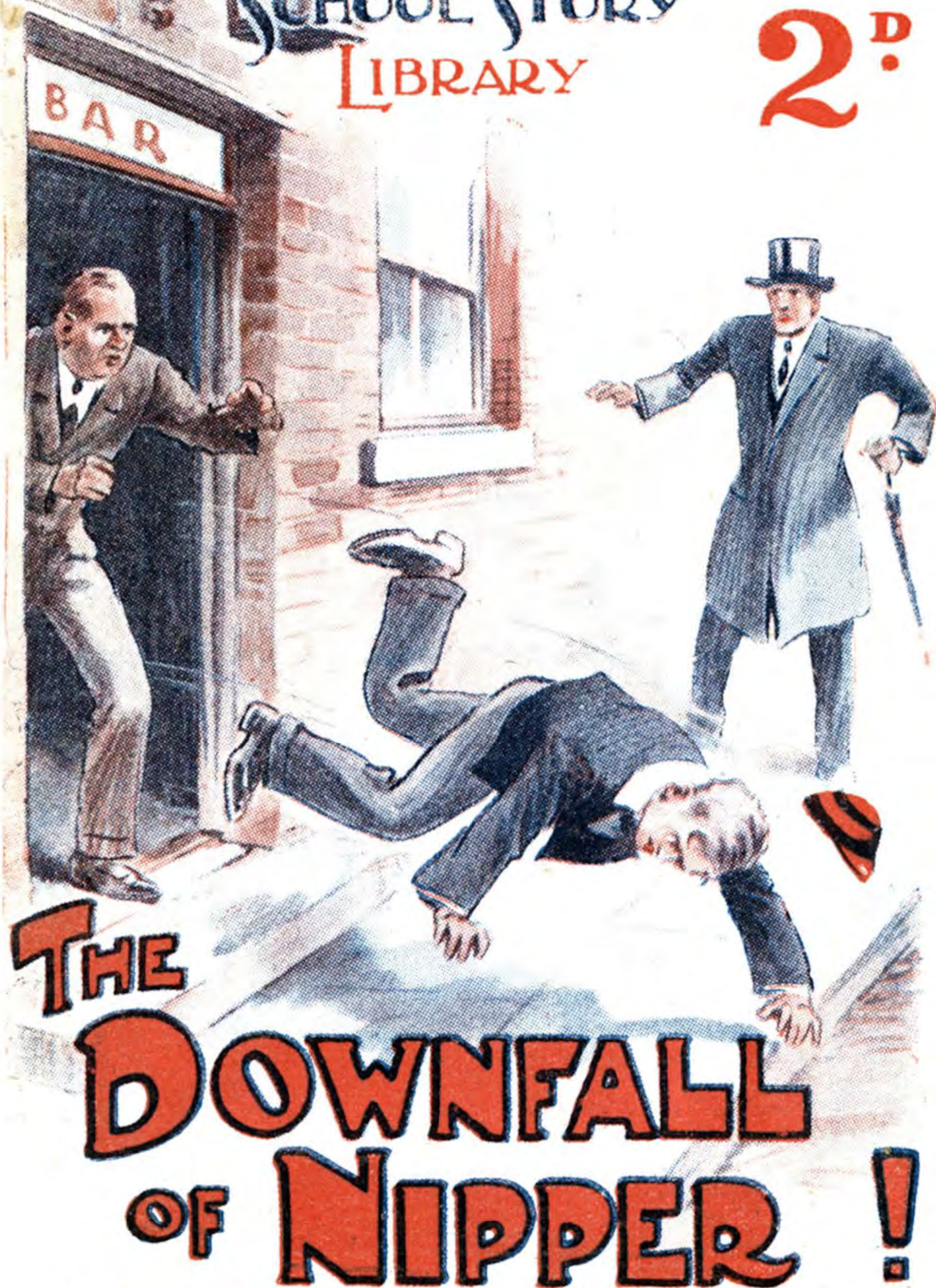


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THE DOWNFALL OF NIPPER !

A dramatic incident from the powerful long complete school yarn inside, featuring the chums of St. Frank's.

New Series No. 155.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

• April 20th, 1929.



Handforth appeared to wrestle with the tap. A stream of water shot out, wavered uncertainly across the room, and then struck Gore-Pearce in the chest, afterwards rising and hitting him in the face. "Look out, you idiot!" howled Gore-Pearce furiously.

Extra-Special !

Amazing Sensation at St. Frank's—

The DOWNFALL of NIPPER !



