

"THE ADELAIDE TEST MATCH SENSATION!"

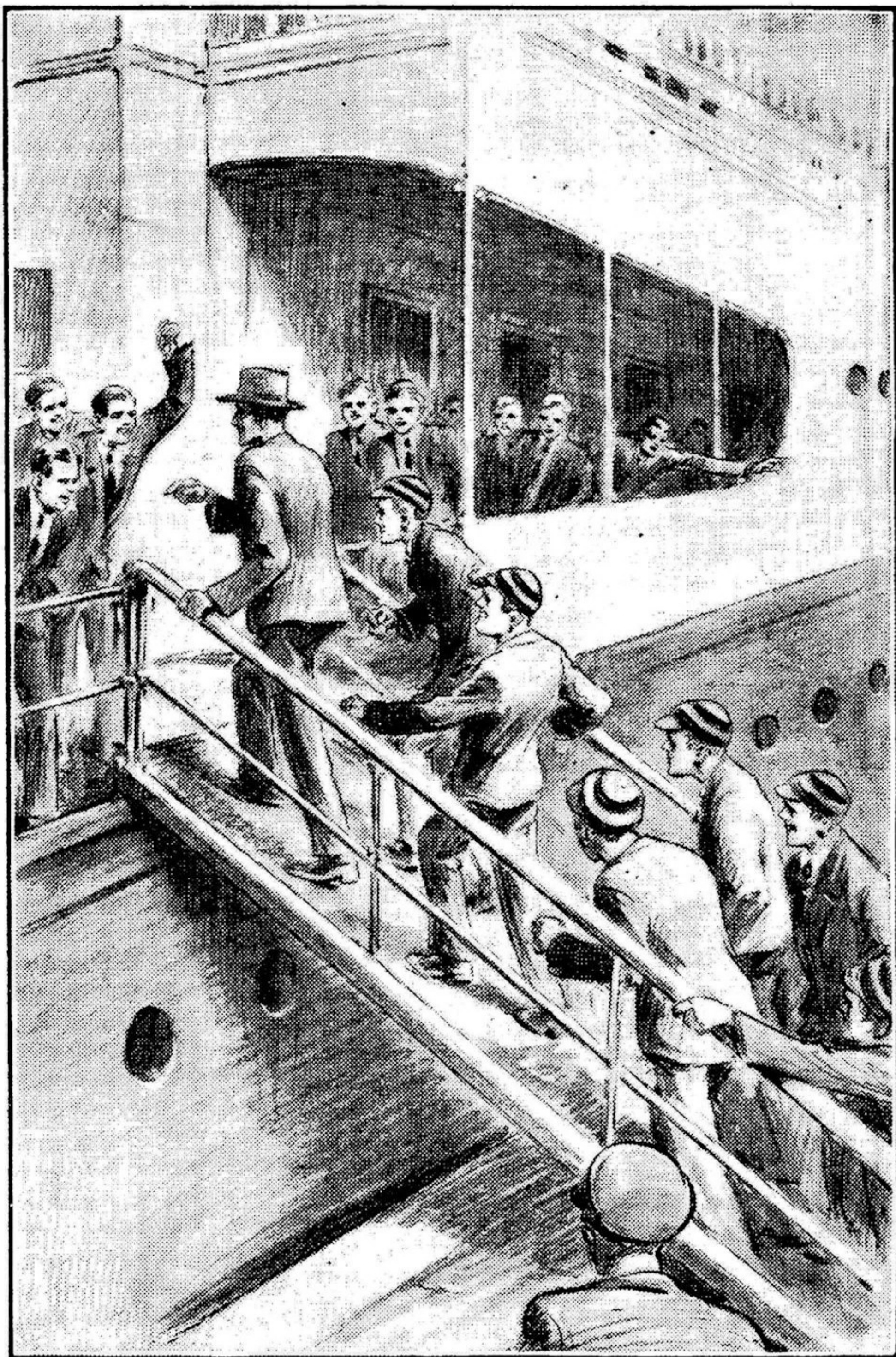
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Amid great cheering, Nelson Lee and the twelve juniors who had been away from the School Ship so long went up the gangway. "Welcome back to the fold, you chaps!" yelled Harry Gresham excitedly.

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THE ADELAIDE TEST MATCH SENSATION !



By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

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

What a sensation it is, too ! William Napoleon Browne is the cause of it, for Browne succeeds in bringing off one of the greatest boaxes in the history of cricket. Read all about it now in this week's stunning long yarn.—Ed.

CHAPTER 1.

The Re-union !

"**T**HERE they are, the bounders !" said Fullwood excitedly.

"By Jove, yes !"

A crowd of St. Frank's juniors leaned over the starboard rail on the promenade deck of the liner, St. Francis. It was early morning, and Port Adelaide, South Australia, was already beginning to bake under the heat of the fierce, summer sun. The month was January—practically at the end of it—but in Australia this is mid-summer.

At last the School Ship had arrived. What was more, she was in good time for the fourth Test Match, which was due to start on the following Monday in Adelaide. England versus Australia ! And half St. Frank's was here, as keen as mustard on seeing the game.

All the occupants of the Ancient House and the Modern House were on board this luxurious liner. It was a new idea of the School Governors. Half the school was sent abroad, into sunny climes, the authorities considering that the trip would be of great educational value. Lessons, of course, had continued throughout the voyage exactly the same as though the fellows had remained at home.

The West House and the East House, incidentally, did not figure in this scheme. This half of the school remained in England, at St. Frank's. Doubtless the fellows would have their turn at some future date.

The School Ship had docked during the early hours, and after the rising bell had rung juniors and seniors alike had scrambled into their clothes, and had rushed on deck. They found the great vessel lying snugly in dock, with Port Adelaide in full view.

And now, coming along the dockside, a group of white-clad figures could be seen. There were twelve of them altogether, and they were in charge of a brisk, active gentleman, who could be easily recognised as Mr. Nelson Lee, the Housemaster of the Ancient House—and, temporarily, the headmaster of the Floating School.

Breakfast was just over, and all the fellows were on deck, eager and excited. There had been rumours that the twelve "truants" would rejoin the ship early that morning, and a sharp look-out had been kept.

"They're all there," remarked Buster Boots, of the Fourth. "Old Handy and his minor, Church and McClure, Nipper, Watson—"

"The bounders will have to give an account of themselves!" said De Valerie sternly. "It's like their cheek to get here nearly a fortnight before us, and to miss lessons, and have a high old time!"

"Well, we haven't had such a bad time, if it comes to that," remarked Russell. "It's been a topping voyage from South Africa. I've enjoyed every minute of it."

"Yes, if it comes to that, we all have," admitted De Valerie.

Jerry Dodd, the Australian junior, was leaning over the rail, his eyes shining, his face flushed. He had been standing like that for an hour or two—ever since he had got up. He had not bothered about breakfast, and his one desire now was to go ashore—to set foot on his native Australia.

"By jingo! Isn't everything wonderful?" he asked breathlessly.

"Can't say that I've noticed it," said Boots, with a grin. "Everything looks hot and dusty, if that's what you mean!"

Jerry Dodd glared.

"I tell you it's wonderful!" he insisted.

"Oh, well, have it your own way," chuckled John Busterfield Boots. "Of course, you're an Aussie, aren't you? I'd overlooked that for the moment! But you're not a native of this part of the country."

"My home is in New South Wales—but this is Australia, all the same!" replied Jerry.

"Oh, New South Wales?" said Boots. "Then you must be a gumsucker."

Jerry Dodd glared.

"Idiot!" he roared. "Gumsuckers live in Victoria!"

"Oh, then you're a corncob," said Boots, with a nod.

"I suppose you mean cornstalk?" asked the Australian junior witheringly.

"Same thing," nodded Boots.

"Why, you—you—"

"St. Frank's, ahoy!" came a boisterous hail. "Hallo, you fellows!"

Jerry Dodd swallowed his wrath, and looked at the dock. The twelve figures had now come quite near, and they were waving and shouting and grinning. In the forefront were Nipper and Handforth and Travers. Jimmy Potts and Archie Glen thorne and several others were there, including Willy Handforth, and his two chums of the Third.

"Hurrah!" went up a rousing cheer.

"Welcome back to the fold, you chaps!" yelled Harry Gresham.

There was a rush for the gangway. Everybody on board had been disappointed because the order had gone forth that nobody was to be allowed ashore until Nelson Lee arrived. He was the Head, and the School

Ship was now under his control again. A number of the juniors had wanted to get up a big party to meet the missing twelve, but this idea had been knocked on the head.

And now the twelve had come on board.

There was a tremendous amount of hand-shaking and back slapping as the Removites and Fourth-Formers crowded round. The air was noisy with laughter and shouting, and Nelson Lee, after receiving one or two cheers, hurried off to confer with Mr. Stockdale, who had been in charge since the ship had left Durban.

"Well, what have you got to say for yourselves, you bounders?" demanded Fullwood, as he looked at Nipper and Handforth and the others. "Come on! We're all waiting!"

"What do you expect us to say?" grinned Nipper.

"You've got to give an account of yourselves!" put in Buster Boots, in a stern voice. "When we left Durban we woke up to find that you twelve fatheads had got left behind."

"Careless of us to miss the boat, wasn't it?" asked Nipper blandly.

"You missed it deliberately!" retorted Boots.

"Well, the fact is, Lord Dorrimore was missing in South Africa, and Tommy Watson and Tregellis-West and I thought we'd stay behind to help the gov'nor to look for him," explained Nipper. "The rummy thing was, Handforth and Travers and Willy and all these other chaps had the same wheeze at the same time—so, instead of three of us being left behind, there were twelve!"

"Yes, we know all about that," put in Fullwood. "We've had all the news by wireless. You not only saved Dorrie, but he brought you all to Australia in his big aeroplane, and landed you here nearly a fortnight before the rest of us! You've been having all the luck!"

"Oh, have we?" said Handforth, with a snort. "That aeroplane trip from South Africa was as tame as riding in a hansom cab! Absolutely nothing happened! From the minute we started, to the minute we landed, there wasn't even a jolt!"

"Hard luck!" said Boots solemnly. "Of course, Handy, you were hoping for a wreck, weren't you? Or perhaps you thought it would be a good wheeze to land on a desert island, so that you could be marooned?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, it was tame!" insisted Handforth. "Of course, we got here quickly, and we've had the laugh over you chaps. But I'm not sure that you haven't had the best of it, after all."

"Where's Dorrie now?" asked De Valerie, with interest.

"Goodness knows!" said Nipper. "He just dumped us down in Adelaide, and then flew off. Went to Melbourne, I think—and then on to Brisbane. Anyhow, it doesn't matter. We're all together again now—we're reunited. And we're in time for the big Test match, on Monday."

(Continued on page 6.)

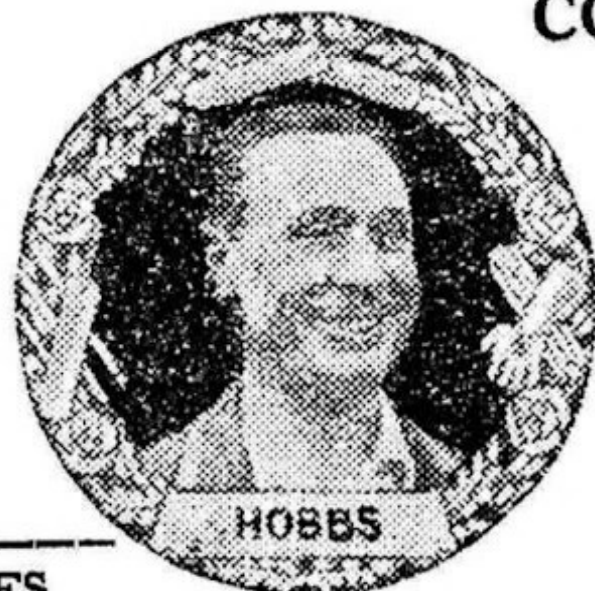
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THE ADELAIDE TEST MATCH SENSATION!



(Continued from page 4.)

"To-day's Thursday," said Travers, nodding. "Well, well! We're earlier than we expected to be. A great many things, dear old fellows, have happened in a short time. How's everything on board?"

"Oh, just the same as usual," replied Harry Gresham. "Lessons every day, and the ordinary routine. Thank goodness we've reached a port. We're jolly glad of the change."

And the eager light in the eyes of all the other boys proved that his words were very true.



CHAPTER 2.

A Popular Announcement!

WHAT have you fellows been doing with yourselves since you arrived in Australia?" asked Fullwood, with interest.

"Oh, nothing much," said Handforth carelessly. "We've been up the Murray River, and we've had a tussle with bushrangers——"

"What!"

"With bushrangers!" repeated Handforth. "Archie was kidnapped by a gang, and we rescued him——"

"Rats!" grinned Duncan. "You can't pull our legs like this!"

"But it's true!" said Handforth calmly.

"Honour bright?"

"Eh? Well, partly," said Handforth cautiously. "There weren't any real bushrangers. That was Travers' dotty idea. When we got to Renmark, on the Murray River, Travers arranged a fake hold-up. Of course, I wasn't deceived for long——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He was the last one to be *un*-deceived," said Willy gently. "Poor old Ted! He'd been pining for bushrangers ever since we started up the river, and it was jolly decent of Travers to provide some."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly young ass——" began Handforth, turning red.

"But it was a fact about Archie," said Nipper, becoming serious. "He was really kidnapped by crooks, and he was only rescued yesterday. We've come straight down to Adelaide, you know, because we wanted to get here to rejoin the school."

And crowds of fellows gathered round whilst the recent adventures were recounted.

"You'll love Adelaide," said Nipper, by way of conclusion. "It's a wonderful city, with glorious parklands, and heaps of splendid trees. Wide streets and fine buildings."

"It doesn't look much to me!" said Hubbard, as he gazed ashore.

"You haven't seen Adelaide yet," said Nipper.

"I'm looking at it!"

"This is Port Adelaide," explained Nipper. "Adelaide is seven miles away, and I don't suppose you'll see it until Monday, when the Test match starts."

"We might get leave to make a trip," said Fullwood hopefully. "Anyhow, it'll be a bit thick if we don't. I mean, you fellows have been having all the fun——"

Clang-clang!

Handforth started.

"By George!" he ejaculated, looking round. "That sounds like the bell for Big Hall!"

"It is the bell for Big Hall," said Gresham. "That's why it sounds like it."

"Oh, corks! Lessons again!" groaned Handforth.

"This is what comes of missing the routine," said Fullwood sadly. "You fellows have practically forgotten what work is like!"

"Well, it won't take us long to get into it again," said Nipper, with a chuckle. "We're back for good now, my sons. Of course, during our stay here we shall eat and sleep on board. There's not an inch of room in Adelaide. The place is packed to suffocation."

"Visitors?"

"Thousands of them," said Nipper. "Adelaide has got Test match fever in its most virulent form."

"And we're stuck here, seven miles away!" grumbled Russell. "And, to make things worse, on the very morning of our arrival in Australia we've got to go in to school, just the same as usual! These masters have no hearts!"

They all went trooping into the huge main lounge of the liner—which was now doing duty for Big Hall. Indeed, practically everything on the ship was called by the usual St. Frank's names. Thus, there were Common-rooms and studies and class-rooms.

There was a big cheer from the school when Nelson Lee appeared on the platform. Everybody was glad to see him back, particularly as his enterprise had been so successful.

"Well, it's good to see you all again, and to know that everything has been going on smoothly," said Nelson Lee genially, after he had acknowledged the cheering. "I'm not going to keep you long here. It's hot to-day, and the more open air you can get, the better. The School Ship has arrived in Australia, and I think we can safely say that the trip, so far, has been a very great success."

"Hear, hear, sir!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Particularly for some of you, sir!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I can assure you that I would rather have been on board with the school," said Nelson Lee. "But that episode is now over, and I intend to treat it as though it never happened. Let us take it, then, that we have all been together throughout the trip, and that we have all just arrived in Australia. I had originally intended that the ship's arrival in Adelaide should be signalled by a whole holiday, and I see no reason to alter that plan."

"Hurrah!"

"Oh, good egg!"

"However, I am going to make one amendment," continued Nelson Lee, smiling.

The cheering and the noise died down.

"To-day is Thursday, and the big Test match starts on Monday," said Nelson Lee. "Well, Saturday is a half-holiday in any case, and if you have a free day to-day I do not think that very much work will be done to-morrow. So, rather than do things by halves, I'm going to proclaim a complete holiday from now until next Tuesday."

The school held its breath, hardly able to believe these glad tidings. If Nelson Lee had wanted to popularise his return to the ship he could not have done it in a better way than this!

"Hurrah!"

"Three cheers for Mr. Lee!"

"Hip, hip, hurrah!"

"Until Tuesday, therefore, the school can do very much as it pleases," said Nelson Lee cheerfully. "I place you all on your honour to behave yourselves, and to do credit to St. Frank's. You will all take meals on board, just as usual—unless, of course, you prefer to buy your own out. Locking-up time will be one hour later than usual—"

"Hurrah!"

"I am, as I have said, placing you all on your honour," pursued Nelson Lee. "If any of you so far forget yourselves as to get into trouble ashore, I shall deal very severely with the culprits. Indeed, I will say at once that any boys who displease me will be confined to the ship indefinitely, and no shore leave will be allowed."

"You can trust us, sir!" shouted Fullwood.

"We'll behave ourselves, sir!"

"Yes, rather!"

"And next week, after Monday, there will be lessons only in the mornings," added Nelson Lee, causing fresh delight. "In the afternoon, while the Test match lasts, you will be free to go into Adelaide to witness the play."

"Hurrah!"

"You're a brick, sir!"

"By Jove, rather!"

"Let's give him another cheer, you fellows!"

And, as Nelson Lee gave the signal for dismissal, the whole school cheered him to the echo. Everybody had been expecting a few concessions upon the School Ship's arrival in Australia, but Nelson Lee's generosity had taken everybody's breath away.

Yet Nelson Lee had acted wisely. He knew perfectly well that any school work would be a mere farce if the boys were kept in the class-rooms. Far better to give them their liberty during these few exciting days.

And it was very sensible to keep the school aboard ship for eating and sleeping. Adelaide was packed to suffocation with visitors. The Test match, which was due to start on the following Monday, eclipsed everything else.



CHAPTER 3.

William Napoleon
Browne Steps In!

THERE was much excitement and talk and laughter on the wide deck shortly afterwards, when crowds of juniors gathered to discuss the situation.

"I suppose Adelaide is jolly excited about the School Ship's arrival, eh?" asked De Valerie.

"Well, it wasn't going exactly mad about it," replied Nipper, with a grin. "I saw one of the morning papers, and I didn't see a line about the School Ship, yet the papers must have known that she was due early this morning."

"An oversight, I expect," said Handforth. "The School Ship not even mentioned? That's awful!"

"Didn't Adelaide make a fuss of you fellows when you arrived by aeroplane?" asked Boots.

"A fuss?" laughed Nipper. "My dear chap, we were completely overwhelmed! You never saw anything like it! The whole town went dotty over us!"

"If Adelaide went dotty over a mere dozen of you, what's it going to do when we all invade the place?" grinned Harry Gresham. "By Jove, there'll be some excitement!"

"I venture to predict, brothers, that the cheering will be deafening," said Browne, of the Fifth. "You must remember that I shall be in evidence, and—"

"You can clear out of it, Browne!" said De Valerie. "No seniors allowed here!"

"Rats!" said Nipper. "Browne's one of us! He may be in the Fifth, but he's nearly human, all the same."

"I thank you for those kindly words, Brother Nipper," said William Napoleon Browne gracefully. "I understand, from your simple chatter, that the worthy people of Adelaide appreciated your arrival?"

"We were fêted and feasted until we were dizzy," said Handforth. "It was marvellous! In fact, Mr. Lee sent us up the Murray River because the Adelaide people were so jolly enthusiastic about us. I tell you, the whole place went off its rocker with excitement!"

"I can well believe it," nodded Browne. "You must realise, Brother Handforth, that

Adelaide has never before experienced the shock of seeing you. Stalwart and robust as the Australians undoubtedly are, the shock of your appearance was well calculated to drive them temporarily loopy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here——" began Handforth.

"Peace, brother!" beamed Browne. "All danger is now over, since Adelaide, I take it, has grown accustomed to your own peculiar form of beauty. It is said by some that even gorillas have a certain beauty of their own. However, to proceed. An idea of startling brilliance has occurred to me!"

