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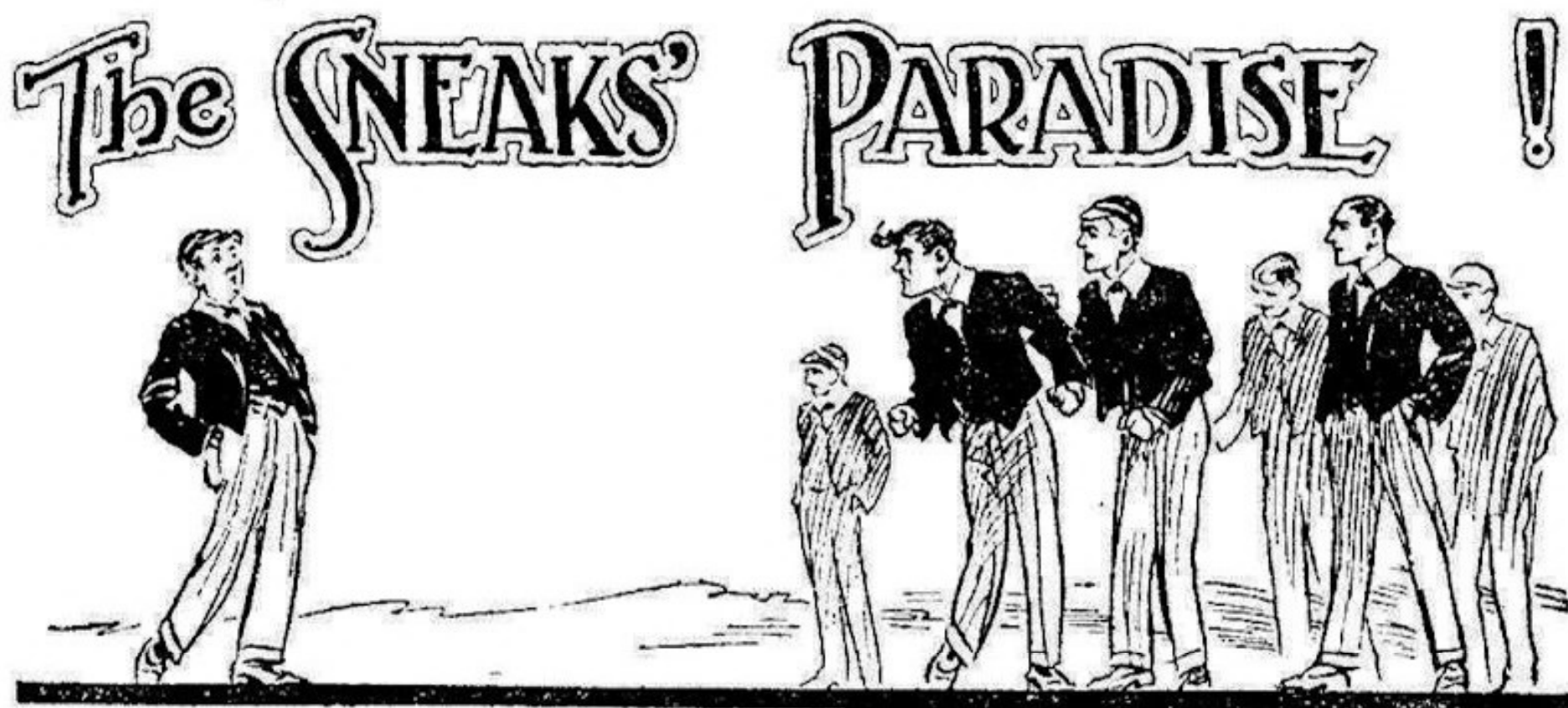
April 6th, 1929.



Gore-Pearce, swaggering unconcernedly along the passage, received a sudden and nasty jolt. It came in the form of a football—a very muddy football—propelled by Edward Oswald Handforth's lusty foot. "Sorry!" said Handy casually, quite unworried by the fact that Gore-Pearce's face was now a mass of mud.

Amazing New School-Adventure Series!

Just the Kind of Yarn you Like!



By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

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

Amazing changes have taken place before at St. Frank's when new headmasters have been appointed, but never such extraordinary changes as those which mark the advent of Dr. Morrison Nicholls. The cheery chums of St. Frank's are booked for some stirring times in the near future. Start reading this opening yarn of a magnificent new series now.—ED.

CHAPTER 1.

Starting the Term Well!

CRASH—bang—thud—crash! Nipper, Tregellis-West, Watson, and two or three other Removites looked round in astonishment. They were standing in the Junior Common-room of the Ancient House at St. Frank's, and they had been chatting about football.

"Earthquake?" said Tommy Watson blankly.

"No; only Handforth!" replied Nipper.

"Begad! I believe you're right, dear old boy," said Sir Montie Tregellis-West. "That's one refreshin' feature about old Handy. You always know when he's arrived."

Crash!

Further alarming sounds floated in from the corridor. Without doubt Edward Oswald Handforth had arrived. It was the first day of the new term, and all the Houses at St. Frank's were swarming with newly-arrived seniors and juniors. They had been coming in by every train, and quite a few by road, too.

It was a sunny April afternoon, and the old school was looking at its best. It looked particularly good to all the Ancient House and Modern House fellows, for they had been away on the famous School Ship throughout the previous term, and it was good to be back on the old familiar ground.

Handforth & Co., the celebrated chums of Study D. had not travelled from London by train, with the others. Handforth had naturally come down in his Austin Seven bringing Church and McClure with him as a matter of course.

"Hallo, you chaps! How goes it?"

Handforth appeared in the Common-room, flushed, cheerful and dishevelled. His Etons were dusty, his collar was crumpled, his hair was tousled, and he was supremely happy.

"Cheerio, Handy!" sang out Nipper. "Thought you'd turn up some time this afternoon. Good man! Did you have a good time?"

"Fine!" said Handforth.

"What was all the noise just now?" asked Fullwood. "Trouble out there?"

"Oh, nothing!" replied Handforth. "I was only biffing Gore-Pearce in the eye, and giving Gulliver a slish on the nose, and rubbing Bell's face on the lino. They started checking me."

"It sounded like half the school falling down," said Harry Gresham.

"That was because Church and McClure were loaded up with parcels and things," explained Handforth. "They got in the way, and the silly asses wouldn't shift. So I had to biff them, too. But it was only a trifle."

The other juniors chuckled. Handforth generally regarded all such violent disturbances as trifles, and on the first day of term he was usually boisterous.

Church and McClure came in soon afterwards, and they were looking even more dishevelled and the worse for wear than Handforth. They had a weary, haggard look about them. This was probably due to their ride from London. Motoring, with Handforth at the wheel, was a harrowing, strenuous ordeal, and unless Handforth's passengers were possessed of iron nerves they were generally worn out after the first few miles.

"Well, I'm jolly glad to be back again," Handforth was saying. "It's all very well going on these world tours, and I've got to admit that we had a fine time in Australia and New Zealand, but I'm glad we're home this term."

"Rather," said Nipper, nodding. "We can get things more settled. Afraid there won't be much footer, but we'll be unusually strong on the cricket field this year."

"Yes, by George!" said Handforth, nodding. "I've never been so fit before."

"Ahem! I wasn't thinking only of you, old man," said Nipper gently. "We've all had plenty of practice, owing to our Australian tour, and we've brought Charlie Bangs back with us."

"He's over in the West House now," grinned Gresham. "Pitt and a crowd of other West House chaps grabbed him and carried him off—to introduce him all round."

"Well, they won't be able to keep him," said Handforth complacently. "He's ours! He's an Ancient House chap. He's going to share Study F with Jerry Dodd and Jarrow."

"Don't you be too sure," said Nipper. "Bangs may find himself shoved into the West House. You can never tell with these schoolmasters—especially as we've got a new Head this term."

"Old Bangs says that if he isn't put into the same study as Jerry Dodd, he'll clear off back to Australia," remarked Church. "Jerry's his pal, and he's not going to be separated from him."

Handforth was looking thoughtful.

"The new Head!" he exclaimed slowly. "By George! I'd forgotten all about him! He's the chap we met here on Easter Monday, isn't he?"

Nipper nodded.

"I'm afraid he hasn't forgotten us, Handy," he said ruefully. "We'll probably

be up for punishment before the day's out. I've heard that Dr. Morrison Nicholls is a stickler for discipline."

"Doctor who which?"

"Dr. Morrison Nicholls."

"Well, he's got a high-sounding name, anyway," said Handforth. "I had a feeling that there'd be something wrong when we got back to St. Frank's," he added tartly. "Why isn't Dr. Stafford still here? Has he gone for good?"

"I think he's only a bit run down," replied Nipper. "Reggie Pitt was telling me that he had the 's' early in the term—the Head, not Pitt—and . . . turned to a touch of pleurisy. He stuck it till the end of term, but now he's been sent away to the South of France for a few weeks."

"And we've got this Nicholls chap foisted on us," said Handforth indignantly. "Goodness only knows what he'll be up to."

They had vivid recollections of a brief meeting with Dr. Morrison Nicholls, with disastrous results, on Bank Holiday. Irene & Co., of the Moor View School, had worked a very successful jape on the schoolboys, and Dr. Nicholls had been mistaken for one of the spoofers. To be painfully blunt, the boys had bowled him over and sat him on the back of an old cow, this adventure ending in a ducking in a muddy pond.

Dr. Nicholls had said very little at the time, but he had hinted that he would take the necessary measures when the school re-assembled. So quite a few of the Removites were vaguely uneasy this afternoon.

"Well, never mind the new Head," said Nipper. "Let's forget these unpleasant subjects. Supposing we sally out into the Triangle and see if we can start a bit of excitement somewhere!"

"Good egg!" said Handforth enthusiastically.

BUT just then Reggie Pitt & Co., of the West House, arrived in merry mood, bringing the Remove's latest addition with them. Charlie Bangs—known familiarly as "Boomerang"—was a New South Wales junior, and he was a rather extraordinary-looking youth.

"We've brought back your freak," said Reggie Pitt genially. "We wanted him for the West House, but the bouncer insists on being with Jerry."

"Too right, I do!" grinned Bangs.

He was astonishingly thin, and nearly a head taller than most of the other Removites. His legs and arms seemed hardly thicker than broomsticks, and his neck, projecting from his bony shoulders, was so long and scraggy that it was difficult to believe that his head could be adequately supported. His face was lean and humorous, and his eyes were merry.

"Wait until you see Boomerang on the cricket field," said Nipper confidently. "He's the finest recruit we've had for terms. This ought to be a record season for us, my sons."

"Maybe I'm not so good," said Bangs modestly.

"Well, we shall see within a week or two,"

said Reggie Pitt. "What are you fellows doing now? Anything special? Any chance of hunting up some trouble?"

"Are you looking for trouble, then?" asked Nipper, smiling.

"First day of term," said Reggie coolly. "Discipline lax—prefects blind in one eye—masters chin-wagging in their own studies. These opportunities don't come often."

"You're right," grinned Nipper. "The Fourth, you mean?"

"Exactly!"

They were all looking interested now. Handforth had suggested seeking some excitement in the West House, but with Pitt & Co. in the party this was hardly reasonable. Far better to have a go at the Fourth.

"We want to start the term well, of course," agreed Nipper.

"And how can we start it better than by putting Corky & Co. in their places?"

"Hear, hear!"

"We shall have to think out a good wheeze," said Handforth. "Before we went away on the School Ship, Corky & Co. were getting a bit troublesome. Those silly Fourth-Formers even had the nerve to suggest that they were on an equality with the Remove!"

"Idiotic, of course," said Nipper. "How were they while we were away, Reggie?"

"Awful!" replied the West House Junior leader. "It took us all our time to keep them in their places."

Lionel Corcoran, the youthful owner of the Blue Crusaders Football Club, had brought about a surprising revival in the Fourth Form—particularly in the East House section, of which he was the leader. "Corky" had awakened things with a vengeance, and the Fourth was now a force to be reckoned with.

"You can leave this to me," said Handforth calmly. "I'll think out a jape, my sons. We need something special—something brainy."

"Then it's no good leaving it to you," said Travers.

"You silly ass——"

"Two heads are better than one, Handy—and a dozen heads are better than two," interrupted Nipper soothingly. "So we'll put our heads together."

"Mind the splinters!" said Handforth sarcastically. "If you fatheads are going to take this thing out of my hands, I'll have nothing to do with it. Leave it to me and everything'll be all right."

He was shouted down, and the others mooted all sorts of spur-of-the-moment japes against Corky. Handforth shrugged

his shoulders, and moved towards the door.

"I wash my hands of it!" he said sternly.

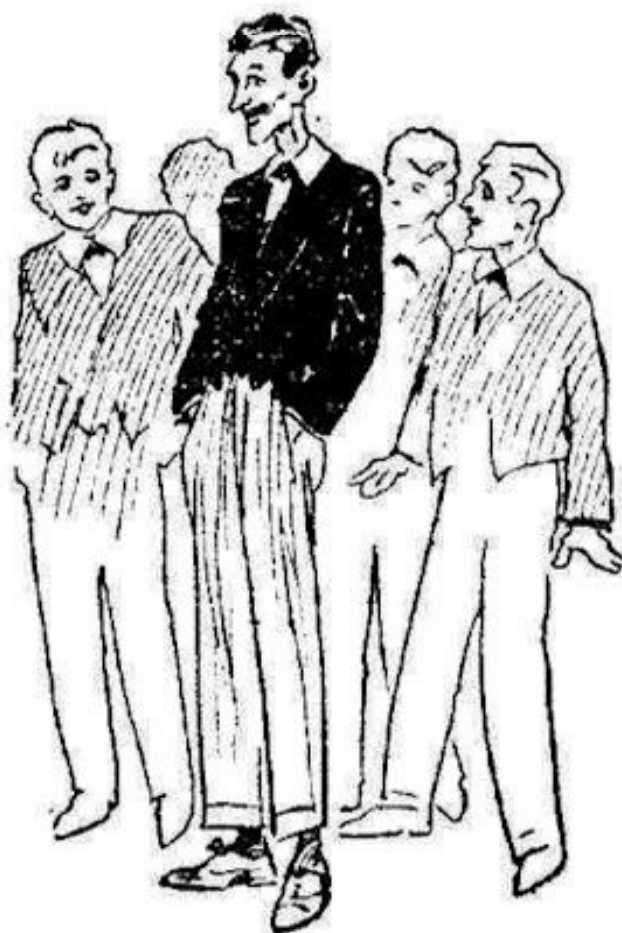
"Good!" said Nipper. "Your hands need washing by the look of 'em."

"I'm going out to do some scouting!" went on Handforth, ignoring the insult. "I'll find out what Corky & Co. are doing, and then I'll come back and report."

"Hold him somebody!" yelled Pitt, as Handforth vanished. "He'll ruin everything! If he spots Corky & Co. in the Triangle, he'll start telling them that we're going to work off a jape."

"Oh, let him go," said Nipper. "Things will be worse if we chase him. He'll yell at the top of his voice, and give everything away. Personally, I think the situation is improved. We can get on now."

"Well, there's that about it," admitted Reggie, with a chuckle.



IN the meantime, Handforth was striding down the Ancient House steps, into the afternoon sunlight. He looked something like a tiger stalking its prey. There was an eager light in his eye, and his attitude was expectant.

"Not a sign of 'em!" he muttered, frowning.

He paused under one of the elms, fresh with its spring coat of green. Over by the gymnasium his minor was initiating a group of other fags into the mysteries of a new game that he had learned in Australia. At least, Willy Handforth gave the other Third-Formers to understand that the game

was Australian. So far as Handforth could see, it was a pretty rough business, involving a sort of catch-as-catch-can wrestling match as a mere side-issue.

Edward Oswald looked in the other direction, and saw William Napoleon Browne, the lanky leader of the Fifth, striding along towards the cloisters with Dora Manners by his side. Irene's pretty cousin was in her nurse's uniform, and she seemed to be highly amused at Browne's chatter. Stevens, also of the Fifth—and Browne's study-mate—was hovering near by, looking painfully bored.

But there was not a sign of any Fourth-Formers. Handforth's eagle eye failed to detect a single one.

"What rot!" he said impatiently. "They must be about somewhere!"

He was on the point of venturing into the Modern House—incidentally a most hazardous proceeding, since the Modern House was a hotbed of Fourth-Formers—when a gleam came into his eyes. Lionel Corcoran had just emerged from East Arch, arm in arm with John Busterfield Boots.

Not an exceedingly strong enemy force—but the enemy, nevertheless!

CHAPTER 2.

On the Warpath!

HANDFORTH, apparently, had strange ideas on scouting. For he strode forward grimly, his fists automatically clenching themselves—a habit of his when he was on the warpath.

He had nothing against Corcoran personally, or Boots either; but they were Fourth-Formers. It was therefore his plain duty to go up to them, challenge them, and reduce them to mincemeat. This was Handforth's idea of "starting something against the Fourth." Subtlety had no place in his composition. He was for the direct methods every time.

"Hi!" he shouted, as he approached.

Corcoran and Buster Boots, who were deep in conversation, looked up. Corky hadn't been on the world-trip, and he was probably listening with keen interest to Buster's vivid descriptions of the great Test Matches in Australia. Cricket was essentially the subject of the day.

"Hallo, Handy!" sang out Corcoran, waving.

He happened to pull a bag of toffee out of his pocket at the same moment, and Handforth, who was striding up, saw something fall to the ground. The two Fourth-Formers were veering off towards the gates. Strangely enough, they did not appear to welcome Handforth's threatened company.

"Hi!" repeated Handforth. "I want you chaps!"

He glanced at the object which had fallen from Corky's pocket as he passed—a casual glance, since he had a vague impression that it was a bus ticket, or something of that nature. Then he came to an abrupt halt.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" he ejaculated.

He bent down and picked up—banknotes! He ran them through his fingers. Five of them—closely folded. Five pounds! And Corcoran had pulled them out with that bag! It wasn't so careless as it appeared, perhaps, for toffee bags are apt to be sticky. The carelessness lay in the fact that Corcoran kept toffee in his trousers pocket.

"By George!" said Handforth, aghast. "Of all the careless fatheads! Dropping his giddy money all over the Triangle!"

He stared round. Corcoran and Boots were just approaching the gateway.

"Hi!" he roared, for the third time.

"What is the matter with you, Handy?" demanded Corcoran, looking round. "Buster's telling me all about the geysers at Rottenrua, in New Zealand."

"Rotorua," grinned Boots.

"What's in a name?" asked Corky. "I wish you'd buzz off, Handy. You Remove fellows always give me a pain."

"It's all you deserve!" said Handforth sternly. "Do you know what you did just now, while you were walking towards the gates?"

"Yes," said Corcoran. "I pulled out these caramels. Have one?"

Handforth helped himself.

"You did something else!" he said severely. "And you need a good ticking off, my son—for your carelessness. In fact, you deserve to lose——"

He broke off, starting so violently that he swallowed his caramel whole.

"Great Scott!" he ejaculated, red in the face.

Whether he was red in the face from swallowing the caramel, or from another cause, Corky and Buster didn't know. At all events, Handy now wore a most peculiar expression on his face—a sort of concentrated look of satisfaction.

"What were you going to say?" asked Corcoran curiously.

"Eh? Nothing!"

"Nothing?"

"Well, hardly anything," said Handforth hastily. "It doesn't matter, anyhow."

He turned on his heel, and fairly bolted. Corcoran and Boots glanced at one another in astonishment, and then stared at Handforth. He was streaking into the Ancient House like a track-sprinter!

CRASH!

The Common-room door burst open, and Handforth arrived. He was flushed and hot and excited. In his hand he waved Lionel Corcoran's pound notes.



"Just when we were on the point of getting a wheeze!" sighed Nipper.

"No hope now, of course," said Pitt pathetically.

Handforth pulled himself up short at the sight of those solemn faces, and some of the excitement left him. He became suddenly cautious.

"Well?" he demanded, looking round. "Got an idea yet?"

"One or two possibles, but they turned out to be non-starters, dear old fellow," said Travers. "No doubt it's the effect of the holidays, but it's an undoubted fact that our brains are so creaky that we can hear them for yards. We've been interrupting one another's thoughts with 'em!"

"Your brain may be creaky—it can't be anything else—but mine isn't!" said

Handforth coldly. "And if it's a wheeze against Corky & Co. that you want, you can give yourselves a rest. I've got one."

"What's that money for?" asked Church, intrigued by the fact that Handforth was still holding the notes high in front of him, so that everybody could see. "What's the idea of waving it about like that?"

"It's Corky's," said Handforth.

"I think we'll let Corky off," said Nipper. "If he's going about giving notes away, we don't need to jape him."

"You silly ass, he dropped these notes in the Triangle," said Handforth. "I never saw anything so careless! Pulled out a bag of dud caramels, and dropped these notes without knowing it."

"They probably stuck to the bag," said Nipper.

"Of course," nodded Travers. "And Handy has stuck to the notes. Well, well! Our honest Handy has at last descended to burglary."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You don't think I stole it, do you?" gasped Handforth.

"Of course he doesn't, ass!" said Nipper. "He was only pulling your leg. All the same, if you saw Corky drop the money, why didn't you give it back to him?"

"Because I thought of a wheeze!" replied Handforth promptly. "It caught me suddenly, just as I was going to hand the notes back to Corky. Here's the idea we've been looking for."

"Proceed, O oracle," said Reggie.

"Corky doesn't know he's dropped this money, and he ought to be taught a severe lesson," said Handforth. "I mean, carelessness of that sort is almost criminal. Not a mere half-crown, or ten-bob note, but five quid!"

"Corky is certainly asking for trouble," agreed Nipper.

"He's the skipper of the Fourth," went on Handforth. "He ought to know better! Now, my wheeze is to put this money away in some secret place, and keep mum."

"What's the good of that?" asked Pitt curiously.

"Every good!" said Handforth. "It's a wheeze to jape the Fourth. Before long Corky will be dashing about the school, frantically looking for his lost quids. And we shall know where they are all the time, and we shall be able to laugh at him."

There was an ominous silence.

"Well?" said Handforth, after a pause.

"Is that what you call an idea?" asked Travers politely.