By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

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

St. Frank's has experienced many shocks recently—the appointment of Dr. Nicholls as headmaster ; his startling ideas for reforming the school—but this week comes the greatest sensation of all. Nipper, the popular Junior Skipper, is in disgrace ; he is faced with—expulsion ! Read all about this amazing state of affairs in this powerful long complete yarn, chums.—Ed.

CHAPTER 1.

Lively Times at St. Frank's!

CLANG! Clang!

Another day of trouble and strife for St. Frank's was being heralded in by two monotonous clamour of the rising bell.

Handforth, of the Remove, turned lazily over in bed, caught Church a fearful punch on the jaw, and the peace of the little dormitory was shattered. Church sat up, gasping and gurgling.

"Who did that?" he asked, staring round wildly. "Why, what the dickens—Hi, Handy!" he bellowed. "Handy!"

"Eh?" said Handforth, blinking. "What's the matter, fathead? What's all the noise about?"

"You—you hulking great gorilla!" yelled Church. "What are you doing in my bed?"

"Your bed?" said Handforth dazedly. "Rot!"

"It's a fact!" said McClure, from his own bed. "Last night, Handy, you were in your own bed, but this morning you're not only in Churchy's, but practically occupying the whole of it, and poor old Churchy is nearly on the floor."

Church passed a hand over his brow.

"No wonder I'm all full of aches!" he said indignantly. "This great elephant must have pushed me to the side, and I've been half out all night! There's an awful crick in my back, and my neck's stiff, too. He didn't even leave me a bit of the pillow!"

Edward Oswald Handforth, who had been gradually gathering his wits together, suddenly grinned.

"By George!" he said. "I remember now."

"What do you remember?"

"It was those rotten biscuits," said Handforth.

"Biscuits?"

"Your biscuits!" said Handforth accusingly. "Why the dickens you bring biscuits into the bed-room beats me! Of all the silly, fatheaded——"

"You—you ungrateful rotter!" snorted Church. "You started complaining about being hungry, and I fished out a bag of biscuits. Yes, and you had over half of them, too."

"That's neither here nor there," said Handforth sternly. "I went to sleep before I'd finished them, and the rest must have slipped out of the bag. I woke up about two o'clock in the morning, and found myself wallowing in the crumbs. It was like lying on a lot of tintacks!"

Church and McClure grinned.

"Biscuit crumbs aren't very comfortable in bed," admitted Church.

"Comfortable!" said Handforth. "How many did you give me? Half a hundred-weight? I was simply surrounded by the things, and when I got out of bed I shook 'em off in clouds. You don't think I was going to sleep in that mess, do you?"

"Couldn't you shake the sheet?"

"It was your idea to give me the biscuits, so I got into your bed," replied Handforth. "Yes, and I shoved you into mine, too! It was like your nerve to get out again and squash in with me!"

Church's jaw dropped.

"Nerve!" he ejaculated. "My nerve? What about yours?"

"And now you start complaining about being stiff!" said Handforth indignantly. "I've never heard of such cheek!"

Church breathed hard. He knew, from past experience, that any sort of argument would be idle. He certainly didn't remember being hauled out of bed by Handforth, or getting back into his own. He half suspected that Handforth had dreamed it.

"Oh, well, we won't make a fuss," he said gruffly. "We've enough trouble from those Reformers without making any of our own." Handforth started.

"That reminds me!" he said. "By George! I meant to be up early this morning. I'd planned to be out by six o'clock. We were all going down to prepare a special trap for Gore-Pearce."

"Were we?" asked Mac interestedly.

"Of course we were," said Handforth, in disgust. "We had it all fixed up last night. And now we're too late!"

"It's wonderful how you make up our minds, Handy," said Church. "This is the first we've heard of any scheme to get up early. It's just as well we didn't, though. We can't do anything against the Reformers."

Handforth stared.

"Losing your nerve?" he asked grimly.

"No, but what's the use?" said Church.

"Things are rotten at St. Frank's just now—

ever since the new Head turned things upside down. We can't touch any of the rotters without their sneaking, and the Head approves of it! He even asks us to sneak, indeed! My hat! I can't believe it even now!"

MANY of the St. Frank's juniors were like Church. They would awaken in the morning, and vaguely wonder if they had been dreaming. For their time-honoured code had been destroyed. At least, the Head was attempting to destroy it.

Dr. Morrison Nicholls was a very learned man—an earnest, kindly man. Unfortunately, he had this one kink. It was his pet theory that England's great Public schools were in need of reform, that they were full of the wrong spirit.

While discipline was presumably maintained, and while everything appeared perfectly all right on the surface, there was a continuous undercurrent of wrongdoing. It was the Head's opinion that hundreds of breaches of the rules were constantly going on, unknown to the masters, unknown to the prefects—but thoroughly well known to the boys themselves.