"Well, you can go and chuck it overboard!" said Handforth, with a snort. "We don't want to hear it!"

"Alas, that I should be so scorned!" sighed Browne sadly. "If you will give me your attention for ten minutes—perhaps fifteen minutes—I will outline this noble wheeze——"

"One minute, Browne—and that's all!" said Nipper briskly.

"Man of few words as I am, I nevertheless find it impossible to do justice to this idea in the space of one minute," said Browne firmly. "It is no exaggeration to say that this brain-wave is both masterly and brilliant——"

"And you thought of it yourself?" put in Boots.

"I did!"

"There's nothing like modesty, is there?"

"True, Brother Boots—true!" said Browne heartily. "Modesty, I have always held, is one of life's sweetest virtues. If you will take me as an example, you will never go wrong."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now, touching upon this matter of Adelaide's eagerness to do homage to us," continued Browne. "It is safe to say that the town, at this moment, is waiting on tenterhooks, and with bated breath, for the school's arrival. The good citizens are doubtless practising their cheering abilities; and I have no doubt that the Lord Mayor, or the Australian equivalent of that dignitary is at this precise second holding an urgent council with his stouthearted corporation, with a view to settling the exact form of celebrations that shall be prepared——"

"Minute's up!" said Nipper crisply.

"Red carpets, without question, are being laid in all the main streets," continued Browne, in a complacent voice. "And it goes without saying, that the Adelaide massed bands are practising their most vigorous notes. It will possibly be considered that fireworks are unnecessary, since we shall arrive during daylight. However, that is a detail. I venture to say—— Brothers, brothers!" added Browne sadly. "I deplore this lack of attention. I would remind you——"

"Talking to yourself?" laughed Stevens, of the Fifth.

"Alas, so it would seem!" said Browne, shaking his head. "I fear, Brother Horace, that these children have allowed the excitement to get into their heads. Singularly

enough, they have walked away to the other side of the deck, leaving me flat."

It was painfully true. Nipper and Handforth and all the other juniors had cleared off, and Browne now had no audience. Fenton of the Sixth strolled up, however, with Biggleswade and Reynolds.

"Ah, Brother Fenton, the very man!" said Browne brightly. "You could not have appeared at a more opportune moment."

"Well, if you think I am going to listen to your gas, you're mistaken," said Fenton, smiling. "You've exhausted these juniors with your eloquence, and——"

"For the moment, they can be forgotten," said Browne. "You, as captain of the school, are the right person to listen to my words. I must tell you, Brother Fenton, that a singularly dazzling idea is afoot. When I tell you that the man who thought of it is the brainiest individual on this boat, you will realise the importance of the occasion. It is no exaggeration to say that this man is a genius. Now, when I thought of this idea——"

"Oh, you!" grinned Fenton. "You're the genius, are you?"

"Is it necessary that you should be reassured of that fact?" asked Browne, in surprise.

"Well, I wasn't certain," said Fenton. "Come on, Biggy! As I was saying——"

"Wait!" urged Browne. "I trust, brothers, that you are not presuming to treat me with the same lack of courtesy as these mere juniors?"

"If you've got an idea, let's have it," said Fenton patiently. "The trouble with you, Browne, is that you're so confoundedly long-winded. Cut it short, old man! Let's have it hot and brief."

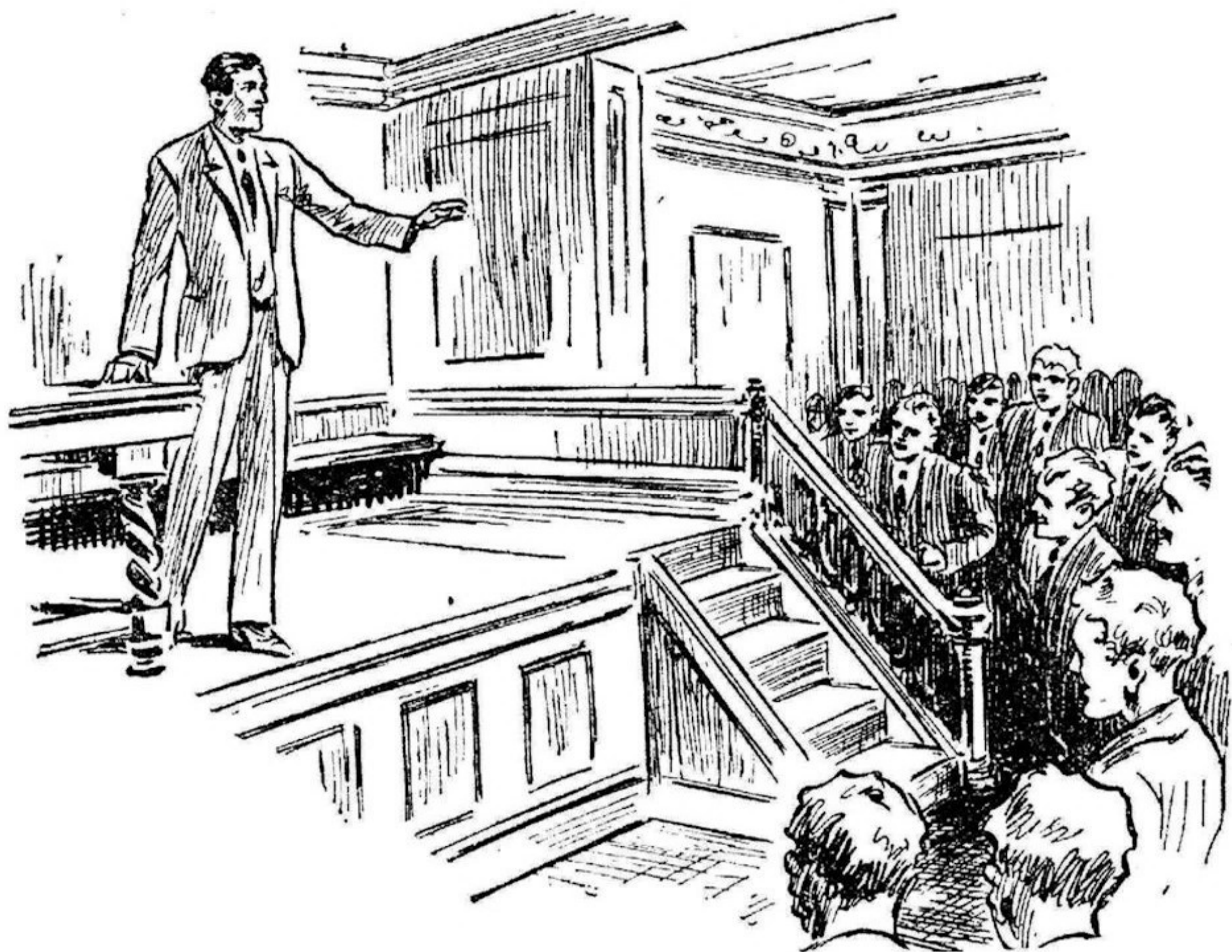
He and the other seniors waited. They knew, from past experience, that it would be better to give Browne his head for a minute or two. If they didn't, he would only follow them about, and make himself a general nuisance. Besides, it was impossible to be really cross with the great William Napoleon. His apparent terrific "swank" was only just his way.

"Since you ask for this idea hot, who am I to say you nay?" said Browne. "You shall have it hot, Brother Fenton—indeed, I can safely say, that you will be scorched. In a word, I suggest that you should lead the entire school through Adelaide in a procession."

"What the——"

"Let it be dignified and impressive," said Browne. "You must remember that Adelaide is waiting to overwhelm us with honours. A procession, led by yourself, with me by your side, and with the rest of the school trailing away in the rear, down to the smallest and grubbiest fag, will be the sight that Adelaide will never forget. And why should we deny our Australian brethren this great treat? Let us be generous."

Edgar Fenton looked at the other seniors, and then he looked at Browne.



"I'm going to proclaim a complete holiday from now until next Tuesday," concluded Nelson Lee. The school held its breath at first, hardly able to believe the glad tidings.

"Well?" he asked patiently. "We're still waiting, old man?"

"Waiting?" repeated Browne. "For what?"

"Well, you said you had an idea——"

"I have already blistered you with this idea," said Browne stiffly.

"Oh, that?" chuckled Fenton. "Is that what you call an idea? My poor chap, the heat's affecting you. You'd better go below, and get an iced lime-juice!"

Adelaide! Do you think we want to make an exhibition of ourselves?"

"Mad idea!" said Biggleswade.

"It's one of Browne's ideas—which comes to the same thing," added Reynolds.

"Brothers——"

"No, it's no good, Browne," interrupted Fenton. "You don't seriously mean this, do you? I mean, hang it, we've no right to disorganise the traffic of Adelaide by marching through the town in a long procession."

"And do you imagine for a moment that Adelaide would resent this disorganisation of traffic?" asked Browne, in astonishment. "Do you not realise, Brother Fenton, that Adelaide is already disorganised? Have you not heard what happened to the twelve juniors who arrived a fortnight ago by aeroplane?"

"Well, that's true, I suppose," said Fenton thoughtfully. "They were made a big fuss of, weren't they?"

"A fuss, brother, is a singularly inadequate term," said Browne. "I am in no way paltering with the truth when I say that Adelaide fought—literally fought—to get near those twelve juniors. At times, their lives were actually in peril."

"Yes, but——"

"Should we deny Adelaide the joy of honouring the whole school?" went on Browne earnestly. "I say 'the whole school' "

CHAPTER 4.

Not So Bad After All!



WILLIAM NAPOLEON BROWNE did not turn a hair.

"It is the fate of all great men that they should be misunderstood," he said calmly. "However, let us not be hasty. Perhaps, Brother Fenton, you have not grasped the full significance of this masterly suggestion?"

"I've grasped all I want, thank you," said the school captain. "Browne, you're an ass! What next? A procession through

in the full knowledge that half the school is still at St. Frank's. However, that is neither here nor there. 'The whole school' in this case obviously refers to the overseas branch, and I may so put it. Now, Brother Fenton, in all seriousness, I suggest that Adelaide is anxiously awaiting the moment when we shall arrive."

"Well, what's all the fuss?" asked Reynolds. "Lots of fellows are arranging to go into Adelaide. In fact, practically everybody."

"Precisely!" agreed Browne. "And how will they arrive in Adelaide? How will they hit the town? In a rabble, brothers! Without fear of contradiction, I say they will arrive in a rabble!"

"Nonsense!" said Fenton. "Mr. Lee distinctly warned the school—"

"And do you believe that such warnings will be heeded?" asked Browne witheringly. "Alas, brother, that you should be so deluded! Let me remind you that the vast majority of juniors are seething with excitement. Why should we allow them to inflict their noisy presence upon Adelaide? What will this great Australian town think of St. Frank's? Remember that you are the captain—"

"That's all very well, but—"

"Wait!" said Browne, holding up a lean hand. "I warn you, Brother Fenton, that you are shirking a great responsibility. Were I captain of this school, I would not hesitate. Alas, owing to some singularly blithering blundering, I was placed in the Fifth Form, and thus I am denied the assumption of my rightful place as school captain!"

"You hopeless ass!" said Fenton, exasperated.

"There you wrong me," said Browne. "I am not hopeless, brother. Never have I been hopeless. Indeed, I may safely say, with perfect confidence, that my optimism is unquenchable."

"So is your tongue!" growled Stevens.

"Allow these juniors to overrun Adelaide at your peril!" said Browne warningly, as he gazed at Fenton. "Even at this moment they are preparing to dash into the city, disorganised and noisy. St. Frank's is a great and noble school, the finest in the whole of England, and I am startled to find that you are prepared to risk the school's fair name. Ere many hours have elapsed, Adelaide will be shaking its head, and saying that these English schoolboys are little better than aborigines. And all for the lack of a little forethought."

"You're exaggerating, of course, but there may be something in what you say," admitted Fenton thoughtfully. "Some of these juniors will probably make young asses of themselves. I'm not altogether sure that it's a good idea of Mr. Lee's to let them run wild for to-day."

"Then, Brother Fenton, the solution is in your own hands," said Browne. "A procession through Adelaide, with yourself at the head, will be dignified, impressive. Much as

these juniors desire to break loose and make animals of themselves in the Adelaide soda-fountains, they will be reluctant to break out of the procession. And by the time it is over the initial excitement will have passed, and then we can safely allow the juniors to go their own way. By that time Adelaide will have seen that the scholars of St. Frank's are orderly, and fully alive to a sense of their dignity."

"By Jove!" said Fenton, stroking his chin. "I'm hanged if this idea of yours isn't a pretty good one after all, Browne."

"Well, I was thinking the same thing," admitted Biggleswade. "I can't quite understand it coming from Browne, but now I come to think it over, it might be a good stunt. As Browne says, it would prevent the kids getting too noisy to start with. And most of their excitement would be blown off by the time the procession ended."

"The Big Parade!" said Browne, beaming. "I trust, brothers, that you gather the idea? A parade—a procession—in order to give Adelaide a chance to overwhelm St. Frank's with an Australian welcome! Can you not picture the crowded streets, lined with cheering and waving multitudes? Let me remind you what happened to the original dozen! If that handful could be so honoured, what, then, will Adelaide do for the whole school?"

But Fenton was not listening.

"I'll tell you what," he said briskly. "I'll put it to Mr. Lee, and see what he says."

"Wait!" urged Browne. "Let me approach Brother Lee—"

"And waste the rest of the day?" asked Fenton. "Nothing doing, old man!"

He hurried off, and his first move was to hasten to the gangway. Wilson, of the Sixth, happened to be there.

"Any of the fellows gone ashore yet?" asked Fenton.

"Not yet," said the other prefect.

"Then don't let anybody off the ship until I give permission," said the school captain. "I am glad I am in time."

"Why, what's the matter?" asked Wilson, with a start. "You don't mean to say that there's a hitch?"

"Not exactly," grinned Fenton. "But there's a wheeze on. I'll tell you about it later, if it comes to anything."

He ran into Nelson Lee farther along the deck, and he quickly told the famous school-master-detective of William Napoleon Browne's suggestion. Nelson Lee listened, smiling amusedly.

"It is a typical Browne idea," he said at length. "Of course, Browne has grossly exaggerated the danger of the juniors making trouble, and I rather think that he has also exaggerated the feelings of the Adelaide citizens. However, a dignified procession through the main streets as a kind of kick-off is by no means a bad idea. Yes, Fenton, go ahead, by all means. Such a parade can do nothing but good."

"You approve, then, sir?"

"I do—decidedly," said Nelson Lee. "But I'm not at all certain that Adelaide will go

as mad over the procession as Browne predicts."

Fenton hurried away, and a few minutes later brisk orders were going round from Form to Form. William Napoleon Browne's stunt was to be put into operation.

And Browne, beaming with triumph, bustled briskly about, giving the school the benefit of his advice and wisdom.



CHAPTER 5.

The Big Parade!

CLANG, clang!
"Hallo! What the dickens—" began Handforth, with a start.

"That's the bell for Big Hall again!" said Church.

"What!"

Clang, clang!

"There's no mistaking it," said McClure, pulling a long face. "My only hat! I hope we're not going to be prohibited from going ashore!"

Nipper came hurrying up.

"Come along!" he said briskly. "Everybody's getting into Big Hall?"

"What for?" demanded Handforth.

"Haven't you heard?"

"I've heard the bell, if that's what you mean."

"No, about Browne," said Nipper. "He's suggested some sort of wheeze to Fenton, and Fenton has given it the O.K. Mr. Lee thinks it's good, too, so Fenton is going to say a few words to the school. I understand he won't keep us more than a minute or two."

"What rot!" said Handforth.

But, of course, he had to go with the others. In less than a couple of minutes the whole school had collected in "Big Hall," and as there were no masters present the place was in an absolute uproar. Some of the fellows were excited, others were indignant, and everybody, without exception, was shouting.

Fenton, as he came on the platform with Browne, began to realise more than ever that the Fifth Form skipper's idea was an excellent one. If this crowd went into Adelaide in its present condition, the fair name of St. Frank's would in no way be enhanced.

"What's the matter, Fenton?" the juniors were shouting.

"Buck up, Fenton! We're waiting to go ashore!"

"It's a whole holiday to-day, and we don't want to waste any of our time!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Buck up, Fenton!"

Fenton went to the edge of the platform and raised a hand.

"How can I speak while you're making all this noise?" he demanded warmly. "Dry up!"

The school dried up.

"Perhaps, brother, it would be better if I made a brief preliminary speech," said Browne gracefully. "You can see how the school is waiting on tenterhooks to give me a cheer—"

"Yah! Dry up, Browne!"

"Gag him, somebody!"

"Throw him out!"

A perfect roar went up from the seniors and juniors. Browne, it seemed, was not wanted. Everybody was impatient, and Browne's longwindedness was not popular at such a moment as this.

"Better let me make the speech, old man," said Fenton gently.

Browne looked at the shouting, gesticulating crowd, and he winced.

"I am desolated," he said, in a tragic voice. "Alas! It is well said that the prophet is of no account in his own country!"

And Browne retired, broken-hearted, to the rear of the platform. Edgar Fenton, grinning, held up his hand again.

"Can't you behave yourselves for once?" he demanded. "Browne warned me against letting the school descend upon Adelaide in a rabble, and he was right!"

"A rabble!" yelled Handforth indignantly, and his protest was taken up noisily by many of the other juniors in Big Hall.

"Yes," snapped Fenton. "If you're as excited as this when you get into the town, you'll have everybody saying unkind things about St. Frank's. Don't forget, we've got to uphold the honour and dignity of the school."

"Oh, my hat!" groaned Handforth. "He's going to give us a lecture!"

"No, I'm not," said Fenton. "What I've got to say I can say in one minute. We're all going by train into Adelaide."

"But we're in Adelaide now!" shouted some of the bewildered juniors.

"It's seven miles to Adelaide itself from the docks," went on Fenton. "We're all going together, and as soon as we come out of the station in Adelaide we're going to march through the streets in a procession."

"My only sainted aunt!"

"Great Scott!"

"Browne thinks that Adelaide is eager to see us, and we might as well do the thing in the right style," continued Fenton. "I'm going to leave it to the various Form captains to be responsible for their men. I shall lead the procession with the Sixth; Browne will follow on at the head of the Fifth; then Hamilton will come with the Remove, Boots with the Fourth, and Handforth minor with the Third. That's the order we'll take, and the procession will go right through the town."

"Hurrah!"

"By jingo, it's a brainwave!"

"And Browne thought of it, eh?"

"Yes."

"Good old Browne!"

William Napoleon Browne, his heart magically mended, came rapidly back to the front of the platform, beaming benevolently.

"I shall now make a short speech——" he began.

"That's all!" said Fenton, nodding. "As I said before, I shall leave the rest to the various Form captains. We're all going ashore now, and I shall expect you to make this procession a success."

"Hurrah!"

And the fellows went crowding out, talking excitedly and animatedly. Browne was foiled again. Not that his speech really mattered. The school knew what had to be done, and it would be a sheer waste of time to stay there, listening to Browne's "gas."

It was still quite early in the forenoon, and everybody was anxious to be off. They wanted to make the most of this great day. After being so many days aboard ship, without really having an opportunity of stretching their legs, they were as keen as mustard upon getting ashore.

And they were setting foot on Australian soil, too! For the majority of them, this was a new and novel experience. They cared nothing for the broiling heat of the day. Seniors and juniors alike, they wanted to get into Adelaide—the Queen City of South Australia.

Everything went swimmingly right from the very first. There was no trouble in getting into the train for Adelaide, and everything was very, very orderly, in spite of the general air of excitement. Once the train had started, there was plenty for the school to see—plenty for it to be engrossed in.

The names of some of the places sounded very familiar to the boys—Cheltenham—Kilkenny—Croydon—Brompton, and so forth. On that short journey, too, they passed Finsbury Park, which was equally familiar in sound. Then, presently, they had got beyond Bowden, and were now practically within the great city of Adelaide itself.

On one hand, indeed, they could see the houses of North Adelaide—really, the residential section of the city, with countless trees and wonderful parklands. Then, at last, over the River Torrens, and so right into Adelaide proper, to the terminus.

When they all emerged from the station, they found themselves very near to King William Street.

Fenton, with Browne by his side, led the procession out into the open, and having seen that everything was going well, Browne took his place at the head of the Fifth. The Remove followed behind, and so on. Presently, the whole school was parading down that fine thoroughfare, past the Post Office, and the Town Hall, and then into Victoria Square, past Wright Street and Carrington Street until the South Terrace was reached. Here it was decided that the parade should turn to the left, proceed along South Terrace as far as West Terrace, and then go right round by the cemetery and Kingston Park, past the Observatory, and then back to the North Terrace again, skirting the station, and then continuing up into North Adelaide, by way of Pennington Park.