"Yes, it is!"

"Alas! Our Handy is even more creaky than we are," sighed Travers. "He comes here with a wheeze that is not only rusty, but positively corroded. My dear old fellow, the thing's hopeless."

"Oh, is it?" snorted Handforth, bristling.

"Well, it's not very brilliant, anyhow," said Nipper gently. "Where does the laugh

come in, Handy? We can't even cackle at Corky while he's looking for his money. If we do, he'll jump to the truth. I've got a better wheeze."

Handforth glared.

"Why, you ungrateful rotters!" he said indignantly. "If this suggestion isn't any good to you, I'll wash my hands——"

"We thought you'd washed your hands ten minutes ago," said Nipper, grinning. "Cheese it, Handy! Listen to this one. We'll all sally out into the Triangle, call 'Pax' with the Fourth-Formers, and invite them into the school shop."

"Shall we?" said Handforth blankly.

"We shall!" said Nipper. "Then we'll tell Corky & Co. that we feel like starting the term well. We'll have tuck all round, and we'll generously invite the Fourth crowd to join us. In fact, we'll do the thing properly, and lavish five quid on the feed."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Five quid!" gasped Handforth. "You—you mean——"

"Exactly!" grinned Nipper. "Why not? If Corky is careless enough to drop his money about in the Triangle, he'll have to put up with these things. Besides, if we spend his money on the Fourth, what will he have to grumble at?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"By George, it's a stunt!" grinned Handforth. "Those fatheads will think that we're treating 'em, and it'll be their money all the time! Afterward, I suppose, we'll tell 'em the truth?"

"Naturally," said Nipper contentedly. "When the whole fiver has disappeared into Mrs. Hake's till, we'll blandly thank Corky & Co. for their generosity, and we'll tell Corky about the money."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It'll be a lesson to him," said Nipper. "Perhaps he won't be so careless with his cash next time. And we shall be able to have a really good chuckle at Corky's expense."

Handforth was beaming now.

"Well, on the whole, it's not such a bad wheeze," he admitted. "Not so good as mine, of course, but I don't want to make a fuss."

"Ahem!" murmured Pitt. "Perish the thought!"

"But I found the money, and I'll do the honours!" continued Handforth firmly. "And, later, I'll give Corky a stern lecture on the subject of carelessness. Any ass who drops five quid like that deserves to be penniless for the rest of the term."

THREE minutes later the Removites were swarming in the Triangle, cheery and boisterous. Corcoran and Boots and Armstrong and quite a few other Fourth-Formers were attracted by the throng; although, being in smaller force, they kept cautiously to their own side of the Triangle.

"Pax, you chaps!" sang out Nipper, advancing.

"Here, cheese it!" frowned Handforth. "This is my job, my son!"

He pushed Nipper aside, and strode towards the Fourth-Formers. The latter automatically assumed fighting attitudes. Whenever Handforth approached in this way it generally meant violence.

"Better go easy, Handy!" suggested Bob Christine, of the Modern House. "I shouldn't advise you to start any fireworks in the Triangle. It may be the first day, and the prefects may be a bit blind, but——"

"Rot!" interrupted Handforth. "Who's talking about fireworks? We've come out here to invite you fellows to a spread."

The Fourth-Formers looked sceptical.

"What's the matter with it?" asked Buster Boots.

"Nothing, you ass!"

"You haven't put ink in the jam-tarts, or blotting-paper in the sandwiches, I suppose?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly chump!" roared Handforth. "The Remove has decided to treat you fellows to a feed in the school shop. Order what you like! We'll pay! Eat to your hearts' content! It's our invitation, and we'll foot the bill."

The Fourth-Formers looked very astonished, and they gathered round with greater interest.

"Is this honest Injun?" asked Corcoran.

"Of course it is, fathead!" said Handforth. "Ask the others."

"Honest Injun!" chorused Nipper & Co.

"Good enough!" roared Buster Boots. "Come on, you chaps! It's the Remove's treat. Haven't we always said that these Remove fellows are made of the right stuff?"

And the Fourth-Formers, filled with great enthusiasm, swarmed towards the school shop in a boisterous flood.

CHAPTER 3.

Treating the Fourth!

MRS. HAKE was accustomed to sudden invasions of this sort, especially on the first day of term. But even Mrs. Hake was rather taken aback when her shop became packed to suffocation within the space of twenty seconds.

"Young gentlemen—young gentlemen!" she protested.

"What's the matter?" asked Handforth. "We've come here to buy some tuck."

Handforth had been carried into the shop on the crest of the flood, and he was now jammed hard against the counter, with a press of juniors behind and all round him. In fact, there was hardly an available inch of room left in the shop.

Mrs. Hake had a couple of assistants to-day, and they were both looking startled. They failed to see how they could cope with this tremendous rush of business.

"Come on!" roared Handforth. "Help yourselves, my sons! Have a go at these sausage-rolls! Money's no object—go ahead!"

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Handy!"

"Rats!" yelled Handforth. "This isn't my treat. The Remove has merely trusted me with the money."

"Only five quid, though!" muttered Church, who was next to Handforth. "You silly ass, Handy! Unless you're careful, you'll run up a bill of ten or fifteen pounds!"

"Eh?" said Handforth, with a start.

"And then you'll have to pay the balance out of your own pocket!"

"My only hat!"

"Don't be so lavish!" whispered Church. "Five quid won't go far among a crowd like this! You're mad! Fancy inviting 'em to help themselves to what they want! Why on earth didn't Nipper do the honours?"

Handforth, thus warned, for once took heed.

"Steady on, you chaps!" he bellowed. "The Remove is paying exes. up to the sum of five quid."

"Good man!" said Corky. "Exactly five quid?"

"Exactly five quid!" said Handforth.

"Well, it's jolly generous!" said Corky enthusiastically. "I must say that you Removes are proper sportsmen."

SOMEHOW, Mrs. Hake and her assistants established some kind of order. At all events, they saw to it that the crowd did not obtain more than five pounds' worth of tuck. And Mrs. Hake, being a lady of much wisdom, relieved Handforth of the notes in advance.

Sausage-rolls and beef-pies and jam-tarts and similar horrors were passed round by the dozen. For, after all, one can obtain quite a large supply of such eatables for five pounds.

The Remove and the Fourth participated heartily, the crowd overflowing out into the Triangle. In fact, many other customers, eager to give Mrs. Hake some business, were unable to enter.

When it was all over, Lionel Corcoran called for the Fourth to give the Removes a cheer. It was given with enthusiasm.

"I think we ought to thank Handforth especially," continued the leader of the Fourth. "It shows a nice spirit on his part—a friendliness that we can't fail to appreciate."

"Hear, hear!"

"Good old Handy!"

"Let us particularly admire his modesty!" said Corcoran firmly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Are you trying to be funny, you ass?" asked Handforth, frowning.

"Funny?" said Corcoran. "I've never been more serious! I mean it, Handy! Your modesty is a bit too obvious to be put on. You will tell us that the Remove entrusted you with that fiver, but we know



The Fourth's triumph was short-lived. For Handforth grabbed a huge jam tart and slammed it into Corcoran's face. Immediately the Removites' frowns turned to laughter. "Down with the Fourth?" went up a yell. "Rats to the Remove!" came the answer.

jolly well that it's your own money all the time."

"Handy's a brick!" said Boots enthusiastically.

"Hurrah!"

The Fourth-Formers were cheering noisily.

"Rats!" shouted Handforth, thoroughly uncomfortable. "The money wasn't mine at all. You're making a mistake——"

"No, no!" insisted Corky. "It was yours, old man, and we want to thank you very heartily for your generosity——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Handforth.

The other Removites took up the laugh, and they were soon rocking with hilarity. Mrs. Hake began to get anxious.

"You've been dished, you fatheads!" grinned Handforth. "It was a jape!"

"What?"

"Of course it was!" roared Edward Oswald. "That money wasn't mine at all—or the Remove's, either! It was yours!"

"Mine!" exclaimed Corcoran.

"Yours!" chuckled Handforth. "My only sainted aunt! We've dished you beautifully, haven't we? Treated you to a feed out of your own giddy money!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Removites went into fresh storms of laughter.

"Just a minute—just a minute!" said Lionel Corcoran coolly. "I think it's about time we straightened this thing out. My poor Handy, you've got it all wrong. The money was yours."

"I tell you it wasn't!" replied Handforth. "In fact, there's no reason why you shouldn't know the truth now. Remember when I shouted to you in the Triangle, about half an hour ago?"

"Yes. What of it?"

"Do you know that you dropped five quid out of your pocket?" grinned Handforth.

"Did I?"

"Yes, you jolly well did!" said Handforth. "I picked it up, and I was going to give it to you when it occurred to me that we could work off a jape with the cash. And we've worked it off! You've been treated to a feed out of your own cash, my son!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

All the Removites roared with laughter at the joke, and the Fourth-Formers were beginning to look a bit doubtful.

"I meant it to be a lesson to you," continued Edward Oswald sternly. "Any fellow who drops his money about like that deserves to lose it! He deserves to be without pocket money for the rest of the term!"

For some reason, Corcoran and Boots fairly shrieked with laughter, and it was only with difficulty that Corky controlled himself.

"Handy, old horse, you're all wrong!" he said breathlessly. "I knew you'd picked that money up all the time!"

"Eh?"

"I was expecting you to give it back to me," said Corky coolly. "And when you bolted off with it Buster and I thought that you'd pinched it."

"Why, you silly idiot——"

"Not really, of course!" grinned Boots. "But we guessed at once that you had thought of a wheeze. Corky wasn't expecting it; his only idea was to give you a lesson."

"Me?" said Handforth, staring. "A lesson! Me?"

"Yes, you!" grinned Corky. "Didn't I tell you that the money was yours, Handy? I dropped it out of my pocket deliberately, so that you could see it—so it would be an object lesson to you to be more careful in future."

Handforth was looking utterly bewildered, and the general laughter had subsided. The Removites were not looking quite so pleased with themselves. Nipper and his supporters were beginning to suspect that the jape had sprung a leak.

"I don't know what the dickens you're talking about!" said Handforth impatiently. "What do I need an object lesson for? You can't spoof me! You know jolly well you dropped that money by accident, and——"

"Half a tick!" said Corcoran. "How much cash have you got?"

"Eh?" Handforth started. "Why, I've got some notes—— By George! That's funny! I've got five quid in notes!"

"You mean you had five quid in notes," said Corky, shaking his head. "You haven't got them now, Handy! You spent that money on this treat."

Handforth gave a scornful laugh.

"Have I?" he said tartly. "I'll show you!"

He dived his hands into his pockets confidently. Then a startled expression came into his eyes. His search became more hurried; his expression became blank; his face turned red.

"It's gone!" he gasped, at last.

"Of course," nodded Corcoran. "You've spent it!"

Handforth gave vent to a terrific roaring bellow.

"My money!" he hooted. "Why, you—you burgling rotter! You boned my money, and then——"

"Pardon me," interrupted Corcoran gently. "I didn't bone anything. The thing's as simple as A B C. I was chatting with Boots about an hour ago in the East House—up in my dormitory, in fact—when I saw you take your handkerchief out. Something dropped to the ground, and you didn't even notice it."

"Wha-a-a-at!"

"Fact!" said Corky. "It was just near the gym. When Boots and I came down I had a look, and found your money—five quid, neatly folded up."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was the Fourth's turn to howl with glee.

"You weren't anywhere in sight, so I decided to teach you a lesson," said Corcoran blandly. "My idea was to drop the money in front of you—so that you couldn't help

seeing it—to listen to your stern censure, and then to explain that you had done exactly the same thing. But you improved on the wheeze considerably. Thanks awfully for spending your fiver on the Fourth!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But I thought it was yours!" hooted Handforth.

"I know you did. That's what makes it so funny."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My fiver!" wailed Handforth bleakly. "I'm broke now! Oh, my only topper! And my pater gave me that money for a new hat, and some pads!"

"Never mind," said Corky soothingly. "It's been spent on a better cause, Handy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And in future, old man, remember the old adage: 'Those who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones,'" said Boots solemnly. "You meant this jape to be a lesson to Corky, and it's been a lesson to yourself!"

"You're mad!" roared Handforth. "I don't live in a glass house! And if you're accusing me of throwing stones, you rotter——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Corky wangled a good excuse for dropping the cash—sticking to his caramel bag," said Boots. "But you haven't any excuse at all, Handy. You pulled out that money with your handkerchief. Fancy keeping quid notes in a handkerchief pocket! Well, I hope you've learnt your lesson!"

And he and the other Fourth-Formers rocked with laughter. The Removites gazed at one another sadly. The great jape had fizzled out; it had turned against them!

"This is what comes of placing any reliance on that dotty ass of a Handy!" said Nipper bitterly. "We believed him when he told us that the money was Corky's! We might have known that Corky was up to his tricks."

"It's one up for the Fourth, my Remove beauties!" sang out Corcoran. "Good old Fourth! We'll show you a few things this term!"

"I'll show you something now!" bellowed Handforth wildly.

He leapt forward, grabbed a huge jam tart from the counter, and slammed it into Corcoran's face. Strictly speaking, it was an inexcusable action, but the manner in which it changed the Removites' frowns to laughter seemed to justify it.

"Down with the Fourth!" went up a yell.

"Rats to the Remove!" came the answer.

As though by magic, the Fourth-Formers and Removites hurled themselves at one another. The shop became a battle ground, and there was an ominous sound of crashing as one or two dishes were toppled off the counter.

"Pax, you silly asses!" roared Nipper. "Stop it!"

But the juniors were too excited to take any heed. The Removites were indignant at the way in which the jape had been turned on them; and the Fourth-Formers had no option but to accept the challenge.

Within a matter of seconds the scrap was in full swing. As Handforth enthusiastically remarked, as he pushed somebody's face into Mrs. Hake's best flower-pot, the term certainly was starting well!

CHAPTER 4.

Trouble With the New Head!

NIPPER and Travers and Pitt and many more of the level-headed juniors did their best to put a stop to the thing. It wasn't merely undignified, but it was positively perilous. At any moment a prefect might come along and take all their names, and that would be a mere preliminary to drastic punishment.

Furthermore, it was most unfair to Mrs. Hake, who was a passive spectator. However, Nipper re-assured her.

"Can't you do something, Master Hamilton?" she asked anxiously. "Look at my shop! Everything's been ruined—"

"It won't last long," said Nipper. "Don't worry about the stock, or the dishes. Make out a bill when it's all over, and I'll see that it's paid."

"But it's not your fault, Master Hamilton!"

"It's the Remove's fault—and the Fourth's," growled Nipper, "and I'll jolly well see that these fatheads pay up!"

Mrs. Hake was slightly relieved, but not absolutely re-assured. It seemed to her that her shop would be completely wrecked.

But it wasn't. The combatants needed more space. There wasn't sufficient room to scrap thoroughly here; they couldn't enter the fight in the whole-hearted manner that they desired. Punches were apt to be restricted when one's fist was within two or three inches of one's opponent's nose.

A prefect arrived on the scene, too, and his shouts soon had an effect. The juniors went streaming out into the Triangle; and when other prefects came into sight the Triangle cleared as if by magic. In fact, the prefects hardly found anybody to report. To cap matters, a tall, dignified figure, wearing cap and gown, now made its appearance.

"Cave!" gasped somebody. "It's the Head!"

And it was. Dr. Morrison Nicholls had been strolling through Big Arch with Mr.

Stockdale and Mr. Goole—the House-masters of the Modern House and the East House respectively—but he left them now, and he strode purposefully into the school shop.

"What is the matter here?" he demanded angrily. "What was all that commotion a minute ago?"

THE new Head was a learned-looking gentleman. He was middle-aged, clean-shaven, and had the air of a Harley Street specialist. His manner was precise, and he had a habit of speaking in short, sharp sentences.

He beheld a scene of minor wreckage. The damage was not very excessive, but it looked worse than it actually was. The floor was strewn with smashed jam tarts, trampled doughnuts, squashed buns, and so forth. And Biggleswade and Morrow, of the Sixth, were standing in front of some object in the centre of the floor. It almost seemed as though they were shielding it from the Head's gaze.

"Nothing much, sir," said Biggleswade hastily. "We don't usually have these scraps. But on the first day of the term they're liable to happen, you know. No need to inquire too searchingly into it, sir."

Dr. Nicholls gave the Sixth-Former a cold look. "Biggy" was a good-natured fellow, and was deservedly

popular. He could be severe enough when the occasion demanded, but he was well known to have one eye that was permanently closed. Morrow, the head prefect of the West House, was thoroughly decent, too.

"If you'll leave it to us, sir, we'll see that the culprits are suitably punished," said Morrow. "It's only an innocent rag."

"Grooooooh!"

It was rather unfortunate that the object behind the two prefects should make that extraordinary noise at that particular moment.

"Stand aside!" commanded the Head.

"He's only one of the boys who—"

"Stand aside, I tell you!"

Morrow and Biggleswade reluctantly moved, and Dr. Nicholls gazed down upon a remarkable object which sat on the floor. It bore some slight resemblance to a human being. It was undoubtedly attired in Etons, but no face was visible. The head was entirely coated with jam and custard and whipped cream and similar delicacies.

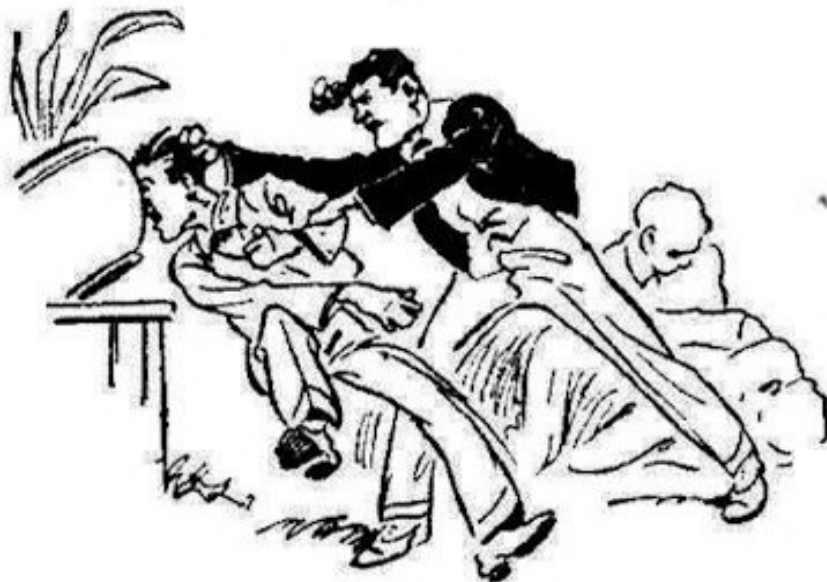
"Gug-gug-gug!" said the object faintly.

"What is this?" demanded Dr. Nicholls.

Biggleswade sighed.

"This, sir," he said, "is Handforth."

"Handforth! A boy, do you mean?"



"Well, a sort of boy," explained Biggleswade cautiously. "I don't know that you can accurately describe him as a boy, though. He's more like a human hippopotamus, with a slight touch of the bullock about him."

The new Head frowned.

"Are you attempting to be facetious, young man?" he asked sharply. "How dare you poke fun at me in this way? Who are you? What is your name?"

"Biggleswade, sir."

"What Form?"

"Sixth, sir—and I'm a prefect."

"An error that shall soon be rectified, Biggleswade," said the Head tartly. "It is apparent to me that you are not fitted to shoulder the privileges of prefectship. But more of this later. I will deal with this unfortunate boy on the floor."

Handforth, who was just beginning to realise vaguely that he was in the presence of the enemy, had been toying with the idea of making a sudden bolt for the door. But he paused now. There was no time.

"Stand up, my poor lad!" said the Head kindly.

Handforth stared through a mist of jam and whipped cream. The Head's tone startled him. He had been expecting something very different. He struggled to his feet.

"It is apparent that you have been grossly ill-used," said Dr. Nicholls, his tone becoming gentle. "Upon my soul! You are in a shocking condition, my boy! An appalling condition!"

Handforth had very much the same idea himself; but he couldn't for the life of him see why the new Head should waste this sympathy on him. In Handforth's opinion, it was all in the day's work.

His chief anxiety was to get away, so that he could find four Fourth-Formers—or perhaps five. He knew for certain, however, that Corcoran and Armstrong and Griffith and Boots had held him down. He rather believed that Oldfield had assisted. Anyhow, he knew the four. They had pinned him to the ground, and had proceeded to plaster him with pastries. And Handforth was burning for revenge.

He totally dismissed the suggestion that the Fourth-Formers had been justified. He forgot that he had rammed a jam tart down Boots' neck; he overlooked the fact that he had nearly cracked Griffith's jaw by ramming a whole doughnut into that unfortunate junior's mouth. Corky & Co. had merely seized Handforth in self-defence, and as part of the general fun. There was really no need for Handforth to thirst for revenge.

"Who is responsible for this outrage?" asked the Head.

Handforth looked round.

"Outrage, sir?" he gurgled, wiping half a sponge roll from behind his left ear. "Where, sir? I can't see any outrage!"

"You have been grievously assaulted, Handforth."

"Me? Oh, well, perhaps you're right," agreed Edward Oswald. "Four of 'em, by

George! Perhaps five! Wait until I get my fingers—Ahem! I mean—Yes, sir!"

"You say that five boys attacked you?"

"Four, sir," replied Handforth indignantly. "Not that it matters," he added, pulling himself together with a start. "All in the game, sir. I hope you won't take any notice of this trifle."

"Do you know the names of the boys who assaulted you like this?"

"They didn't assault me, sir."

"Do you know their names?" insisted the Head sternly.

"Yes, sir."

"Tell them to me."

"Not likely! I—I mean, I'd rather not, sir, if you don't mind."

"I want you to tell me their names, my boy," said Dr. Nicholls. "Do not be hindered by any false sense of loyalty to your school-fellows. They have committed a shameful act. They must be punished. Their names!"

Handforth calmly shook his head.

"No, sir," he said firmly. "Awfully sorry, sir, but I'm not a sneak."

The Head started as though he had been stung.

"Sneak!" he thundered violently.

Handforth jumped nearly a foot into the air.

