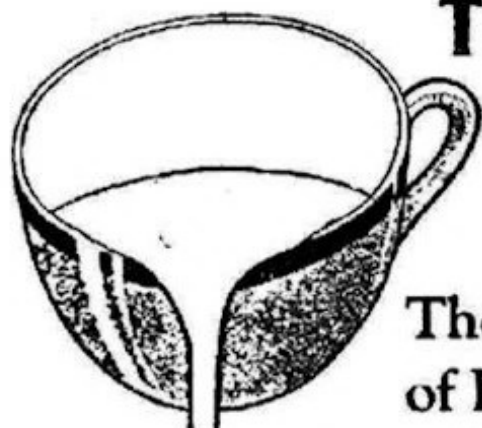
This was through that blundering idiot Stone! Nelson Lee had said that if their identity became known, Northmouth would become an exceedingly unhealthy place for them, and it certainly looked like it.

Pretending to be interested in the small adjustment the driver of the bus was making, Nipper kept a watchful eye on the smoke-room door. It was Coles, the trainer, who emerged with Minter.

(Continued on page 44.)

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Read This—At Once!

CHUMS, get ready to cheer!

I have a bit of news that will make old readers of the N.L. shout for joy, and new readers eager with anticipation.

Ezra Quirke is coming!

"Who is Ezra Quirke?" ask new readers. "We have heard something about him in 'Between Ourselves.' People always seem to be asking Mr. Brooks to bring Quirke back into the stories. Is he somebody extra special?"

He is somebody extra special, take your Editor's word for it. Quirke is one of the most amazing characters created in schoolboy fiction, and the former series in which he was featured was one of the most popular that has ever appeared in the Nelson Lee School Story Library.

And Ezra Quirke is coming back—very shortly!

Look out for full details next week, chums!

Concerning E. S. Brooks!

Readers are still clamouring for more stories by Edwy Searles Brooks. They had better buy either the "Boys' Realm" or the "Popular." Yarns by Mr. Brooks appear in both these papers—and in the latter case they deal with the early adventures of the Boys of St. Frank's.

Points From My Mail.

My big budget of letters contains as usual heaps of interesting suggestions and questions. Israel Herr, P.O. Box 3116, Johannesburg, South Africa, wants to hear from League members. By the way, I owe apologies to a whole crowd of friends all over the world whose notices have not appeared. The fact is we have been pressed for space more than ever of late. C. B., of Plymouth, asks about the Fire of London. This started in the oven of Farynor, head baker to King Charles the Second, at 2 a.m., September

2nd, 1666, in Pudding Lane, near London Bridge. A Chorley chum asks who Sargon was. This worthy was commander-in-chief to Shalmaneser the Fourth in Assyria, 720 B.C.

There has been a little bit of trouble in a debating society at Leeds, for the rules laid down a three-minutes' limit for all speeches, and one energetic member with the gift of the gab insisted on exceeding this limit. He seems to have gone ahead at about 50 m.p.h., and other orators were riled. Small wonder! If all ordinary methods fail, this talkative individual will have to be kindly but firmly muzzled. A Cape Town supporter writes, apropos of the stories, that good Old England takes a lot of beating. He has pushed forward a theory here at which no fair-minded person will cavil. There are some people who take a peculiar pleasure in running down England, goodness knows why! They imagine it is not going ahead fast enough, but slow and sure wins, and swift and sure, which is the British way, knocks up the finest records.

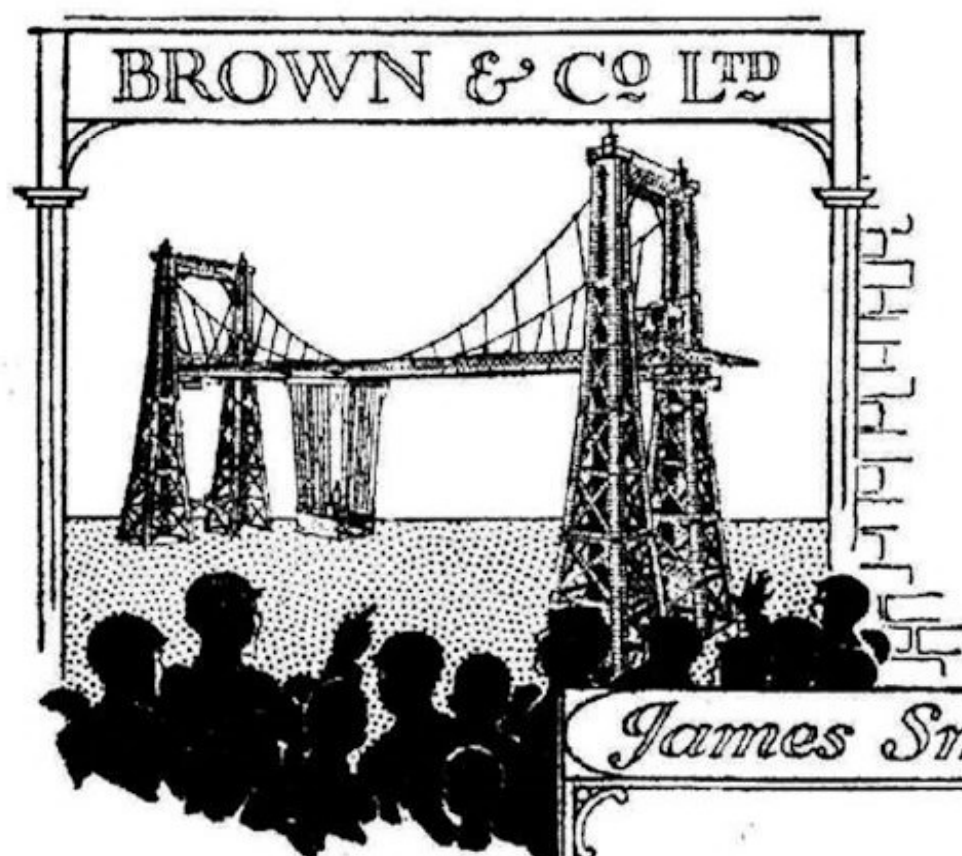
How's this, umpire? A Worthing supporter has 19 pen chums all through the N.L. This enthusiast has been collecting the portraits of film stars, and has obtained those of Ivor Novello, Norma Shearer, Bebe Daniels, Richard Dix and a host more.