But, somehow, the big procession did not seem to pan out quite so well as William Napoleon Browne had anticipated. To be painfully blunt, in fact, the procession was a dismal failure!

When it first started from the station, and proceeded along King William Street, a fair number of citizens took notice, and smiled. But there were no cheering crowds—no lined streets—no evidence of enthusiasm.

St. Frank's had arrived, but, for all Adelaide seemed to care, St. Frank's might just as well have stayed away!



CHAPTER 6.

Not a Roaring Success!

KING WILLIAM STREET was very busy. Motor-cars were passing up and down in great numbers; trams, splendidly equipped, were much in evidence; and there were countless pedestrians. Everywhere there was an appearance of bustle and industry and liveliness.

But, strangely enough, the St. Frank's procession was allowed to walk on without any commotion being caused. It cannot truthfully be said that Adelaide went mad with delight. In fact, before the procession had got halfway down King William Street, Fenton was beginning to regret that he had agreed to the proposition.

"We're making asses of ourselves," he murmured, as he glanced at Biggleswade, who was near him.

"Seems like it," agreed the other prefect. "Nobody's taking any notice of us. Might as well be a flock of sheep, for all the attention we're attracting!"

Similar comments were being made in the ranks of the Fifth and the Remove and the other Forms.

"What about it, Browne, you ass?" demanded Stevens tartly. "Where's the red carpet?"

"Owing to some singular neglect, the red carpet appears to have been overlooked," said Browne.

"And the massed bands?"

"I will agree, Brother Horace, that the massed bands are conspicuous by their absence."

"And the cheering multitudes?"

"Ah, there we are nearer the mark," said Browne promptly. "You cannot deny, brother, that the multitudes are on the spot. Not, of course, that they are cheering. I will grant you that the cheering has so far failed to materialise——"

"You'll grant me that this procession is a fizzle!" said Stevens bluntly. "Why, the people of Adelaide don't care twopence about us!"

"A harsh thing to say of this noble city——"

"Rats!" grunted Stevens. "I'm not saying harsh things about Adelaide, or about its inhabitants, either. You know jolly well that I'm saying harsh things about you! You're a double-dyed idiot for persuading Fenton to lead this parade. It's not impressive at all. It's—it's cheap!"

William Napoleon Brown winced. Somehow, he had received the same impression himself. Stevens had used the very word. Cheap! Undoubtedly, there was something that smacked of cheapness in this march through the fair city. It would have been quite different if Adelaide had arisen to the occasion, as Browne had so confidently anticipated. The skipper of the Fifth was terribly disappointed.

The procession went on, but even after Victoria Square had been passed, and the school was getting nearer to South Terrace, it was just the same. There was far too much bustle in Adelaide—far too much traffic and commotion—for the town to take any notice of a mere procession of schoolboys.

"I say, what's wrong?" demanded Handforth, as he looked from pavement to pavement, and noticed the indifference of the throngs. "Don't the people know we're here, or what?"

"They must know we're here, ass!" said Church. "But they just give us a glance, and then look away again. Talk about creating a sensation! Why, we haven't caused the slightest ripple to disturb the ordinary life of Adelaide!"

"We ought to have had some banners!" said Handforth firmly. "That's the trouble! If we had had a lot of banners, saying who we were——"

"Cheese it!" put in Fullwood. "If the Adelaide people wanted to take any notice of us, we're here to be seen. Banners aren't needed, Handy. No; Adelaide doesn't take any interest in St. Frank's. That's the long and the short of it."

When the comparative quietness of South Terrace was reached, Edgar Fenton called a halt. Everybody was feeling very hot, very uncomfortable, and very self-conscious. There is nothing more embarrassing than an impressive procession which people steadfastly refuse to look at; and Adelaide's lack of interest had been very marked.

"I think we'll disperse now, you fellows," said Fenton briefly.

"I thought we were going on a kind of circular course?" asked Boots, of the Fourth.

"We were—but that's off!" replied Fenton. "There's been enough of this parade. We'd better break up now, and distribute ourselves over the city as quietly and as unob-

trusively as possible. And don't forget, you juniors, that if you're late on board this evening you'll get into trouble."

With that the great procession was at an end. The various Forms broke up, and drifted away in groups. The fellows made up little parties, and decided to do some exploring. There were plenty of interesting spots to look at in Adelaide—the Government buildings, the Art Gallery, the Botanic Gardens, and countless other attractions.

Before they could get out of South Terrace, however, a big, stoutish man approached, a smile on his heavy, clean-shaven face. This individual was dressed in white drill, with a big straw hat.

"Say, young fellows, you're not giving it up are you?" he asked, as he approached the biggest group.

"The procession?" said Fenton. "Yes."

"You shouldn't do that!" said the man. "It was dandy! I guess you're the English boys from that School Ship, eh?"

"Yes," chorused a number of voices.

"Thought so!" said the man. "Well, my name's Grant Harrington—editor-in-chief of this city's greatest newspaper."

"Oh?" said Fenton.

"Sure thing!" continued Mr. Harrington. "'The Adelaide Sentinel.' The snappiest newspaper in this little island!"

"Never heard of it!" said Fenton, who greatly

disliked Mr. Harrington's looks.

"Well, say, you must be dumb!" declared the editor-in-chief boisterously. "Never heard of the 'Adelaide Sentinel'? I'm telling you right now, kids, that it's going to knock every other Adelaide newspaper cold. Get me? Stone cold, kiddoes! When I run a newspaper, I run it right!"

"What's the idea?" asked Fenton. "Are you looking for copy?"

"You bet your life I'm not!" retorted the other promptly. "I've got all the copy I need! I guess I saw your procession come down King William Street. Say, you kinder got the cold shoulder from this town, didn't you?"

"Got the what?" asked Handforth, pushing forward. "You're not an Australian, are you?"

"Gosh, no!" said Mr. Harrington, with a snort. "An Australian? Me? My name's Grant Harrington. I'm an American, sonny, and I'm here to show these Australians how to run their newspapers!"

There was something very bombastic and unpleasant about this American journalist. In spite of his perpetual grin, there was a note of contempt in his voice; and as he

STUPENDOUS!

Think of it, chums! FIVE wonderful gifts given away in ONE week! That's what the NELSON LEE is doing next week. Don't miss this amazing opportunity, lads!

looked at the St. Frank's fellows his eyes were the reverse of friendly.

"But don't you worry, youngsters," he went on. "Maybe the other Adelaide newspapers won't make any mention of your arrival. I guess they're too dead. But the 'Adelaide Sentinel' will sure give you a snappy notice in this evening's edition. Watch out for it! English schoolboys, hey? Gee, you look it!"

And with a roar of laughter Mr. Grant Harrington raised his hat in derisive salute, and then walked away.

He left the crowd of St. Frank's fellows hot with indignation, and there were many angry exclamations. This little incident, coming on top of the procession fizzle, had been rather the limit.



CHAPTER 7.

Back to the School Ship!

BEFORE anybody could say much, however, an elderly gentleman appeared in their midst, and he was looking concerned and worried.

"I hope you'll pardon my intrusion, boys, but I trust you'll take no notice of that impudent fellow who was just speaking to you," he said earnestly. "My name is Alcott. I'm proud to be a native of this city, and to welcome you most heartily."

Mr. Alcott's tone was very different from Mr. Harrington's, and the boys listened to him with respect.

"I suppose that man was pulling our legs, wasn't he, sir?" asked Handforth.

"I only wish that I could truthfully say he was," replied Mr. Alcott. "Unfortunately, the 'Adelaide Sentinel' is an established fact in this city; a newspaper of the 'yellow press' type. This man has had the impudence to publish the infernal rag, and I am sorry to say that it has gained a certain amount of popularity. There are some American methods that we like in this country, but Mr. Grant Harrington's methods are very questionable."

"As long as he's not an Australian, sir, it doesn't matter," smiled Fenton.

"An Australian! Good heavens, no!" said Mr. Alcott. "I hope there is no Australian who will give you such a greeting as that man gave you! I merely came across and mentioned these facts to you, so that there should be no misapprehension. I am delighted to have met you, boys. Once again, welcome to Adelaide!"

He smiled, and departed, and all those fellows who had heard his words felt better. Before long the majority of the juniors had trickled away, and a great many of the seniors had gone, too. Fenton, with Biggleswade and one or two other Sixth-Formers,

approached William Napoleon Browne, who was standing alone—a lanky, drooping figure.

"Alas, brothers, I know what you are about to say!" he exclaimed, as they surrounded him. "But do not, I beg you, lash me unduly with your tongues!"

"As a general rule, Browne, your ideas work out successfully," replied Fenton. "But I hope you're prepared to admit that this one has been a hopeless frost?"

Browne sighed.

"I cannot deny it, Brother Fenton," he said brokenly. "I am chilled to the marrow by this self-same frost to which you refer. However, willing as I am to make excuses for Adelaide, I am compelled to state that this city has failed—signally failed—to come up to the scratch. I thought better of Adelaide, brothers."

"Rubbish!" said Fenton. "Adelaide's all right. But we were idiots not to take the general situation into account. The whole city is packed with visitors, and seething with Test match fever."

"True—or, to be Australian, too right, it is!" agreed Browne. "While admitting that my name is Mud, I must nevertheless wager a deener that there will be a different story to tell to-morrow—"

"Bother to-morrow!" interrupted Conroy of the Sixth. "We've had enough of this game! Why, the whole procession was a joke, and I expect Adelaide is laughing at us."

"No, I don't believe that," said Fenton. "The painful truth is, Adelaide is neither laughing at us, nor noticing us in any other way. That's just the trouble. We came into the city with all that big commotion, and we've found ourselves ignored."

"But Adelaide didn't ignore those twelve juniors who got here a fortnight ago," argued Stevens. "That's what I can't understand. Those twelve kids were fêted and feasted until Mr. Lee was compelled to send them away up the Murray River. Yet, when we arrive, nobody ever notices us!"

"The explanation is simple enough," said Fenton. "A fortnight ago, Adelaide wasn't bitten by Test match fever. But now, nobody can think of anything else but cricket—or talk of anything else. The town is crammed with visitors from all parts of South Australia—and, I expect, from Victoria and New South Wales, too. Everybody is concentrating on Adelaide for next week. It's the fourth Test match, don't forget!"

"I must confess that I had momentarily overlooked this important fact," said Browne gracefully. "Brether Fenton, you are right. Adelaide is so full of cricket—and rightly so—that we are, by comparison, of no importance. At any normal time, however, our procession would have been an unqualified success."

"Well, I dare say you're right," said Fenton. "That the trouble. We ought to have realised that the times weren't normal."

Who are we, anyhow? A mere rabble of unimportant kids!"

"Strong words, Brother Fenton—bitter words," said Browne. "Yet, I will agree, truthful words. However, you must not imagine that I am prepared to let this matter drop. Adelaide must be forced to realise that St. Frank's is an establishment of some considerable importance. Furthermore, there is Mr. Grant Harrington——"

"Oh, let's be going," put in Conroy. "The procession was a failure, and we'll let it go at that. It's no good trying to do anything else, Browne. You'll only make things worse if you try any other dodges."

"He won't have a chance," said Fenton grimly. "Anyhow, he won't get us to help him in any more of his brilliant brain-waves."

And most of the seniors strolled off to enjoy themselves. By this time the rest of the school had distributed itself over the city, and the procession was already forgotten. Browne alone remembered the fiasco, and he was not the kind of fellow to accept such a defeat.

During the afternoon many of the fellows went back to the School Ship. It was tremendously hot that day, and, much as the juniors enjoyed seeing the sights of Adelaide, they felt in need of a little rest. Moreover, they had found every place crowded and packed. Restaurants, hotels, public institutions—all were the same. Adelaide was filled to overflowing. The forthcoming Test match had added tremendously to the population.

It was rather a relief to get back to the broad decks of the St. Francis, to lounges in the Common-rooms, and in the deck-chairs under the awnings. Besides, there was the question of meals to be considered. On board they were free, and the majority of the fellows had worked up big appetites. They really saw no reason why they should miss the official school meals.

That unfortunate procession, perhaps, would have passed completely into oblivion but for one thing. Fairly late in the afternoon, a number of seniors arrived on board, bringing with them some copies of the "Adelaide Sentinel." Mr. Harrington, being a live business man, not only issued his newspaper in the morning, but in the afternoon as well as the evening. And these present early evening editions were very interesting—and very exasperating, too.

Other newspapers had come on board, and the majority of the fellows were rather saddened by the fact that the School Ship was not even mentioned. Practically every column was filled with cricket news, and so there had been no room for a paragraph concerning the arrival of the English school-boys.

However, the "Adelaide Sentinel" had devoted a full column to the School Ship, and on the front page, too. There, right across the page, in a glaring headline, were the words: "Adelaide Gives Frozen Shoulder to English Schoolboys!"

On the front page, too, was a snapshot of the procession going down King William Street—an atrociously reproduced photograph, but it indicated clearly enough how the procession had been more or less ignored.

Handforth had got hold of one of the newspapers, and his face was red with wrath as he read the article—which, no doubt, had been penned by Mr. Grant Harrington himself. A whole crowd of Removites and Fourth-Formers had gathered in the Junior Common-room, and, although it was time for tea, nobody thought of the meal.

This news item in the "Adelaide Sentinel" had aroused the St. Frank's fellows to a high pitch of indignation and anger!



CHAPTER 8.

A Bit Too Thick!

HANDFORTH quivered. "Look at it!" he said thickly. "By George! Wait until I see old Harrington——"

"Keep your hair on, Handy," said Nipper soothingly. "No need to take any notice of this drivel!"

"But look at this article!" snorted Handforth indignantly. "Just listen to this, you chaps! I'll read it out: 'Our young English visitors received a jolt this morning when they hit the city in a lively bunch, and proceeded to march down town in parade. In their sweet innocence, these youngsters from little old England believed that Adelaide would sit up and take notice. But Adelaide, of course, knew better.'"

"That's a bit thick!" said De Valerio warmly.

"Yes rather!"

"Better give St. Frank's no notice at all than publish this kind of drivel," said Fullwood.

Browne, who had strolled in, was looking thoughtful and worried. For once the imperturbable William Napoleon was the reverse of longwinded.

"Proceed, brother," he said, looking at Handforth.

"Have you read this?" asked Edward Oswald.

"I have," admitted Browne. "And of all the cheap, sarcastic, provocative, unspeakable drivel, this is surely the most drivelling!"

"Let's hear the rest of it, Handy!" shouted two or three voices.

"I can't read all of it," said Handforth. "But listen to this bit: 'Adelaide proved its horse-sense by giving the icy shoulder to this silly parade. These English boys thought they could put one over on the city, and the city promptly showed them that it wasn't falling for that bunk. If this bunch of eye-glass champs likes to go around the world in its own ship, let 'em go. But Adelaide

has something better to do than stand around gazing at——”

“Eyeglass champs!” broke in Jimmy Potts hotly. “Great Scott!”

“It’s Archie’s fault!” said Travers. “Somebody must have spotted his window, and we’ve all been tarred with the same brush!”

“Good gad!” complained Archie Glen-thorne. “Dash it, that’s a most unjust accusation, laddie! I haven’t worn the good old monocle for days and days. Too dashed hot, I mean.”

“Archie is absolved,” said Travers solemnly. “It must be merely an expression, Mr. Harrington believing, in his ignorance, that all English people wear eyeglasses.”

“There’s lots more—all in the same strain,” said Handforth indignantly. “What are we going to do about it?”

“Nothing,” said Nipper

“Nothing?” roared Handforth, glaring.

“What do you suggest, then?”

“Eh? I don’t know,” stormed Handforth. “But I do know that Adelaide has insulted St. Frank’s! First of all it ignored our procession, and now its newspapers come out with this drivel!”

“You mustn’t blame Adelaide for that,” said Nipper smoothly. “Cool down, Handy! The Australians are sportsmen, and they won’t take any notice of this silly nonsense.”

“Won’t take any notice of it?” repeated Handforth. “But it’s in an Australian paper!”

“Run by an American, brother,” put in Browne. “I venture to predict that Mr. Grant Harrington has made a bloomer this time. Not for the first time, I judge, he has failed to feel the correct pulse of Adelaide. In Brother Harrington’s anxiety to get in a knock at England, foolishly believing that the Australians who have given him shelter will put up with it, he has overreached the mark. Believe me, brothers, the ‘Adelaide Sentinel’ will not add to its circulation by this glaring example of journalistic fat-headedness.”

“Even the other papers ignore us,” said Handforth bitterly.

“Of course they do,” laughed Nipper. “Why should they mention us—a party of touring schoolboys? Cricket is the all-important thing at the moment, Handy and we’re just as interested in cricket as the Adelaide people, too. But, of course, this American gentleman’s exhibition of uncalled-for spite is too thick for words. The trouble is we can’t do anything to punish him!”

“No?” said Browne smoothly. “Leave it to me, brothers. It is not my habit to boast, but I say, without fear of contradiction, that Brother Harrington will, before I have done with him, wish himself back in Oskkosh, Wis., or Kalamazoo, Mich., or whatever town he happens to come from.”

“But, my dear chap, what the dickens can you do?” asked Nipper, smiling. “When a newspaper article like this comes out, the only thing to do is to ignore it. It’s beneath contempt.”

“But England has been insulted!” said Handforth warmly. “We’ve been insulted—St. Frank’s has been insulted! And by this—this fat American. We ought to get hold of the chap and rag him! Isn’t there a horse-trough somewhere in this city?”

“Let us not consider such crude methods, Brother Handy,” murmured Browne. “There are better ways—more subtle ways. Leave it to me! While admitting that I have yet no concrete idea, I shall nevertheless set my brain to work. And, as you all know, when my brain starts working——”

“Concrete ideas result?” said Travers smoothly. “Naturally, dear old fellow! I’m glad you admit that your brain is made of concrete. You’ve verified something that I’ve long suspected.”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

But Browne took no offence. He merely waved his hand and strolled out. He knew perfectly well that his brain was not made of concrete, and he was determined, moreover, to evolve some scheme that would ultimately lead to the humiliation of the egregious Mr. Grant Harrington. This American newspaper owner had committed an act of exceedingly bad taste, and he should be sharply punished for it. So Browne took it upon himself to be the medium of that punishment.

The juniors, probably, would have gone on discussing the matter, only just then something very interesting happened!



CHAPTER 9.

The Challenge!

It was Willy Handforth, of the Third, who gave the first intimation that something unusual was in the wind. Willy appeared in the doorway of the Junior Common-room, and he gave a hail. “You’re wanted, Nipper,” he said briskly.

“Wanted?” said Nipper. “Who by?”

“Fenton.”

“What have I done now, I wonder?” asked Nipper, frowning.

“Cheer up!” grinned Willy. “Fenton only wants to see you about cricket. You’re the junior skipper, you know——”

“Cricket?” repeated Nipper. “But we haven’t fixed any game.”

“Fenton’s fixing it now,” said Willy cheerfully. “A crowd of Australian chaps came on board about ten minutes ago, and there seems to be some idea of arranging a match for to-morrow.”

“What?” went up a general roar.

The juniors were excited at once. It was something to look forward to the big Test match on Monday; but, important as that game was, it sank into insignificance compared with a game that the juniors themselves might play in.



Handforth came charging along the pavement. He grabbed hold of Church violently; so violently, indeed, that that unfortunate junior spun round and hit an elderly gentleman in the ribs. "Here, steady, you idiot!" gasped Church.

There was a rush on deck, and Willy's story was true enough. Under one of the big awnings, Fenton and Biggleswade and Browne and a few other seniors were talking genially with some lithe, muscular-looking young fellows, who were typical Australians.

"I say, is this true?" demanded Handforth breathlessly. "Is there going to be a match to-morrow?"

"I think so," smiled Fenton. "Let me introduce Tom Warwick, of Adelaide. Warwick, these are some of our juniors. Hamilton, Handforth, Travers."

"Pleased to know you," grinned Tom Warwick, of Adelaide.

There were some more introductions, and the juniors soon learned that these stalwart youths were senior schoolboys from one of the big Adelaide colleges. One or two others represented different colleges, too. And Tom Warwick was the spokesman of the party.