"Eh?" he gasped.

"Do not use that word to me!" roared Dr. Nicholls, in a fury. "It is a ridiculous word! A word that has been misapplied and misused for generations!"

Morrow and Biggleswade listened with interest. It seemed that Handforth had unconsciously blundered upon one of the Head's pet subjects.

"There is an incredible amount of nonsense going on in all our great Public Schools!" said the Head angrily. "Boys are constantly submitting to persecution, and keeping their troubles to themselves, because they have a horror of this so-called sneaking. It is all wrong. It is absurdly wrong. I intend to change it at St. Frank's!"

Handforth stared in amazement.

"You're going to uphold sneaking, sir?" he asked blankly.

"I am!"

"Not with me, sir! I'm not going to sneak!"

"That is because you have been educated up to this absurd point of view," said Dr. Nicholls curtly. "By giving me the names of the boys who so grossly maltreated you, you will be doing your duty. They must be punished. And before I can punish them, I must know their names."

"Of course, sir."

"And you know these boys' names?"

"Of course, sir."

"And you are going to tell me their names—now?"

"Of course, sir—I mean, certainly not!" said Handforth hastily. "Not likely! My only hat! You're a funny sort of Head, aren't you?"

"What!"

"I mean, urging me to sneak, sir!" protested Handforth indignantly. "It's—it's not proper! It's not nice! I'm blowed if I'll sneak!"

The Head went red with anger. He was not accustomed to being answered in this manner by a junior. Morrow and Biggleswade, although they were prefects, silently approved of Handforth's boldness. They were ashamed of Dr. Nicholls for his professed views.

"I shall not punish you as you deserve, young man," said the Head grimly. "Three minutes ago you had my sympathy. You have alienated that. You deserve punishment for your insolence, but I perceive that you are so steeped in your false code that it is both idle and undignified to argue with you. Go indoors at once, and get yourself cleaned."

"Yes, sir," said Handforth gratefully.

"One moment, though," added Dr. Nicholls. "If you give me the names of the culprits I will guarantee you immunity from persecution."

"I don't understand, sir."

"It has been my experience," said the Head, "that if a boy 'sneaks' he is immediately scorned and held in contempt by his fellows."

"Of course, sir."

"Nothing of the sort!" thundered Dr. Nicholls. "That attitude is all wrong. The boy has done his duty by giving the information. Tell me these names, and you will have done your duty, too."

"Duty!" gasped Handforth. "You call it a duty to sneak, sir?"

"I can see I am wasting my time," said the Head, with a sigh. "I was going to promise you that you need not fear persecution. Any boys who bring information to me, leading to the punishment of other boys who have broken the school rules, will be safe. But more of this later."

He dismissed Handforth with a wave of his hand, and then he looked at Morrow and Biggleswade, and frowned.

"More of this later!" he repeated significantly.

He strode out of the school shop, and vanished.

"What did he mean?" asked Biggy.

"Goodness only knows!" said Morrow. "Scatty, I think!"

HANDFORTH was seething with indignation when he came downstairs after cleaning himself up. He found everything normal. The excitement was over. Fourth-Formers and Removites were fraternising again, and Nipper had already held a round-robin, and had collected sufficient cash to compensate Mrs. Hake for the damage that had been done. So the affair was over.

But Handforth didn't think so. He stormed into the Remove Common-room, in the Ancient House, full of the new Head's amazing pronouncement, and the other juniors listened in sceptical astonishment as Handforth gave the details.

"You must have got it wrong, old man," said Nipper.

"But I haven't!"

"The Head wouldn't say things like that!"

"Ask Morrow!" shouted Handforth. "Ask Biggy! They were there, and they heard him. Urging me to sneak—and telling me that our code is all wrong! Said that any fellow who peaches is only doing his duty!"

"The man must be off his rocker!" said Fullwood.

And the discussion waxed lively.

CHAPTER 5.

The New Head's Bombshell!

NEXT morning, St. Frank's settled down to the normal routine.

All those fellows who had been away on the School Ship were glad to be back under the old rules and in the old surroundings. They had a feeling of certainty; they could make plans days or weeks in advance. At this time of the year, too, it was good to be down in Sussex.

Not a great deal of notice had been taken of Handforth's "gassing" concerning the Head. Handy was well known to be prone

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to exaggeration—and also to misunderstanding things. It was generally felt that he had got hold of the wrong end of the stick.

There were a few rumours, it was true, that the prefects were uneasy, and that Morrow and Biggleswade had talked in the same strain as Handforth, but most of it passed off. It was assumed that nothing further would happen.

But this assumption was all wrong.

That very morning, after prayers, Dr. Morrison Nicholls introduced himself to the school, and it was soon felt that here was a strong personality. The Head's influence was apparent as soon as he stepped on the platform. He "got over," as it were, from the very first moment.

There are some men who can never cause a complete hush in a crowded hall. Dr. Nicholls was not one of these. On the contrary, his very presence was sufficient to make the whole school give him their closest attention. He possessed that magnetism which stamps the born actor; he could hold his audience by a mere gesture. Yet Dr. Nicholls was no actor.

"It is not yet certain whether I shall permanently be your headmaster," he said. "While I am in control, however, I shall conduct this school according to my own convictions. With all my heart, I trust that Dr. Stafford will sufficiently recover from his illness so that he can once again get into harness. It may be a matter of two or three months, or it may be a year. In any case, I am convinced that Dr. Stafford will approve of the changes that I have decided to inaugurate—and not only approve of them, but adopt them."

The school listened wonderingly. What were these changes that the Head spoke of? St. Frank's, like most other Public Schools, hated changes. Things were good enough before Dr. Nicholls came, so why should he want to alter them? Who did he think he was, anyhow? Nerve!

Somewhat truculently, St. Frank's prepared to listen.

"I have referred to changes," said Dr. Nicholls. "Let me hasten to assure you that they are minor changes. Indeed, there is but one of any importance. I shall not presume to alter any school rules and regulations, or to interfere with the school's routine. I am here to control—not to destroy. And when I say control, I mean that I have the welfare of the whole school at heart. The moulding of character is of the utmost importance. Between the ages of twelve and twenty a youth is constantly and continuously assimilating new ideas. Many of these ideas are false—many positively harmful."

The school listened, more resentful than ever. It was growing into a lecture. Much as the school hated changes, the school hated lectures even more.

"One of the most insidiously harmful ideas at present rife in our Public Schools concerns the so-called 'crime' of sneaking," proceeded Dr. Nicholls gravely. "You all know what I mean. You all know what happens

to a boy who informs regarding the misdemeanours of his schoolfellows. He is labelled as a sneak. He is persecuted. He is ostracised."

"I suppose he means pulverised!" murmured Handforth. "I've pulverised a few sneaks, anyhow—and I'll pulverise some more yet!"

"Shush, you ass!" warned Church.

It was noticed that Teddy Long was listening with great intentness. He occupied the unenviable position of sneak-in-chief in the Remove. If there was any sneaking to be done, Teddy did it. Gore-Pearce and Gulliver and Bell were not above "peaching," either.

"I am not blind," continued the Head. "Neither am I deaf. I have been in control of young people too long for that. Perhaps I am going to startle you by my next words. If so, I shall be glad. I want to startle you."

St. Frank's began to get more interested.

"You all know—every single one of you—that every day and every single hour there are breaches of the rules committed," said Dr. Nicholls. "Perhaps you think it is right that these breaches should be allowed. For they are allowed. Not by me, not by the under masters, not by the prefects. They are allowed by the very system that is in vogue. And that system is wrong."

"My only hat!"

"What's he going to say next?"

"Goodness knows!"

"Quite wrong!" insisted the Head. "It is the policy at St. Frank's, as in other Public Schools, to wink at this, and to turn a blind eye to that. In most cases, the prefects do not know of these irregularities. But the boys know. They are the general talk of the Common-rooms. Grievances are aired—real grievances. But as soon as a master or prefect appears, there is a hush. It is all a conspiracy of silence—to protect the culprits. These boys are breaking the school rules, and the others know that they are breaking the school rules. Yet they are never punished."

The school was positively "sitting up" now. Dr. Nicholls was certainly getting to the root of things. Every word he said was absolutely true. But St. Frank's had never heard a headmaster discuss the subject so openly before. There was something refreshing in Dr. Nicholls' frankness.

"Yet they are never punished!" he repeated impressively. "Do you consider that right? Most of you are thoroughly decent—thoroughly upright and honourable. The rule-breaking is only committed by the minority. Yet you all know that this minority is immune, unless somebody happens to be caught red-handed by a person in authority. And how often are they caught red-handed? Not often! The conspiracy is too tight for that!"

The school held its breath. This was getting fascinating.

"Boys—particularly younger boys—are bullied," said Dr. Nicholls. "Oh, I know it

is ridiculed and scoffed at, but there are many younger boys in this hall who can tell the truth if they want to. The bullying may not be grave, but it is persistent. And the culprits are never called to book. Of course not! In order to be called to book, somebody must sneak. Nobody sneaks—except those who have no reputation to lose, and all of you, I have no doubt, prize your reputations."

"But sneaking is a dirty game, sir!" shouted Handforth impulsively.

"You only say that because such a spirit has been instilled into you from your very first day under this roof," snapped the Head. "You have always been taught that to inform is to sneak—and that to sneak is contemptible. But that view is wrong!" he added fiercely. "At the risk of labelling myself a crank, I tell you that the view is wrong. And if I can, I mean to bring about a change."

"He'll have his work cut out!" murmured Fenton, the school captain.

"Mad!" breathed Biggleswade. "A man with views like that oughtn't to be a headmaster! There are some things that you can't alter."

"You can alter them, Biggy—but the remedy is worse than the disease," said Fenton sagely.

"The Head is quite right, of course. Everybody knows it. But how is he going to alter things? He'll make them a lot worse if he starts monkeying."

"Rather!" said Biggy. "The most sen-



sible schoolmasters are those who know their limitations. A man without an eye that's capable of winking is useless. And practice is jolly different to theory."

The two prefects were startled a moment later, for it almost seemed to them that Dr. Nicholls had overheard their whispered words, or had been reading their thoughts.

"There are some of you who will say that I am an idealist," he went on. "You will tell me that there is much wisdom in the old adage: 'Of two evils chose the lesser.' You will declare that any reform will be worse than the existing conditions. You will even say that while these changes sound well in theory, they will crumble to pieces in practice."

"By gad!" breathed Biggleswade, staring.

"Perhaps you are right—perhaps I am wrong—but at all events I am going to take

the unusual course of putting the whole matter to the test," said Dr. Nicholls impressively. "It has long been one of my dreams—one of my ambitions—to lead the way in a reform of this kind. I want my efforts to be successful, and I want the school to help me."

There was an ominous silence.

"I am at last in control of one of Britain's greatest Public Schools," continued the Head, in an almost gloating voice. "I have nursed my theories carefully and tenderly, and now the opportunity has come for me to put them into practice. Let me disabuse your minds at once of the thought—which I have no doubt is in all your heads—that I am acting beyond my authority. Before accepting this appointment I stipulated that I should be granted the opportunity of introducing this reform."

Again the Head had read the thoughts of the school. Indignation was welling up within everybody; fellows were jumping to the conclusion that the new Head was about to force his cranky ideas upon them on his own initiative.

"The St. Frank's Governors, Dr. Stafford, and myself, threshed this matter out," declared Dr. Nicholls. "The appointment was offered me, and I accepted it only on the understanding that I should institute this change. Therefore, I am here for the definite purpose of bringing it about."

The school could only marvel at the Governors' insanity.

"Bullying is an evil that must be stamped out," said the Head grimly. "These subjects are generally taboo; they are hushed up. I know perfectly well that open bullying does not take place. That sort of thing, thank goodness, is a relic of the past. But what of the secret bullying? What of the arm-twisting, the ear-pulling, the persecution in other ways, that is everlastingly going on? There are perhaps only one or two senior boys who indulge in these reprehensible habits. They may not be even in the highest Form. Perhaps you will tell me what happens if a big Fifth Form boy twists the arm of a fag?"

"He gets it in the neck, sir!" said Willy Handforth promptly.

"Indeed!"

"Rather, sir," said Willy. "I'm the leader of the fags, and if anybody starts bullying, we take matters into our own hands. Things are quite all right as they are, sir. You needn't think we're so jolly helpless!"

The Head was rather taken aback.

"You are helpless in those cases where the persecuted boy fails to make any complaint," he retorted, frowning. "I have no doubt that many timid fags are afraid to make any mention of the tyranny to which they are sometimes subjected."

Willy couldn't allow this to pass.

"But there aren't any timid fags, sir," he protested. "I've seen to that! A new

kid is sometimes timid, but I jolly soon knock it out of him!"

Dr. Nicholls pointed a quivering finger at Handforth minor.

"You are condemning yourself!" he shouted. "By your very words, you are convincing me that a reform is long overdue."

"Eh?" gasped Willy. "Beg pardon, sir?"

"A timid boy joins the school, and you immediately proceed to 'knock' his timidity out of him," said Dr. Nicholls impressively. "What is that but bullying? If this sort of thing goes on amongst the youngest boys, what of the older boys? I tell you that it must stop. In future, these unfortunates will be granted their freedom. They need no longer fear the petty persecution of the stronger. Brute force will rule no more!"

The Head walked from end to end of the platform, gazing intently at the various Forms, and they could feel the magnetism of his personality. Not a sound broke the stillness of the great hall except the Head's footfalls.

"There are other matters," he said, at length. "The school rules are broken in many ways. I want to tell you that it is your duty to report any such breach of regulations to your Form-masters, or House-masters—or to me. I want you to enter wholeheartedly into this new regime. Help me. Cast aside your settled convictions. They are false. Unless the whole school backs me up, the experiment will not have a fair chance."

The school did not appear to be very enthusiastic.

"Masters and pupils should work hand in hand," said the Head. "It is the usual custom for schoolboys to regard their masters as enemies. That is absurd. Masters and pupils should be friends; they should co-operate in work and pleasure. The old system of hushing up irregularities must be abolished. My ambition is to make St. Frank's a model school."

He pointed in a general sort of way.

"You can help me!" he declared. "You, and you, and you! Hitherto you have been prevented from giving information by the ridiculous unwritten law which prevails. You have been led to believe that it is honourable to keep silent when common justice demands that you should speak out. Let me tell you that it is dishonourable to shield an offender, and thus allow him an immunity of which he takes advantage by repeating the self-same offence! Thus these rule-breakers go on from bad to worse."

"Theory—theory!" muttered Fenton, frowning. "It's true that the offenders don't get punished by the masters, but they're soon found out by the fellows—and punished twice as severely, too. The thing is automatic—it works by itself."

The school captain was right. As everybody in the school knew, a fellow had only to go a bit beyond the limit and, without the

masters knowing anything about it, he would soon be pulled up. And his punishment would be far more drastic than anything that the masters could hope to inflict.

The St. Frank's code was all right. Dr. Morrison Nicholls was a man of theories, and he was evidently asking for trouble!

CHAPTER 6.

Teddy Long to the Fore!

THE new Head's mistake lay in the fact that he based his arguments upon a totally wrong assumption.

He took it for granted that all offenders against the school rules got off scot free, unless they were caught red-handed by a master. In this he was absolutely at fault.

How many times had Nipper & Co. bumped one or other of the cads for smoking, or breaking bounds? How many times had they administered a thrashing for some misdemeanour which could not be reported? And the same with the seniors.

The school's very decency kept it in order. The majority of fellows always backed the side of law and order.

Perhaps Dr. Nicholls had not been educated in a Public School; perhaps he did not know how automatically these things worked. He made the incredible blunder of assuming that the few dishonourable boys were allowed to wreak their evil unhindered.

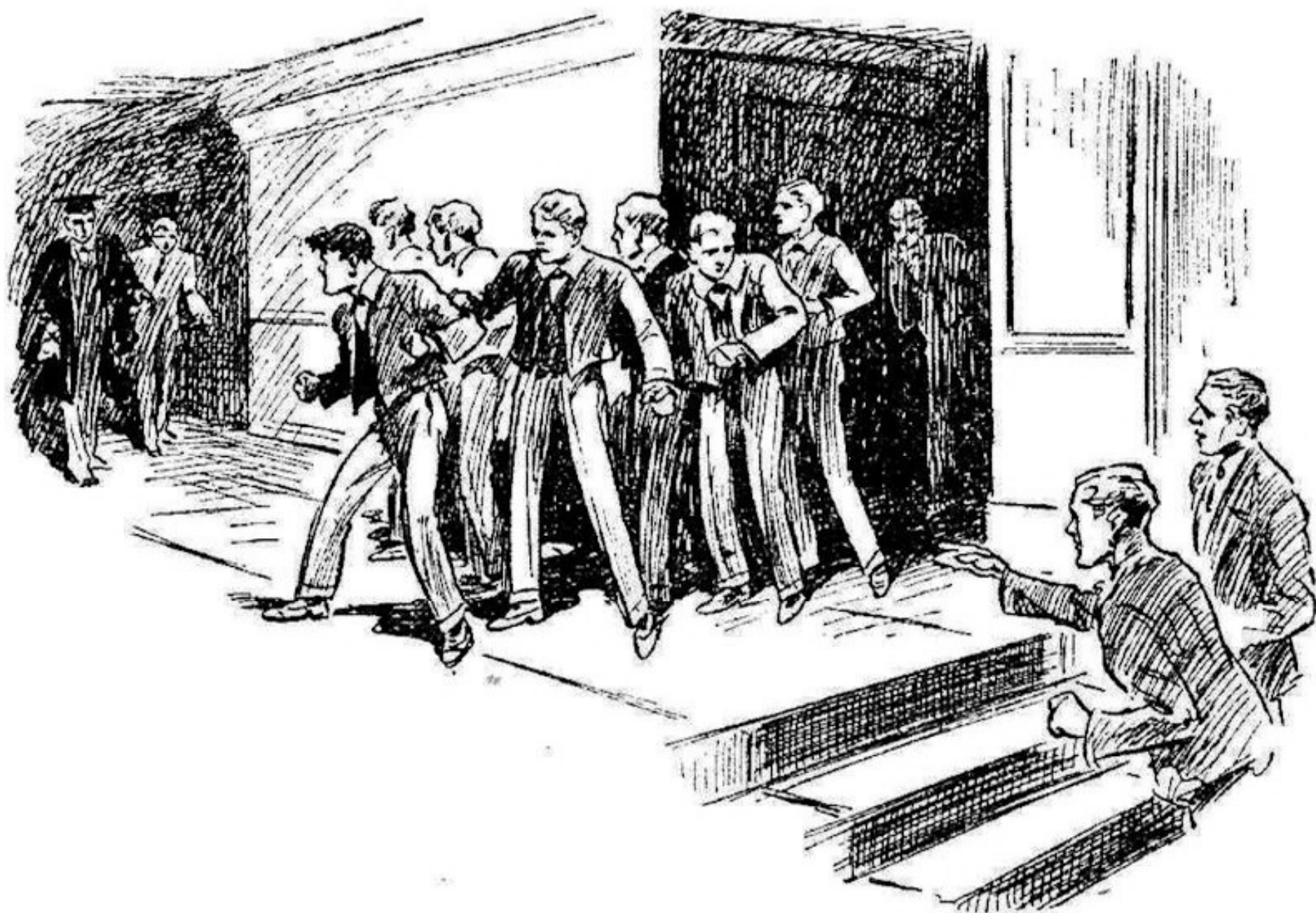
These fellows might not have their misdeeds reported to the powers that were, but they were certainly punished by their fellow schoolboys whenever they went beyond the limit. Quite apart from all this, there were a hundred and one violations of the school rules and regulations that were always being committed. Life at the great school would be intolerable if all rules were enforced to the letter. A little elasticity was essential.

"From now onwards, matters are to be different," said Dr. Nicholls, with emphasis. "As I have told you, this new regime cannot be a success unless you all agree to help me. If any of you are persecuted, report to your own masters, or to me. If you know of breaches of the regulations, it is your duty to report them. Do you understand? Your duty! You will not be sneaking. You will be helping to maintain law and order."

"Mad!" muttered Handforth, under his breath.

"Clean off his rocker!" agreed others.

"None of you need fear the consequences of your so-called sneaking," continued the Head. "I want to impress upon you most solemnly that it will not be sneaking. The word is misused. All boys who come to me with reports of misdemeanours will be guaranteed immunity from persecution."



The Remove raiders gasped in consternation as they heard footsteps mounting the stairs. "Cave!" breathed Nipper. "Bunk to the other stairs!" The juniors retreated—and found themselves confronted by the Head. They were between two fires. Escape was impossible!

"How, sir?" asked Handforth bluntly.

"How?" repeated the Head, frowning. "I shall guarantee them immunity."

"But if any chap sneaks, sir, he'll be dropped on like a shot—just the same as of old!" protested Handforth, with rare boldness. "You can't alter all these things like this! Better not try, sir."

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

"I am hoping that you will change your attitude before long," said the Head, compressing his lips. "I am prepared for opposition. I expect it. But sooner or later you will find out that my theory is not only right, but that it is capable of being put into practice. If any boys are 'dropped on' for bringing information to me, the culprits will very soon be sorry for themselves. I have come to St. Frank's to stamp out this tyranny. It is rife in all our Public Schools, and St. Frank's is to lead the way in the new reform."

Soon afterward the school was dismissed—with plenty to talk about.

"**A**S crazy as a March hare!" said Handforth flatly, as he and a crowd of other Removites streamed into the Triangle. "I've never heard such drivell! It's positively rotten, too. Urging us to sneak!"

"He ought to be boiled!" said Church indignantly.

"The man's a crank!" said Fullwood. Nipper shook his head.

"I think you fellows have misunderstood him," he said thoughtfully. "Dr. Nicholls isn't a crank, and he isn't mad, either."

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

"He simply doesn't understand the psychology of a big school—that's all," said Nipper.

"He doesn't understand the which?"

"The psychology."

"And what's that, Mr. Dictionary?"

"Well, I can't exactly explain, although I know what it means," confessed Nipper. "It's the—the school's mind. Not exactly that, either. But Dr. Nicholls hasn't the power to understand us, as some masters have. He evidently thinks that rules and regulations ought to be stuck to like glue, and that everything ought to be done by rule of thumb."