It was his opinion also that the boys—particularly the juniors—were compelled to suffer in silence. They were forced to endure the petty tyranny of bullies, and the hundred and one other hardships of school life that went on unknown to the authorities. It was their code—their unwritten law—that these offenders should not be reported. Sneaking was a contemptible thing. Sneaking was barred. And so, in the Head's view, the evil persisted, without any hope of deliverance for the sufferers.

Dr. Nicholls had come to St. Frank's to change all this. Dr. Stafford had gone abroad after an illness, and there was some doubt as to whether he would ever come back. And the new Head, with the full sanction of the Governors, was putting his theories into practice.

He believed that the old system was wrong. Boys should not be scorned by their fellows because they "gave the game away." If they were persecuted, it was their duty to report the persecutors. Only in this way could the discipline of the school be fully maintained.

On the face of it, the Head's scheme seemed pretty sound. Unfortunately, it was only theory. He wanted to "cleanse" St. Frank's. He wanted to have everything running so smoothly that all petty persecutions would cease, and all breaches of the rules would be obsolete.

But, human nature being what it is, Dr. Nicholls was up against a brick wall, so to speak. In practice, the plan was inclined to defeat its own object by causing more breaches of discipline than ever. For the unscrupulous fellows immediately took a mean advantage of their new power.

The Head failed to understand that the boys themselves were fully capable of dealing with the petty tyrants who occasion-

ally disturbed the ordinary run of things. These fellows might have a brief run, and it was more than likely that they were never officially punished. But they were always subdued, sooner or later. The school was well capable of looking after itself.

The present state of things was intolerable. The remedy was far worse than the disease. The rotters had immediately seized upon their advantage, and Claude Gore-Pearce, of the Remove, had started an absurd movement which he called the Reform Party. The Reformers had pledged themselves to sneak on any and every occasion—to work hand in hand with the Head to abolish all rule-breaking and petty tyranny.

And, as in the case of most reformers, their own tyranny was worse than that which they had set out to suppress.

THE trouble is, we don't know what the dickens to do about it," said Handforth, as he dressed. "Nipper won't make any move, and as soon as I start I'm jumped on. And what's the good of that?"

"Nipper will do something when the right time comes," said Church sagely. "He's not so mad as you are, Handy—"

"Not so what?"

"Not so impulsive," corrected Church hastily.

"That's better!" said Handforth, with a snort. "Don't forget, my lads, that I can punch you as much as I like. If I punch the other chaps they'll sneak, but you're different."

Church and McClure grunted. They had been having a hard time of it lately. They had been receiving all sorts of punches which should have been delivered to the rotters. Handforth, finding it too risky to invite the Head's wrath by smashing the Reformers, had serenely smashed his own chums. It relieved his feelings, and he was safe. Church and McClure were no sneaks.

"There's nothing new in what's going on," said McClure. "It was just the same in the French Revolution. The people were living under a tyranny, and they jibbed—and the Revolution made things worse than ever. The tyranny became twice as bad. It's just the same here."

Handforth stared.

"We're not French!" he said tartly. "And we're not having any revolution, either! So don't talk rot!"

"Yes, but it's just the same," argued McClure. "The Head's object is to give us freedom. And look what we've got! These Reformers are trying to institute their rotten ideas. As soon as we break a rule, somebody sneaks on us, and we cop out. If we go for the chap who sneaked, he sneaks again, and we cop out once more."

"Life's not worth living!" said Church sadly.

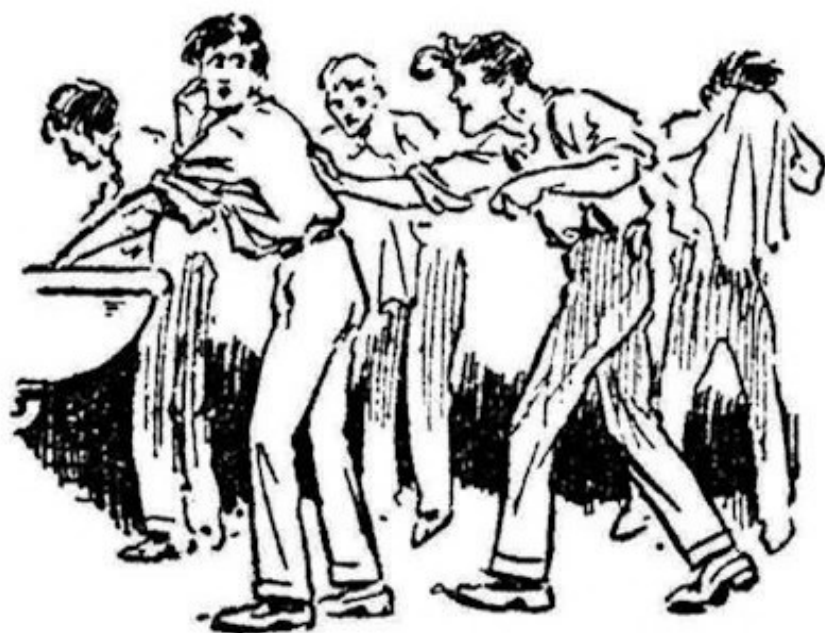
"It can't last much longer," said Handforth. "These Reformers need reforming! That's the chief thing. The worst of it is, we can't give them any of their own medicine without becoming tarred with the