"They want us to fix up a game for to-morrow," explained Fenton. "They've suggested that the team shall be representative of St. Frank's, so some of you juniors will be needed——"

"Good egg!"

"We're on, Fenton!"

"Rather!"

"It's a challenge, really," smiled Warwick, as he looked at Nipper. "You see, we heard about your test match in South Africa. We read about it in the newspapers, and we thought it was a good stunt. Why not repeat it here?"

"Why not?" said Nipper promptly.

"We thought you weren't arriving until to-morrow," continued Warwick. "Then we happened to see, in that rotten American-owned paper, the 'Sentinel,' that you had already arrived."

"I hope you didn't take too much notice of that newspaper report?" asked Nipper.

"Too right, we didn't!" grinned one of the other Australian boys. "We know the 'Sentinel' too well! It's only a cheap rag!"

"Well, about the cricket," said Warwick. "We've got an Australian team ready—chosen from a few of our colleges—and we're challenging you to a two-day game, to start at eleven-thirty to-morrow morning, in the new Collegiate Oval."

"It's a wonderful ground," said one of the others. "Room for tens of thousands of spectators, too."

"And such accommodation will undoubtedly be necessary," said Browne, nod-

ding. "All Adelaide will doubtless turn up to witness this Battle of the Giants!"

Just the same as all Adelaide turned up to look at the procession, eh?" chuckled Fenton. "No, Browne, old man. We shan't get many spectators for this match, so don't go and kid yourself. A schoolboy game will be a tame affair compared with the real Test match, which starts on Monday."

"But surely this is to be a species of test match?" asked Browne.

"Well, yes," put in Tom Warwick. "That's the very idea. A schoolboy test match—Australia versus England—just as you played South Africa versus England in Durban. You won that game, too, by one run."

"We shall do better here, of course, brother," said Browne benevolently.

There were many chuckles.

"We expect a hard game, but if you lose you won't suffer any humiliation," said Warwick. "Our fellows have been practising for weeks, and we know that you have been aboard ship."

"The game's the thing," said Fenton. "And we'll do our best to give you a good game, Warwick."

"That's fixed, then," said the Australian skipper. "Fine! It's to be a two-day match, covering to-morrow and Saturday. I only hope that we shall be able to take the game to a definite result before stumps are finally drawn. Of course, there'll only be time for one innings each."

"Well, we don't want to take the game beyond Saturday, do we?" asked Nipper.

On Monday, we shall be keen on seeing the start of the big Test match."

"Hear, hear!"

There wasn't much to discuss. Details were fixed up and after the Australian boys had been entertained to tea, they took their departure, highly delighted with the success of their errand.

"I don't think we can do better than play exactly the same team as at Durban," said Fenton, afterwards, as he consulted with Browne and Nipper and a few others. "I've got the list here: Wilson, Reynolds, Fenton, of the Sixth; Browne, Stevens of the Fifth; Hamilton, Dodd, Gresham, Handforth, of the Remove; Boots and Christine, of the Fourth. That's precisely the same team—"

"Too many juniors!" said Conroy major.

"They played a fine game in South Africa," argued Wilson.

"And where do I come in?" demanded Conroy.

"Sorry, old man, but you'll have to be twelfth man," said Fenton smoothly.

"Wait a minute," said Nipper. "I rather think Conroy major should be in the team, Fenton."

"That's very kind of you, kid," said Conroy.

"Not at all," smiled Nipper. "But as Dodd can't play—"

"Why can't Dodd play?" broke in Fenton. "He's one of the finest cricketers in the junior Eleven."

"You bet he is!" agreed Nipper. "But Jerry Dodd happens to be an Australian. If he plays at all, he'll have to play for the other side!"

"By Jove, yes!" said Fenton, with a smile. "I'd forgotten that for the moment. Our team will represent England, won't it? That makes it rather difficult for Dodd to play. I'm afraid we shall have to include you, after all, Conroy!"

"Afraid!" roared Conroy.

There was a roar of laughter, but Conroy major was soon mollified. The only fellow who was looking abstracted was William Napoleon Browne. The lanky skipper of the Fifth, indeed, had a far-away expression in his eyes, but he came to himself with a start as the little party began to break up.

"One moment, brothers—one moment!" said Browne firmly. "There is a small matter that must be settled without any further delay."



CHAPTER 10.

Browne on the Warpath

EDGAR FENTON looked at Browne and laughed.

"What is it?" he asked amusedly.

"Another brainwave, old man?"

"You have settled the team, and you have made all the necessary arrangements," said Browne. "But, so far, brothers, you have not yet decided upon a manager."

"A what?"

"A manager."

"Do we need a manager?" asked Fenton.

"Assuredly!" said Browne promptly. "For the time being the St. Frank's Eleven will be a kind of England test team, and, as such, it will require a manager. Now, I have in mind a keen, brilliant individual—a fellow of dazzling ideas and sterling worth."

"Yourself, I suppose?" grinned Nipper.

"Correct, brother," beamed Browne.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But, my dear ass, you're a member of the Eleven!" said Fenton. "Besides, why on earth do we need a manager?"

"There are reasons—"

"Rats!" said Handforth. "There's nothing to marage. The details are fixed up, and there's nothing further to do. We'll simply appear in the Collegiate Oval to-morrow—"

"I fear, Brother Handforth, that you do not appreciate the finer points of the situation," interrupted Browne gently. "I merely wish to receive your assurance, Brother Fenton, that I am to regard this appointment as manager as official."

Fenton laughed.

"If it'll please you to call yourself manager, Browne, go ahead," he said good-naturedly. "We don't mind, I'm sure."

"Splendid!" said Browne genially. "Then all will be well."

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He strolled away, a look of intense satisfaction on his face. Handforth shook his head.

"Mad!" he said pityingly. "Poor chap! Clean off his rocker!"

But not long afterwards, in the Common-room, Edward Oswald Handforth had reason to change his mind. Quite a crowd of juniors had gathered there, contemplating another visit into Adelaide. There was plenty of time before calling-over—and this evening, too, there would be an extra hour of grace. And now that the heat of the day had departed, any amount of the fellows wanted to look at Adelaide again. It would be so much more charming, too, to go into the town when all the lights were gleaming.

While the juniors were busily looking up trains, and arranging times, Browne had drifted into the Common-room.

"Nothing could be better," he declared, as he looked round, and noted the throng. "Brothers, gather round, for I have something of import to discuss."

"Sorry, Browne—no time," said Nipper briskly. "We're just going into Adelaide."

"And for that very reason, I desire this conference," said Browne, nodding. "To be quite brief, I need aid."

"You've needed aid for years!" agreed Handforth. "If you'll come along with us,

we'll find a nice brain specialist, and we'll leave you in his care."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"While appreciating that your remarks are intended to be jocular, Brother Handy, I nevertheless deplore the underlying insinuation," said Browne. "However, we will let it pass. Brothers all, I have a wheeze."

"Drop it overboard!" said Buster Boots.

"I can say, with all truth, that this wheeze is a master conception," continued Browne. "I have given it much thought—and that fact, in itself, is an indication of the wheeze's sterling quality."

"Well, well," said Vivian Travers. "There's nothing like persistence, dear old fellow."

"But it won't work with us!" said Handforth. "We've had enough of Browne's wheezes! Look what happened this morning! Adelaide is still laughing over the joke—"

"I deny that statement," interrupted Browne firmly. "Adelaide, on the contrary, is still seething with indignation over the insult that Mr. Grant Harrington has placed upon us. These good Australians, I am convinced, do not approve of this blighted American's tactics. However, there may be some Adelaide citizens who are misguided enough to heed the blatherings of our American friend. And I propose that these people—meaning the subscribers to the 'Adelaide Sentinel'—shall be hoaxed."

"Hoaxed?" repeated Nipper, staring.

"Hoaxed up to the eyebrows, brother," nodded William Napoleon Browne. "Furthermore, it is necessary that Mr. Grant Harrington should also be hoaxed—in his case, not merely up to the eyebrows, but even to the roof of the place where his brains should be. We have in our midst a hoaxer of unqualified distinction."

"Look here, you lanky ass——"

"Without fear of contradiction, I should say that this hoaxer is the world's greatest," continued Browne. "He is a man of iron nerve. Never, in any circumstances, has he been known to shrink from duty."

"Oh, let's clear off," said Handforth impatiently. "He's talking about himself again!"

"Too right, brother, I am!" said Browne benevolently. "And with justification. Now, a hoax, in order to be successful, must be carried through with a nerve that is not only cast iron, but riveted in every joint and double armour-plated. I claim to be possessed of such a nerve."

"For once, Browne, old man, you've spoken the truth," said Nipper feelingly. "When it comes to sheer nerve, you run off with all the prizes. You've got such a colossal nerve, in fact, that we're fed up with you. We'd better forget that newspaper incident——"

"And let this flabby Philadelphian go unpunished?" asked Browne, aghast.

"How do you know he comes from Philadelphia?"

"A mere figure of speech," said Browne, waving an airy hand. "Be good enough to refrain from quibbling, Brother Nipper. Knowing many Americans, who are, moreover, good sportsmen, I can only conclude that Brother Harrington was biffed out of the United States by his fellow countrymen. It is my ambition that Brother Harrington should now be biffed out of the Australian Commonwealth—or at least, out of Adelaide—by our fellow countrymen."

"But how on earth do you propose to get this American rotter chucked out of Adelaide?" asked Nipper in astonishment. "Hang it, Browne, you're not trying to tell us that a hoax will do the trick, are you?"

"An ordinary hoax, no," admitted Browne. "But the hoax that I am about to suggest—yes! For, without exaggeration, it is the most stupendous hoax that mortal brain has ever evolved!"

Nipper looked up at the other juniors.

"Shall we hear it?" he asked.

"No!" roared the crowd, in a solid voice.

"That's not very encouraging, anyhow," grinned Nipper. "Well, look here, shall we give him a couple of minutes?"

"All right, then—two minutes!" said Handforth magisterially. "But no longer."

"Hear, hear!"

And all the other juniors voiced their approval of this decision.



CHAPTER 11.

The Great Wheeze!

"It is said," said Browne, "that great men should be so disdainfully treated by the rabble. However, 'twas ever thus!"

"Are you referring to us as rabble?" demanded Boots, glaring.

"A mere figure of speech, Brother Buster," said Browne. "As I need a certain amount of assistance in this enterprise, I must necessarily swallow my pride. Now, to business."

"And don't forget—only two minutes," said Nipper.

Browne was in no way perturbed.

"There is to be a double purpose in this proposed hoax," he said smoothly. "Firstly, and most important of all, our friend from Kansas, or wherever his home town happens to be, is to be so discredited in the eyes of the Adelaide populace that he will be compelled to pack his grip, and go back to where the cotton grows. Secondly, it is highly necessary that the Adelaide populace should know, once and for all, that St. Frank's has arrived in Australia. At present the Adelaide populace has apparently overlooked this overwhelming fact."

"It's no good harping on that same string, Browne," said Nipper. "We'd better forget——"

"Mr. Grant Harrington has not forgotten, and who are we to ignore the example of such a distinguished man?" demanded Browne. "Now, it has been arranged by certain stalwarts that a species of test match shall start to-morrow morning at eleven-thirty in the Collegiate Oval. In all truth, this will be a test match, and we can correctly describe it as Young England versus Young Australia. Am I right, brothers?"

"Yes, of course."

"We knew this ages ago, you long ass!"

"But it is necessary that I should impress the facts upon your childish minds," said Browne smoothly. "Do you imagine, for one moment—or even for two moments—that the good people of Adelaide will roll up in their myriads to witness this preliminary test match?"

"I don't suppose there'll be anybody there at all—except a crowd of schoolboys from the various colleges. We don't expect anybody else, so we shan't be disappointed."

"But why should we be content to have our prowess witnessed only by a number of our Australian schoolboy coppers?" asked Browne. "I have heard, on the highest possible authority, that the Collegiate Oval is capable of accommodating a crowd of fifty-thousand. It is my ambition to see every

available inch occupied—and, moreover, every seat paid for."

"Two minutes up, old man!" said Boots. "Now we can go, I suppose."

"Thank goodness!" said Handforth. "Come on, you chaps!"

"Wait!" urged Browne. "I am about to propose a plan whereby the Collegiate Oval can be filled to overflowing. To-morrow, brothers, there will be no question of Adelaide taking notice of St. Frank's."

"But you're dotty!" said Nipper, grinning. "How do you propose to work this miracle?"

"I could, no doubt, accomplish it single-handed," replied Browne. "But as we are anxious that there should be no hitch, I am prepared to enlist your aid, and thus make assurance doubly sure. Why should we play our great match against Young Australia with a vast area of empty benches staring us in the face? Would it not be far better to play before a cheering multitude?"

"You're a hopeless ass, Browne," said Nipper. "You know jolly well that the Adelaide people won't take any notice of our match. It's only a schoolboy affair, although we, of course, think it is pretty important. But with the real Test match starting on Monday, why should the people bother to come and see us? They won't come and see us, and nothing will make them."

"I shall make them," said Browne simply.

"Some sort of advertising stunt, I suppose?" asked Boots, who was by way of being a publicity expert himself. "It wouldn't work, Browne. Adelaide's too excited about the genuine Test match. I'd thought of this, but I gave it up."

Browne remained as calm as ever.

"Briefly, what I propose is this," he said.

"I shall, at a fairly late hour this evening, adopt an impressive disguise."

"What?"

"Much as I regret hiding the features you now see, the necessity for such a move is essential," said Browne. "And while you are tucking yourselves snugly into your bunks, I shall drive through the streets of Adelaide in the largest car that money can hire."

"But what the dickens—"

"On the windscreen of this car will be the following words," continued Browne, "'Manager, England Team.' Do I perceive the glimmerings of understanding?"

"I'm jiggered if you do!" said Travers. "What's the idea of all this tomfoolery?"

"A harsh term, Brother Travers, but we will let it pass," said Browne. "I realise that you have not yet appreciated the wheeze. Reclining gracefully in the rear of this massive car, I shall drive to the offices of the 'Adelaide Sentinel.' I shall then interview Mr. Grant Harrington. He, of course, will utterly fail to penetrate my disguise. I shall announce myself as the manager of the England Test team, and he, poor mutt, will accept me as such. My eloquence will be impressive, and I have not the slightest doubt

that I shall lure Brother Harrington into the snare."

"But what's the idea of all this pretending?" asked Nipper.

"The idea, Brother Nipper, is simple," replied Browne. "Once I have convinced Brother Harrington that I am the manager of the England Test team, I shall indicate to him that there has been a change in the plan. I shall be careful to tell no whoppers, but by ambiguous chatter, I shall make Brother Harrington understand that the great Test match, instead of starting on Monday next, will start to-morrow, at eleven-thirty, in the Collegiate Oval. And Brother Harrington will consider that he has got hold of a first-class scoop for his blighted newspaper."

"Great Scott!"

"Needless to say, the 'Adelaide Sentinel' will hum through the printing machines with more than usual vigour," said Browne lightly, "and in the early morning this newspaper will be on sale in every quarter of the city, with glaring headlines to the effect that the Test match is to start that day instead of on Monday. Can you not visualise, brothers, the vast and enormous crowds that will dash pell-mell for the Collegiate Oval?"

"Thinking that they're going to see England versus Australia?" asked Nipper.

"Exactly!"

"And they'll really turn up to see our match against the schoolboys?"

"You have put it in a nutshell, Brother Nipper," said Browne. "Adelaide, startled and dumbfounded, will be in a fever of excitement."

"But it can't be done!" said Handforth impatiently. "Browne, you're as mad as a hatter!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Cheese it, Browne!"

"You couldn't work a hoax like that, so you'd better come down to earth again."

But Browne did not turn a hair as all those voices took up the song of doubt.



CHAPTER 12.

Many Allies!

"IMPOSSIBLE!" That was the general cry.

"We'll all admit that you've got plenty of nerve, Browne, but this time you've bitten off more than you can chew," said Nipper. "No, old man, it's hopeless."

"I regret to note this lack of faith in one who has so frequently exhibited his prowess as a hoaxer," said Browne sadly. "Let me remind you, brothers, of the various episodes—"

"No, cheese it," said Nipper hastily. "We've wasted enough time as it is. But



As the St. Frank's cricketers came on to the field a great roar of anger went up from the spectators. "We've been swindled!" "It's not the Test match at all!" "We want our money back!"

do you really think, Browne, that you could pull wool over the eyes of this newspaper editor? Such men are keen and shrewd. Besides, Harrington will know perfectly well that the Test match date could not possibly be altered."

"Of course!" chorused the others.

"The man would only laugh at you," said Travers, shaking his head.

"You have apparently overlooked the all-important fact, brothers, that our newspaper friend is an American," urged Browne.

"What's his nationality got to do with it?"

"Everything," said Browne. "You will have noticed that Brother Harrington filled his front page with a libellous story concerning ourselves, instead of devoting it to cricket, as the other Adelaide newspapers had done."

"Well?"

"Brother Harrington, in other words, is not interested in cricket," said Browne.

"He, like most other Americans, no doubt regards cricket as a slow, silly, sleepy imitation of a game. You must know that it is the common belief in America that cricket is the world's worst."

"Well, that's true," confessed Nipper. "Most Americans think that cricket is a fat-headed game. That's because they don't know anything about it."

"And why should we believe that Brother Harrington is any exception?" said William Napoleon Browne. "What do you think he knows of cricket? Holding the game in such contempt, he will not realise that a mere date is as immovable as the stars in the heavens. When you realise, moreover, that he will have the full blast of my eloquence turned upon him, he will have little or no chance of using his alleged shrewdness. In short, I shall convince him that the date *has* been altered. As the manager of the England test team—"

"But you're not!" said Nipper.

"Not what?"

"Not the manager of the England Test team."

"There, Brother Nipper, you are wrong," said Browne. "I am."

"What?"

"Unquestionably I am the manager of the England test team," said Browne kindly. "Have you forgotten, brothers, that this matter was arranged less than an hour ago?"

"The ass means that Fenton said that he could call himself the manager of the St. Frank's team if he likes," said Nipper, with a chuckle. "But that's not the same thing."

"You will pardon me, Brother Nipper, but it is," insisted Browne. "Does not St. Frank's represent England for to-morrow's match?"

"Yes."

"Then our team is the England test team," said Browne triumphantly.

"Oh, my only sainted aunt!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"For the love of Samson, he's right!" said Travers. "Well, well! What a brain!"

Browne beamed.

"As I have mentioned before, I shall tell no whoppers," he said. "When I represent myself as the manager of the England test team, I shall be telling a literal truth. Needless to add, I shall not inform Brother Harrington that there happens to be two England Test teams. And he, the poor fish, will jump to an entirely erroneous conclusion. And who am I to correct him? When I find him drawing his own conclusions, why should I disillusion him?"

"Upon my word, you chaps, I believe there



As the St. Frank's cricketers came on to the field a anger went up from the spectators. "We've been
"It's not the Test match at all!" "We want
back!"

is something in this wheeze of Browne's," said Nipper, taking a deep breath. "If only he can play his part well enough, Harrington might be fooled. He's an American, and he's bound to be contemptuous of cricket. And when he thinks that he's getting a big scoop for his rotten newspaper, he'll jump at it."

"He will not merely jump at it, Brother Nipper, he will fly at its throat," said Browne.

"You're proposing to go to this newspaper office this evening, aren't you?"

"In the neighbourhood of midnight, when

the newspaper is on the point of going to press, when there will be no time for Brother Harrington to verify my statement."

"And where do we come in?" asked Nipper. "Didn't you say that you wanted us to help you?"

"I did," said Browne. "I understand that you are about to descend upon Adelaide, with a view to spending a happy hour or so sight-seeing."

"Yes."



"Then, brothers, listen to me," said Browne impressively. "To-morrow morning, as I have hinted, Adelaide will be shattered by the startling news that the 'Sentinel' will announce. But this startling news will be all the more effective if certain rumours have been going the rounds over night."

"Rumours?"

"Exactly," murmured Browne. "My suggestion is that you should distribute yourselves over every hole and corner of this noble city. And when the distribution is complete, you will excitedly ask one another, in voices than can be easily overheard, if

there is any truth in the latest news. You will then proceed to make mention of the fact that the big England versus Australia test match is to start to-morrow, at eleven-thirty, in the Collegiate Oval."

"My only hat!"

"Rumours—mere rumours," said Browne. "And we all know what rumours are. They will be circulated like lightning. They will go hither and thither, and this way and that way. Adelaide will go to bed to-night assuring itself that such rumours are ridiculous and impossible. And then, in the morning, the bombshell! The report in the paper!"