"And that if we have some rotters amongst us they're free to go their way unhindered," nodded Travers. "A ridiculous assumption, dear old fellows. I rather think we can look after ourselves without any help from the Head."

"He's sincere enough," went on Nipper. "He probably thinks that he's a man with a Great Idea, and he's making it his life's work to put it into practice. But the thing

is bound to fail, no matter how hard he tries to enforce it."

"Why is it bound to?" asked Church.

"Because only the rotters will take advantage of the situation," replied Nipper. "The rest of us will go on as usual. We shall keep to our own code, and we shall bar sneaking more vigorously than ever."

"Rather!" said Handforth, nodding. "By George! If I collar any sneaks, I'll make them sit up! The Head's trying to turn St. Frank's into a sneaks' paradise! That's what he's doing! I never heard such drivel!"

"Sneaks allowed here!" said Travers whimsically. "Sneaks catered for! All welcome!"

"Ass!" frowned Handforth.

"Well, well! Isn't it just about what the Head is aiming at, dear old fellow?" asked Travers. "He's told the school that he won't be down on any fellow who sneaks. The fact is, we've been labouring under the most colossal misapprehension for years; ever since we were infants. It's amazing how brainy chaps like us can get these wrong ideas into our heads."

"What wrong ideas?" asked Handforth, staring.

"About sneaking, of course," said Travers. "All these years we've regarded a sneak as a pretty contemptible sort of reptile. Yet, actually, he's an honourable fellow—a fellow with a high sense of duty—a fellow to be praised and looked up to."

"Look here, you howling idiot——"

"It's no good, Handy—the Head's told us the truth of the matter, and who are we to question the Head's ruling?" asked Travers, with a sigh. "The worst of it is, I'm such an obstinate blighter. Even when the truth is told to me, I won't believe it. I shall continue to regard a sneak as a pretty mouldy sort of insect."

"And so we all shall," said Nipper grimly. "Don't look so hot, Handy, old man. Travers was only rotting."

"Nobody should rot on such a subject!" said Handforth sternly. "I want to know what we're going to do about it? I want to know—— By George! Just look at this! Look what the breeze has blown up!"

TEDDY LONG, of Study B, had appeared from the West Square, and there was something unusually arrogant in his bearing. As a general rule, Teddy was inclined to be cringing in his manner. When he approached such fellows as Handforth and Nipper he did so with caution and respect.

But this morning he swaggered up with an air of intolerable swank. He held his puggy chin in the air, and he had the appearance of one who owned the entire premises.

"Kill it, dear old fellows," said Travers, averting his eyes. "For the love of Samson! It's been asking to be squashed for terms—but the time has now come when the deed can no longer be delayed."

"Hi! You!" roared Handforth, turning on the sneak of the Remove. "Come here!"

Teddy Long paused, stiffened, and for a fleeting second he revealed traces of his old manner; then he gave a gulp and tried to look dignified.

"Speaking to me?" he asked coldly.

"Yes, I am!" retorted Handforth. "Come here!"

"You'd better not lay your hands on me, Handforth!" said Long truculently. "If you do, I shall complain to the Head—and

he'll see that I'm not persecuted afterwards! We fellows with a high sense of duty are officially protected."

"Great Scott!"

"I'm a bit particular with whom I mix," went on Teddy, gaining confidence. "I don't like your face, Handforth, and never did! And I'm jolly well not going to obey your rotten orders."

"What's more, you chaps had better not try to bump me any more," continued Teddy Long, looking at the group with a comprehensive stare. "I'm safe now. At last we've got a headmaster who knows what he's doing."

"My only hat!"

"Touch me, and I shall be reluctantly compelled to report you to the Head!" said Teddy Long calmly. "And now that we're on the subject, perhaps you fellows will have the decency to apologise to me?"

"Apologise!" ejaculated Nipper, amazed.

"Yes, rather!"

"What for?"

"Because you owe me an apology," said Teddy sternly. "I've been right all the time! You fellows have always called me a sneak, and you've looked upon sneaking as a pretty rotten game."

"So it is!" roared Handforth.

"Nonsense!" said Teddy, with a wave of his hand.

"Wha-a-a-at! Are you speaking to me?"

"Yes, I am!" said Long, becoming more and more assured. "You're not going to tell me that the headmaster is wrong, I suppose? He ought to know best! And he says that sneaking is a duty—an honourable duty."

Handforth took a deep breath.

"Just a minute!" he said ominously.

Slowly and deliberately he commenced to roll up his coat sleeves; and Teddy Long's arrogance positively oozed out of his pores. He seemed visibly to shrink. Some of the colour fled from his cheeks.



"What—what are you going to do?" he asked feebly.

"You'll see!" said Handforth, with relish. "First of all, I'm going to slaughter you. Then I'm going to reduce you to mincemeat. After that I'll knock you into the middle of next week!"

"Here, you'd better go easy!" gasped Teddy Long. "Don't forget that I'm protected!"

"Oh, are you? Where's your protection?"

"The Head said——"

"Never mind what the Head said!" roared Handforth. "The Head isn't here now—but I'm here. Sneaking's a duty, is it? Sneaking is honourable, is it? By George! I'm going to give you something to be honourable about!"

But Nipper and Travers and one or two others held Handforth back, much to his indignation.

"Why should you have all the fun, Handy?" asked Nipper. "Don't forget that we're in this. I rather think that we're entitled to our share of the sport."

"Lemme go!" shrieked Teddy Long, who had been seized by Church and McClure.

Handforth, much to his disgust, was not allowed to monopolise Teddy Long. That startled junior was seized by many grim hands. He was whirled purposefully into the shadows of West Arch.

Bump!

"Stop it, you rotters!" howled Teddy. "You know what the Head said! I shall be forced to do my duty——"

Bump!

Any further words were impossible. Teddy Long was bumped violently and frequently. In fact, by the time the Removites had finished with him he was thoroughly exhausted, to say nothing of being abominably sore.

"Well, that's that!" said Nipper, dusting his hands. "Now you can go and do your duty, my son!"

CHAPTER 7.

Gore-Pearce's Opportunity!

BETTER go easy with that cig., old man," grinned Gulliver, of the Remove

Claude Gore-Pearce, who was about to light a cigarette, raised his eyebrows in supercilious wonder. He and his two precious cronies were taking things easily in Study A after afternoon lessons.

"Go easy?" repeated Gore-Pearce. "What for?"

"If any high-minded fellow looks in and sees you smoking, he'll probably consider it his duty to report you to the Head," said Gulliver, with a chuckle.

"Idiot!"

"I was only joking, hang it!" protested Gulliver.

"You shouldn't try to joke—it doesn't suit you," said Gore-Pearce. "No, my sons! There's no danger of anybody reporting us. Nipper and Handforth and those other fools are all against sneaking, and they regard the new Head as a harmless lunatic. As far as we're concerned, things will go on in the same old way. Yet it strikes me that there's a chance here for us to gain some power."

"Power?" asked Bell curiously.

"Power!" repeated Gore-Pearce, lying back in his chair and closing his eyes. "It's the beginning of a new term, and things haven't shaken down yet. Gad! What an opportunity!"

"I can't see any opportunity!" said Gulliver, staring.

The millionaire's son opened his eyes.

"No?" he said. "Then you must be blind. My dear idiots, there's a glorious chance for us here—a chance to start a winning campaign against Nipper and Handforth and that clique."

"Better not try it!" said Bell, shaking his head. "They're too strong for us! As for calling it a winning campaign, you're off you're rocker. It's bound to be a losing one."

"With the headmaster on our side?"

"Eh?"

"You heard what I said."

"Yes, but——"

"There are no 'buts' about it," interrupted Claude Gore-Pearce. "Have we ever had the Head on our side before? Never! If we started anything against Nipper's gang, we were fighting against heavy odds. The masters always took a stand against us, and we got it in the neck. But now it's changed. The new Head is our pal. He'll stand by us."

Gulliver and Bell were startled.

"I may be dense, but I'm jiggered if I can see what you're driving at," said Gulliver. "How is the Head on our side?"

"I'm an ambitious sort of chap," said Gore-Pearce thoughtfully. "Nothing will satisfy me but the captaincy of the Remove. And there's no reason why I shouldn't become captain, is there?"

"I can think of lots of reasons," said Bell, shaking his head. "One particular big reason."

"And what's that?"

"Nipper!" said Bell, with conviction.

"I'm not afraid of Nipper!" scowled Gore-Pearce, rising to his feet, and pacing up and down. "Look here! Here and now—at this very minute—the new party is formed."

"The new party?" asked Gulliver, staring.

"The Reformers!" said Gore-Pearce calmly. "I'm the president, you chaps are the vice-presidents. That's pretty swift, isn't it? The Reformers is now an approved rival party."

"But what the dickens——"

"The Reformers stand for Duty and Honour," said Gore-Pearce sententiously. "All members pledge themselves to uphold the rules and regulations of this great school."

Whenever they see breaches of discipline, their high sense of duty will compel them to report direct to the Head."

"Great Scott!"

"The Head, naturally, will have a special kindly eye for the Reformers," said Gore-Pearce smoothly. "He will protect them; he will support their cause. If there is any persecution, he will put it down with a firm hand."

"But you don't mean all this?" gasped Bell.

Claude Gore-Pearce suddenly dropped his play-acting and grinned.

"Yes, I do," he said coolly. "By gad, what a chance! My dear idiots, if the Head's fool enough to start this rot, why shouldn't we take advantage of it? It's a stunt! And if we work this Reform Party right, we're on a cert! We'll get members by the dozen, and for the first time in history Nipper will have an opposition party that'll knock him off his perch."

"We'll never get enough support!" said Bell sceptically.

"Not at first," admitted Gore-Pearce. "But wait until later! Wait until the fellows see that the Head's on our side. At first we shall probably have a rough time of it, but the ultimate aim is worth it! Back me up, and we'll be in complete power in the Remove! The Head will afford us protection—he'll save us from persecution. Gad, it's a cinch!"

TWO minutes later the cads of Study A were out in the passage, en route for the Common-room. Gore-Pearce meant to start the ball rolling at once. There was no reason why he should delay the public announcement of the Reform Party's inauguration.

It was raining outside. April was true to its record; there had been showers on and off all day, and just when the fellows wanted to be out of doors a particularly heavy shower had driven them in.

Biff! Thud!

A wild howl came from Gore-Pearce. A muddy football, coming apparently from nowhere, had struck him full in the face, leaving about half a pound of grime on his features.

"Sorry!" said Handforth casually. "Kick it this way, my son!"

Gore-Pearce nearly choked. Handforth's complete disregard of the damage was insufferable.

"Come and fetch it yourself!" snarled Gore-Pearce. "Look what you've done to my face!"

Handforth strode up, and examined Gore-Pearce's face.

"A bit muddy, but that's an improvement," he said calmly. "I haven't seen you looking so presentable for months! Your face is half hidden, and that's how it always ought to be."

"You silly fool!" panted Gore-Pearce. "I'm smothered! What the deuce do you

mean by kicking a football about in the passage?"

"It's raining outside," explained Handforth. "I got a bit wet, even as it was, and——"

"Cave!" came a sudden gasp from Church and McClure.

With the agility of an expert conjurer, Handforth grabbed the football, and in a flash had tucked it up McClure's back. McClure boiled with indignation, but with the enemy so close at hand he was compelled to reserve his opinion of this manoeuvre. He utterly failed to see why Handforth couldn't have tucked the muddy football up his own back.

"Pretend to be leaning against the wall!" hissed Handforth.

MR. JAMES CROWELL, the master of the Remove, gave a suspicious glance at the chums of Study D as he came down the corridor. They were leaning against the wall, and McClure, who was in the middle, seemed to stick out in a curious way. But Church and Handforth flanked him so effectively that Mr. Crowell had no cause to suspect the presence of a football. As all the juniors knew, kicking a football about in the passages was strictly prohibited.

"Just a minute, sir!" said Gore-Pearce grimly.

Mr. Crowell looked at him. Then he started. He looked again, adjusting his glasses.

"Gore-Pearce!" he said. "What is the matter with your face?"

"Nothing, sir—it's natural!" said Handforth. "We thought there was something the matter with it when he first came, but——"

"I was not addressing you, Handforth!" said Mr. Crowell tartly. "There is no necessity for you to be facetious, either. Gore-Pearce, how did you get that mud on your face? Go upstairs and wash it off at once!"

"I got this mud on my face, sir, because Handforth was kicking a football about in the corridor," said Gore-Pearce hotly. "And Handforth knows perfectly well that football indoors is against the rules."

Handforth & Co. stared in blank amazement. Mr. Crowell frowned. He was certain that he had heard the unmistakable "thud" of boot meeting ball, but he had never dreamed of asking any questions. If he had actually seen the breach, he would have been compelled to punish the culprit. But Mr. Crowell, as of yore, turned a deaf ear and a blind eye to suspicious circumstances.

In the face of Gore-Pearce's statement, however, he had no option but to make an inquiry.

"Sneak!" breathed Church fiercely.

Gore-Pearce spun round.

"Did you hear that, sir?" he asked indignantly. "I protest! The headmaster has expressly ordered us to report the break-

ing of rules, and he has said that there is no such thing as sneaking. Are you going to let this fellow insult me because I've done my duty, sir?"

"By George! You—you——"

"Silence, Handforth!" said Mr. Crowell, frowning harder than ever.

He was in a quandary. He violently disagreed with Dr. Morrison Nicholls' views, and with this absurd reform. But Mr. Crowell was only a Form-master, and he was compelled to support the headmaster's experiment. His own private views he was forced to suppress.

Now he found himself in the unenviable position of sympathising with Handforth, and yet being obliged to punish him; and in so doing he would indicate his official approval of Gore-Pearce's contemptible action. Mr. Crowell felt bitter. He was sure that the Head had not realised the difficulties that he—the Head—was creating for the Form-masters and prefects.

"I—er—hardly think it was necessary, Gore-Pearce, for you to vouchsafe this information," said Mr. Crowell coldly. "You know perfectly well that I disapprove of tittle-tattling."

"The headmaster ordered us to report——"

"I know very well that the headmaster has ordered," snapped Mr. Crowell. "But it is hardly necessary to go out of your way to mention such a trifle. You complain that Handforth kicked a football in this passage, and that it hit you in the face?"

"Well, look at my face, sir!" protested Gore-Pearce.

"I have looked at it once, and I do not desire to look at it again," retorted the Form-master. "Handforth, what have you to say?"

"An awful lot, sir!" said Handforth thickly. "But I think I'll say it after you've gone!"

"Ahem! I mean, do you confess that you kicked a football into Gore-Pearce's face?"

"Yes, sir—but it was accidental."

"I quite believe that; but you know, nevertheless, that you are breaking a rule by using a football indoors," said Mr. Crowell. "Where is it?"

Mac reluctantly produced it.

"I have no alternative but to confiscate this ball," said Mr. Crowell severely. "You may have it, Handforth, after you have executed the imposition I am compelled to inflict."

"Oh, draw it mild, sir!" protested Handforth.

"I am sorry, Handforth, but I must uphold the discipline of the school!" said Mr. Crowell sternly. "You will write me ten lines. Bring them to my study, and you may have your football."

And the Form-master walked off—feeling that his duty had been done.

CHAPTER 8.

Remove Reprisals!

UNDOUBTEDLY, Mr. Crowell had signified his complete disapproval of the headmaster's edict. By giving Handforth such a preposterously small impot, the confiscation of the football became farcical. It would only take Handforth three minutes to complete that task, and then he could get his football back.

"Now!" said the leader of Study D, in a terrible voice.

Mr. Crowell had vanished. He had vanished quite hurriedly, instinctively feeling that a spot of bother would start as soon as his back was turned. And Mr. Crowell had no desire to hear it, or to be anywhere within official earshot.

"You rotter!" thundered Handforth. "You sneak! You dirty cad!"

Gore-Pearce recoiled.

"Better keep your hands to yourself!" he panted. "You know what the Head said——"

"Blow the Head!"

"If you touch me because I reported you, the Head will come down heavily on you! He promised us immunity——"

"That means you'll sneak again, eh?"

"It's not sneaking——"



"It is, and you know it!" roared Handforth furiously. "By George! Put up your hands, you cad!"

Crash!

Gore-Pearce reeled back as Handforth's fist crashed into his face. The next few moments were highly entertaining—for Church, McClure, Nipper, Tregellis-West, and quite a few others who were gathered round. Nobody thought of interfering. Gore-Pearce was swiftly reduced to jelly.

He tried to put up a fight, but against Handforth it was hopeless. When he went down for the third time he stayed down. He made no attempt to come to the surface again, so to speak.

"And the next time you sneak, I'll make it worse!" said Handforth, as he dusted his knuckles. "If you think you can hide behind the Head's gown you've made a bloomer! We're not taking any notice of this tommy rot!"



Swoosh! As the Head pushed the dormitory door open a mass of white stickiness hurtled out and completely covered his face. The Removites looked on in horrified alarm. That stuff had been intended for Corcoran & Co.!

Gore-Pearce struggled feebly to his feet, and although he said nothing his glare was evil. Gulliver and Bell assisted him away, and they all went into Study A.

"So much for the Reformers!" said Bell, not without relish.

"Very funny, aren't you?" snarled Gore-Pearce. "By gad! I'll get my own back before long! I told you it would be a bit rough to start with, didn't I?"

"You didn't think it would be as rough as this, did you?" asked Gulliver.

The millionaire's son breathed hard.

"Wait!" he panted. "I haven't started yet!"

"Don't make a fuss over trifles," he said sternly.

And McClure could gain no more satisfaction than that—which was no satisfaction at all.

At first it looked as though the affair might develop into something big. But it didn't. Gore-Pearce wisely decided to let the matter drop. The time wasn't quite ripe for him to carry his tales to the Head. And as for his Reform Party, he warned Gulliver and Bell to say nothing about it.

OUT in the corridor the Removites were singing the praises of Mr. Crowell.

"He's a good old stick!" said Nipper approvingly. "I'm glad we've got him back in the Remove."

"He's never been away," said Tommy Watson.

"I know; but we had Mr. Norton while we were on the School Ship," said Nipper. "I think he's gone to the River House School. I hear they're enlarging it. Anyhow, it's good to have old Crowell in control of us again."

"He's a sportsman," said Gresham, with a chuckle. "You'd better go and do your ten lines, Handy."

"Bother the ten lines," frowned Handforth. "We've got to do something about Gore-Pearce!"

"I rather thought you'd done it!" grinned Nipper.

"Something else, I mean," said Handforth. "If he's going to start a regular system of sneaking, there'll be some work for us to do. And supposing he runs to the Head, and complains that I've biffed him for sneaking?"

"In that case, the Head will be compelled to uphold him, and you'll probably get a swishing," said McClure promptly. "You deserve it, too."

"Eh?"

"Look at my clothes!" said Mac, with a glare. "I don't often get wild with you, Handy, but—"

"Don't talk to me about clothes!" snorted Handforth. "Can't your mind rise above clothes?"

"But I'm smothered!" said Mac. "It was like your nerve to shove that rotten football up the back of my jacket! Why couldn't you have put it up your own? I must say you're jolly careless with my clobber!"

Handforth waved his hand.



Swoosh! As the Head pushed the dormitory door open his face. The Removites looked on in horrified al

"I've changed my mind," he said. "We'll leave it for a bit, and see how things are going. I heard somebody saying that there's going to be a jape against those Fourth-Formers this evening—and there might be a chance for us to get busy."

"How?" asked Bell.

"You'll see how when the time comes," replied Gore-Pearce.

THE evening set in definitely wet, and cricket practice at the nets was out of the question. Even football was abandoned. This was no hardship, for interest in football was waning. The cricket season was nearly at hand, and everybody was as keen as mustard on practising.

The Removites gathered in the Ancient House Common-room, which was the usual thing on a wet evening. It was only natural, perhaps, that the fellows should think of ways and means to spend the evening. Nothing could be done out of doors, but there



ickness hurtled out and completely covered had been intended for Corcoran & Co.!

were many other ways of killing time.

"We ought to make Corky & Co. sit up," said Nipper thoughtfully. "They spoofed us over that five quid feed, and they've been cackling ever since. In fact, I'm getting fed up with their cackling. It's up to us to put them in their places."

"Hear, hear!"

"Until we've got our own back, they'll keep on reminding us of that dotty feed,"

continued Nipper. "There's no reason why we shouldn't silence them this evening."

"And that reminds me," said Handforth, frowning. "I'm broke! Those funny idiots burgled all my cash, and I shan't get any more until the end of next week."

"Why not touch Willy for five bob?" grinned Fullwood.

"My minor?" asked Handforth coldly. "Touch him for five bob? You silly ass! It's he who touches me for five bob!"

"Isn't it your turn to return the compliment?"

"I'd rather be broke for the whole term!" said Handforth, with conviction. "By George! You won't catch me borrowing money from my minor! He came to me to-day and offered me a quid!"

"Good man!" said Nipper. "You can always rely on Willy! And were you ass enough to refuse it?"

"I refused it," replied Handforth bluntly.

"Not that it made any difference," explained Church. "Mac and I took the quid, and we're providing the study feeds until some more cash rolls in."

There were many chuckles. Handforth had refused to accept the loan from Willy, but it was only a farce. Study D had taken the money, so it amounted to the same thing.

"Now, about this jape," continued Nipper. "We don't need anything too elaborate—and you can't beat the old wheezes. Any suggestions?"

"Let's go over and scalp 'em," said Handforth promptly.

"Too risky and too noisy," said Nipper, shaking his head.

"In any case, why bother with Corky & Co.?" asked Handforth. "Why be satisfied with such small fry? We owe those Moor View girls a lot more than we owe the Fourth!"

"Yes, by jingo!" said Fullwood. "But I think we'd better leave that, Handy. It needs to be something pretty deep to spoof Irene & Co. They're girls, but they know all the tricks, and they're so

jolly smart that we shall fail unless we make a lot of preparations."

The schoolboys had vivid recollections of the stupendous jape that had been worked off on them by the schoolgirls on Easter Monday. It had been a shattering defeat, and Irene Manners and her cheery girl chums had scored the greatest victory in Moor View history.