same brush. That's why we're so beastly helpless."

"Oh, well, let's go and wash," said Church practically.

THERE was a bit of trouble in the bath-room. A crowd of fellows already occupied all the wash-basins, and Handforth, who was always impatient, barged in and pushed somebody out of the way before he had half finished.

Then there was an argument about one of the taps. It seemed that it had been leaking a bit, and Handforth repaired it. At least, he set out to repair it. Actually, he caused a stream of water to hiss across the room like a jet from a hosepipe.



"Look out, everybody!" sang out Nipper, who was nearest. "Handy's repaired that tap!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Help!" yelled Handforth. "I can't leave go! The top's come off!"

"We told you not to unscrew it!" gasped Church. "You silly ass! The tap only needs a new washer."

Handforth succeeded in smothering the stream, and at that moment Claude Gore-Pearce looked in. The president of the Reform Party was dressed with more than his usual elegance; and his swagger was so arrogant that Handforth stiffened. The very sight of Gore-Pearce made him see red.

"Gulliver anywhere about?" asked Gore-Pearce, as he looked round.

Handforth wrestled with the tap again. A tremendous spurt of water shot out, wavered uncertainly across the room, and then struck Gore-Pearce in the chest.

"Look out!" howled Claude wildly.

The stream rose a trifle, hit him in the face, and then slowly descended. Before Gore-Pearce could dodge, he was drenched from head to foot.

"By George! It nearly got the better of me that time!" said Handforth breathlessly. "Good! I've screwed it in again!"

"You did that on purpose!" howled Gore-Pearce furiously.

Handforth looked round.

"Eh? Did what on purpose?" he asked blankly. "Hallo! You're wet, Gore-Pearce! What have you been doing to yourself?"

"You did it!" shouted Gore-Pearce savagely.

"Well, of all the silly ideas!" snorted Handforth. "Ask these chaps! Was I wrestling with this tap or not? How could I help it if Gore-Pearce got in the way?"

"Accidents will happen!" murmured Nipper.

"Accidents be hanged!" snapped Gore-Pearce. "You've ruined my clothes! You've——"

"Look out! Mr. Lee's coming!" ejaculated somebody.

Gore-Pearce strode to the door, leaving a trail of water behind him.

"Mr. Lee!" he called urgently.

The leader of the Reform Party was adopting the policy of the new organisation, and was sneaking!

CHAPTER 2.

The Head Thinks Twice!

NELSON LEE, the Housemaster of the Ancient House, frowned as he caught sight of Gore-Pearce's drenched condition.

"What have you been doing, young man?" he asked sharply.

"I!" yelled Gore-Pearce. "I've been doing nothing! Handforth deliberately drenched me from head to foot!"

"If you shout at me, Gore-Pearce, I shall punish you," said Lee coldly. "Have you forgotten your manners?"

"That cad, Handforth, deliberately swamped me!" roared Gore-Pearce. "If I can't get any satisfaction from you, I'll go to the Head——"

"Silence!" rapped out Nelson Lee.

"I tell you——"

"Another word, Gore-Pearce, and I'll give you a thrashing!"

There was something so grim in Nelson Lee's tone that Gore-Pearce managed to control himself. He stood there, panting—pale with rage. But even he knew better than to cross swords with the famous school-master-detective.

"How was it that Gore-Pearce was drenched like this?" asked Nelson Lee, looking into the bath-room. "What are you doing with that tap, Handforth?"

"It's been leaking, sir," said Handforth.

"I can quite believe you."

"I tried to repair it, sir——"

"You should not have done any such thing," said Nelson Lee sternly. "You are not a plumber, Handforth. Am I to understand that you accidentally allowed a stream of water to strike Gore-Pearce?"

Handforth hesitated. He knew perfectly well that the affair had been no accident.