"But, hang it, isn't it a bit too thick?" protested Handforth. "A hoax is a hoax, Browne, but I don't see why you should expect us to tell whoppers for you?"

"Have I hinted that I expect any such service?"

"Well, you're asking us to tell fibs about the Test match—"

"By no means," said Browne. "Need I remind you that the test match will start to-morrow?"

"You mean *our* test match?" yelled Nipper.

"What other, then?"

"Why, you—you deep boulder!" said Nipper breathlessly. "He's right, you chaps! This match of ours will be a test match. England versus Australia, too! As Browne says, there's no need to go into any details. When we tell one another that the test is going to commence to-morrow by eleven-thirty, we shall be perfectly truthful."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good old Browne!"

The juniors roared with laughter, and they waxed more and more enthusiastic for this wheeze of Browne's, which they had so recently regarded as "dotty." It was only another example of William Napoleon Browne's masterly eloquence. He had won these juniors over, and from that minute onwards they were his staunch and loyal helpers in this startling enterprise.

And, judging by the howls of merriment that arose, not many fellows doubted that the said enterprise would be a huge success.

They would have been even more astonished if Browne had mentioned one or two other details of his scheme. But for the present he kept these to himself.

The whole affair, of course, was one of the most audacious hoaxes that even William Napoleon Browne had ever attempted to bring off. And if it succeeded it would attain world-wide notoriety. But that didn't worry the imperturbable Fifth-Former. All the better, indeed!

CHAPTER 13.

Letting Adelaide into the Secret!



A

DELAIDE was a fairy-land to most of the English schoolboys as they promenaded through the streets that evening.

The air was warm and gentle, with a faint cooling breeze. Overhead, the stars sparkled in all their brilliance, and the air was as clear as crystal. It was a really glorious evening, entrancing and enchanting after the heat of the day.

And by night the juniors—and the seniors, too—found Adelaide even more beautiful than by day. The gleaming electric lights, the brilliantly illuminated shops, the theatres, cinemas, and other places of amusement; all these were gloriously attractive. The St. Frank's crowds fairly revelled in this second glimpse of Adelaide.

It was wonderful, standing on Victoria Bridge, looking over the wide river and the splendid parklands. Street-car rides were taken to all parts of the city, and the school-boy visitors, one and all, voted that they had seldom seen a city so beautiful and charming as this.

The majority of the fellows had nothing on their minds to worry them. But there were others, particularly those belonging to the Remove and Fourth, who had a set task for this evening.

In accordance with William Napoleon Browne's suggestions, they had distributed themselves widely over North and South Adelaide. While some were as far north as Fitzroy Terrace and Jeffcott Road, others were as far south as Glen Osmond Road and Park Terrace. Still others concentrated on the busy districts—Travers and Potts, for example, being in King William Street, and Handforth & Co. in Rundle Street.

Browne himself, in the meantime, was excessively busy.

Not only did he visit the Collegiate Oval, but he had interviews with various people; some connected with the hospitals, others not entirely ignorant of electricity and wireless apparatus. Browne was a very busy fellow that evening; and, moreover, he was taking it absolutely for granted that his hoax would be a success. The word "failure" had no place in William Napoleon's dictionary.

THE LATEST CRAZE!

Are you collecting the fine Metal Motor-Car Badges which are being given away every week in the "Magnet" Library? They're the goods—everybody's collecting 'em!

In Rundle Street—one of the busy shopping centres of Adelaide—Handforth & Co. were preparing to get busy. They had lost track of the other juniors, although now and again they would probably run into an isolated senior or two, to whom they would casually nod and pass on.

"We want to do the thing thoroughly," Handforth was saying. "It's agreed, isn't it, that we shall all start these rumours at exactly eight o'clock?"

"Seven o'clock, ass!" said Church. "By eight o'clock we shall have to be on our way back to the School Ship. If we're not, we shall find a pack of trouble waiting for us."

"Well, seven o'clock, then," said Handforth. "Why make a fuss about an hour? By George! It's nearly seven o'clock now!"

He stood there on the pavement, looking dreamy.

"Fancy!" he said in a far-away voice. "Here we are in Australia, wearing flannels, under a starry sky. And back in England, at St. Frank's, the chaps are doing their prep. At this very minute they're stoking up the study fires in the Ancient House—"

"The Blue Crusaders are in the Ancient House, aren't they?" asked Church. "In any case, what does it matter?"

"I was just thinking, that's all," said Handforth. "We're jolly lucky, you know."

"You're wrong, too!" put in McClure. "At St. Frank's, at this very minute, the chaps haven't long started morning lessons."

"Eh?"

"It's a fact!" grinned Mac.

"Don't be an ass!" snorted Handforth. "Are you trying to pull my leg, or what?"

"My dear chap, why try to air your ignorance?" said McClure. "Everybody knows that Australian time is ahead of Greenwich."

"By George! I seem to remember something of it," admitted Handforth, with a start.

"It's only just about ten o'clock in the morning in England," went on Mac, with a chuckle. "Adelaide is about nine hours fast of Greenwich. But why waste time on this? We'd better discuss the Test match."

Handforth glanced at his watch.

"Just seven o'clock!" he said. "Right-o! Now, we've got to be careful how we set this rumour going. We mustn't let on that we're only talking about our own game—"

"Cheese it, you ass!" urged Church. "Not so loud!"

"Eh?"

"You'll give the game away, you chump!"

"But we've got to talk loud, haven't we?" asked Handforth, staring.

"Yes, about the Test match—but not about our own game!" hissed Church. "You'll give the whole thing away if you yell like that!"

"I wasn't yelling!"

"Forget all about our own game," said McClure. "All we've got to do is to talk about the Test match, and ask one another if we've heard the latest news. Now, I sug-

gest that you two fellows look in a shop window where there is a crowd of other people, and I'll come up to you, as excited as the dickens, and gasp out my supposed news."

"That's a good wheeze," said Handforth, nodding. "But I'll come up with the news. You two chaps look in the window."

"Are you sure you'll do it right?" asked Church dubiously.

"If you're looking for a thick ear, Walter Church——"

"I'm not!" said Church hastily. "And you'd better not start any rot here, Handy, or you'll give St. Frank's a bad name."

In order to save all arguments, Church and McClure betook themselves to a brilliant shop window, where there was a large number of other people close by. And Handforth prepared to dash up with his news.

He came charging along the pavement, knocking violently into people, and when he reached his chums he was fairly gasping for breath. He grabbed them so violently that the unfortunate Church spun round, hit an elderly gentleman in the ribs and caused the elderly gentleman's hat to fly off his head, after which it rolled into the road, where it was run over by a passing car.

"Here, steady!" gasped Church. "You—you silly idiot——"

"Have you heard the news?" gasped Handforth, in a hoarse, thick voice.

"What news?"

"Why, there's going to be a terrific cricket match to-morrow!" roared Handforth excitedly. "St. Frank's versus—— Ugh! What the dickens did you do that for, Mac?" he went on, with a gasp, as McClure's elbow butted him in the ribs. "You clumsy fathead—— Eh? Oh, my hat! I—I mean, there's going to be a test match to-morrow, before the real one starts on Monday——"

"Gag him!" said Church fiercely.

Seizing Handforth firmly and resolutely Church and McClure yanked him out of the startled crowd, and whisked him away. The unfortunate gentleman who had lost his hat was left raving to no purpose. For within a couple of minutes Handforth & Co. had dodged down Pulteney Street, and were in Hindmarsh Square. And there both Church and McClure glared at their leader ferociously.

The great Edward Oswald, as a distributor of false rumours, was not entirely a success!



CHAPTER 14.

More Trouble!

RNOLD McCLURE took a deep breath.

"The only thing that saved the situation was all the noise," he said. "Luckily, nobody heard what you said, Handy. You—you hopeless chump! You blithering cuckoo! You blundering jackass!"

"Look here——"

"I mean it!" said Mac, exasperated. "What the dickens do you mean by coming up to us and roaring out that there's going to be a special test match before the real match on Monday?"

"My hat!" ejaculated Handforth. "Did—did I say that?"

"Yes, you did!" snorted Church. "We only just dragged you away in the nick of time."

"I'll do it better now," said Handforth. "You chaps had better find another shop window——"

"Rats!" said Church. "You can look in the shop window, and I'll come along and start the rumour."

And, for once, Handforth's chums were firm. They knew how excitable their leader was, and they did not trust him

again. So, in Grenfell Street, it was Church who came rushing up to his chums.

"Hallo, you fellows!" he said, with pretended excitement. "Heard the latest?"

"What about?" asked Mac.

"The Test match!" said Church loudly. "It's starting to-morrow morning, at half-past eleven!"

"What!"

"Fact!" said Church, as he noticed a number of people looking at him. "It's absolutely official! And it's going to be played in the Collegiate Oval, too."

"The Test match?" yelled McClure.

"Yes, the Test match!"

"England versus Australia?"

"Yes!" roared Church enthusiastically. "Ripping, isn't it?"

They passed on, arm in arm, leaving all sorts of people in full possession of those facts and discussing them incredulously. Everybody knew that the Test match didn't start until the following Monday. So what were these English schoolboys talking about?

TEST MATCH
MEMENTOES!

Every boy, surely, would like lasting mementoes of England's victorious Test Team now in Australia. Buy next week's NELSON LEE and you'll have four of them with

MORE TO FOLLOW!

What could they mean by saying that the Test match would start on the morrow, and, moreover, in the Collegiate Oval?

"We did that very well!" said Handforth complacently, when he and his chums had reached the vicinity of the Post-Office, on the corner of Franklin Street.

"I like the 'we,' chuckled Mac. "You didn't do a thing, Handy! That's why it was a success!"

"Well, I'll do it now!" said Handforth, with a grunt. "You're mad!" he added loudly. "Clean off your heads. What do you mean by telling me that the Test match is going to start to-morrow?"

"So it is!" shouted Church.

And they went through the pantomime again—Handforth, this time, taking an active part, and, remembering to be cautious in what he said.

"Hey, young 'un!" ejaculated a hefty looking man, who might have been a cattle-station hand, as he seized Handforth's shoulder. "What's that you're saying about the Test match?"

"Eh?" gasped Handforth, as he was swung round. "I was talking to my chums

"Starting to-morrow, is it?" said the man, with a laugh.

"Yes."

"You've got it all wrong, kid! The game doesn't start until Monday!"

"All right—have your own way!" retorted Handforth. "But I know jolly well that the test match starts to-morrow, in the Collegiate Oval. Everybody's talking about it!"

Curiously enough, this man had just heard the rumour from another quarter. Some of the other St. Frank's fellows had been talking in a neighbouring street, and the word had passed from mouth to mouth. This apparent verification of the story caused the man to get very excited.

He went running across the road, narrowly escaping being hit by a passing car, and he charged into a crowd of other men.

"The game is starting to-morrow—our boys against the Englishmen!" he shouted, at the top of his voice. "It's true!"

"Don't you believe it!"

"Somebody's been filling you with guyver."

"You needn't believe it unless you like!" shouted the man. "But I tell you it's true—dinkum oil!"

Handforth & Co. stood on the other side of the street, watching and listening. A crowd was already collecting, and the excitement was growing.

"My only hat!" murmured Church. "We've started something this time!"

"That chap looks like getting into trouble!" said Handforth.

"We'd better slide out of the picture," murmured Church uneasily. "Come on, you chaps!"

"Wait a bit!" said Handforth. "Let's see what happens. What a lark if a tremendous crowd gathers!"

But at that moment a number of young fellows, having come to the conclusion that the excited man needed cooling down, grabbed a fire-extinguisher from a taxi-cab that was standing near by. The nozzle was bumped on to the pavement, and a hissing stream of liquid came shooting out.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A roar of laughter went up as the cattle-station hand—or whoever he happened to be—received that stream of liquid full in the face. He staggered back, roaring, and the other men shouted with fresh laughter.

"That'll cool you off, digger," shouted somebody. "Don't you believe these rumours about the Test match. They're all ribuck!"

Handforth & Co. discreetly slipped off into another street.

"We'd better go easy from now on," said Church. "In fact, we'd better be making a move towards the station. Which is the way? We've got to get to North Terrace, haven't we?"

In the meantime, other groups of juniors were doing the good work in various other parts of Adelaide. The rumours were flying about with incredible rapidity. Throughout that great city people were talking about the Test match—about the wild stories that were being told. And, as is generally the case where rumours are concerned, a certain number of people were ready enough to believe them. Even the people who heard these rumours with scorn could not help wondering how they had got about: and so, as the evening wore on, the situation grew more and more interesting.

And the St. Frank's fellows, finding themselves once more back on the School Ship, compared notes, and congratulated themselves on the success of their enterprise. It was now up to William Napoleon Browne to do his big act!

CHAPTER 15.

Browne on the Job!



HUGE, luxuriously-appointed saloon-car glided to a standstill opposite the "Adelaide Sentinel"

editorial offices. It was not far from midnight, and the city was quietening down—although, owing to the prevailing holiday spirit, the streets were still fairly lively.

People stared wonderingly at that well-appointed car. On the lower part of the wind-screen was an imposing label, carrying the words: "Manager, ENGLAND TEST TEAM." The chauffeur was in livery, and behind, seated in all his glory, was a tall, distinguished-looking stranger.

He appeared to be a man of about thirty, with a moustache and rimless pince-nez. He was attired in immaculate evening-dress, with a light overcoat, carelessly left open.

All down King William Street this car and its solitary occupant had attracted widespread attention. Indeed, it had caused no little excitement. For many people were still talking about those wild rumours that had been going about.

And now—this car!

The manager of the England Test team. This, in itself, was significant. What was the manager doing here, on Thursday night? Of course, there was no reason why the M.C.C. manager should not drive through Adelaide, but, at the same time, the circumstance was interesting.

Everybody who saw that car took it for granted that it was connected with the M.C.C. That it could merely contain a senior schoolboy was a thought that occurred to nobody. William Napoleon Browne was "made up" so cleverly that it was ridiculous to imagine that he could be a schoolboy. Browne, as he had frequently proved, was a consummate actor.

The car having stopped, he stepped briskly out of it, walked into the "Sentinel" offices, and found himself in a kind of lobby, with an inquiry office near by. Two men were already inspecting him with great interest.

"Where," asked Browne, in businesslike tones, "can I find the chief editor?"

"Mr. Harrington, do you mean?" asked one of the men.

"If he is the chief editor—yes!" said Browne. "A personal interview is absolutely essential. And as time is money, and I have no time to waste, this will no doubt be a measure of economy."

And he handed a pound note to the nearest man.

"What name shall I give?" asked the man, in an awed voice.

"Browne—just plain Browne," said the visitor. "You may mention, at the same time, that I am the manager of the England test team."

"Here, I say, sir!" asked the other man excitedly. "Is it true about the game to-morrow?"

"Perfectly true," replied Browne. "However, I must remind you—"

He broke off, as the man who had taken his money hurried away. In less than a minute the man was back, and William Napoleon Browne was being ushered along a wide corridor. That liberal tip had done the trick. Browne found himself ushered into the presence of Mr. Grant Harrington, the editor-in-chief of the "Adelaide Sentinel."

Mr. Grant Harrington, in shirt sleeves and collarless, was in his office, working hard. His desk was littered with cuttings, with papers, and there were two or three telephones within reach. Underlings dodged in and out, and the air of hustle and bustle was tremendous.

"I'm glad to see you, colonel, but you've sure called at an awkward time," said Mr. Harrington briskly. "And I'll tell you

right now that if you had been any other man I wouldn't have seen you."

"But, being the manager of the England test team, you felt disposed, no doubt, to waive a point?" said Browne, sitting down. "Look here, my friend. I've got some big news for you. I understand that this is the most important newspaper in Adelaide?"

"I'll tell the world it is!" said the editor promptly.

"If you tell me, it will be quite sufficient," said Browne. "Owing to a certain sudden decision, a big step has been taken with regard to the Test match. If I give you this exclusive item of news, I take it that you will circulate it to the other Adelaide newspapers?"

Mr. Harrington's eyes opened wide.

"Sure!" he ejaculated, after a moment.

He could tell that his visitor was English—extravagantly English. In point of fact, in Mr. Harrington's eyes, he looked a boob. However, as Browne had intended to give this impression, he was perfectly satisfied.

"That has lifted a great load off my mind," he said, with relief. "I should hate to go from office to office, bothering you editors."

"Give your item to me, colonel, and I'll see that it goes to the right quarters," said the American, with a nod. "Is it anything important?"

"As a matter of fact, it is vital."

"Do tell!" said Mr. Harrington politely. "You're the manager of the M.C.C., aren't you? You're taking care of the English cricketers?"

"I am the manager of the England team!" replied Browne.

"But I thought some other guy had your job?" asked Mr. Harrington, with a frown. "Major—"

"I have been recently appointed to this position," interrupted Browne. "But that is neither here nor there, my dear sir. I desire you to announce, in your morning's edition, that the test match will be played to-morrow."

"What?" shouted the editor.

"To-morrow," said Browne, "the test match will start."

"Gee whiz!" ejaculated the editor. "Say, are you trying to put something over? This game doesn't start until Monday."

Browne drew himself up with dignity.

"I am the manager of the team, and I ought to know," he replied, with some asperity. "Whatever you may have heard, Mr. Harrington, I am now telling you, quite exclusively, that the test match starts to-morrow, at eleven-thirty, in the Collegiate Oval. It is most important that this news should be announced as quickly as possible."

"Gosh, then the rumours we've been hearing are true? I had a paragraph all set up—"

"A paragraph?" repeated Browne, with scorn. "The front page, Mr. Harrington! Nothing less than the front page—and the

whole of the front page! You don't seem to realise that this item of news is——"

"Say, is this on the level?" demanded Mr. Harrington, leaping to his feet and leaning across his desk, his eyes gleaming. "Now, sir, I'm asking you—is this on the level?"

Browne sighed.

"Do you take me for an impostor?" he asked coldly. "I am telling you that the test match starts to-morrow, but if you do not choose to believe me, I shall go elsewhere. No doubt there are other editors——"

"Say, stay right where you are!" interrupted Mr. Harrington promptly. "Now, let me see," he went on, seizing a pencil and a piece of paper. "Let's get this right."

He dotted down the details, and Browne, cool and eloquent, had little difficulty in convincing Mr. Grant Harrington that the information was not merely official, but absolutely beyond doubt!

CHAPTER 16.

A Bombshell for Adelaide!



It is possible that Mr. Grant Harrington had no desire to inquire too closely into the authenticity of the

staggering news that his visitor had imparted. He took Browne at his face value, and he took Browne's information in exactly the same way.

Here was the chance of a big scoop. It was a fact that the "Sentinel" was losing money, and a great "story" like this was sufficient to establish the newspaper once and for all.

Mr. Harrington's contempt for the English was so great that he took it for granted that his visitor was a brainless nincompoop. Being connected with cricket, he could scarcely be anything else. Mr. Harrington's scorn for cricket was as great as his scorn for the English. Needless to say, he had not the slightest intention of passing this news on to any other editor. He intended to keep this scoop for himself.

And Browne, who had expected to experience some little difficulty, was gratified at his easy success. He had hoodwinked this hustling American editor with supreme ease, and not long after he had taken his departure from the "Sentinel" offices the entire editorial staff was working like mad.

Browne was doing the thing thoroughly. He had taken a room in one of Adelaide's most exclusive hotels, and he had invited Mr. Harrington to ring him up if he desired any further information, and this, in itself, seemed to be a guarantee of good faith.

However, Mr. Harrington did not ring up. He was too anxious to keep this story exclusively for his newspaper.

Before long the printing presses were roaring at full speed, and, in anticipation of the

tremendous demand, tens of thousands of extra copies were being printed.

The imperturbable Browne slept like a top that night, but he was up at a very early hour. Having observed that Adelaide was already beginning to seethe—according to programme—and having purchased two or three copies of the "Sentinel," he betook himself off to the School Ship. He left Adelaide in a condition bordering upon fever—Adelaide, not Browne.

When he arrived on board, he found the fellows just turning out. Seniors and juniors were coming on deck, to breathe in the clear, fresh air of the cool morning.

"Greetings, brothers," said Browne amiably. "If you have observed strange rumblings from the direction of Adelaide, you will doubtless be relieved to learn that everything is so far safe."

"Rumblings?" repeated Fenton, who happened to be there. "We've heard nothing."