Nipper & Co. had not forgotten. They were on the friendliest possible terms with the girls, and the latter chipped them every time they met. Nipper was determined to wipe off that old score when the opportunity arose.

"We'll leave it, Handy," he said. "It's pouring with rain this evening, and we don't want to go too far afield. Let's be content with Corky & Co. I suggest something simple. As soon as it's dark we'll steal into the East House and prepare some booby traps in the Fourth dormitories."

"Stale!" said Handforth scornfully.

"Booby traps are obsolete," declared Gresham.

"Don't you believe it," grinned Nipper. "There's nothing to beat a variation of the old stunts. I'm not suggesting that we should balance a pail of water on the edge of a door, or anything clumsy like that. I've got another wheeze."

"Let's have it," chorused the crowd.

"We shall need a lot of string," said Nipper. "Briefly, the wheeze is this. With string, ingeniously arranged, and with such ingredients as catapult elastic, custard powder, and paste, we can do quite a lot. A little whitewash might come in useful, too, to say nothing of a little preparation I made this afternoon while we were in the 'Stinks'."

"Go ahead!" said Handforth eagerly. "This sounds good!"

CLAUDE GORE-PEARCE, looking more or less respectable again, leaned over to Gulliver and Bell. They were sitting in one of the corner lounges of the Common-room, apparently reading. The jape-planning was going on in mid-apartment, where the bulk of the fellows had gathered.

"A chance to do our duty, what?" said Gore-Pearce.

"How do you mean?" asked Gulliver, staring.

"Well, hang it, as dutiful pupils of this great establishment, how can we allow this breach of the rules to pass?" asked Gore-Pearce coolly. "I rather think it's up to us to report this affair before it can come off."

"To Crowell?" asked Bell sneeringly.

Gore-Pearce frowned.

"No, not to Crowell!" he snapped. "To the Head! I'm not reporting anything else to Crowell—or to any of the other masters, either. I suggest that we take a little stroll to the Head's house, and get into his good books by tipping him the wink about this business."

"But it'll ruin the jape!"

"Of course it will—and these fools will get into trouble."

"What about us getting into trouble afterwards?" asked Gulliver sourly.

"How?" said Gore-Pearce. "Who'll know how the Head received his information?"

"They'll guess."

"Guesswork's nothing!" retorted Claude. "They can't scrag us on guesswork. And the Head will single us out as dutiful fellows, and when I start my Reform Party I shall have official support. Leave this to me, my sons!"

Gulliver and Bell were thoroughly uneasy.

"Hang it all, Gore-Pearce, it's too thick!" suggested Bell. "It's sneaking!"

"The Head has told us that that word is misused."

"Don't trot out that piffle!" said Bell. "You know jolly well that the Head's cranky! It's sneaking, and you can't get away from it. The worst kind of sneaking, too—peaching on a jape, and getting our own Form-fellows into trouble with the Head. The chaps will half kill us if they find it out!"

"We've been promised that we shall be immune from persecution," replied Gore-Pearce calmly.

"You weren't very immune when Handforth smashed you, were you?"

"That won't happen again," retorted Claude. "By gad, no fear! Once bitten, twice shy! I shall know what to do next time! But I tell you, there's no fear of the chaps finding us out. And we shall make a hit with the Head."

It seemed strange to Gulliver and Bell that they could ever really "make a hit" with a headmaster by "telling tales out of school." It was opposed to all their settled convictions. Sneaking was a rotten game, and even Gulliver and Bell only indulged in it when they were driven into a corner. To do it in this premeditated manner, and without the slightest reason, was startling.

In fact, they jibbed.

"You can go to the Head, if you like—but I'm not going," said Gulliver.

"Neither am I," said Bell.

"Just as you please," nodded Gore-Pearce. "But if you refuse to back me up in this first venture, you can consider that I've accepted your resignations as vice-presidents of the Reform Party. I'll appoint two other fellows."

"The Reform Party isn't anything yet," sneered Bell.

"But it will be!" retorted Claude fiercely. "By gad! You may be blind, but I'm not! This Reform Party is going to make history in St. Frank's! And if you don't support me wholeheartedly, I'll wash my hands of you."

So Gulliver and Bell were more or less forced into this contemptible game of deliberate and premeditated sneaking.

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CHAPTER 9.

The Informers!

DR. MORRISON NICHOLLS looked thoughtfully at the three junior boys who stood before his desk. He was in his study, and at first he had refused to grant the interview. But when an insistent message came that it was of vital importance, he had changed his mind. The Head was not accustomed to granting interviews to juniors.

It was dark now, and raining harder than ever. The "April shower" had evidently made a miscalculation somewhere. It was nearly bed-time, too.

"Well?" said Dr. Nicholls, with a touch of impatience. "What do you boys want? To begin with, who are you?"

"I'm Gore-Pearce, sir," replied Claude boldly. "These fellows are Gulliver and Bell."

"I see," said the Head. "What Form?"

"Remove, sir."

"And House?"

"Ancient House, sir."

"And you have a message of vital importance for me, I understand?" asked the Head gravely. "I hope that I shall be able to share that view. Otherwise I may regard this insistence as an impertinence."

"We're here to do our duty, sir," said Gore-Pearce. "Not all the fellows have taken your speech to heart, but we have, sir. And we realise that you're the cleverest headmaster we've ever had at St. Frank's!"

Dr. Nicholls gave Gore-Pearce a suspicious look. Gulliver and Bell shivered in their shoes. They did not possess such nerve as their leader.

"You have come to me in order to fulfil your duty?" asked the Head steadily. "Splendid! Explain exactly what you mean, Gore-Pearce."

"We've learned that there is a grave breach of the school rules being committed, sir," said Gore-Pearce. "At first we didn't like to say anything, but you have aroused our sense of duty to such a pitch that we couldn't stand by and see this thing done without bringing you the information."

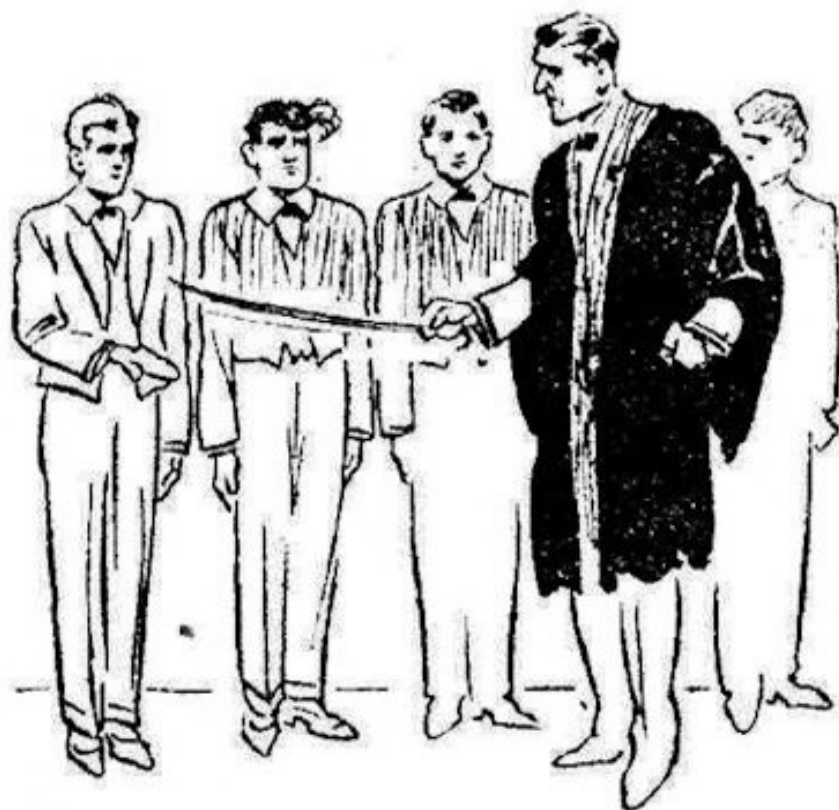
"Oh!" said Dr. Nicholls slowly. "I see—I see!"

"To use the old expression, sir, we're sneaking," proceeded Gore-Pearce. "But you have told us that the word 'sneaking' is wrong. By bringing you this news we are doing our duty to the school."

"You are quite right," said the Head quickly. "If you know of some breach, it is plainly your duty to tell me—or at least to tell your own Housemaster. Why have you come direct to me?"

Gore-Pearce had been expecting this awkward one.

"I'm afraid our Housemaster wouldn't understand, sir," he replied coolly. "Mr. Lee is rather old-fashioned. He hasn't got



your broadminded outlook. He would have treated us with contempt, sir."

"I hardly think so, Gore-Pearce."

"But I know it, sir," said Gore-Pearce. "We should have been labelled as sneaks, and I very much doubt if the culprits would have been properly punished. So I thought I'd better come straight to you."

The Head looked thoughtful for a few moments. Perhaps he was not altogether satisfied with Gore-Pearce's air of assurance.

"What is this breach of the rules?" he asked bluntly.

"A crowd of Ancient House fellows is raiding the East House, sir."

"Indeed!"

"They're at it now," said Claude calmly. "About a dozen of them. They all know that it's against the rules to go upstairs in any House but their own, unless they have express permission. I thought you might be able to catch them red-handed, sir."

"Quite a good idea, Gore-Pearce," said Dr. Nicholls, nodding. "You did the right thing in coming to me—in bringing me this information. I think it will prove to you how beneficial the new system will be to the school in general, once it is in full operation. Here we have a number of boys secretly breaking the regulations. But for your voluntary information, this misdemeanour might never have come to light."

"I'm sure it wouldn't, sir."

"Then it must be obvious to you that my methods are justified," said the Head, rising to his feet. "First and foremost, we must maintain discipline. Not merely the masters, but the boys, too. When I say 'we,' I mean the whole personnel of the school. And discipline can only be upheld if we all pull together."

"Well, we're game to do everything we can, sir," declared Gore-Pearce. "Gulliver and Bell and me. In fact, we're going to start a Reform Party, and do everything we can to uphold your ideas. And it'll be much more certain of success, sir, if we can say that the party has your support and approval."

Gulliver and Bell were freshly amazed at their leader's audacity; and they suspected, too, that Gore-Pearce had forced this interview mainly in order to get in a word about his precious Reform Party.

"I am glad, Gore-Pearce, that you have taken my words to heart so thoroughly. But this is not the time for me to give the matter my attention," said Dr. Nicholls. "Now let me have these facts clearly. A party of Ancient House boys, I understand, has entered the East House with the object of committing some—er—trick?"

"Exactly, sir. And if you go there straight away, you'll collar them before they have time to get away."

And Gore-Pearce proceeded to give a few more details.

HANDFORTH chuckled.

"By George! That'll give 'em something to go on with!" he murmured gleefully. "I've got to admit, Nipper, that it's a good idea. A dashed lot better than the old kind of booby-trap."

"Praise from you, Handy, is praise indeed!"

"As a matter of fact, I thought of the wheeze myself," continued Handforth. "It occurred to me directly after you had mentioned it."

"Wonderful!" murmured Nipper. "It's

extraordinary Handy, how these wheezes leap into your mind directly after you've heard somebody else trot them out. Sheer coincidence, of course," he added gravely.

There was quite a number of Ancient House Removites in the dim upper corridor of the East House. They were in the Fourth Form quarters, and so far everything had gone smoothly. Nobody had suspected their presence; nobody had disturbed them.

Travers and Potts and Tich Harborough came creeping along and joined them.

"O.K?" breathed Nipper.

"All finished, dear old fellow," nodded Travers.

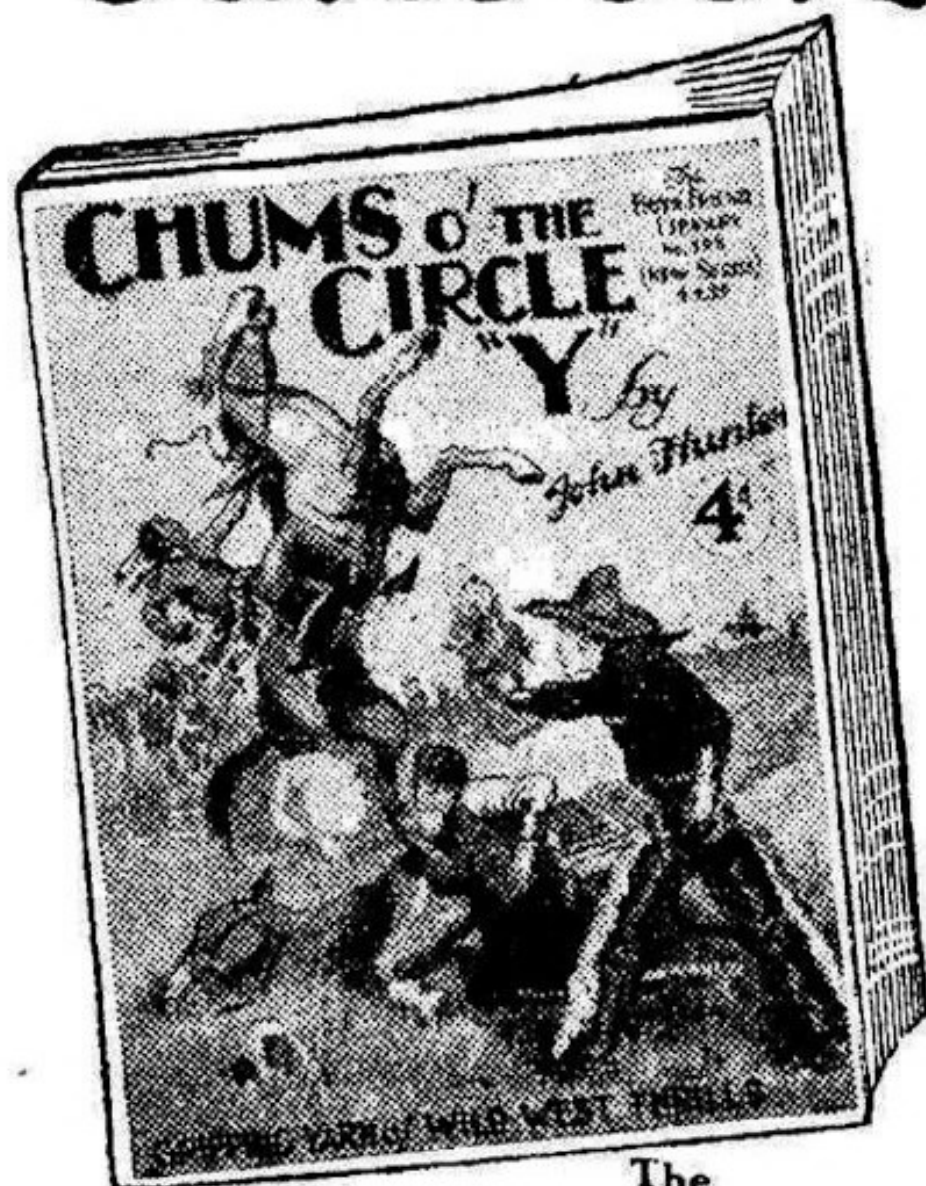
"Good! Then we might as well clear out," said Nipper. "We've done our job, and the sooner we're back in our own quarters, the better. Come on! We'll go down the back stairs, the same as we came up."

They crept along, chuckling. But when they reached the head of the rear staircase Nipper suddenly drew back. There were footsteps on the stairs—and voices! The voices of Sinclair and Kenmore—both prefects.

"Cave!" breathed Nipper. "Bunk to the other stairs, you chaps!"

One of the prefects had suddenly turned a switch at the bottom of the stairs, and the upper landing had become flooded with

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light. The juniors streaked for safety—only to come face to face with the headmaster!

"Halt!" commanded the Head sternly.

It was a hopeless position. The intruders were ambushed. Behind the Head came Mr. Barnaby Goole, the Housemaster of the East House. Payne and Parkin, two other prefects, were there, also.

"Easy, Handy—easy!" murmured Nipper, as he observed that Handforth was showing signs of making a dash for it. "We're collared—and we can't escape. No sense in trying. Take it calmly."

"We're trapped!" said Handforth fiercely. "Back and front!"

"Looks like a betrayal to me," muttered Travers.

"Same here!" agreed Nipper. "My sons, somebody has sneaked on us!"

Before they could make any further comments, the enemy closed in on them. They had halted in the centre of the long corridor. The Head and the others advanced from one direction, and Kenmore and Sinclair came up in the rear. The very fact that their retreat had been cut off proved that the Head must have had foreknowledge of the Removites' presence.

"You boys belong to the Remove, I believe?" asked the Head coldly.

"Yes, sir," said Nipper.

"You board in the Ancient House?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then what are you doing here—in the East House?"

"Just paying a call, sir," said Nipper calmly.

"A call!" snapped the Head. "Come! Tell me the truth! You have been committing some act of trickery. It is advisable for you to make a full and complete confession. I might as well inform you at once that I know all the details of your escapade."

"In that case, sir, there's nothing for us to confess," said Nipper resignedly. "We're not ashamed of ourselves. It was only a jape, sir. No harm in it."

"That is a matter of opinion, young man," replied the Head, casting his eye over the crowd. "Mr. Goole, I would like your prefects to take the names of these Remove boys. While they are doing so, I will make a personal investigation. I am glad of this opportunity to get into close touch with one of these so-called japes. Headmasters too seldom bother themselves over such trifles."

He moved towards one of the Fourth Form dormitories.

"Look out, sir!" warned Nipper urgently.

"Ass!" hissed Handforth. "Why didn't you let him go? Didn't he say he wants to get into close touch with our jape?"

The Head turned, frowning.

"Stop that mumbling!" he commanded.

"What is it you want to say?"

"Better not go into that room, sir," said Nipper.

"Ah! You are afraid of what I shall discover, eh?" said Dr. Nicholls curtly. "I

am afraid I cannot heed your words. I mean to find out for myself exactly what you have been doing."

The Head opened the door—and found it out!

SWOOOOSH!

As he pushed the dormitory door open, a sharp click sounded, followed by a remarkable sound of twanging elastic and clattering tin. But these sounds were completely drowned by the fearful "slosh" caused by something which struck the Head full in the face.

The Removites seemed rooted to the floor, horrified. They had known what was coming, but they had not been able to prevent it.

"Guggggggh!" gurgled the Head incoherently.

He had certainly found out what tricks the invaders had been up to. In a moment of thoughtlessness, Gore-Pearce had omitted to explain to Dr. Nicholls that booby-traps were the order of the hour, and that it would be inadvisable to open any dormitory door without taking due precautions.

Dr. Nicholls turned. His face had vanished. In place of it there was a huge blob of sickly-looking stickiness. It was whiteish in colour, and it dropped on to his shoulders and chest. It was like a lot of treacle in consistency, but it was like treacle in no other respects. There was an ingredient in that mixture which Nipper himself had invented. It was an ingredient which advertised itself not only to the Head, but to everybody else in the corridor.

In fact, it nearly knocked everybody backwards, even when they were standing yards away. So the Head's condition could be imagined. The odour was simply appalling. When Nipper went into the laboratory to invent a particularly unpleasant "whiff," he did the job thoroughly.

"Gug-gug-gug!" went on the Head frantically.

The prefects leapt to his assistance. It was an heroic exhibition. The juniors fell back, dumbfounded. That particular dose had been intended for Corcoran and Armstrong and Griffith, since this was Corky's dormitory. It had been specially and additionally flavoured, in Corky's honour, he being the leader.

Without doubt, Nipper's device was very ingenious. The opening of the door released a catch which connected with a contrivance just inside the room, and a panful of the mixture was projected with unerring accuracy into the face of the person in the doorway. It was, indeed, something new in booby traps.

Dr. Nicholls had discovered this for himself!

CHAPTER 10.

In the Neck!

"MY dear sir! This is appalling!" ejaculated Mr. Barnaby Goole, aghast.

"Better keep back, sir!" advised Payne, of the Sixth. "Phooh! This is worse than awful! What in the name of goodness have the young idiots been up to? Where did you get this frightful stuff from?"

"We made it," said Nipper sadly. "But we didn't mean the Head to get that dose. Our luck's out, it seems."

Charles Payne grunted. Whilst the other East House prefects approved of this ambush, Payne had been opposed to it. But he had been compelled to defer to the Head's orders. His sympathies, originally with the juniors, were now somewhat alienated. He had not counted upon this ordeal.

Payne was a stout fellow—in more ways than one. He was even bigger than Fatty Little—a stout, cumbersome senior. He was a thoroughly good sort, too, and nobody had ever known him to be anything but happy. He was the one bright spot in the East House prefects' room.

Nipper & Co. stood waiting, their hearts beating rapidly. Handforth was still keen upon making a dash for liberty, but this would have been worse than useless, seeing that all their names had been already taken.

All the Removites felt that they had been betrayed. The ambush had been too complete for any other explanation. A master, chancing along, could have been avoided. But the raiders had been caught front and rear, and escape had been impossible.

Somebody—some traitor—had sneaked. And none of the Removites could understand why. Obviously the informer had been an Ancient House fellow, and a fellow, moreover, who had been in the Common-room, and had heard the arrangements. Jape-plans were invariably openly discussed in the Common-rooms. Hitherto, nobody had ever dreamed of taking precautions. If some of the fellows disapproved of japes, they merely kept out of them. To imagine that they would inform the authorities was a contingency that was simply unthinkable.

Yet the incredible had happened this time.

Dr. Nicholls emerged from the ring of prefects. He was recognisable again. But he was hot with rage, and whatever punishment he had decided to inflict would now be considerably added to.

"You young scamps!" he said thickly. "How dare you engineer such atrocious devices?"

"But you don't understand, sir!" protested Handforth. "It was meant for Corky."

"For whom?" thundered the Head.

"For Corcoran of the Fourth, sir."

"That is neither here nor there!" retorted the Head. "This shameful device was fixed up, and I am amazed that you boys should

devote your time and thoughts to such idiotic pastimes."

It was more patent than ever that Dr. Nicholls was not only out of touch with the Junior School, but also out of sympathy with it. It was impossible for him to comprehend that this booby trap, so idiotic in his eyes, was a thing of joy to the schoolboys.