Notwithstanding the apology I have dropped in above, the League has every reason to be proud of itself. If we don't get as much of it in the N.L. as we would like, the splendid organisation of chums carries on.

A curious word of criticism of a story (not in the N.L.) comes from Birmingham. My correspondent points out that he had read in a yarn of a fellow of 17 who found a chum of the same age lying injured in a country road after a bike spill, and the splendid chap carried the victim six miles home. Good toe and heel work, a non-stop walk, and did not turn a hair. A stout fellow, evidently! But was it possible? Well, well! It just depends on the muscles of the carrier. All power to his biceps!

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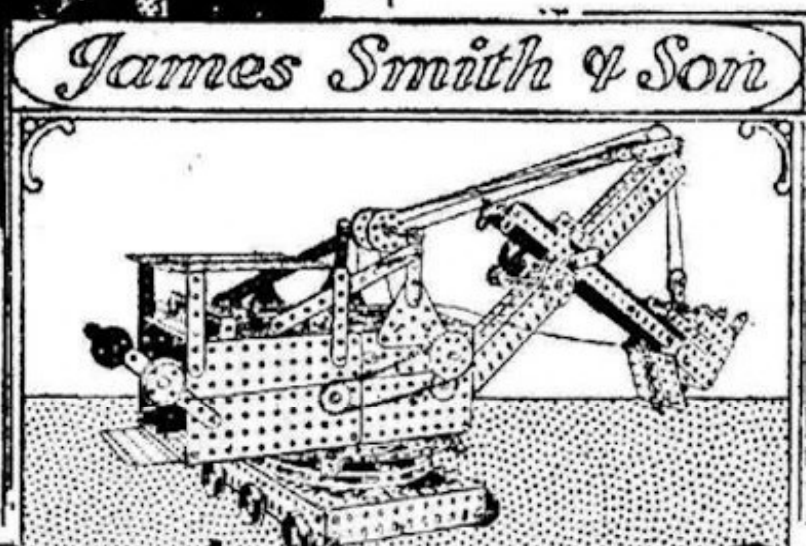
This week also marks the opening of another important event—the new Meccano Model-Building Contest. When you call to see the special Meccano displays at your dealer's shop do not forget to ask for full particulars of the Meccano Contest and an entry form.

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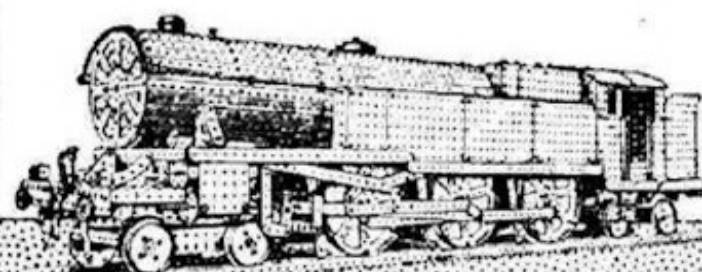
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What's Wrong with the Rovers?



(Continued from page 41.)

Then the players began to come out, and Dick Ridley joined Nipper.

"I hope you do well this afternoon, youngster," said the centre-forward. "You played a thundering good game last Saturday, and if you can show the same form to-day you'll be pretty certain to play in Barter's place whilst you are on this surveying job. Is it likely to last long?"

"Some weeks, I expect," replied Nipper, a little awkwardly; and then he saw a two-seater passing them, and Ridley was raising his hat to the girl at the wheel, whilst the man, beside her stared steadily ahead, totally ignoring him.

The man who had cut the young footballer was Edward Colton, the director of the Rovers who had called Nelson Lee and Nipper in to solve the mystery, and the girl at the wheel was his pretty niece Clarice.

There was an angry flush upon Dick Ridley's face as he turned to Nipper.

"It's a funny thing that such a charming girl should have such a pig of an uncle! She had intended coming over alone, and was going to run me back, but I suppose the old man tumbled to that, and set out to be awkward. It's only once in a blue moon that he ever attends an away match."

Nipper sympathised. He saw the trainer talking to Grogan, and then they were getting into the bus to do the remaining ten miles to Midbury.

It was a little misty as they descended the hill into the big town, almost hidden in a pall of mist and smoke. They drove cautiously, overtaking packed trams travelling in the direction of the ground. At last Midbury City's enclosure was reached, and the Rovers' players alighted and were shown into a large and airy dressing-room.

There was certainly no feeling of confidence among the visitors; Midbury's unbeaten record at home scarcely encouraged that. Dismal Dave felt quite convinced that he was going to let a record number of shots through that afternoon, whilst the home goalie was going to have a half-holiday.

(But Nipper finds that that is easier said than done, for in the excitement of playing football he cannot help being off his guard at times. You can bet that troublous times are in store for both Nelson Lee and his plucky young assistant, now that their real identities are known. Look out for plenty of excitement in next week's grand instalment.)

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