"Then you do not know of the bombshell that has been exploded this morning?"

"What's your game, Browne?" asked Fenton, looking straight at the Fifth Form skipper. "I understand that you got special leave last night? What on earth were you doing in Adelaide?"

"Why inquire about my doings?" said Browne. "Take a glance at this, Brother Fenton. But be warned in time. If you have any brandy near by, get a firm half-nelson on it in advance. You will need a reviver."

"Idiot!" said the St. Frank's skipper.

He took the copy of the "Adelaide Sentinel" and opened it. A number of other seniors, who had gathered round, looked over Fenton's shoulder amusedly. Then suddenly they became rigid. Fenton himself uttered a gasp.

"Great Scott!" he ejaculated blankly.

"I must remind you that I gave you full warning," murmured Browne.

"But—but what does this mean?" shouted Fenton.

The other seniors were shouting, too. For there, right across the front page of that newspaper, were the startling words:

"TEST MATCH SENSATION!"

and these words were printed in big, black type.

Underneath there were further startling headlines:

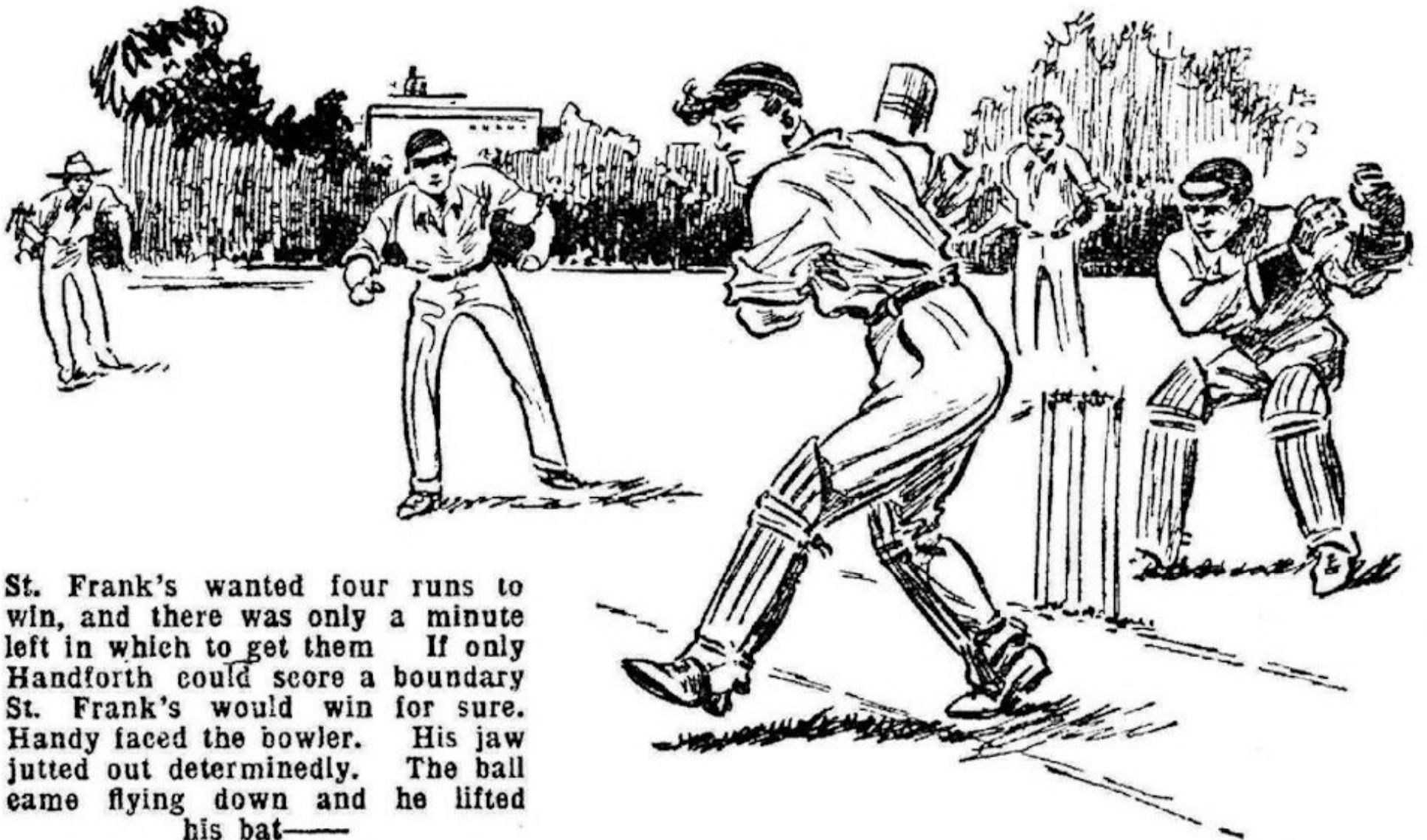
"ENGLAND v. AUSTRALIA GAME STARTS TO-DAY IN CITY. STARTLING CHANGE IN M.C.C. PLANS."

"But—but—but——" said Fenton helplessly.

"Read on, brother," beamed Browne.

"Listen to this, you fellows!" ejaculated Fenton breathlessly. "Look what it says here:

"This newspaper, with its usual dead-on-the-mark accuracy, is able to



St. Frank's wanted four runs to win, and there was only a minute left in which to get them. If only Handforth could score a boundary St. Frank's would win for sure. Handy faced the bowler. His jaw jutted out determinedly. The ball came flying down and he lifted his bat——

announce exclusively an unprecedented change in the M.C.C. programme. The fourth Test match of the series, previously arranged to commence on Monday next, has been put forward by three days. This game will positively start to-day, Friday, at eleven-thirty a.m., in the Collegiate Oval. Our readers will be gratified to know that once again this newspaper has got ahead of all its rivals. Our information is official and guaranteed, having been imparted to us by the touring manager of the M.C.C. himself."

"They're mad!" said Biggleswade, startled. "That's our game they're talking about."

"Of course it is!" ejaculated Fenton. "We're playing to-day, in the Collegiate Oval, at half-past eleven! What on earth does this newspaper mean by announcing that the real Test match starts to-day?"

"A singularly asinine misapprehension, brother," said Browne blandly. "It is possible, of course, that the editor of this rag misinterpreted my brief conversation with him——"

"What?" gasped Fenton. "Do you mean to say that you—— Browne," he added fiercely, "are you responsible for this?"

"It is my greatest triumph," said Browne modestly.

"Why, you—you——"

"Reserve your congratulations until later, Brother Fenton," smiled Browne. "I am, as you know, of a modest disposition——"

"Congratulations be hanged!" roared Fenton. "You dangerous idiot! There's no excuse for playing a trick like this! You've hoaxed this newspaper!"

"And I trust that the newspaper will be so discredited that its circulation will wither and dry up!" said Browne, nodding. "You

may recall, Brother Fenton, that it was this rag which printed such a libellous column concerning ourselves only yesterday. Retribution has overtaken this American journalist, from Chicago, Ill., or wherever he happens to hail from."

Just then a crowd of juniors came along, and they heard the news, too. Within five minutes all the St. Frank's fellows had heard, and the School Ship became a shouting, roaring mob of excited fellows. And gradually the startled shouts changed to roars of laughter, and they grew more and more hilarious as the full significance of the hoax was appreciated.



CHAPTER 17.

At the Collegiate Oval!

"Y George! It worked, then!" said Edward Oswald Handforth dazedly. "Oh, my only hat! Old Browne did the trick!"

"It's almost too good to be true!" said Nipper.

He and a number of other juniors were gazing at that front page of the "Adelaide Sentinel." But there it was—in bold print. All the established, respectable newspapers of Adelaide had, of course, made no reference to this sensation. Even if they had contained the news, they would not have given it any prominence—for they would have known, quickly enough, that it was a hoax. But Mr. Grant Harrington, in his super-cleverness, had come a cropper.

It is even possible that the American editor had some doubts regarding the authenticity

of that story, and he probably thought that after the excitement was over the game would have been worth the candle. He would have sold tens of thousands more newspapers that morning, thus placing the periodical into the hands of new readers. But these questionable methods were not likely to be profitable in Adelaide.

And although Adelaide, as a whole, received the news with scepticism, there were, nevertheless, a certain number of people who believed the newspaper report. It certainly seemed true enough. There it was in black and white, and, in this report, it was no longer a rumour. It was declared to be official. All the other newspapers made no mention of the story—but, then, the "Sentinel" made a strong point of announcing that this news was exclusive. It really did seem that an unprecedented situation had arisen, and that for some reason the great Test match was to start to-day.

At all events, all roads leading to the Collegiate Oval were soon choked with animated humanity. And at the great enclosure everything seemed to indicate that the newspaper had told a true story.

For at the many turnstiles men were ready, prices had been posted up, and there were great bills, too, bearing the words: "England v Australia." There seemed no shadow of doubt that the great match was really to start this morning.

On the School Ship everybody was happy. Browne was the hero of the hour. He had hoaxed that unpleasant, sneering American editor.

Not only the St. Frank's eleven, but practically the entire school set off for the Collegiate Oval directly after breakfast. When the fellows arrived they were startled and dumbfounded to find the place absolutely besieged.

Seldom had they seen such great crowds. Like wildfire the startling news had spread throughout the city, and thousands of people were pouring into the enclosures. A large proportion of this crowd, even now, could not believe that the Test match was really starting to-day. But they had come, all the same—to see what actually would happen.

"There's going to be some trouble before long," said Fenton, not without a certain amount of uneasiness. "Browne, what do you propose to do about this?"

"I am well prepared, brother," replied Browne calmly.

"I hope you are!" said Fenton. "Creat Scott! There'll be a riot when we appear on the field! These people are expecting the real Test match—and you can just imagine what their feelings will be when they find that it's only a schoolboy game!"

"We shall probably be tied to the nearest lamp-posts," said Biggleswade.

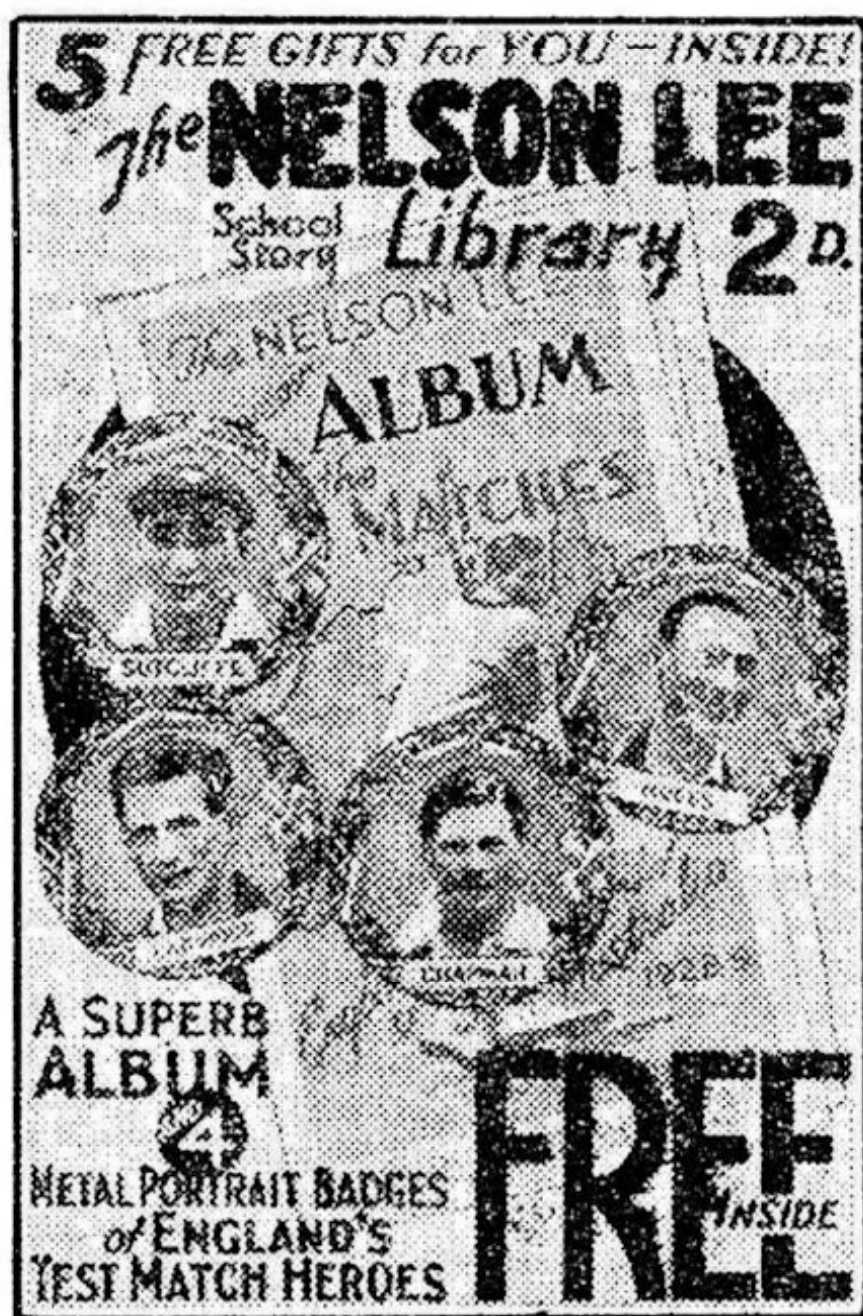
"Are we to be held responsible for the blunderings of a newspaper editor?" asked Browne mildly. "Where is your sense of justice, brothers?"

"Never mind our sense of justice," said Fenton. "The fact remains that these people have been hoaxed. The newspaper editor isn't on the spot—and we are! We shall certainly be lucky to escape unscathed!"

"In that case, why go in?" asked Biggleswade.

But Browne had made all arrangements, and the St. Frank's crowd gained admission by a special door. Not that they were allowed to enter free. Everybody, except the members of the Eleven, had to pay to get into the grandstand. There was a lot of indignation about this—but Browne

NEXT WEDNESDAY'S COVER!



was as firm as a rock. Those who couldn't afford to come in were kept out. Yet it was noticed that Browne stalked up and down amongst the ranks of the fags, and the more impecunious Removites and Fourth-Formers, distributing cash.

Anyhow, everybody got in all right, and by this time the enclosure was practically full. The excitement was tremendous. All the gates had to be closed half-an-hour before the game was due to start, and still there were thousands of people arriving from every quarter of Adelaide.

The majority who came were beset by doubts. They could not believe that astounding newspaper story; yet the way to verify the report was to come to this ground. Seldom had the fair City of Adelaide known such a sensation.

The Australian schoolboys, captained by Tom Warwick, were dumbfounded. The whole thing had hit them like a blow between the eyes. They had known nothing of it overnight, and now they were bewildered. They had expected to play St. Frank's with only a sprinkling of spectators looking on. And instead they found themselves faced by this tremendous multitude. It was a multitude, moreover, which would probably turn exceedingly wrath when it discovered that the Test match was a mere schoolboy game.

The first indications came when the umpires appeared. They were both senior schoolboys.

**NEXT WEEK'S
EXTRA-SPECIAL ISSUE!**

FIVE FINE FREE GIFTS

"ST. FRANK'S AT THE TEST MATCH!"

Nipper and his cheery chums from the School Ship "look in" at the fourth Test match.

"RIVALS OF THE BLUE CRUSADERS!"

The opening instalment of a rousing new football and dirt-track racing serial, written by your favourite author, Edwy Searles Brooks.

Win a "JAMES" Go Any- where Bicycle!

All readers will have a chance of winning this bicycle, or a Hobbs' cricket bat, by entering the simple and interesting competition which appears next week.

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

Then the players, clad in immaculate white, sauntered out over the turf. A kind of ripple passed through the packed enclosure; a growling, muttering sound filled the air, and it rose rapidly to a mighty roar.

For all these people—who had paid for their seats—could see that these cricketers were schoolboys. Some of them were youths of eighteen or nineteen, but others were merely youngsters of fifteen. They were all schoolboys! This was not the Test match at all!

A great roar went welling up, angry and infuriated. Adelaide was beginning to realise, with full force, that it had been hoaxed.

And the only St. Frank's fellow who remained perfectly calm was William Napoleon

Browne. Since he was the instigator of the whole affair, this was pretty cool on his part. But then, Browne was never anything else but cool.



CHAPTER 18.

Leave it to Browne!

"E'VE been swindled!"

"It's a fraud!"

"It's not the Test match at all!"

These, and many other shouts—far more violent—rent the air of that hot, sunny morning. One man, who was madly excited, was gaining the attention of a large section of the crowd.

"We're not going to stop here and watch these schoolboys!" he was yelling. "We'll have our money back!"

"Yes, yes!"

"Too right, we will!"

And if we don't get it, we'll know the reason why!" roared the hothead. "After that, we'll go to the 'Sentinel' office——"

A roar of approval met this statement.

"We'll go to the 'Sentinel' office!" bellowed the man. "We'll burn the place down!"

There was not so much approval now. A few of the more excited spectators shouted their agreement, but the great majority of the people received this call to hooliganism without much enthusiasm.

However, Adelaide, like every other great city on this earth, has its undesirable element, and it is a curious fact that these men generally have plenty of money to attend amusements and games. There were many in that vast crowd who were ready enough to commit some drastic act of violence. But before the hotheads could gain any support, a voice sounded tremendously in the enclosure, booming out so that every single person could hear.

"Brothers—Aussies—Cobbers—lend me your ears!" came the voice. "A word of explanation, perhaps, will not be out of place before this great match commences!"

Everybody was silent; everybody wondered where that great voice was coming from. And then hands pointed. All over the ground there were big wireless loud-speakers. As a matter of fact, William Napoleon Browne was standing on the balcony of the big grand stand, and he was speaking calmly into a microphone.

"Before dealing harshly and unmercifully with the editor of the 'Sentinel,' let me give you the inner history of this episode," said Browne. "To begin with, my name is Browne, and I am honoured to be in the Fifth Form of St. Frank's College. In due course, you will see me on the field of play. You will know me at once when you see the tall, handsome, distinguished looking——"

"Cut it out!"

Yells and cat-calls interrupted Browne, but he was in no way perturbed.

"I am more responsible for this hoax than is the editor of the 'Sentinel'," he continued. "Although, mark you, seldom have I known such a fatheaded, dithering blunder to be made. As a source of reliable news, I cannot truthfully recommend the 'Sentinel.' It was I who gave the false information to the editor——"

Another roar of anger interrupted him, and he calmly waited until it died down.

"However, do not judge me too hastily," he continued at length. "At this present moment, no doubt, you would like to rend me limb from limb. But I would point out that I am in a position of safety. You can grasp nothing but my voice, and with that you may do as you will."

Everybody except the more unruly members of the crowd were beginning to take notice. They could not help liking Browne's cool, conversational tone. There was, too, something irresistibly likeable about his method of speech.

"Being English, I have always understood that the Australians were true sportsmen," said Browne smoothly. "I see no reason why I should alter that opinion. Brothers, sisters, let me tell you a few facts. The 'Sentinel' was hoaxed by me, and I therefore urge you to absolve the editor from blame. In passing, however, I would like to remark that this American gentleman did not keep faith with me, since he promised to pass on my news to every other Adelaide newspaper. I have since learned that he did nothing of the sort, and from that you may draw your own conclusions."

Incidentally, fully ninety per cent of Browne's listeners resolved, then and there, that they would never buy another copy of the "Sentinel" as long as they lived. A newspaper that could perpetrate such a blunder as this was not worthy of support. There wasn't the slightest doubt that the "Adelaide Sentinel" was doomed to dismal failure. Mr. Grant Harrington had more than met his match in William Napoleon Browne. His insult to the St. Frank's boys had received its reward.

"I may frankly tell you that I expected a full gathering, brothers," said Browne genially. "And it was I who fixed the prices of admission——"

A prolonged yell greeted this statement.

"Not, however, that I desire any of this money for myself," urged Browne. "Neither do any of my fellow-players require any recompense. Cricket is a game—a noble sport—the king of games. And we, of St. Frank's College, play for the love of it—as, indeed, do the boys of these Adelaide colleges who are soon to appear before you."

"What are you going to do with all the money, then?" shouted a voice.

"Yes, what about it?"

"If you don't want it for yourselves, who gets it?"

"That, brothers, is the point that I am now about to make clear," said Browne, his voice audible in every section of the great ground. "But let me assure you that you will get full value for your money. I can state, without fear of contradiction, that the cricket you are now about to witness will satisfy your most ardent desires. And when I told the editorial gentleman that the game was to be Australia v. England, I was truthful. In every sense of the word, this game is to be a test match——"

"What about the money?" roared somebody.