"It was only a bit of fun, sir," said Nipper defensively.

"Fun!" shouted the Head. "Do you call it fun to invent some hideous contraption that smothers people with evil-smelling liquid?"

"It would have been funny enough if Corky had copped it, sir," said Handforth feelingly. "My hat! We took an awful lot of trouble with that stuff, too!"

"The mixture as before!" nodded Travers. "Whitewash, golden syrup, paste, custard powder, and goodness only knows what else. Well, well! We must prepare ourselves for the penalty, dear old fellows."

"I am exceedingly glad that I have been permitted to discover, at first hand, what kind of amusements you junior boys indulge in," said Dr. Nicholls curtly. "But I am not an unjust man. I will not increase your punishment because I happened to—er—fall into the trap. It was not intended for me, and I will therefore forget it."

The Removites were pleasantly surprised. This was decent of the Head. He was a man of strange ideas, but he was no tyrant. His provocation was excessive, and by making no fuss over his misfortune he was proving himself to be remarkably broad-minded.

"Thank you, sir!" chorused the juniors gratefully.

"However, you have transgressed the school rules by entering this House for the purposes of playing a trick," continued Dr. Nicholls. "You shall be punished accordingly. I intend to cane you all."

"Thank you, sir," repeated the juniors, with equal gratitude.

They had been fearing gating—detention. A caning was painful at the moment, but it was swift. Far better to get it over and done with.

"You will report to me, in my study, in half an hour's time," added the Head, as he prepared to depart. "Mr. Goole, will you be good enough to see these boys off your premises?"

"I certainly will, sir," said Mr. Goole promptly.

The Head moved away, but Nipper stopped him.

"May I ask something, sir?"

"Eh? Well, what is it?"

"How did you know, sir, that we were in the East House?" asked Nipper.

This was a question which all the other fellows had been burning to put, and they waited eagerly for the Head's reply. Not that they had any hope that he would satisfy their curiosity.

"How did I know?" repeated Dr. Nicholls. "I knew because I was informed."

"Oh!"



By the time the Removites had finished with Gore-Pearce & Co. the three cads were complete wrecks. They were smothered in dust, they were torn and tattered; their hair was smothered in ink, and their eyes were blackened.

"Three boys of your Form considered it their duty to report your conduct," continued Dr. Nicholls, with engaging frankness. "I am telling you this because it is just as well that you should know the truth. It is my policy to encourage boys to report all breaches of discipline; and these boys will be fully protected from persecution if they are high-minded enough to do their duty."

"High-minded!" breathed Handforth feebly.

"Yes, high-minded!" repeated the Head, giving him a sharp look. "It will be my task, I can see, to entirely readjust all your ideas of right and wrong. I repeat, most emphatically, that there is nothing wrong in a boy reporting an act that he knows to be in defiance of the school's law and order. I have commended Gore-Pearce highly for his action in coming forward."

"Gore-Pearce!" ejaculated all the raiders, in one solid voice.

"Gore-Pearce and Gulliver and Bell were the three boys who came to me," replied the Head. "I am giving you their names because they are the first boys who have acted upon my suggestion. Moreover, there is utterly no reason why their names should be withheld. I approve of what they have done, and I have thanked them for their loyal spirit."

"Great jumping grasshoppers!" breathed Handforth.

"And you will remember that these three boys are immune from persecution," said the Head sternly. "They have done their duty, and you will touch them at your peril. Let me repeat this most earnestly," he added, his voice becoming more grim. "You have suffered because of Gore-Pearce's information, but he and his companions have only obeyed my wishes. Let their example be your watchword."

There was an ominous silence.

"I can see that you are still obstinate," said the Head coldly. "Perhaps, in time, you will learn. It is your duty to do as Gore-Pearce has done, in similar circumstances. If you know of any irregularity, you must report it—particularly so if the irregularity had not yet been committed. Only by this means can perfect discipline be maintained. We must all pull together."

And the Head, without another word, strode off.

"WHERE are they?" asked Handforth, in a voice like that of a stage villain.

He did not intend to be melodramatic, but he was so wrought up by the

headmaster's recent pronouncements that he found it difficult to control himself.

The raiders were now in the Triangle. They took no notice of the rain, and they stood there, trying to pull themselves together. The most surprising thing of all, to their minds, was that Dr. Nicholls should have so frankly given them the names of the informers.

They had been "seen off the premises" by Mr. Goole—who, incidentally, had been very silent over the whole business. He had taken care to state no opinion one way or the other. The East House prefects, in the meanwhile, were given the delightful task of disconnecting the other booby traps. The juniors were to hear later that Sinclair inadvertently received a full dose in his face, and that Kenmore only avoided a similar disaster by a hair's breadth. This news came as a slight balm to the wounded souls of the Removites.

But just now Nipper & Co thought only of—Gore-Pearce.

"For the love of Samson!" said Vivian Travers. "What are we coming to, dear old fellows? St. Frank's is a sneaks' paradise. Fellows can peach and get patted on the back for it!"

Handforth made a strange explosive noise.

"I'll pat Gore-Pearce on the back!" he said thickly. "By George, I'll pat him somewhere else, too! And I'll pat him so hard that his nose will be level with the rest of his face! The cad! The sneak! The rotter! The waster! And Gulliver and Bell are just as bad!"

"Wait a minute, Handy," said Nipper. "I'm awfully sorry, old man, but you'll have to keep your hands to yourself."

"What!"

"I don't want you to punch Gore-Pearce—"

"Here, hold on!" gasped Handforth. "Are you going to say that we've got to let those cads off? Are you taking any notice of the Head's piffle? Are you going to knuckle under, and——"

"Handy!" protested Nipper, pained.

"Eh?"

"You don't think I'm as weak as that, do you?"

"Well, you told me not to punch Gore-Pearce, didn't you?"

"For the simple reason that I mean to punch Gore-Pearce myself!" retorted Nipper. "I'm the Form skipper, and it's my job. I hate to disappoint you like this, but I regard it as a duty."

"What rot!" snorted Handforth. "Don't I get my whack?"

"I put it to the meeting," said Nipper, looking round. "As captain of the Remove, is it my job to slaughter those Study A cads? Is it my duty to show them the error of their ways—using my fist for this purpose?"

The meeting was unanimous in its reply.

"Rats!" it said emphatically.

"Eh?" gasped Nipper.

"We're all in this, my lad," said Fullwood,

"and we'll all have a share in scrapping Gore-Pearce & Co. We can't all fight the rotters, but at least we can join in the fun."

"Hear, hear!" said Travers. "What price getting them into the Common-room, pronouncing them guilty, and then putting them through the mill? A regular Form punishment?"

The suggestion was carried with scarcely a discussion. It wasn't unanimous, because both Nipper and Handforth wanted Gore-Pearce & Co to themselves. Nipper's claim was undoubtedly the stronger, but he bowed to the will of the majority.

NEXT WEDNESDAY'S COVER! ~~~~



"But wait a minute," he added. "There's no hurry."

"Oh, isn't there?" retorted Handforth. "We're going to find Gore-Pearce & Co. at once, and——"

"We're due in the Head's study for a swishing within twelve minutes," said Nipper. "It's one of those appointments that can't be overlooked. Better get that over first, and say nothing to anybody else in the meantime."

CHAPTER 11.

Trouble for Three!

DR. MORRISON NICHOLLS was rather decent about it.

The "swishing" was a very mild and innocuous business. He went through the long line of culprits, delivering a

couple of feeble strokes with the cane on each hand.

The juniors were grateful. They knew perfectly well that the Head could have made them smart in the real old-fashioned way, had he liked. The punishment was more a matter of form than anything else.

Dr. Nicholls had this in his favour. He was inaugurating a new system, and he was "going easy" with the first victims of the change. Another man might easily have overstepped the mark, and alienated every scrap of good feeling. But the Head's methods were calculated to be embarrassing.

"BOSS OF THE REMOVE!"

It has always been the ambition of Claude Gore-Pearce to become skipper of the Remove, and with the advent of Dr. Nicholls his opportunity has arrived.

Gore-Pearce has curried favour with the new Head; his principles are the principles of the new Head—and for that reason his Reform Party becomes a power in the Remove.

What's the good of sticking up for Nipper who is opposed to the Head? ask many of the Removites. Far better to rally round Gore-Pearce!

And so Gore-Pearce passes from triumph to triumph; and so his dreams become possibilities—he can call himself Boss of the Remove!

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

"I do not intend to keep you here, boys," he said when he had finished. "But before you go I would like to add a few words to what I told you in the East House. I want you to remember that I have your welfare at heart; that although I may be outraging all your preconceived notions of schoolboy honour, I am sincere. My one aim is to improve the general morale of the school, and I want everybody to help me in this task."

"Is there anything wrong with St. Frank's morale, sir?" asked Nipper quietly.

"Very little, I believe," replied the Head. "But even that little must be eradicated. You must not think that Gore-Pearce and his two friends committed a dishonourable act."

"They sneaked, sir!" said Handforth hotly.

"They obeyed my wishes," retorted Dr. Nicholls. "They knew of a breach of dis-

cipline, and they brought the information to me. Therefore I must warn you, in all gravity, that those three boys are not to be interfered with for their commendable action."

The Removites were silent. The position was becoming painful. In spite of themselves, they could not help liking this grave, earnest man. He was so sincere that it was impossible to hate him. And this made the position all the more difficult. He thought he was doing right, and yet the boys knew perfectly well that his theories could never stand the test of actual practice.

He had a kindly way of speaking, and also his whole bearing after he had been smothered in that "mixture as before" had been singularly generous. And now this caning was not a caning at all, but a formality.

How could the juniors work up a fierce resentment against such a diplomatist? How could they swear that they would defy him, and disobey him, and how could they call him a beast and a rotter?

For Dr. Nicholls was so obviously the opposite. He was generous, he was forbearing, and he had the welfare of the school at heart to such a degree that it almost amounted to a passion. He had come to St. Frank's to make good with his new ideas, to prove to the world that there was something at present wrong in the conduct of Britain's great Public Schools.

"We will not discuss this matter further," he said quietly. "I hope you will realise, my boys, that I have dealt very leniently with you. I may not always be so tolerant. Good-night!"

"Good-night, sir," they chorused.

OUTSIDE, they dawdled as they crossed the Inner Court. The rain had stopped, although none of the juniors noticed this. Their minds were too preoccupied.

"What's the matter with you chaps?" asked Handforth impatiently. "Get a move on!"

"The fact is, Handy, I hardly know what to do," confessed Nipper. "The Head is so thoroughly decent about it all that the scragging of Gore-Pearce & Co. is a bit difficult. It hardly seems like playing the game."

"Just what I was thinking, dear old fellow," said Travers.

"I was, too," muttered Gresham.

Handforth stared at them in amazement.

"Well, you're a weak-kneed lot!" he said tartly. "Great Scott! Do you mean to say that the Head has robbed you of all your spirit? What about Gore-Pearce? Aren't you going to slaughter him?"

"You don't understand, Handy," said Jimmy Potts. "We're just as wild with Gore-Pearce, but the Head isn't the kind of man we thought he was. He's a crank, but——"

"But nothing!" interrupted Handforth fiercely. "Why, if we knuckle under to his fatheaded whims, we shall never hold up our heads again! Things will go from bad to

worse. We arranged a raid to-night, and it was ruined because Gore-Pearce sneaked. Sneaking is a filthy game, and Gore-Pearce has got to go through the hoop. What's the good of considering the Head's feelings?"

Handforth's logic was simple—and sound.

"He's right, you chaps," said Nipper grimly. "Unless we deal promptly and sharply with these cads, we shall practically admit that we've knuckled under to the Head's fantastic ideas. This is the beginning of the fight, and we've got to be strong. Gore-Pearce & Co. mustn't be allowed to escape."

And, the point being settled, they marched resolutely to the Ancient House. There wasn't much time before the bed-time bell would ring, anyhow. A thing like this was better dealt with swiftly.

CLAUDE GORE-PEARCE was lounging in the Common-room when the crowd came in. He was looking quite at his ease, but Gulliver and Bell, who were with him, were decidedly disturbed.

"Look out!" panted Bell nervously. "Here they are!"

"Oh, crumbs!" breathed Gulliver.

"Keep your hair on!" said Gore-Pearce contemptuously. "They daren't touch us! The Head has guaranteed that we shall be safe. If they try any rot, we'll soon remind them of the facts."

There was a few other fellows in the Common-room, but they had not been particularly interested in the cads of Study A. One or two rumours had flown round that something had happened in the East House, but nobody knew the facts. Nipper & Co. had not yet broadcast the news.

Now was the time.

Somebody had fetched Reggie Pitt and Castleton and a crowd of others from the West House. The Common-room was soon overcrowded.

"Now, what's all the trouble?" asked Reggie, looking round. "Speak, O chief," he added, looking at Nipper. "Wherefore this gathering?"

"It's serious, Reggie," said Nipper.

"I thought so," nodded Pitt, becoming sober. "What's the trouble?"

"Have you fellows heard about the mess-up in the East House?"

"We've heard nothing," said Castleton.

"I'll tell you in about ten words," said Nipper. "A crowd of us planned to raid Corky & Co. A simple wheeze. We fixed up some patent booby traps. We thought it was a good scheme to work off something against the Fourth."

"Why weren't we in it?" asked Pitt severely.

"It wasn't really a big jape," said Nipper. "Just a House affair—and something to occupy a rainy evening. Well, we got there; we fixed up the booby traps; and then we were collared by the Head."

"That was a nasty one!" said Castleton, with a whistle.

"We found that the headmaster had obtained his information from an informer—from three informers," proceeded Nipper relentlessly. "Handy, you might keep your eye on that door. Gore-Pearce is trying to edge towards it!"

"I'm watching him!" said Handforth.

The West House Removees were startled.

"By gad!" said Singleton. "You're not telling us, are you, that Gore-Pearce sneaked on you?"

"He overheard us making our plans—we discussed them, in fact, in this very Common-room," said Nipper. "While we were on the raid, Gore-Pearce and Gulliver and Bell went to the Head, and told him of what we were doing."

"Great Scott!"

"The traitors!"

"The dirty sneaks!"

"They did this deliberately—probably in order to curry favour with Dr. Nicholls," continued Nipper. "The whole jape fizzled out, and we've just come from the Head's study, after having a four-hander each."

"Phew! Hard lines!"

"In fairness, I must say that the Head laid it on gently," added Nipper. "Perhaps he felt that it was a pretty mean sort of business. But that's neither here nor there. Gore-Pearce & Co. sneaked."

"And it's up to the Remove to do something!" said Gresham.

There was an uproar. Everybody shouted at once, and excitedly discussed the amazing act of treachery.

Gulliver and Bell were positively pale; even Gore-Pearce was beginning to look a bit shaky, although he managed to maintain an air of insolence and carelessness.

"You've heard what we've been saying, Gore-Pearce," said Nipper grimly. "Stand forward! You, too, Gulliver. And you, Bell."

THE cads of Study A stood in the centre of the Common-room, surrounded by the menacing throng.

"You're crazy!" said Gore-Pearce sourly. "I've said nothing because you've been talking rot. Your accusation is beneath contempt. We don't know anything about the affair."

"Not a thing!" gasped Bell.

"We didn't sneak!" panted Gulliver.

"So you're liars, too?" asked Nipper contemptuously.

"Where's your proof?" shouted Gore-Pearce, trying to work himself into a fury. "It's a nice thing for you chaps to come here and to accuse us of sneaking! We don't know anything about it! We can prove that we've been in our study all the evening."

Some of the fellows were beginning to look uncertain, but the victims of the informers knew better. Nipper was regarding Gore-Pearce with infinite scorn.

"Let me save your breath, Gore-Pearce," he said. "You're a liar, and you've proved it. Unless, of course, the Head lied to us," he added casually.

"The Head!" ejaculated Claude, startled. "It may interest you to know that Dr. Nicholls candidly told us that you three fellows went to him with the information."

"Oh, crumbs!" said Bell bleakly. "That's done it!"

Gore-Pearce shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, what are you going to do about it?" he demanded. "I thought better of the Head! We did our duty, according to his own views, and the least he could have done was to have kept our names back."

"The Head sneaked, didn't he?" asked Reggie Pitt coldly.

"By George! The Head gave these cads some of their own medicine!" shouted Handforth. "He was consistent, anyway! But why waste time like this? Why not grab these rotters, and spoil their faces?"

"Yes, yes!"

"Grab them, you chaps!"

"Down with the sneaks!"

There was an ominous movement. Gore-Pearce & Co.'s exposure had come like a bombshell. When they heard that the Head himself had given their names, it was sheer idiocy to maintain their air of innocence—palpably false though it had been.

"Steady on!" shouted Gore-Pearce, trying to back away. "Go easy! If you touch us you'll have the Head down on you!"

"If we touch you, we shall have to wash ourselves afterwards!" roared Handforth. "In fact, we shall have to use disinfectant! But we're prepared for that, you miserable worms. All together, my sons!"

"Stop!" shrieked Gore-Pearce. "The Head treated you lightly this time, but he'll lay it on thick if you defy him. He's guaranteed that we shall be immune from persecution."

Nipper held up his hand.

"Gore-Pearce is right, you chaps!" he said. "The Head did say that. We shall have to pause and think."

"What!" roared the crowd.

"We shall only put ourselves in the wrong if we descend to persecution," continued Nipper. "But there's a difference between persecution and justice. We must give these three chaps justice. And I suggest running the gauntlet to start with, frog's-marching as a sort of side-line, and then we'll draw lots as to which of us can give them a good hiding."

"You spoofing rotter!" ejaculated Handforth. "I thought you meant that we weren't going to touch them!"

"Justice," said Nipper, "demands satisfaction."

JUSTICE obtained it.

At the end of seven hectic, agonising, bewildering minutes Claude Gore-Pearce and Albert Gulliver and George Bell were so utterly changed in appearance that their own mothers would never have recognised them.

Nipper had thoroughly approved of the punishment. It wasn't persecution, but jus-

tice. The sneaks had received the reward they deserved. As for the possible consequences, Nipper cared nothing. This was a sort of test case, anyhow, and when it came to an issue Nipper was always strong.

The three cads were tattered wrecks. They were smothered in dust, they were torn and battered. Their collars had gone. Their hair was smothered in ink, and their eyes were blackened. Their noses were swollen, and their ears were puffy. Taking all in all, Gore-Pearce & Co. felt that sneaking was not worth the candle.

Yet this lesson could scarcely have got home as it should. For no sooner were the cads allowed to escape than they bolted down the passage, ran out into the Triangle, and scooted at full speed for the Head's house!

CHAPTER 12.

The Head Means Business!

PHIPPS started violently.

And for Phipps to start violently was something akin to a miracle. This imperturbable butler—who incidentally did some valeting for Archie Glenthorne—was the calmest man in all St. Frank's.

But Phipps now positively jumped.

He had opened the Head's hall door, in response to a thunderous knock, and he beheld a spectacle that made him wince. Phipps had an appreciative eye for a fellow's clothing; and the sight of Gore-Pearce & Co. did not merely give him a pain, but it agonised him.

"Where's the Head?" demanded a hoarse, breathless voice.

"It is impossible for you young gentlemen to see the headmaster in your present condition," said Phipps coldly. "Really. I am surprised that you should come here like this. I regret——"

"Oh, clear out of the way!" snapped the leading scarecrow.

Phipps was rudely pushed aside. This, in itself, was an outrage that Phipps had never before suffered. His calm dignity had always preserved him from such treatment. But Claude Gore-Pearce was nearly beside himself with rage and pain. Gulliver and Bell, for once, were imbued with the same reckless abandon.

They burst into the headmaster's study like a tornado. Dr. Nicholls was in the act of closely examining his face in the mirror, and he spun round, disliking this violation of his privacy. It was a pity if a man could not examine one of his own pimples without being interrupted.

"How dare you!" he shouted angrily.

"Please, sir——"

"What is this?" demanded the Head, forgetting all about the slight eruption on his left cheek—due, no doubt, to the recent

change of air! "Good heavens! Who are you? Have you met with an accident?"

"I'm Gore-Pearce, sir!" gabbled the first scarecrow, who was leaning over the desk. "Look what those chaps have done to us, sir!"

Dr. Nicholls stiffened. He overlooked the manner of his visitors' entry.

"So you are Gore-Pearce?" he said sharply. "You others, I assume, are Gulliver and Bell?"

"Yes, sir!" blurted out the pair.

"And your companions have presumably persecuted you?"

"Yes, sir!" panted Gore-Pearce. "We warned them what would happen if they touched us. We told them that you had promised us protection. And this is what we got, sir!" he added bitterly.

"I am intensely sorry, Gore-Pearce, that your high-minded action should have resulted in such a disgraceful exhibition of savagery," said the Head gravely. "It is apparent that you have all been treated with gross brutality. I am exceedingly pained to see this."

"You're not so pained as we are, sir."

"Mental pain, Gore-Pearce, can be far more severe than mere physical pain," retorted Dr. Nicholls. "I am deeply grieved that your schoolfellows should have been so misguided and so defiant."

"And what about us, sir?" complained Gore-Pearce. "Look at us, sir! Our clothes are ruined, we're bruised all over, and we shan't be able to walk properly for a week!"

"You will all three be excused lessons for a day or two, so that you may recuperate," said the Head, his expression becoming more and more angry. "I am shocked, my poor boys!"

"If we get this for doing our duty, sir, we're not going to do any more," said Claude feelingly. "And what was the good of your guarantee?"

"I do not think you mean to be insolent, Gore-Pearce, and in the circumstances I will overlook the arrogance of your tone," said the headmaster coldly. "It is all to the good, perhaps, that this has happened."

"All to the good, sir?" gulped Bell.

"Yes," said the Head. "It gives me the opportunity to teach the culprits a very sharp lesson—a lesson they will not forget. Who were the boys who committed this outrage?"

"The whole Remove, sir."

"But they were inflamed, I take it, by those boys I recently caned?"

"Yes, sir," said Gore-Pearce. "Hamilton—and Handforth, and Travers, and the others. They're the ones who really did it."

Dr. Nicholls pursed his lips.