"I was wrestling with it, sir," he said vaguely.

"The water was hissing all over the place long before Gore-Pearce came in, sir," put in Church. "He happened to strike a bad patch. He walked right into the worst of it."

"I need inquire no further," said Nelson Lee, nodding. "Handforth, leave that tap alone. Apparently you acted from the best of motives, and so I will not punish you. But don't interfere with such things again."

Lee prepared to depart, and Gore-Pearce went red with wrath.

"What about me?" he shouted. "Aren't I going to get any compensation for my ruined clothes, sir? I tell you, Handforth did it deliberately——"

"The matter is settled, Gore-Pearce. I want to hear no more," interrupted Nelson Lee. "Accidents are always liable to happen."

And Lee took himself off. Many of the Old-Timers had not failed to observe the twinkle in his eye. The Old-Timers were those fellows who stuck to the old-fashioned code of honour. Sneaking, in their view, was despicable, whether it had official sanction or not.

"That's one for you, Gore-Pearce, my lad!" said Fullwood, grinning.

"He'll be sorry for himself before long!" said Gore-Pearce fiercely. "It's no good reporting any of you chaps to Lee or Crowell, they're 'in' with you. They're purposely ignoring the Head's orders."

"They've got sense," said Nipper, nodding.

"They'll find themselves in the wrong box if they keep it up!" snarled Gore-Pearce.

"By gad! It seems to me that we Reformers have got to tighten the reins."

He stormed out, and Nipper sighed.

"Poor chap!" he said. "In a way, I'm sorry for him. He's got such a great idea of his own importance that he thinks we all ought to salaam to him. He's not used to power. It'll overwhelm him yet."

"Isn't it about time it did?" asked Handforth pointedly.

"That's one for me, eh?" chuckled Nipper.

"You think I'm too slow?"

"You're supposed to be the Junior skipper, aren't you?"

"Well, yes—but I'm only the same as you chaps," replied Nipper. "The fact that I'm skipper doesn't give me the powers of a magician. It's no good starting something against these Reformers until they give us the opportunity. Things are getting better and better."

"You ass! They're getting worse and worse!" protested Fullwood.

"That's only on the surface," said Nipper.

"You know as well as I do that things generally get worse before they're better."

Quite a number of the Remove fellows was getting impatient. They thought that Nipper should have taken active steps against Gore-Pearce's party before this. But Nipper, as he had more than once proved, was wily. There was method in his inactivity.

DOWNSTAIRS, Corky & Co., from the East House, were paying a call.

When Nipper came down he found Lionel Corcoran chatting with the Hon. Tom Harborough and one or two other Removites. Armstrong and Griffith and

Boots—all of the Fourth—were there, too. There was an alliance at present, the Old-Timers of the Remove and the Fourth having joined hands against the Reformers.

"The trouble is, there's nothing doing," Corky was saying. "And it's a lot worse for us chaps than it is for you."

"Why is it?" asked Nipper.

"Because your Form-master is on your side," replied Corky feelingly. "Old Pycraft is against us. He's hand in glove with the Reformers. Thinks it's a brilliant idea. He encourages sneaking, and he never questions any complaints. Just ladles out canings and lines all day long."

"Poor chaps!" said Nipper. "It certainly is very rough for you!"

"We don't stand a chance!" complained Armstrong. "As soon as we scrag anybody they sneak. Life isn't worth living!"

"Whichever way we turn it's the same," said Griffith. "And there's a new development now. Remember how we agreed to stick to the rules so that the Reformers wouldn't get any chance to sneak on us?"

"Yes," said Nipper.

"Well, Merrell and the other cads in our house are inventing things now," said Griffith. "So what's the use? They dash to Pycraft with a lot of lies, and Pycraft believes them!"

"He wants to believe 'em!" said Armstrong grimly. "And all the time he's preening himself like a giddy cock-sparrow! Doing the Head's good work! That's the sort of thing he prattles!"

"We're up against a brick wall," said Griffith darkly. "Things are worse than ever—and there's no hope!"

Nipper grinned.

"Don't be so pessimistic, my sons!" he said, with a chuckle. "Things aren't so bad as all that. Who are these Reformers, anyhow? The rotters are in the lead, and their followers are fellows who can't do any thinking for themselves. The backbone of the Junior School is as strong as ever."

"It's a bit bent, though," said Corky.

"Look at this thing coming along now!" said Handforth, with suppressed indignation. "Just look at it! Did you ever see anything so horrible?"

"It's more comic than horrible, old man," said Nipper.