"Ah, the money!" nodded Browne. "Well, brothers and sisters, the entire proceeds of this match are available. If you so choose, you will receive your money back, and no questions will be asked. You are at liberty to take your departure at once, if you want to. But, before there is a stampede, let me explain that if you are content to remain, every pound of this money—every deener—goes to the Adelaide hospitals."

There was a complete silence at this announcement.

"I have taken care to make very full preparations," said Browne smoothly. "Hospital officials are with me at the moment, and I must explain that I have given these gentlemen a complete outline of my programme. As I said, you can get your money back if you wish—but if you decide to remain, and witness this schoolboy test match, then you will have the satisfaction of knowing that your money is going into the coffers of the hospitals."

And, as William Napoleon Browne had confidently expected, not a soul in that great gathering moved. Somebody started cheering, and this was echoed by others; then, like magic, it swept round the ground, and within the next second or two thousands of throats were lifted in cheers and laughter.

Browne, as usual, had won the crowd over.



CHAPTER 19.

England v. Australia!

"GOOD old Browne!"

"Hurrah!"

"By George! The man's a wonder!"

Hand forth was shouting excitedly, and many of the other St. Frank's juniors were equally animated. They had been expecting all sorts of trouble, and they were overjoyed by the way Browne had smoothed the turbulent waters. The crowds, instead of being hostile, were now thoroughly good-natured. They had seen the humour of this situation, and, being true sportsmen, the audacity of it appealed to them.

"You're all right, young 'un!"

"Too right, he is!"

"We'll stay and see the match!"

"Hear, hear!"

"One more moment, and you will then be robbed of the pleasure of hearing my voice—which, I may add, is by no means as harsh as these loud-speakers would have you believe," said Browne genially. "It came to my knowledge that there was a very successful flag-day recently. Adelaide responded nobly to the call; but, at the same time, the hospitals failed to obtain the full money they so urgently required. I can say with confidence that if you all retain your seats, the money taken at the gates this morning will bring the total for the hospitals to the desired mark."

There was more cheering at this, and then Browne, with rare diplomacy, introduced one of the most popular of Adelaide's public men to the microphone. As soon as this gentleman's name was heard, and as soon as he started speaking, the vast audience rose at him and cheered madly. It was, in a way, the hall-mark which stamped William Napoleon Browne's efforts as sterling.

Only a few words from this famous public man were necessary. He substantiated everything that Browne had said, and concluded by requesting the crowd to give Browne three hearty cheers for his extraordinarily clever piece of work—which had resulted in a splendid windfall for the hospitals. He further urged that the crowds should wait and see these valiant schoolboys in action.

And the crowds waited.

What was more to the point, the crowds were glad that they had waited. For after this game had started—which everybody expected to be tame—it was soon discovered that cricket of a very high standard was being exhibited.

Tom Warwick won the toss, and it was the St. Frank's fellows who came out on to the field—promptly on the stroke of eleven-thirty, as announced. The wicket was in perfect condition, and the luck of the toss was a very important factor in a two-day game like this.

There was something very businesslike about the St. Frank's Eleven—something very workmanlike in the way Fenton placed his field. The spectators almost forgot that they were watching schoolboys. Cricket, here, was taken seriously, and practically every one of those spectators were keen critics, who knew all the finer points of the game.

Browne of the Fifth, and Gresham of the Remove, opened the bowling—Browne starting off from the pavilion end. A mighty cheer went up as he delivered his first ball—for he was recognised as the tall, lanky youth who had been at the microphone.

And during that first over the crowd began to realise that these youthful cricketers were "hot stuff." Browne's bowling was masterly, and the first over proved to be a maiden.

Then came Harry Gresham—a mere junior—whose father was "Hat Trick Gresham," who, in his own cricketing days,

had played in Australia on many occasions—and for England, too.

Gresham opened his over in dazzling fashion. Ordinarily, he was a cheery, normal kind of junior. But on the cricket field Gresham was a different being.

With his first ball he completely spread-eagled the Australian batsman's wicket—before that unhappy youth had scored a single run. A great roar went up. One wicket down, and not a run on the board!

"Good old Gresham!"

"Hurrah!"

"Don't forget your pater's name!"

But Harry Gresham did not perform the hat trick—nor did he have the remotest idea that any such thing was possible. Indeed, after that early disaster, the Australian schoolboys settled down steadily, and the second wicket partnership lasted until the luncheon interval. The bowlers were having the worst of it, and when the hundred went up on the board there was a rousing cheer of encouragement.

After lunch scarcely any of the crowds had gone. They were realising that this match was a kind of dress rehearsal for the great game which would start on Monday. Young England v. Young Australia were giving a masterly display.

Immediately after the resumption of play, Fenton secured a wicket, and Gresham followed this success by getting two more wickets in rapid succession.

But the Australian juniors were by no means done. There was not a sign of collapse. The score mounted steadily—200—250. With seven wickets down, the total had reached 315. Then came another stand, and the St. Frank's players had a gruelling time in the blazing afternoon heat, chasing the leather.

Just before the tea interval Handforth brought off a typical energetic catch, which earned him a roar of enthusiastic applause. Eight wickets down.

Then came tea, and still more hard work after it. Finally, the last wicket fell with the Australian total at 412. It had been quick scoring—brilliant, entertaining cricket. Not one moment of that day's play had been dull or dreary. The young Australian batsmen had shown the Adelaide people something they had never seen before. For the general public was not in the habit of coming to these school matches, and had never realised that they could be so worth-while.

Fenton and Reynolds opened the St. Frank's innings, but there was very little time before stumps were drawn. A mere sixteen showed on the board at the close of play, and no wickets had been taken.

The crowds departed, lighted-hearted, contented. And it was significant that an enormous percentage of the spectators stated their intention of coming again on the morrow—to see these English schoolboys batting. Fenton and Reynolds had given them a mere sample—but they wanted some more!



CHAPTER 20.

Well Done, St. Franks!

"BROWNE, you're a marvell!" said Fenton frankly.

William Napoleon Browne smiled.

"I would point out, Brother Fenton, that I have been aware of that fact for quite a number of years," he said, in a kindly voice. "But do not praise me unduly. I was born with these great gifts—"

"How on earth you had the nerve to carry it through beats me!" went on Fenton. "I never expected to find this crowd here this morning."

It was Saturday now—and the hour was nearly eleven-thirty. Much to Edgar Fenton's astonishment—indeed, much to the astonishment of all the St. Frank's fellows, except Browne—hardly an inch of room was left in the enclosures. Adelaide had turned up again, in full force.

"Yesterday, they came because they thought they were going to see the real Test match," said Fenton. "But to-day they came with their eyes open—they knew that they were paying money just to see us. And I'm hanged if they haven't rolled up as enthusiastically as ever!"

"The people of Adelaide are sportsmen," said Browne calmly. "Had I not been assured of that fact from the first, I should not have dared to perpetrate the hoax."

"Well, good luck to the hospitals," said Nipper. "They'll get another big sum to-day."

"And we've got to see that the crowd get their money's worth," said Fenton earnestly. "It would be an awful fizzle if we collapsed. But that Australian total is a formidable one. 412, you fellows!"

Browne waved a hand.

"Wait until I get to the wicket," he said calmly. "Do not despair, brothers. The game will be ours."

When the play started, Fenton proceeded to give one of the finest displays of his career. The St. Frank's captain was on his mettle, and although Reynolds left when the total was at 73, and Wilson only scored a modest 15 runs, Fenton carried on until he had gained his century in masterly style.

By then he seemed to be absolutely set, but during the very next over he gave the very slimmest of slim chances to second slip, and the leather was held, and Fenton was out. He had scored 103, and he came in for a tremendous ovation as he walked to the pavilion.

He had played cricket like a genuine Test match player, and the spectators recognised Fenton at his true worth.

Harry Gresham did well, too. He scored 52. Nipper, batting brilliantly, did even

better. He mounted his individual total to 74 before he was unfortunate enough to be stumped.

Stevens and Christine were unlucky, scoring 5 and 7 respectively.

At the tea interval, after a day of exciting ups and downs, the game was in an exceedingly interesting condition. The total stood at 320, which meant that nearly a hundreds runs were required to win the game. And there was hardly time.

Conroy major and Browne were batting, Browne having only just come in; and the great man of the Fifth proceeded to buck things up wonderfully.

Browne knew that the only chance of success was to hit, and to hit hard. Quick runs were required. Otherwise the time would arrive for stumps to be drawn, and the game would be a draw. Browne considered that the only way to save the game was to go all out for runs, and to get the necessary 413 before the close of play.

Conroy was good, but he was slow. Exasperatingly enough, he scored a single now and again, generally at the end of an over, so that time was wasted—for Browne, the hard-hitter, was compelled to be idle.

Then came Conroy's dismissal, and Fenton did not hesitate to send in Handforth. Handforth was tenth man, and he was reckless. There was just a chance, however, that he would score some quick runs. If he failed, the game would be lost. For Boots could not be expected to do anything spectacular as last man.

"Runs, brother—runs!" murmured Browne, as Handforth passed him.

"Just you watch me!" said Handforth confidently.

And not only Browne watched him, but the Adelaide crowds, too. They watched him with growing wonder, marvelling that his wicket could remain intact.

For Edward Oswald Handforth, realising the urgent necessity for runs, and being horribly reckless by nature, sloshed out at everything. He hit his very first ball to the boundary, and during that one over he should have been dismissed at least twice. But his wicket seemed to bear a charmed existence.

There was no style about Handforth's play—but it was certainly spectacular. He threw caution to the winds, swiped at everything, and scored with amazing rapidity.

During that last half-hour of play those spectators who remained witnessed the most thrilling cricket of the day. Many people had gone away, convinced that St. Frank's would lose, or that the game would be drawn. These people missed a rare treat.

For Browne and Handforth played dazzling cricket. Fours and threes were the order. And it didn't matter whether Browne received the bowling, or whether Handforth received it. They were both slogging hard, both scoring at a tremendous rate.

"Will they do it" asked Fenton breathlessly.

"By Jove, I wonder!" said Nipper. "There's only five minutes more to go, and I don't think it's possible— Oh, well hit. Handy! Boundary!"

And another tremendous roar went up when the 400 appeared on the board.

Twelve runs needed for a draw—13 for a victory—and only one more over to go!

The over started, and Browne promptly lashed out. Away went the leather, but it was stopped brilliantly, and only resulted in a single.

Handforth swept the next ball away to the boundary, and every St. Frank's fellow present held his breath painfully when the bowler started his next run.

Clack!

"Oh, my hat! He's done it again!" gasped Church.

It was true. Another boundary! And the score stood at 409.

Handforth set his teeth, gripped his bat and thrust his jaw out. He watched the bowler as a cat watches a mouse.

Down came the leather, up went Edward Oswald's willow.

"Hurrah!"

A terrific cheer went up as it was seen that Handforth, for the third time, had hit the ball to the boundary!

"St. Frank's wins!"

"Well played, Handy!"

It was extraordinary. Just as the St. Frank's fellows had beaten the South African schoolboys' Test team, so they had beaten the Australian schoolboy Test team—by one run!

And everybody was satisfied—including all those thousands of people who had paid for admission.

And now the way was clear for the real Test match—the genuine thing—which would definitely and positively begin on the Monday!

THE END.

(You can be sure that the St. Frank's boys go and watch that Test match. Also look out for a great surprise in the next stunning yarn, which is entitled "St. Frank's at the Test Match!" And don't forget that Five Free Gifts are coming next Wednesday, too!)

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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.



T. M. TEDESCHI.

A GREAT many girl readers, in addition to yourself—Joan Sloper (Bath)—have written to me in reply to Reg T. Staples' query—why do girls read the Old Paper? In a nutshell, they all put the reason down to the fact that girls have got just as much sense as boys. And with this, of course, I heartily agree.

* * *

Here are the particulars you want—T. M. Tedeschi (Walsall)—concerning the East House boys: Cobb, Study No. 11. Turner, Page, No. 13. Conroy minor, Kemp, No. 17. Clifton, No. 14. Simms major is in the Fifth, and Simms minor in the Third. Modern House: Yakama, Study No. 4. Ellmore, No. 7. Lawrence, No. 2. West House: Canham, Study Q. Kerrigan is in the Third. Ancient House: Duncan, Adams, Study J. Somerton, G. Between thirty and forty East House characters have so far been mentioned in the stories, but I haven't the space to repeat them here. Your photo appears this week, and considering that you have been reading the Old Paper for nine years, I think you must have started very young, although I understand the photo is two years' old. And this suddenly makes me think of something. What the dickens do you mean by asking me for all these particulars (which I have been ass enough to give you) when you have been reading the Old Paper for so many years? You ought to know as much about the school as I do!

* * *

Here are the titles you ask for—Arthur R. Thomas (Mumbles)—107, "Loot"; 108, "The Kidnapped Stockbroker"; 109, "The Case of the Crimson Feathers"; 364, "The Horror of Bellton Wood"; 365, "The Dragon's Fangs"; 385, "The Remove to the Rescue." The St. Frank's Questionnaire and Sectional Map are still "in the air." You're not the only reader who is impatient, but you really *must* continue to wait. I dare say the Editor will agree to starting the Questionnaire very shortly, if there is enough evidence that it is wanted; but that Sectional Map is a gigantic task—far more gigantic than any of you readers can possibly imagine, and as I'm the author of these

yarns, I'm the only man who can do it properly, since the map, in its present form, is wholly contained in my mind's eye, and in nobody else's. And as I am kept tremendously busy writing stories, this map is purely a spare-time job. Thus I can't make any promises about it, as my spare time is very limited. I can only say that I'm slowly going ahead on the job, and one day possibly it will be ready for publication.

* * *

No—Rosamund Woods (Bricket Wood)—the Sixth-Formers have no authority over the Fifth, and it is not usual for prefects to give lines or impositions to William Napoleon Browne and his brethren. The Fifth-Formers are not allowed to employ fags, although they would much like to. This is a privilege which only full seniority carries with it. So you are another reader who wants a series featuring old Browne? If I get sufficient requests I shall seriously have to consider this. We cannot possibly publish the snapshot you sent, although you desire it. It is not only too small, but altogether too dark. Let's have that other photograph you promised, and please let it be a little bigger one.

* * *

Since you assure me—Rosina Carini (Thorpe Bay)—that your nationality is Italian, I shall have to be jolly careful. I was going to introduce an Italian villain into one of my stories, but now he'll have to be a Greek. On second thoughts, perhaps I'd better make him a half-breed. For all I know, we may have lots of Greek readers. You'll probably guess that I'm only joking here, for I know that all sensible overseas readers will not be offended if I happen to make one of their countrymen a rascal.

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NELSON LEE'S TRIUMPH! *Slowly but relentlessly the net has been closing round daring Stephen Langton, and at last he is forced to admit himself beaten. This concluding instalment is full of thrills and action.*

WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE ROVERS?



The "Bat" Beaten!

NIPPER grinned, and felt a little thrill. The two passengers looked relieved as Nelson Lee pressed the starter, and the machine skimmed over the tumbled waters of the North Sea.

Nelson Lee took a wide circle. Despite his impatience, he was having to kill time on a machine capable of travelling more than ten times as fast as the very fast boats they were following. But he knew they must be near the salvage ship now, and a sudden excited cry from Nipper confirmed that.

"By Jove, she's moving, guv'nor! Smoke pouring from her funnel. The 'Bat' must have got a move on!"

BOOM!

The four-inch gun in the bows of the leading destroyer had flashed in the darkness, and from the other warship came a great sweeping, searching beam of white.

"They've got her!" said Nelson Lee quietly. "I wish Langton hadn't folded up that landing deck of his, though."

The salvage ship was in the dazzling beam of the searchlight now, and suddenly Nipper, whose keen eyes were fixed ahead, gave a little cry of amazement. One of the destroyers, guns manned—vicious, threatening—was broadside on to the mystery ship, which had made a signal of surrender, but that great landing deck was being opened.

"The Bat must have spotted us, and wants to see us, guv'nor! He wouldn't try any tricks with the guns of a destroyer trained upon him!"

The great detective was putting the 'plane round in a wide circle again.

"I'll accept his invitation when he has some bluejackets for his guests!" was his calm reply.

He went round in a great sweeping circle, dropping rapidly. Nipper, staring into the dazzling light, saw the destroyer come alongside the ship, and saw men leap on board her. The 'plane passed over her, and its occupants could see armed sailors rounding up the men on board.

"That's the finish!" said Nelson Lee quietly, and, turning with a rapidity that startled his two passengers, he planed down gently on to the deck!

Explanations!

B RITISH sailors were in charge of the ship now, and a burly petty-officer, having ordered the wheels of the aeroplane in which Nelson Lee had arrived to be chocked, conducted the little party to the captain's cabin, where they found Langton and the black-bearded Dutchman, both handcuffed, being questioned by the sandy-haired commander of the destroyer. Telkemp looked sullen and despondent, but the "Bat" greeted them with a smile, and said:

"You win, Mr. Nelson Lee. I had an uncomfortable feeling that you would. And now that we are such a pleasant party, and the Chief Constable, or whatever I ought to call the gentleman who has decorated me with these bracelets, being anxious to question me, I am perfectly prepared to give you a frank account of the whole affair."

"I don't like playing policeman," growled the blunt-spoken sandy officer, "but I've got my job to do, and it's only fair to warn you that—"

"Oh, it can be used in evidence against me if anyone likes to take it down, but I regard it more as an informal chat," interrupted Langton. "Perhaps someone wouldn't mind giving me a cigarette. These handcuffs rather hamper one."

Nelson Lee crossed the cabin, placed a cigarette in the mouth of each of the prisoners, and lit them. Nipper felt a certain amount of admiration for Langton. He might be a dangerous crook, but he was certainly a cool and brave man in the hour of defeat, and the bearded Dutchman looked resigned.

It was a strange scene in the small cabin, the two prisoners smoking cigarettes, the bluff, sandy-haired officer in his dapper uniform, with a junior officer in attendance, Nelson Lee and Nipper in flying kit, and James Ridley and Mark Mayhew giving the prisoners anything but friendly glances.

And it was a strange story that Stephen Langton told them, though every word of it rang true.

It seemed that he had inherited a very large fortune as a young man, and his fortune had enabled him to develop his hobby of flying. But all his life he had craved excitement. He was a football enthusiast because, if one was really deeply concerned in the fortunes of a club, there could be a number of thrills in the ninety minutes' play. And then he had hit upon the idea that would give him a great personal interest in Northmouth Rovers, that would enable him to play the dangerous game he had been thinking about for some time, and he had talked it over with Telkemp, a wealthy Dutchman fond of adventure and excitement, and reckless with regard to the breaking of laws.

"He was a keen yachtsman, and held a master's certificate," went on Langton. "Just as I was getting control of Northmouth Rovers, he bought control of a small salvage company in Amsterdam. Both of us worked without arousing any suspicion. I was known to be a man of money interested in flying and football, and it was quite reasonable that, having put up the money that saved the club and gave me control, I should insist on using the ground as a private aerodrome for my supposed night joy rides. The trouble was that I had to have crooks in league with me, so had Telkemp, and the crooks were the snag."

"I enjoyed my first adventure, the kidnapping of you, Mr. Ridley. You see, you were opposed to me, and were likely to be dangerous. Minter, Barter and Coles saw that, too, and there was always the thought of a nice little ransom to be divided between them when we removed our quarters, as we proposed to do in a month or so. My success made me more daring. I smuggled in tobacco and spirits and—"

"Dope!" said Nelson Lee, a little scornfully.

"No!" cried Langton angrily. "Neither Telkemp nor myself would touch that traffic. The crooks we worked for persuaded us to carry stolen goods to and fro. I did some gun-running for a pretty poisonous crowd, but we would not touch dope. It may be coming in, but that's another case for you, Mr. Lee. I'm hanged if I'll plead guilty to that!"

"I believe you," said Nelson Lee quietly, "and I should like to say that I'm very glad to hear it."

Stephen Langton bowed slightly, and a faint smile hovered on his thin lips. He soon concluded his story. He had been greatly impressed by Dick Ridley's design for a silent engine, had paid him well and insisted upon secrecy. An outlaw against the world, he had foreseen his aeroplane, fitted with Dick Ridley's invention, being years ahead of any other machine. Then the appearance of Nelson Lee and Nipper had worried him, though he assured them he had had nothing to do with the attacks upon them save the attempt to hold them up on the Halston Road that Saturday night.