"It is a pity," he said slowly. "I dealt with them very leniently; I warned them in the plainest of terms." He sighed. "I am afraid I shall have to be much more drastic. You may rest assured, Gore-Pearce, that you and these other two boys will be

immune in future. I shall take such measures that there will never again be an exhibition of this kind!"

CLANG-clang!

"Time for bed!" said Nipper cheerily.

The Ancient House Common-room was looking itself again. The juniors were standing about in groups, discussing the recent happenings. And everybody was feeling satisfied. As for where Gore-Pearce & Co. had gone, nobody gave the matter a thought.

Clang-clang!

"That's funny!" said Nipper, frowning. "It's not the bed-bell, after all! That's the bell for Big Hall!"

"At this time of night?" asked Tommy Watson sceptically.

"Well, listen!"

Everybody was attentive now. Discussions ceased abruptly; fellows looked up from their books; Handforth even broke off in the middle of an argument with Church and McClure!

"It's the bell for Big Hall all right," said Travers, yawning. "Well, well! It seems to me, dear old fellows, that our charming friend, Gore-Pearce, has started something else!"

Nipper whistled.

"By Jove, I believe you're right, Travers!" he said. "I'll bet Gore-Pearce buzzed to the Head just as he was, and sneaked about the scragging! Phew! This is going to be interesting! The Head's called the whole school together—and at bed-time, too!"

It was almost unprecedented, and everybody was startled.

"If Gore-Pearce has sneaked again, we'll make a thorough job of it next time!" said Handforth darkly. "We'll pulverise him so completely that he won't be capable of sneaking!"

Nipper shook his head.

"It's a losing fight, Handy," he said dubiously. "We're up against the Head, don't forget. And the worst of it is, the Head's so decent. No matter how bad things get, we can't start a barring-out, or any rot like that. If the Head means to have his way, he'll have it."

"Are you ready to knuckle under?" asked Handforth fiercely.

"Easy, old man," smiled Nipper. "I'm not the kind of chap to knuckle under—and you know it. Let's see how things develop. Later on, perhaps, we shall be able to devise some way of combating this new stunt. But for the moment we're in for trouble."

DR. MORRISON NICHOLLS faced the school.

Big Hall was crowded—and if anybody had dropped a pin, the sound would have been audible. There was certainly something magnetic in the Head's personality.

His very presence was enough to command silence.

"I have taken the unusual step of calling the school together at this late hour of the evening because I have something of grave import to perform," said the Head quietly. "There are certain boys now before me who have openly defied my wishes and my orders. They are to be punished."

He turned and made a gesture to Fenton of the Sixth, who was standing near the door at the back of the platform. Fenton opened the door, and Gore-Pearce and Gulliver and Bell came through.

The school stared.

The cads of Study A had not been allowed to change their appearance. They were exactly as the Remove had left them. Tattered, grimy, and battered, they presented a startling appearance in the brilliant electric lights of Big Hall; they were utterly incongruous on that platform.

"Come forward, my boys," said the Head kindly.

Somebody started hissing—probably Handforth—and the sound was immediately taken up by practically all the Junior School. The hissing turned to booing. Then the Head gave a sharp turn, and raised a hand. Silence fell on the instant.

"I am grieved to hear this disgraceful demonstration," he said angrily. "These boys deserve your sympathy—not your condemnation! Look at them! Can any of you truthfully say that they have not been grossly ill-used?"

"They asked for it, sir!" came a voice.

"These boys only did their duty," thundered the Head. "They learned of a proposed act in defiance of the school regulations, and they brought the information to my ears. That is their only action. A dutiful action. Because of that, they are seized, maltreated, and persecuted."

The school held quite a different opinion, but said nothing. Even the seniors, much as they frowned upon "rows," heartily agreed that Gore-Pearce & Co. had received their deserts.

"This incident is all the more distressing because I had previously promised that all boys who fell in with my suggestions should be immune from this kind of treatment," continued Dr. Nicholls. "Since they have not been immune, I shall compensate them by granting them a week's holiday. That, I hope, will be some measure of recompense."

"My only hat!"

"A week's holiday—for sneaking!"

"When's the ceiling going to fall down!"

"Silence!" commanded the Head. "It is not my intention to detain you long. I know the names of the boys who instigated this outrage. They are now going to be punished. When I say that I shall guarantee protection, I mean it! Much as I dislike the administration of heavy punishment, I have no alternative but to resort to it now."

He turned to Fenton; Fenton turned to a number of other prefects who were on hand. They all sallied down into the body of the hall. And one by one Nipper and Handforth and Church and McClure and Watson and all the other "culprits" were taken up to the platform.

THERE was no pretence about that swishing. By the time the Head had finished, he was nearly exhausted. He had delivered a flogging that left the victims wracked with agony. They were now lined up on the platform, rather pale, and very rebellious. The last fellow had expected the Head's arm to be a bit weak, but it hadn't been.

"I hope you will all take this lesson to heart!" panted Dr. Nicholls, at length. "You have admitted that you reduced Gore-Pearce and Gulliver and Bell to the condition they are in now. You committed that brutal act with the full knowledge of the risks you ran. You defied me, and you have been punished."

He turned to the school.

"Before I dismiss you, I want to say just this," he added. "I have made an example of the boys you now see on the platform. This is, in a way, a test case. I am the headmaster of this school—and I intend that my authority shall be respected and upheld."

St. Frank's uttered not a sound.

"There is nothing so convincing as seeing with your own eyes," went on Dr. Nicholls. "You have seen. I trust you will heed. I invite you to come to me—or to go to your Housemasters—with information that will lead to the punishment of offenders. It will not be sneaking, as you have called it. It will be a step towards the ultimate reform I have in mind."

The school positively glowered.

"Such boys will, I hope, be safe," said Dr. Nicholls impressively. "You have seen what happens if they are interfered with. All such defiance will be dealt with in the same way—and perhaps even more severely. I have publicly flogged these boys. The next time I may be compelled to take even more drastic steps. But I will have obedience—and you will do well to remember it. All boys who work in unity with me shall be protected."

And the school dismissed.

To say that St. Frank's was seething would be putting it very inadequately indeed; seniors and juniors alike were startled and furious. This remarkable new headmaster was evidently out to make history!

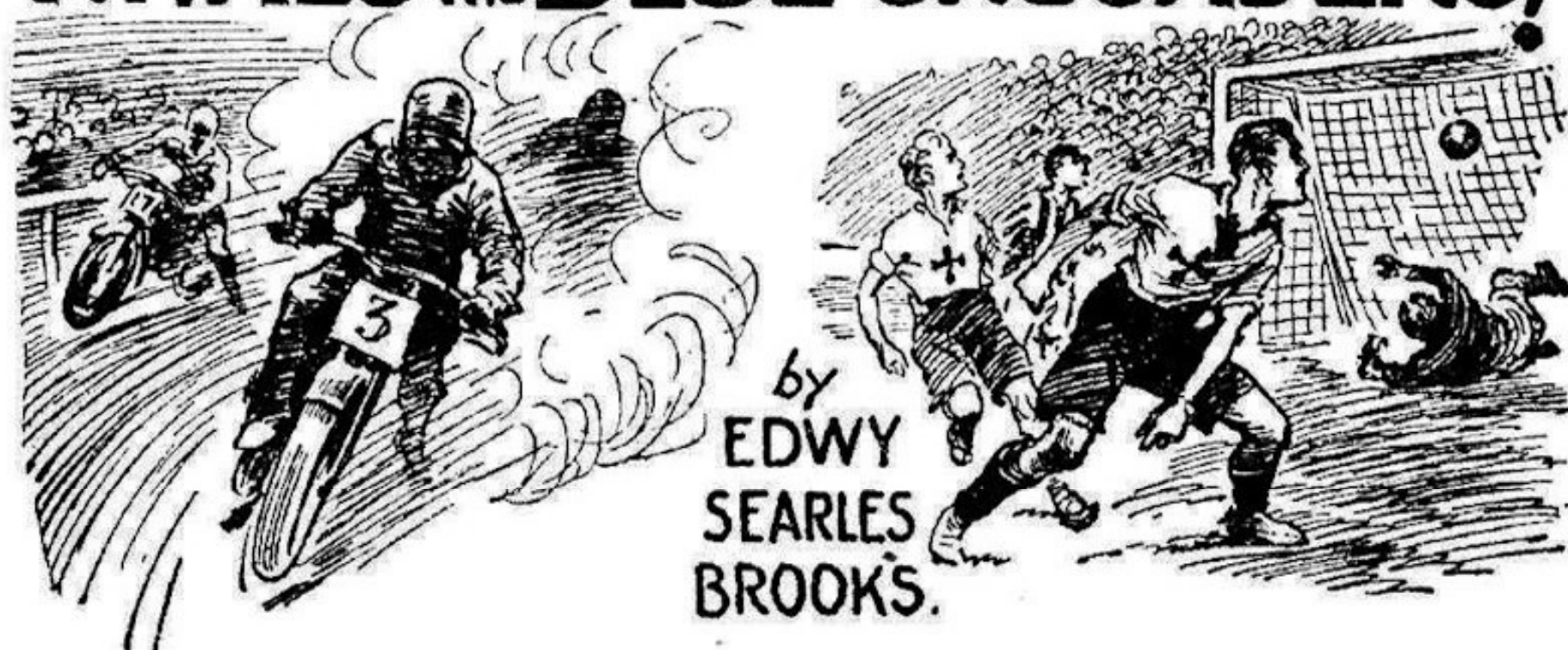
THE END.

(Next week's magnificent long complete yarn, entitled "Boss of the Remove!" is full of surprises. The new Head springs them; so do Gore-Pearce and Nipper!

It's a case of Reformers v. Old Timers at St. Frank's now, and startling things are going to happen!)

Get Thrilled in this Full-Of-Thrills Serial, Boys!

RIVALS OF THE BLUE CRUSADERS!



by
EDWY
SEARLES
BROOKS.

A helmeled, demon-like figure crouched low over a throbbing machine, roaring round the track, skidding wildly and broadsiding recklessly. Rex Carrington's on the track once more and he's riding the race of his life!

Demon Rider I

REX heard the news five minutes after the result, for he was at the Stronghold, in Bannington, watching the Reserve match. He was dreadfully disappointed, and he felt most awfully guilty. He tried to convince himself that he had been the victim of circumstances—of trickery—but he knew, in his heart, that his own perversity had largely contributed to this tragic phase. The Blues were in trouble because of his folly.

"I don't think I ought to race to-night, sir," he told Mr. Harding later. "The Blues have lost, and I'm pretty miserable about it. If I had been playing I might have helped 'em to get those two points. And they're needed, too—needed badly."

"It won't help matters to talk like that, Carrington," said Mr. Harding. "It's no good ranting against Fate. You couldn't play—and you've really got nothing to reproach yourself with. Why disappoint me to-night? Be fair, boy!"

"Fair, sir?"

"Yes, fair!" repeated Mr. Harding, with some heat. "Don't you realise that I've had the town billed especially for you? There are thousands of posters out—advertising you for this evening. You can't let me down like this. Broadside Dick Somers is coming again for this meeting, and there's a gold helmet to be won—to say nothing of the hundred-pound prize in the big handicap."

Rex Carrington sighed.

"All right, sir—I'll ride," he said wearily. "It's funny how things happen! A week

ago I was itching to ride and couldn't. Now that I can ride, I don't want to!"

Mr. Harding wisely made no comment, but he had a few very anxious minutes. For if Rex failed to appear that evening, the public would be justifiably angry. Exactly as the rascally Burke had foretold, the Speedway filled to its fullest capacity. There was a great attraction in Rex Carrington's name, and the Bannington public turned up in full force.

In the first race, Rex found that his left foot troubled him a bit. He was awkward and clumsy, especially in starting off—when one needed one's muscles and sinews to be in first-class fettle. He came in third in the first race, solely owing to his incapacity.

But later the thrill and the excitement of the noisy, dusty track held him in a firm grip, and he forgot his foot completely. If it pained him, he did not know it—he was too tensely concentrated on the sport that had claimed him.

Then came the big race of the evening—the great Gold Helmet Handicap. It was a very special race, the winner not only receiving the much-coveted helmet, but the sum of one hundred pounds in cash, too. Broadside Dick Somers was after both, and there seemed little doubt that he would win, since he was a track-racer of much experience, and to-day he was in dazzling form.

Rex, rather to the disappointment of the crowd, had not yet done anything startlingly spectacular. After his earlier appearances, his present performance was rather tame. The public did not know of his hurt foot.

Mr. Harding was naturally anxious. He was filling Mr. Burke's shoes, for he had not yet engaged a new track manager. It would be a serious thing if Rex fizzled out altogether. There would never be such another crowd as this—if Rex let them down. They had come to see him win. He was the local favourite, and if he consistently lost he would drop out of favour.

"Do the best you can, Carrington," said Mr. Harding, as the big race was about to start.

"No need to tell me that, sir," replied Rex quietly.

He felt his foot giving him a twinge or two, but he resolutely forced himself to concentrate his attention upon his gleaming, quivering, roaring mount. It wouldn't do to think of his injury now! All his senses, all his energies, were needed for the big race.

Then came the starters' signal, and off went the helmeted, demon-like figures, crouching low over their throbbing machines. Rex Carrington set his teeth grimly. He had gone in seriously for this track-racing now—and he swore that he would prove himself worthy of the new sport.

This was the big chance of the evening—the chance of winning a gold helmet, and nearly enough money to clear that gambling debt to Burke! To think of losing was out of the question.

He roared round the track, skidding and broadsiding with a reckless abandon that brought gasps from the banks of spectators.

Rex was riding to win!

Success!

WIN-WIN-WIN!

The pulsating engine in Rex Carrington's mount seemed to throb out the word with monotonous persistence. He had to win! The crowds had

come to the Speedway to see him doing big things, and, so far, he had failed. Unless he made an excellent showing in this race—the big handicap—the public would lose faith in him.

Moreover, there was that matter of the hundred pounds—the prize money. Rex wanted the gold helmet, it was true, but he wanted that cash even more. He could not forget that he owed the rascally Burke a hundred and fifty pounds on that wretched card game. Rex did not doubt that the game had been crooked, but he swore that he would pay up, nevertheless.

Tearing round the dirt track, amidst a smother of dust, with his ears deadened by the terrific din of the competing machines, Rex found that he was practically on the tail of another rider. He and this man were the only two in the race now—and the last lap was on the point of being entered.

Broadside Dick Somers was the other rider—the man who had confidently asserted that he would capture the gold helmet. Dick Somers was one of the crack riders—one of the champions of the country—whereas Rex was very much of a novice.

Yet he was putting up a marvellous performance; he was keeping so close to the leader that even Broadside Dick was by no means certain that the race would be his. He found it impossible to shake off this persistent rival.

The others were nowhere—and did not count.

Round the last bend, Broadside Dick Somers went careering into the most spectacular broadside of the evening. It seemed inevitable, for a split second, that he must crash into the rails, but by a superb effort of skill he controlled his roaring mount, and entered the finishing straight.

In that second Rex realised that his hopes were in vain—that he would never be able to outdistance this champion rider in the last

THE OPENING CHAPTERS IN BRIEF.

ULYSSES PIECOMBE—more commonly known as *Piecan*—manager of the *Blue Crusaders*—is worried. Not because the *Blues* are doing badly, but because a dirt-track has been opened nearby. The players, however, seem unperturbed. Especially

REX CARRINGTON, the *Blues*' brilliant centre-forward. Rex is keen on dirt-track racing, and he enters for some of the races. His clever riding considerably impresses

PETER BURKE, manager of the *Speedway*. Burke, indeed, asks Rex to chuck up footer and become a dirt-track rider, but Rex refuses. The *Speedway* manager invites Rex to play in a game of cards, and the footballer ends up by finding himself in debt to the extent of £150. He writes out an *I O U*. Next day Burke visits Rex, and suggests that if he throws up footer and goes in for track racing he—Burke—will destroy the *I O U*. Rex knocks the manager down, who retaliates by sticking the ferrule of his umbrella through the centre-forward's toe, thus crocking him for footer. Burke reports this to

JULIAN HARDING, owner of the *Speedway*. Angry at such villainy, Harding sacks his manager. Burke goes away, vowing vengeance. Rex, although crocked for footer, can ride a motor-cycle as of old, and he fixes up with Harding to appear at the *Speedway* regularly. Meanwhile, the *Blues* are defeated by *Leverhampton Wanderers*, which seriously affects their hopes of promotion.

(Now read on.)

few hundred yards. In spite of his efforts, he was destined to lose. The thought worried him, and made him even more reckless than usual. Yet really Rex need not have been so concerned, for he had put up a magnificent performance, and the crowds were cheering him to the echo.

He knew nothing of this—he heard nothing except the confused roar of his own engine; he saw nothing except Dick Somers' dust, with just an occasional glimpse of the rider himself.

And if Dick Somers had taken chances in going round that last bend, Rex appeared to be on the verge of suicide. He was only a yard or two behind the leader as he went tearing into the bend, his machine leaning over, bucking madly, and skidding broadside with terrific and terrible violence.

"Rex—Rex!" went up a roar from the excited crowd. "Go it, Rex!"

"Hurrah!"

"You'll beat him yet, Rex!"

But the Blues centre-forward felt that he could not possibly win; and at the moment he needed all his attention upon his machine, which seemed likely to get out of hand completely.

Rex didn't quite realise how close he was upon Dick Somers' tail. As he entered the finishing straight, after careering round the bend, he found himself within a yard or two of the flying dust from Dick's back wheel. He swerved towards the railings and felt his machine going into another skid—the other way this time. He put out his foot to steady himself.

"Ooooooooooh!" gasped Rex.

He had forgotten all about his injured foot—the one he now used. As it touched the ground an agonising pain shot through his foot, up his leg, and seemed to affect his whole body.

Actually, the pain only lasted a mere second, but it seemed to Rex that his foot had been torn off. Unconsciously he jammed the throttle open harder. He had imagined that it was already fully open, but under the stress of that sudden agony he achieved a startling spurt. He was riding blindly now, and how he escaped a smash was almost miraculous.

"Rex!" went up a tumultuous yell.

For the impossible had happened! That terrific spurt, coming so unexpectedly during the last few seconds, had given Rex Carrington the victory! For a flash he and Dick Somers were riding alongside, neck and neck. That spurt had carried Rex forward; and now, just as the finish came, Rex was a head in front of his rival.

"Hurrah!"

"Well done, Carrington!"

"Bravo!"

But Rex heard none of these yells; he did not even know that he had won. Everything had happened so swiftly, so sensationally, that his only thought now was to bring his roaring mount to a standstill. He never quite knew how he managed to close the throttle, how he dragged his sound foot along the ground and succeeded at last in

pulling up after skidding broadside into a spectacular curve.

"Hurrah!"

"Well done, Rex!"

Dimly, now, he was aware of the excitement; he saw the spectators on their feet, shouting, cheering. He was bewildered, for he was certain that he had come in second.

Then Broadside Dick Somers came running over to him, hand outstretched.

"Well done, Carrington!" said Dick cordially. "You caught me napping that time!"

"Did I?" said Rex dazedly.

"The race is yours, old man—and so is the gold helmet!" said the crack rider. "Good luck to you!"

Rex was relieved of his machine by the mechanics, and they soon wheeled it back to the pits. Rex himself found Mr. Harding beside him, and the astute owner of the Speedway was waving cheerily to the crowds, and patting Rex on the back.

"They're giving you a splendid ovation, my boy," said Mr. Harding. "Well done! You deserve all their cheers. That last performance of yours was magnificent!"

"I—I don't seem to remember it!" said Rex dazedly.

Mr. Harding laughed, and after he had taken Rex to the dressing-room, and after Rex had changed, the pair went into the owner's office.

"You haven't failed me, Carrington," said Mr. Harding. "I'm very pleased with you—and it will be for the benefit of us both if you become a regular rider on this track. Think of your future, too. At this rate, my boy, you will soon become one of the champions of England, and there's no reason why you shouldn't make a handsome income."

"I'm really a footballer, sir," said Rex.

"You'd better forget football," smiled Mr. Harding. "You'll never make so much money at that game, Carrington. Track-racing is all the rage nowadays, and there's big money in it for fellows of your stamina."

Rex was rather bewildered by it all; the presentation of the gold helmet, the handing over of the hundred pounds prize money. He wanted to get back to the Blues—so that he could tell Fatty Fowkes of his success. No doubt the team would be back from Leverhampton by this time.

Outside the Speedway he felt a hand on his shoulder. He glanced round. On the instant a frown came into his face.

"Burke!" he ejaculated, startled.

Peter Burke, the ex-track manager, stood beside him. With him were Curly Hankin and Roger Parr and Maurice Brewer, of the Blues reserves.

"Evening!" said Curly, nodding.

"What are you fellows doing with this—scoundrel?" demanded Rex hotly.

"Easy, Carrington—easy!" said Mr. Burke, in a grim voice. "I'll trouble you for some money. I hold an I.O.U. of yours——"

"So that's it, is it?" said Rex contemptuously. "All right, Mr. Burke! I can't pay you the lot—but I can give you a hundred

pounds off it. I'm just as anxious as you are that that debt should be cleared off. Here's your rotten money!"

A Little Game of Poker!