Teddy Long had just strolled into the lobby. The sneak of the Remove was a very different fellow now. Formerly he had had the doubtful distinction of being the only recognised sneak in the Form—the only fellow who had a reputation for running to masters and prefects with his complaints. Nowadays, of course, he was one of many.

And whereas he had previously done his sneaking on the quiet, in fear of being bowled out by the other juniors, he now sneaked with the utmost effrontery.

"Morning, you fellows!" he said, with an important air.

There was also a note of indulgence in his voice. He seemed to consider that he was far superior to any of the Old-Timers. He was taking full advantage of the new order of things. If anybody "scragged" him, as of old, he immediately reported them. There had been plenty of this at first, but the scraggers had found that the game was too costly. So Teddy was now left severely alone. The other juniors listened to his blatherings, and clenched their fists in silent helplessness.

"Joined the Reformers yet?" asked Teddy genially.

"We haven't sunk so low!" said Tich Harborough, with a glare.

"Better mind what you're saying!" frowned Teddy Long. "The Reformers are the all powerful party. If you fellows forget yourselves, you'll probably get reported."

"Get out of our sight, you miserable sneak!" said Nipper. "Even our tempers are liable to get ragged—and you may not be so safe as you imagine!"

"Safe?" snorted Handforth, rolling up his sleeves. "I don't care if I'm publicly flogged, but I'm going to slaughter this insect! It's worth it!"

Teddy backed away in dire alarm.

"Hi! Help!" he howled. "Where's a prefect? Where's a master?"

"You—you snivelling worm!" bellowed Handforth. "You can find a prefect or a master afterwards, but I'm going to take it out of you first. Hold him, you

chaps!"

The juniors closed round, and there was no escape for the startled Teddy.

"Easy, dear old fellow," said Travers, laying a hand on Handforth's arm. "Why be so rash?"

"Don't you think I ought to slaughter him?" demanded Handforth.

"The scheme is sound in every joint," replied Travers, nodding. "But why get reported for it? I've got a much better idea. Merely wait until you can grab the young toad in private."

"Private?"

"Catch him alone," said Travers. "I've a good mind to do it myself. Don't you see? Supposing I give him a good tanning? He'll



dash straight to the Head, no doubt, but he won't have any proof."

"That's no good," said Handforth. "Might as well slaughter him on the spot—now. If the Head questions me I'm bound to admit that I did the slaughtering, so what's the difference?"

Vivian Travers grinned.

"You'd better leave it to me," he said blandly. "I'm not so particular as you. Handy, dear old fellow. I'll catch him alone, reduce him to pulp, and when the Head questions me I'll deny all knowledge of it."

"But that would be a whopper!"

"Only a very small whopper—and in a big cause," said Travers gently. "As I said, I'm not quite so particular. So we'll leave it at that."

Teddy Long, startled and scared by this threatened peril, managed to break away while Handforth was still indignantly telling Travers that there was no excuse for fibbing. Handforth had very strict ideas on the point.

AS it happened, Dr. Morrison Nicholls himself was crossing the Triangle as Teddy bolted out. The scared junior pulled himself up short, and a wild look came into his eyes. Normally, he regarded the Head with awe; but he remembered how Gore-Pearce had repeatedly approached the Head with his tittle-tattle, and if Gore-Pearce could do it, why couldn't he? After all, he was just as important as Gore-Pearce.

He ran up, panting excitedly.

"I say, sir!" he ejaculated.

Dr. Nicholls halted, his brow stern.

"Your name?" he snapped.

"Long, sir!"

"Then, Long, don't you know that you should raise your cap to me?" demanded the Head sternly. "How dare you come running up, shouting your remarks to me as though I were one of your school-fellows? Upon my word! The manners of some of you boys are positively atrocious!"

Teddy gulped, startled by this rebuff.

"Sorry, sir!" he gasped. "But—but I want to make a complaint, sir."

"Oh, so that's it?" said the Head grimly. "Well?"

"Travers says he's going to catch me alone, sir, and give me a good hiding," said Teddy indignantly. "He's threatened to slaughter me, and then deny all knowledge of it when he's questioned—after I've sneaked. I—I mean, after I've made a report."

"Enough!" said Dr. Nicholls angrily. "I refuse to listen to another word, Long! I am very much afraid that many of you boys are taking advantage of the reform that I have suggested. Hold out your hand!"

"Mum-my hand, sir?" gasped Teddy, frightened.

"Your hand!" thundered the Head. "I regard your complaint as a sheer impertin-

ence. Now, sir! No more shilly-shallying!"

Swish!

Teddy held out his hand in amazement, and before he knew what had happened the Head had delivered a stinging cut and had passed on. It really seemed that Dr. Nicholls was not entirely satisfied with the working of his experiment. He was thinking twice about it.