Every word of his story rang true, and Telkemp, speaking in somewhat guttural English, confirmed it. Both were very sporting. They laid no blame upon the crooks they had brought in to provide them with their strange idea of excitement, but it was clear enough to Nelson Lee and Nipper, if not to the others, that the crooks had been assuming command of the situation, and that of late both men had taken part in things that they intensely disliked. No doubt the small crooks round them had allied themselves with some big, unscrupulous London gang.

Nelson Lee looked at his watch and rose.

"We must be getting off," he said. "I fancy you're sufficiently good sportsman,

Langton, to take your gruel like a man, and I'll say this—that if you and Telkemp will promise not to monkey with the crook game again, I'll use every bit of influence I possess to get you let off as lightly as possible."

Telkemp promised hastily, but Stephen Langton hesitated, a thoughtful gleam in his hawk-like eyes.

"I'll have to think about it," he said carelessly. "I can't say that the company of crooks particularly appeals to me, but I like a bit of excitement. It's sporting of you, Mr. Lee, but I'll let you know later."

"All right," said the detective, and, followed by Nipper and Ridley and Mayhew, he went out on deck.

The burly Dutch bully whom Nipper had knocked down was under an armed guard now, and almost in tears. The rest of the gang were a hang-dog looking crowd, very different from the two handcuffed men they had just left.

Nelson Lee was unusually silent as he took his place in the aeroplane and set off once again for England. This time there was no fear of inquisitive searchlights, for messages had been flashed round to another destroyer on the prow and to the Admiralty; short code messages that explained as much as was necessary to know at the moment.

They were getting close to the English coast, seen faintly in the moonlight, when Nelson Lee spoke.

"Another half-hour ought to see our work pretty well finished, Nipper."

The youngster nodded.

"What work?" asked Mayhew anxiously. All he wanted was to get home.

Nelson Lee smiled grimly as he replied:

"A little settlement with the men this end!"

Excitement at Bleakridge!

GAZING down upon the lights of North-mouth and the familiar landmarks all round, Nipper could scarcely credit that it was not yet ten o'clock on the Monday night, and that on the previous Saturday night he had been driving with Dick Ridley and Clarice Colton in those streets so clearly marked by their lights. So much had happened since he and his chief had set off in pursuit of the "Bat," that it seemed ages ago since he had last seen North-mouth.

Both Ridley and Mayhew were greatly excited at the return to the town from which they had been so strangely snatched away by the daring Langton.

Nipper was excited at the thought of what was going to happen when they came down on the Rovers' football ground, for which they were now heading. Langton might not be expected back, and even if he was there might be no one there to meet him.

But the probability was that there would be, for it would be next door to impossible for one man to get the machine into its

hangar unless he was capable of taxi-ing to within inches.

The engine, throttled down, was so silent as to be barely audible to the occupants of the 'plane. They were dropping rapidly now, Nelson Lee peering down in the faint moonlight, seeking a safe landing on the football ground.

Then a flash of light stabbed the darkness—evidently a signal from the ground—and Nelson Lee shut off the engine, and planed down towards the light.

"You're all right, guv'nor," said Nipper. "You're coming down in the middle of the playing pitch, and two men are bunking out of the way."

The 'plane landed gently, and soon came to a stop. As the detective, followed by Nipper, stepped from the machine, two men whom they recognised as Minter and Barter, came hurrying up.

"Hallo, Mr. Minter!" said Nelson Lee genially. "It's good of you to come and meet us, but I think you'll realise now that the game is up!"

For once in his life Nelson Lee had mistaken his man. He had expected the obsequious little crook manager with the shifty manner and furtive eyes, to collapse at the news. Instead Minter paled, his face was almost like that of a savage cur at bay, his lips were parted in an angry snarl, and in a flash he had whipped out a revolver and pointed it straight at the detective's head.

Nipper made a wild spring.

Bang!

The flash almost scorched the youngster, but he had jerked up Minter's arm, and was clinging desperately to it. Minter was like a madman, and he now tried to turn the revolver upon Nipper. Barter had leapt at Nelson Lee, but with a flashing uppercut, the detective sent him rolling over on the grass—knocked out—and dashed to Nipper's assistance. Minter found himself held in a grip of steel; received a twist on the arm that brought a yelp of agony to his lips, and caused him to drop the weapon.

"Stupid thing to do," said the great detective coolly. "Only means another year or so for you, you know."

Nipper picked up the automatic and slipped it into his pocket. The manager of the Rovers F. C., his rage subsiding, was whining. Ridley and Mayhew stood dazedly looking on. Then three men came hurrying across the ground towards them, and Nipper recognised the leader as Detective-sergeant Stone of Scotland Yard.

"We've just had a message through from the Admiralty to say you were flying back, Mr. Lee, and I'd like to be the first to congratulate you on your success," said Stone heartily. "We've been in hiding, but when I heard that revolver-shot I was sorry I had not arrested these men before you arrived. I've got Coles and Grogan under observation, and I'll have them to-night before they get wind of what has happened."

"I rather wish you'd collared these sportsmen, Stone," remarked Lee. "But for Nipper I should have missed seeing them in the dock, and I should have regretted that. Let me introduce Mr. Ridley and Mr. Mayhew."

There was a little procession from the football ground.

"So you were right about Langton," said the C.I.D. man, a little enviously.

Nelson Lee shrugged his shoulders.

"No," he said quietly. "I was wrong!"

The Settlement!

NIPPER, up in good time the next morning, gazed out of his window on to the cold, frosty Town Quay, to see two destroyers and a strange-looking ship being berthed at the moorings usually reserved for vessels on the fishery protection service. There were unusual precautions. An armed guard fell in on the quay, and presently a strange procession marched away to the police-station. The most striking figure among them was the man in flying kit whom astonished loafers recognised as chairman of the Rovers. His hands were manacled, but he held his head high, and

there was a smile upon his lips—a striking contrast to the hang-dog looking crowd who followed between the fixed bayonets of the sailors.

Both Nelson Lee and Nipper had to give evidence at the police-court later in the morning, but the proceedings were little more than formal, for the Northmouth Assizes opened the next day. All the prisoners pleaded guilty. They were committed to trial, or rather for sentence, for in face of the statement made by Stephen Langton and confirmed by his Dutch friend, Telkemp, and the statements of the clever gang rounded up by the London police, and Minter's whining confession, the whole story was out; it was only a question of what the punishment would be.

And on the Friday the motley crowd came up for sentence. Warders supported Minter; Barter looked like fainting.

Minter was sentenced to seven years' penal servitude. Barter and several of the Dutchmen were sent to Dartmoor for three; Grogan and Coles, who had played minor parts, escaped with two years' hard labour. At last but one man stood in the dock—the "Bat," cool and calm, only a little quivering of the nostrils showing that he felt this humiliation.

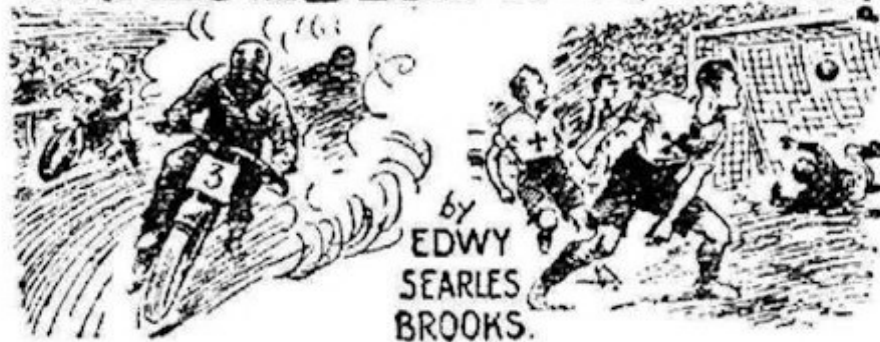
(Concluded on page 44.)

Football & Dirt-Track Racing Serial!

By E. S. BROOKS

It's starting next week; a ripping serial which introduces Fatty Fowkes and his fellow-footballers of the Blue Crusaders. But these usually cheery footballers aren't so cheery now; and old Piecan's face—Piecan is their manager—is longer than ever. For the Blues have got rivals—dirt-track racing rivals—and old Piecan has got the—er wind up!

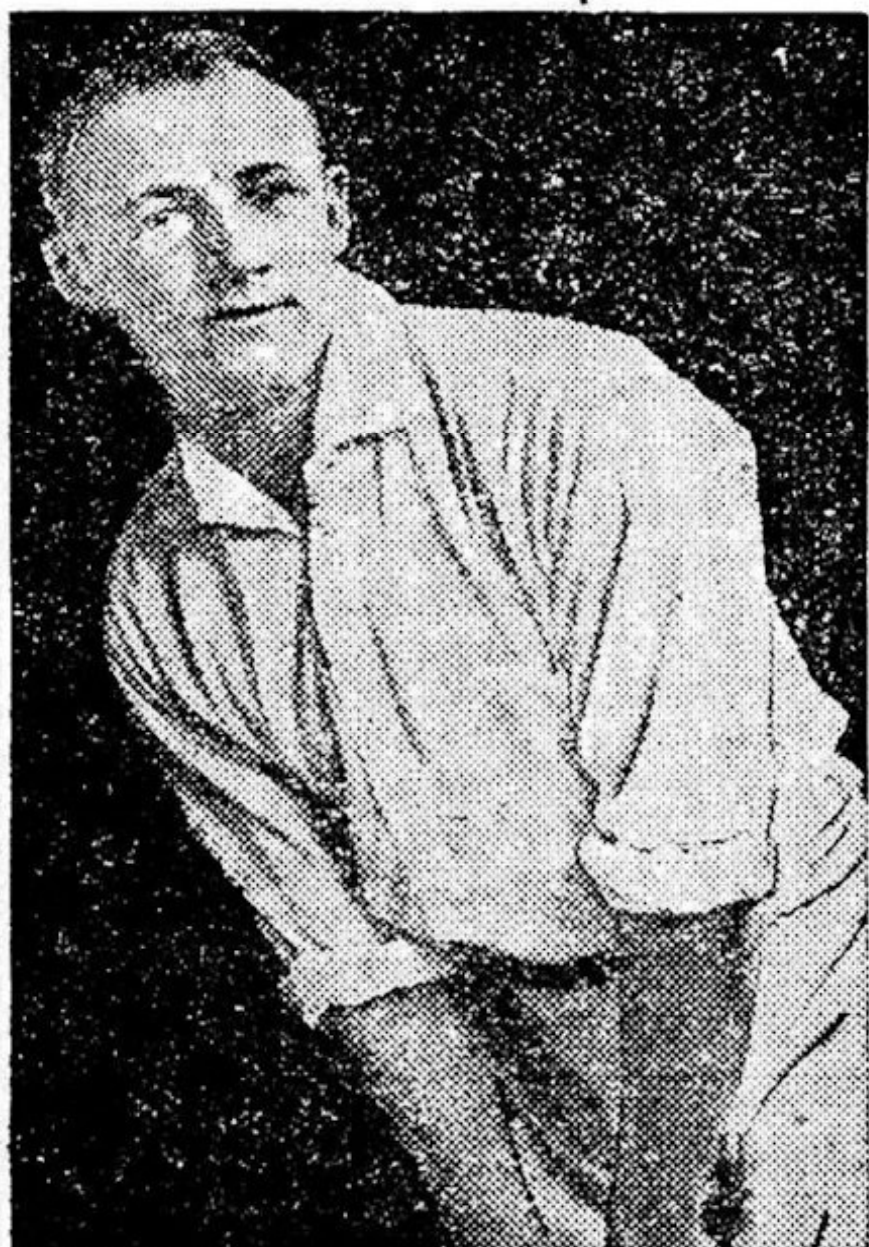
RIVALS OF THE BLUE CRUSADERS!



Football and motor-cycle racing! What two better subjects could anyone want for a smashing, thrilling, gripping sport and adventure yarn! Edwy Searles Brooks has delivered the real "goods" and all readers will simply revel in the opening chapters which appear in

NEXT WEDNESDAY'S FREE GIFT ISSUE!

SHOULD WE RUB IT IN?



DON BRADMAN, who looks like becoming one of Australia's most brilliant batsmen.

All Out to Win?

THE England side which went to Australia has won the first three Test Matches, and the priceless "Ashes" are England's till the summer of 1930, at any rate. Whatever happens in the other two Tests to be played during the present tour, nothing can alter that fact.

How are we going to treat those last two games? Should the English players treat them with the same seriousness of purpose as they have treated the other three, or should they, having gained the "Ashes," give Australia a chance, and not strain every nerve to "rub it in"?

In one respect I can give you an answer to that question without the slightest doubt entering into it. The English cricketers won't allow the Australians to win one of the five games if they can possibly help it. They will do their level best to win all the five, and thus set up yet another record for an England team touring in Australia.

That's a question many people have asked themselves. Having won the first three Tests, and thereby the "Ashes," will England treat the two remaining games with the same seriousness of purpose? In this outspoken article, our special contributor tells you what he thinks about it.

What Chapman Said!

For this answer no less an authority than the present skipper of the England side can be quoted. Just before he sailed for Australia with the lads he has led so well and who have followed so gallantly, Skipper Chapman was asked how quickly he expected the side to gain the "Ashes."

"In the first three matches," he replied, with an optimism which has been justified by events.

"Suppose you win the first three," Chapman was then asked, "what about the other two?"

"Don't you worry," he replied. "We're all out to win the whole five." And that, you may take it, is the motto of Captain Chapman and his men for the remaining games—to win the lot. And, after all, that is the only true way to treat sporting encounters, and the only way in which the Australians, as sportsmen, would like to be treated. They don't want anything given to them: they want to get it, fairly and squarely.

Experiments Expected!

That the interest will be to a large extent sustained in the remaining Tests by this question of whether we can win the whole five is certain. We lost the first three during the last tour in Australia, but there was great rejoicing when we won one of the remaining games; we felt, not that Australia had given it to us, but that we had earned the victory, and that the victory showed that England was coming back to strength.

Personally, I shall expect to see changes in the England side for the remaining Tests. I want to see the younger players,

who have been kept out up to now, given a chance, not so that the Australians can win, but because we shall want these younger players in the future. And now is the time to enable them to get Test match experience.

Maurice Leyland is, so far as we can see, one of the players on whom we shall have to rely when the Australians come over here in 1930. Leslie Ames is also expected to have improved, and be right up to Test match standard both as batsman and wicket-keeper by then. These players are more likely to be ready to continue the fight for the "Ashes" if they get some real experience of these big matches now.

Looking to the Future!

In the same way, the defeats sustained by Australia may eventually prove to be a blessing in disguise. It is a practical certainty, for instance, that, in due course,

we shall see Don Bradman playing for Australia in this country. He is getting Test match experience, and so is young A'Beckett. There are other young players in Australia, who can now be tried with advantage, so far as the future is concerned. Cricketers grow old. Jack Hobbs has said that he won't play for England after the present tour; that he is prepared to make way for the younger fellows.

And that's Test match cricket—the long view. Whether a country has won or lost it can't afford to sit back on its oars. It must build—build always—for the future.

(Look out for our Free Gifts next Wednesday, chums: Metal badges of Jack Hobbs, Percy Chapman, Herbert Sutcliffe and Harold Larwood. Our contributor will tell you all about these famous cricketers in a special article. Tell your pals about this wonderful Free Gifts offer.)

OUR WEEKLY POW-WOW!

A Record Number!

HERE we are again, chums, after an absence of weeks. This week, however, I felt that I simply must have a word with all my readers, for I want to say something about next Wednesday's bumper issue.

First and foremost are the wonderful Free Gifts. It is not necessary for me to go into details again regarding them—numerous announcements have already appeared in the paper concerning this—but I do want to impress upon you that they are really handsome affairs—souvenirs that you can keep by you and of which you will be proud. Every reader must have felt that he, or she, wanted a lasting souvenir of the English cricket team which has performed such wonders in Australia, and now the NELSON LEE is giving you that opportunity—embossed, coloured metal portrait badges of ALL the players!

The fact that **FOUR** of these badges, together with a superb coloured album in which to put them, are being given away in **ONE** week is something that has never been done before, and I am very proud to think that the Old Paper is the one to make this sensational offer. The Album—see page 37—has an attractive cover, showing Percy Chapman, England's popular skipper, in a characteristic batting stance.

The Competition.

So much for the Free Gifts.

Then there's our simple competition. The NELSON LEE has not had a competition in its

pages for a long time. Many readers have been asking for one—and so here it is. A jolly little competition dealing with England's Test cricketers. Who is your favourite player? Who are the twelve most popular players in the team? That's what you've got to decide. Look out for the coupon next Wednesday, chums!

The prizes in this competition are well worth winning. The first is a "James" Go-Anywhere bicycle listed at £7. 15s. (Now, you lads who have been wanting a cycle, here's your chance!) The "James" bicycle is world-famous; its easy-running and reliability on all counts is a byword, and the reader who wins it can regard himself as jolly lucky. Delivery of this cycle is guaranteed for Easter, so the lucky winner will be able to spend a ripping time over the holiday!

In addition to this, twelve Hobbs' cricket-bats are being given away as prizes. Who hasn't heard of a Jack Hobbs' bat? The very name is sufficient to guarantee that it is of the very best quality.

The Story Programme!

Turning to next week's stories, there is a wonderful programme. The St. Frank's boys are in Australia, and you can bet your boots that they don't intend to miss watching the Test match at Adelaide. You'll all thoroughly enjoy every chapter of "St. Frank's At The Test Match!" As regards our new serial, entitled, "Rivals of the Blue Crusaders!" the announcement on page 41 will tell you what you want to know about this.

And now for a word of advice. Again and again I have told you to order in advance, but I am going to say it once more here. Next week's issue is truly astonishing value for twopence, and there's absolutely certain to be a great demand for it. Tell your news-agent **NOW** to save you a copy, and then you won't be disappointed.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE ROVERS?

(Continued from page 41.)

"Stephen Langton," said the judge slowly, "your position is an extraordinary one. You have engaged in crime as you might have engaged in any sport. You have taken nothing from the proceeds of it, and have, in fact, recompensed your victims. But you must pay for your folly, and the sentence of the court is that you go to prison for twelve months with hard labour, and I hope you will, on your release, find something more worthy of your undoubted courage and skill."

"Thank you, my lord!" said Langton in a low voice. "I hope so, too!"

"I wish they hadn't sent him to prison, guv'nor," said Nipper, as he and his chief left the court. "There was something rather fine about that chap, and I thought you were going to do something for him."

"I have," said Nelson Lee. "Langton knows he won't be in prison for long. I can't give you the details, but I saw him this morning, and he's going to pilot a new type of military plane the Government are trying out. It incorporates the Ridley silent engine, and in the early days will probably be a death trap, but I fancy Stephen Langton's nerve will get him through, and that he's going to be useful to his country instead of an enemy to it."

Outside the court old Ridley was talking to his staunch friend Edward Colton, and Dick Ridley was talking to pretty, flushed Clarice Colton. Dick and his uncle were

reconciled: his wonderful engine promised him a fortune, and all was plain sailing.

"Land of my fathers!" said a voice beside Nipper, and the lad immediately recognised it as belonging to Dave Williams, the Rovers' goalie. "These are most terrible doings, I tell you. They say Ridley is going to be chairman now, yes, indeed they do, and indeed to goodness you stay for the weekend to play in the Cup match to-morrow!"

Nipper grinned at the excitable Welsh goalie.

"We're rid of crooks now for the Cup!" he said.

And when Northmouth played their Cup-tie—what a match it was! Never had the enthusiastic spectators seen such a game before. Never had Northmouth Rovers played such fine football.

Their opponents were a famous Cup-fighting team which were doing splendidly in the League, but the Rovers had them beaten from the time the match started. Nipper played the game of his life, so did young Dick Ridley. Nipper succeeded in bottling up the opposing international centre-forward so completely that he was made ineffective; and while he did this Ridley popped on the goals. And when the Rovers won by three goals to one—a bright, bustling, forceful team now, just as they had been in the old days—a raucous voice shouted out a challenging remark that was very true.

"There's nothing wrong with the Rovers!"

THE END.

(That's the end of that fine serial: but there's another one coming next week, written by popular E. S. Brooks. Don't miss reading the opening chapters of "Rivals of the Blue Crusaders," whatever you do, chums!)

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