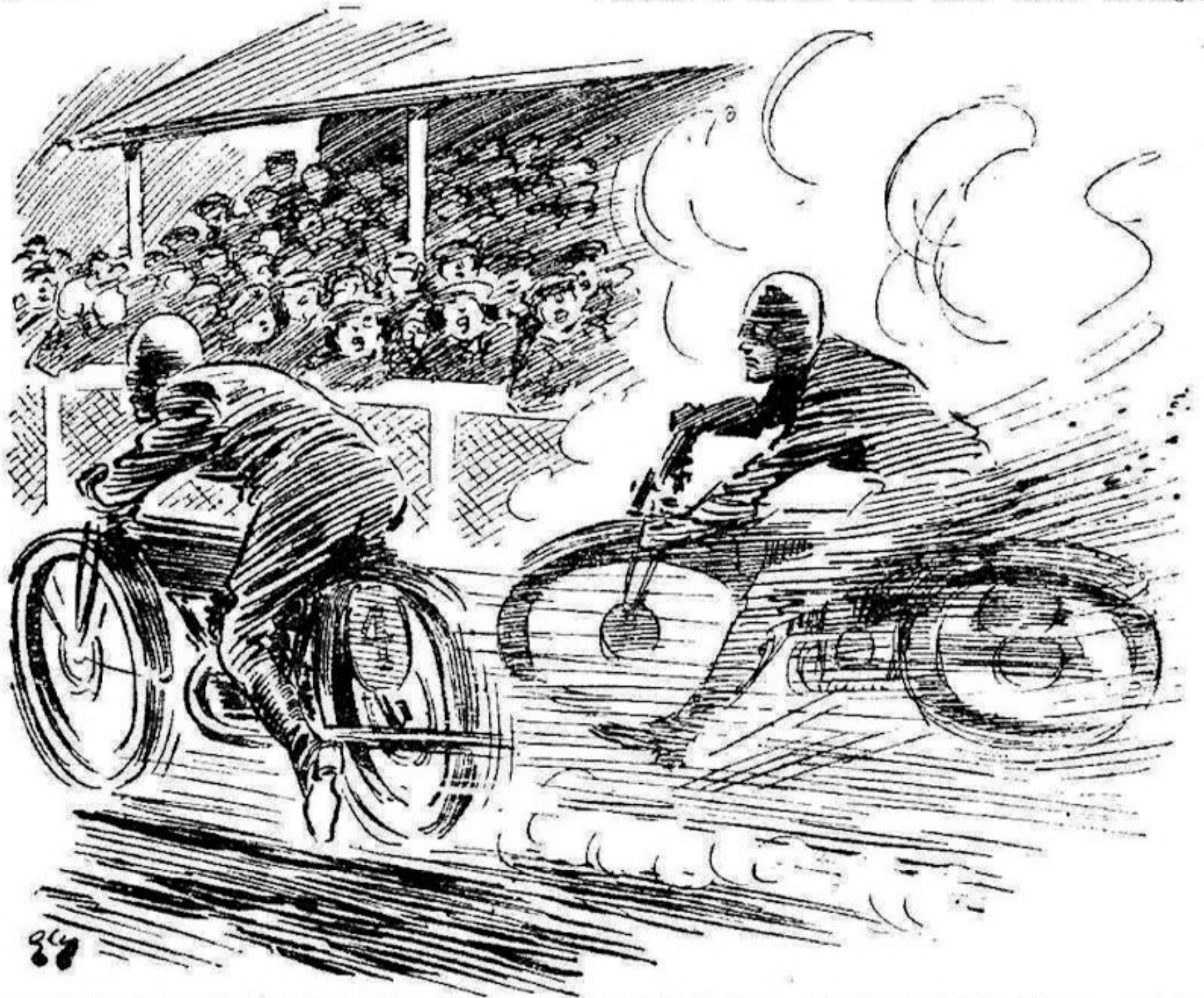
REX CARRINGTON felt in his pocket for the notes that Mr. Harding had handed him only a short time earlier.

Rex did not know whether it was the usual rule for a rider to be paid in cash so soon after the race; and he never gave the matter a thought. The money was welcome anyhow.

"Come round to my house," invited Burke genially. "Don't be a bad sportsman, Carrington! I don't bear you any grudge for what has happened—I can't blame you for Harding's idiocy. He'll regret sacking me before long."

They moved away, and Rex was filled with a kind of startled wonder. He said nothing until they had reached Burke's motor-car, which was standing some little distance away.

"You've got a nerve, Burke!" he said at length. "I'd made up my mind to give you the hiding of your life, and if I'd caught you earlier I should have done some damage."



In swerving to avoid the other rider, Rex found himself skidding madly towards the railings. He put out his foot to stop the bucking machine—and next moment an agonising pain shot right up his leg!

"If you'll give me that I.O.U., Mr. Burke, I'll give you a hundred pounds in cash—and another I.O.U. for fifty," said Rex curtly. "You can rely upon me to clear the debt as soon as I can. I'm rather particular about the people to whom I owe money!"

Peter Burke waved a deprecatory hand.

"No need to be so hasty, Carrington," he said. "I don't want your money so badly as all that. I'm perfectly willing to give you a chance to wipe the debt off in the same way as it was incurred."

"Gambling, you mean?" asked Rex, with a stare.

"A little game of cards——"

"No thanks!" interrupted Rex shortly. "You'd better take your money, Burke."

But I've been thinking it over since, and there's no sense in starting a brawl."

"No sense at all!" said Mr. Burke, nodding. "In fact, Carrington, if you begin any trouble like that you'll find yourself in rather a mess."

He did not actually indicate Curly & Co., but it was clear what he meant. If Rex attacked him, the rascally reserves would come to his rescue—and Rex could do nothing against the four of them.

"After the way you maimed me, I'll have nothing more to do with you!" said Rex coldly. "You're a crook, Burke—and you know it! I'm telling you so to your face——"

"Steady!" said Burke, in a grim voice. "As long as you owe me money, Carrington,

you'll *have* to have dealings with me, whether you like them or not. I'll take your hundred pounds if you prefer it—but I'm perfectly willing to give you a chance."

"I don't want any chances!"

"All right—have your own way!" said Burke, shrugging his shoulders. "But you're a fool, all the same. The I O U that I hold represents a gambling debt—a debt of honour. Come to my house and have a little card game, and you might clear yourself. As I say, I'm ready to give you the chance. I don't really want your money."

"I'm too much of a novice at Faro," replied Rex significantly.

"You can play any old game you like—poker, for example," said Mr. Burke, who seemed very obliging. "I don't care! I'm not a fool, Carrington! I'm not suggesting that you should join in a crooked game. Besides, three of your own footballer friends will be on the spot."

Rex laughed bitterly.

"Friends?" he repeated, looking at Curly & Co. "And do you think I'd trust them? Birds of a feather—all of you! It's another stunt to fleece me, eh?"

Peter Burke flushed—mainly because that shot went right home.

"Go easy, young man!" he said darkly. "I've stood a good bit from you, and I won't stand much more!"

"Take your money, Mr. Burke, and let's go," put in Curly Hankin, with a snort. "He hasn't got the pluck to risk his rotten money in a game of poker."

"That's enough!" snapped Rex, turning on Curly.

"Hang you!" retorted Curly. "I'm not afraid of you, Carrington! You don't know when you're well off! Burke has done the generous thing—he's offered to give you a chance to wipe off that debt in the same way as it was made—and you'll be a fool if you don't accept it."

"Not only a fool, but a funk!" said Brewer sneeringly.

Rex drew a deep breath, and although he knew that he was foolish for taking any notice of these taunts, he could not help himself. Vaguely he suspected that the whole thing was a plot—that he was being jeered into accepting the invitation. But he was hot-tempered—hot-headed—and he rose to the bait.

"I'll play," he said briefly.

"Good!" ejaculated Mr. Burke, with a meaning glance at Curly & Co. "Come on, then! Jump in, boys!"

When they arrived at Burke's house, the host led the way into the sitting-room. They all sat round the table, and then a big stack of "chips" was placed in front of each player.

"What do these represent?" asked Rex, fingering his pile.

"You've got twenty-five chips there—twenty-five quid!" replied Burke. "There's no fun in playing for low stakes."

Rex said nothing, but he was already

regretting his hasty decision. He loathed Burke, and he held Curly & Co. in contempt. He was a fool for "falling" for their bluff. It was too late to back out now, however, without making himself ridiculous and small.

Burke himself was feeling very pleased. His little "wheeze" had succeeded. He certainly wanted Rex Carrington's hundred pounds—but he also wanted to keep that IOU, too, and he had such faith in his own ability as a poker player, and such contempt for Rex's, that he had little doubt that he would soon get hold of that cash. He would then have the satisfaction of sticking to the IOU, too. Mr. Burke had lost his job, but he had his own ways and means of earning money.

He had already arranged with Curly Hankin & Co. that the whole game was to be a bluff. Whatever they lost, they would not be called upon to pay; and, in just the same way, if they happened to win a lot, they would not be able to cash in at the end of the game. Burke had arranged a fixed price for this little stunt.

There was to be no actual cheating—for Rex, in spite of his inexperience, was sharp-witted and shrewd. He would probably be able to spot any irregularities. Burke had sufficient faith in his own skill—and in his ability to bluff. Besides, if, by some mischance, he happened to lose heavily, he would repudiate the whole game, and would still keep a grip on that IOU. However, there was not one chance in a thousand of anything like this happening.

A new pack of cards was produced, and Rex himself shuffled them. That he was suspicious was obvious from the fact that he gave the cards a very close inspection.

"Satisfied?" asked Burke unpleasantly.

"Yes—so far," replied Rex.

"Very frank, aren't you?"

"I don't trust you, Burke—and that's the truth," said Rex bluntly. "But I'm giving you a warning. If I catch you cheating—or if I catch any of these other fellows cheating—I'll clear out of this house, and you can go to Timbuctoo for your hundred and fifty pounds. I shall be justified in repudiating that old debt. This has got to be a square game—understand?"

Burke scowled, but said nothing. Hankin & Co. made several unpleasant remarks, but Rex took no notice. He was feeling better now. He decided that he wasn't such a fool, after all.

He didn't mind a square game—he was ready to take his chance!

Peter Burke's Temptation!

THE game undoubtedly was square, too. So far as the cards were concerned, there was no trick shuffling, or trick dealing.

Rex instinctively knew that Peter Burke was a sharper, and he watched him as a cat watches a mouse. Burke had never had the opportunity of committing any irregularities, even if he had desired to attempt them.

It was essentially a game between Peter Burke and Rex Carrington. The others made very small bets, and they threw in their cards at the slightest provocation. Nearly every deal resolved itself into a tussle between Burke and Rex.

"After about half an hour, Burke was not feeling quite so confident. For Rex was proving to be a skilful poker player; he never gave himself away by word or glance, and in one or two cases he bluffed superbly. Whilst holding only two kings, he backed heavily; and Burke, who was in possession of three tens, threw in his hand when Rex raised him ten pounds in one bet.

"What did you have, Burke?" asked Rex, showing his pair of kings.

"Nothing at all—you can have the money," said Burke, inwardly cursing himself.

In poker there are five cards dealt to each player, and these cards can be changed, if desired—or some of them changed. Three cards, all the same, will win over two pairs. Thus, three twos will beat two aces and two kings.

The luck fluctuated; sometimes Burke would win, and sometimes Rex. On the whole, however, it kept remarkably even. After an hour's play, the piles of chips had scarcely changed. Peter Burke was getting impatient. He had hoped to clear Rex out long before this.

Rex was dealing. He served out five cards to each of them, but had not yet looked at his own.

Peter Burke's face was immobile. He had found himself in possession of three kings, an ace, and a five. It was an excellent hand, even if he got nothing else. The cards had been coming badly for some time, and Burke felt confident now that he would get a good pile of Rex's money.

Then the telephone-bell rang.

"Hang!" snapped Burke. "Who's that? Better hold up the game, boys."

He put his cards down, and the others did the same. Burke went out into the hall, and lifted the receiver from the telephone.

"Well?" he snapped. "Who is it?"

"Is Rex Carrington there?" came a voice.

"No!" replied Burke promptly.

"You're a liar!" came the voice. "I'm Fowkes, of the Blues—and I want to speak to Rex."

"He's not here, I tell you!" shouted Burke furiously. "It's like your infernal nerve—"

"One of the men at the Speedway told me Carrington had gone home with you," interrupted Fatty Fowkes, at the other end of the wire. "Ask him to come to the telephone."

"I tell you he's not here!" roared Burke.

"And I tell you that you're a liar!" retorted Fatty calmly. "Either you bring him to the telephone or I'll come round to your house—and I'll bring all the Blues with me. What's it going to be, Burke? Better make up your mind quickly."

Burke gritted his teeth. He knew that Fatty Fowkes would carry out that threat—and there was liable to be trouble if the Blue Crusaders arrived on the spot.

"All right!" he snarled. "I'll fetch him!"

Burke slammed the receiver on the hall table, and went back into the sitting-room. His face was distorted with rage.

"You're wanted, Carrington!" he snapped. "A fellow named Fowkes is on the 'phone."

Rex looked up.

"You told him I'm here?" he asked.

"You'd better speak to him," retorted Burke. "And don't let him bring any of his fool friends round here, either. Say that you'll soon be with them."

Rex went out, and Peter Burke sat down at the table. Hankin & Co. were over by the sideboard, pouring themselves out some drinks.

"Have one?" asked Curly, glancing round.

Burke nodded slowly. He was looking at his cards, and at the others which lay on the table opposite each player's vacant place. And in that second a thought occurred to him.

It was a tremendous thought—a thought which made him catch in his breath. He remembered that he had seen the bottom card of Rex's five as the footballer had dealt. That card had been the king of hearts. It was of no value to Rex, since the other three kings were in Burke's hand.

He glanced up, and found that Curly & Co. were intent upon the drinks. In a flash, he took one of his own cards and quickly exchanged it for Rex's king of hearts.

When Curly looked round, he found Burke lighting a cigarette.

But Burke now held four kings in his hand—four kings and a five. He rather regretted that he had given Rex the ace, but it didn't matter much.

For now he held four of a kind in his hand—four kings. No matter how high the betting—no matter what good cards Rex Carrington held—it was practically certain that Peter Burke would win when it came to the "show down." For in poker four of a kind is one of the highest hand that a player can hold—especially when they happen to be kings!

(Will the rascally Burke's cheating succeed? See next week's enthralling instalment, chums!)



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BETWEEN OURSELVES!

OUR AUTHOR CHATS WITH OUR READERS

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GEORGE STEVENSON

PREFECTS are appointed at St. Frank's—L. Austin (Berealston)—by the Housemasters, and they only receive these privileges after they have proved that they are capable of shouldering responsibilities. But even Housemasters make blunders now and again, you know. If they didn't, fellows like Kenmore and Sinclair would never be appointed. The Modern House is scarcely any more modern than any of the other Houses. It is merely a name nowadays. Perhaps the Ancient House is a couple of hundred years older actually, but even the Modern House itself is hundreds of years old. Quite recently, though—within a few years, that is—the whole of St. Frank's was remodelled, although most of the old walls were used in the process.

Judging by your letter—Mohammed Ali (Singapore)—your English is not so weak as you make out. The composition of your letter is excellent. However, I certainly think you can generally improve your English by reading any English magazines. Since you have no friends who can talk English, and since you only speak Malay at home, reading is bound to help you a lot.

There's no reason for you to feel too old at twenty-one to read the St. Frank's yarns—Bob Hodge (Calgary, Canada)—for you will find yourself in abundant company. It is no exaggeration to say that thousands of our old schoolboy readers have now grown up into men, and that they are still loyal to the Old Paper. After all, what difference does it make? Age doesn't really count where stories are concerned. I may be different from other people, but I can get thoroughly interested even in a Fairy Tale. And I don't feel ashamed of myself for reading it. If I fancy a Fairy Tale, why shouldn't I read one? I'm doing the reading, anyhow, and if people like to laugh at me, let 'em!

You seem to be a bit of a birthday fiend—George Stevenson (Ilkeston)—and in order to satisfy your thirst for information, I'll give you the following dates; Church, Aug. 28th; McClure, May 9th; Watson, Dec 11th;

Nipper, July 31st; Tregellis-West, March 17th. The reason Nipper was called "Ben-aett" in that very old back number you read is easily explained. When Nelson Lee and Nipper first came to St. Frank's they were working on a detective case, and used assumed names. Here's your photograph this week, and although the original was no larger than a postage stamp, I fancy it will come out all right.

Other readers, please note. The above comment isn't an indication that I welcome postage-stamp-sized photographs! A little larger, if you don't mind. The one of myself that I always send in return (specially autographed) measures five and a half inches by three and a half inches, and it's not a printed reproduction, either. It's a genuine photograph, guaranteed to give you a pain every time you look at it.

Considering that the school—or the most important part of the school—has only recently returned from a long overseas trip—H. Slater (Nelson)—I am seriously thinking of keeping all the fellows at home for the summer holidays. Our Editor is inclined to approve of this wheeze, too. And it's quite likely that Blackpool will be visited by Nipper & Co., as you suggest. But don't take this for granted! The chaps may not be able to get to Blackpool until next year, after all. I don't agree with you about the illustrations of the Moor View girls. Ireno & Co. are obliged to wear the school dress, and they can't look half as smart as they would perhaps like to look. Lots of girls' schools dress their pupils in quite a prim and unattractive manner. But it's the girls who count—not the dresses. Yes; I shall certainly have to feature the Hon. Douglas Singleton again soon, and you can look out for a yarn bringing him well to the fore.

CORRESPONDENTS WANTED

Leonard W. Naden, Castle Mill Farm, Tipton, Staffs., wants to hear from readers interested in football, also in drawing and painting.

J. M. Keith, 52, Sphere Road, Ilford, Essex, would exchange back numbers of the N.L. for stamp collection.

D. J. Thornton, 29, Orchard Road, Cross-gates, near Leeds, wants to hear from readers interested in forming a hobby club.

Miss Ruth Wilson, Armstrong Road, Bayswater, Victoria, Australia, wants girl correspondents anywhere—Canada especially.

B. Swannell, 39, Station Road, Hendon, London, N.W.4, wants correspondents in Hendon.

Leslie Walters, 29, Ravenshaw Street, The Junction, Newcastle, N.S.W., Australia, wants correspondents all over the Empire.

Miss Ida G. Locke, Ferndale, Liss, Hants, wants to hear from girl readers in Africa, Australia and America. Interested in football, and wants to form a cycling club.

Henry T. Westbury, P.O. Box 67, Waihi, New Zealand, offers 1½d. per copy for NELSON LEE back numbers previous to No. 544. No other copies wanted. Letters other than those referring to these back numbers will not be answered.

F. J. Wield, 7, South Bar Square, High Street, Lincoln, wants correspondents overseas.



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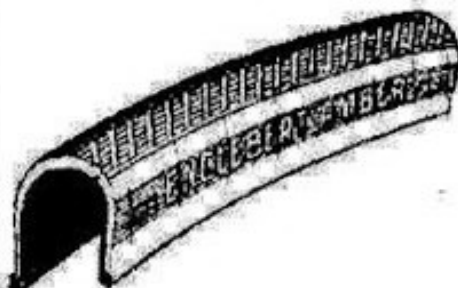
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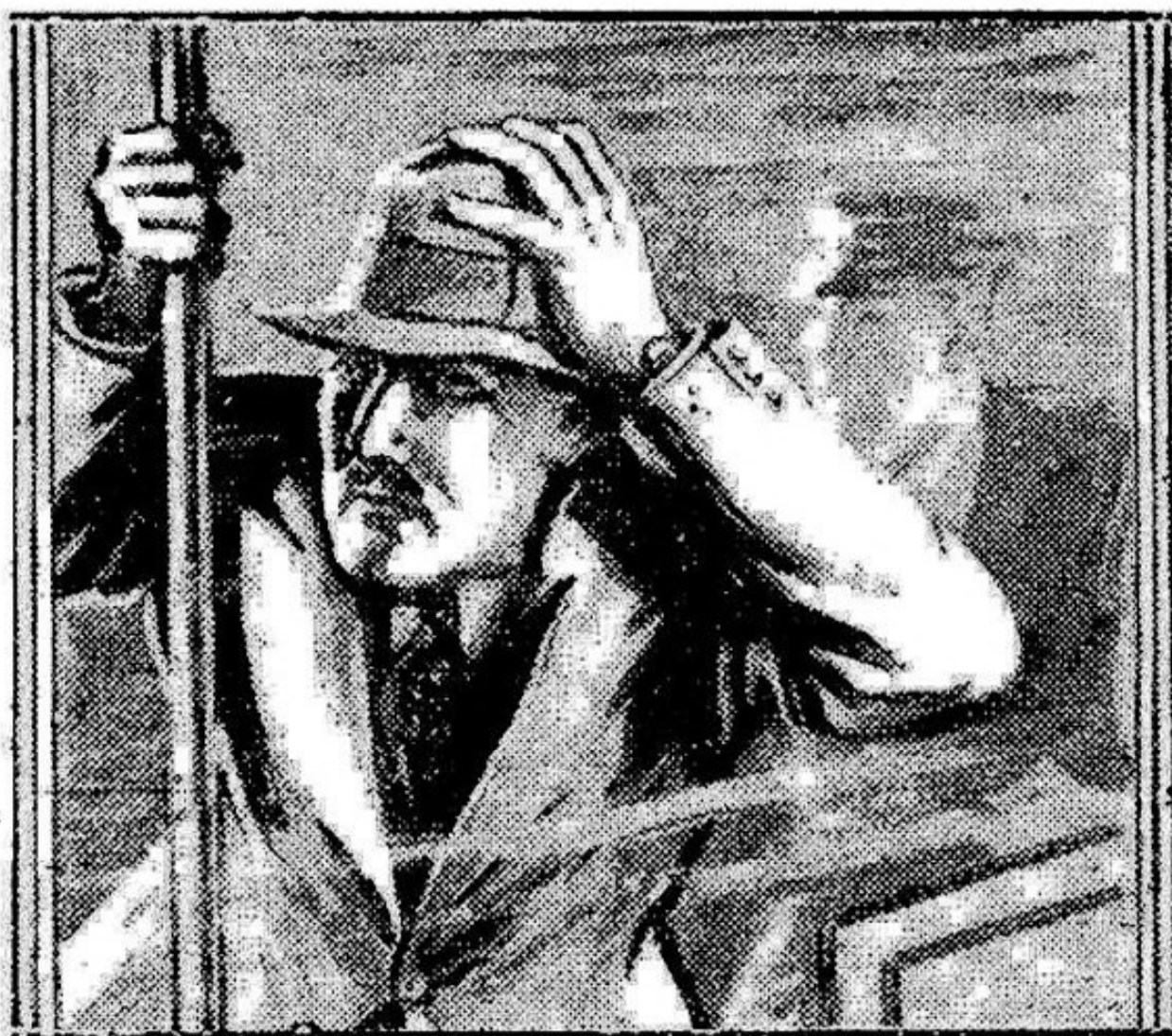
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