CHAPTER 3.

The Old Code and the New!

EVERYBODY was tremendously bucked over that little incident.

Teddy had a big audience, and his discomfiture had been hailed with glee by the Old-Timers. The Reformers were inclined to be startled. The Head wasn't playing the game! To swish Teddy like that, just because he had made a justifiable complaint, was disturbing.

The fact of the matter was, Dr. Nicholls was becoming thoroughly exasperated by the partial failure of his plan. He was no fool. He was, indeed, a very clever man—a very generous-minded man, too. Although he had hated to admit it at first, he could see now that most of the reports that reached him were of no importance. They invariably dealt with trivialities; and they mostly came from the same set of juniors.

In Big Hall, after prayers, the Head had something to say.

"I want to tell you that I am very angry," he declared emphatically. "If you will all co-operate with me in the reforms that I have suggested there will be a big improvement in the general conditions, but so far I have looked for that co-operation in vain. I am convinced that my theory is correct, and if it is practised in earnest there will be an immediate change."

There was a grim, ominous silence.

"As far as I can see, however, a great many of you are sullenly opposed to me," continued the Head. "You resent my new ideas. You prefer to stick to the old-fashioned code. And I want to say at once that I am losing patience with many of the boys who have professed to embrace my ideas."

"Good egg!" murmured Nipper. "That's one for Gore-Pearce."

The President of the Reform Party was looking startled.

"Let me tell you once and for all that I have not sanctioned tittle-tattle," declared Dr. Nicholls. "There is nothing I detest more. I shall pay no attention to boys who come running to me to complain of trifling offences—and offences that have not yet even been committed. Only this morning a boy approached me with a ridiculous story of some threat that had been issued against him. Once and for all, I will not sanction this contemptible behaviour."

"Hallo, hallo!" murmured Nipper. "He seems to be coming round a bit!"



Handforth liked nothing better than "setting about" Claude Gore-Pearce. He charged forward with a whoop of enthusiasm, and Gore-Pearce received a terrific drive on the nose which sent him flying backwards.

"But it's not very hopeful," said Handforth, with a grunt. "He's only complaining about the trifles. He's still got his dotty ideas about the big things."

This proved to be correct.

"I shall only pay attention to genuine complaints—to genuine cases of rule-breaking," said Dr. Nicholls firmly. "I hope you will all take this warning to heart. I am as determined as ever to give this experiment a full and fair trial. I am convinced that it will succeed. There is nothing dishonourable in informing about gross and deliberate breaches of the regulations. In many cases these offences can never come to the ears of the authorities unless the boys themselves supply the information."

And with that the Head dismissed the school.

"WELL, it's something, anyway," said Corky, on the Ancient House steps. "There's some satisfaction in knowing that the Head has seen through Gore-Pearce's rotten game."

"I'm jiggered if I can see much hope," said Handforth, with a sniff. "He's still urging us to sneak, isn't he? If there's any breach of the school rules we've got to inform. Rot! Piffle! I've never heard such drivell!"

"Not so loud, Handy," said Nipper. "No need to shout it. The time is getting ripe for us to take action. It won't be long before we can start reforming these Reformers."

Hubbard came along at this minute, looking happy and self-satisfied. Hubbard was one of the nondescript fellows who was always liable to be a straw in the wind.

"I've got two quid!" he announced proudly.

"Who cares?" said Handforth.

"It came this morning—by registered letter," continued Hubbard. "Two quid, you know. From my Uncle Jim! Haven't seen him for three or four years—he's been away in the Argentine. Not bad to send me two quid, eh?"

Hubbard was full of it—which wasn't surprising. As a rule he considered himself lucky if he received a five-shilling postal order. Two pounds all at once went to his head.

"Better stick tight to it," said Nipper, with a smile. "You'll have the hounds round you in no time as soon as they hear. Here's one coming now, by the way."

Teddy Long came up, hot and breathless.

"I've been looking for you, Hubbard," he panted. "Is it true that you've had a whacking great tip from home?"

"What of it?" asked Hubbard.

"Well, you're my study-mate, aren't you?" said Teddy excitedly. "Whenever I get a

tip I always share it with you, so it's up to you to share yours with me."

Hubbard's face was blank.

"Why, you young rotter!" he snorted. "If you get half a crown you think you're Lord Rothschild, and if I ever see a penny you jolly soon take it out of my sight! Go and eat coke! I won't give you a cent!"

And Hubbard strode off, snorting harder than ever.

NIPPER thought the little incident was over. In fact, he forgot all about Hubbard and his two pounds. But immediately after morning lessons Nipper had reason to remember it again.

He was in the telephone-box in the Ancient House Junior Common-room. He had rung up the Moor View School, with the intention of inviting Mary Summers to tea. Of course, Irene Manners and Doris Berkeley and some of the other girls would come, too—but Mary was Nipper's special chum, and he naturally thought of her first.

The number was engaged, and Nipper was obliged to wait. He lounged about in the telephone-box waiting for the ring; and as it was stuffy in there he had the door ajar.

A group of juniors was arguing close by. There was nothing secretive about their conversation. The boys were Gore-Pearce & Co., and nowadays Gore-Pearce & Co. were very bold. Their old secretive habits had gone. They considered themselves to be a power in the land.

"My dear idiots, it's a cert," Gore-Pearce was saying. "Put a quid of your money on Kingfisher for the three-thirty, and you'll have five quid in your pocket instead of two. You take my tip!"

"I'd rather not bet," said Hubbard uncomfortably. "Hang it, I'm not rich like you, Gore-Pearce. If the horse loses one of my quids would be gone. I've decided to buy a camera and—"

"You're a funk—that's what's the matter with you!" said Gore-Pearce contemptuously. "I'm betting on the horse, and I'm risking three quid on it, too. Lump your quid with mine, and you can buy the finest camera under the sun."

Nipper frowned as he saw that Hubbard was tempted. Nipper never interfered with the cads in their follies; but, as Form captain, he regarded it as his duty to protect such innocents as Hubbard.

"Keep your money in your pocket, Hubbard," he sang out, looking out of the telephone-box. "Don't take any notice of Gore-Pearce."

Hubbard glared.

"You mind your own business, you beastly Old-Timer!" he retorted by way of gratitude for this good advice. "All right, Gore-Pearce, I'll do it!"

"You silly idiot!" snapped Nipper.

"Good man!" grinned Gore-Pearce. "I'll tell you what. You pop down to the White Harp and take the money to the bookie.

You'll find him there, and it'll only take you a minute to dodge in."

"But I might be seen!" protested Hubbard, startled.

"Rubbish!" said Gore-Pearce lightly. "I've taken you under my wing, Hubbard. I can see that I shall have to show you the ropes—"

Nipper who was about to dash out and grab Hubbard by force, was interrupted by the ringing of the telephone-bell. He was compelled to answer, but he told himself that he would seek Hubbard out as soon as he was free. The fellow was acting the fool with his money.

It exasperated Nipper, too, to hear Gore-Pearce boldly and openly arranging to break the school rules in the most flagrant manner possible. And he was supposed to be the champion of the Heads' cause! It was not merely disgusting, but beyond endurance. And when Gore-Pearce dragged a weak fellow like Hubbard into his net, it was time for drastic action—and hang the consequences!

WHEN Nipper had finished chatting with Mary—a somewhat prolonged chat, it is to be feared—he found that Hubbard had already gone down to the village on his bicycle. Like an arrant idiot, Hubbard had consented to do Gore-Pearce's dirty work for him.

Nipper lost no time. He fetched out his motor-cycle, leapt into the saddle, and shot down to the village in record time. There was a grim look in the Remove skipper's eyes as he propped his machine outside the disreputable inn. The White Harp was a known resort for bookmakers' touts and the roughest element of the village. Hubbard's bicycle was leaning against the opposite hedge.

Nipper walked straight in, and he found Hubbard in the bar-parlour, talking to two rough-looking gentlemen who were in the act of taking his money.

"Just a minute!" said Nipper, striding forward.

Hubbard leapt round, obviously jumpy.

"You ass!" he gasped. "I thought you were somebody else!"

"I hate doing this sort of thing, but I just can't help myself," said Nipper, as he took the money out of Hubbard's hands. "How much of this is yours?"

"Two quid," said Hubbard, startled.

"Oh! So you decided to risk the lot, did you?" said Nipper angrily. "You hopeless ass! Put it in your pocket!"

Nipper felt that he was high-handed, but the circumstances warranted it. Hubbard hadn't sufficient sense of his own. Nipper jammed two of the notes into Hubbard's pocket, and handed the rest to one of the men.

"You can settle with Gore-Pearce about this," he said. "I don't know whether this chap's made any arrangement with you, but if he hasn't he isn't going to. Outside, Hubbard!"

"I won't!" shouted Hubbard hotly. "What do you mean by interfering?"

"Yes, clear out of it, you young swab!" said one of the men.

"Hold on!" said Nipper, pulling Hubbard aside. "Now look here, my son, I only did that to give you a jolt. Now it's up to you to make up your own mind. If you risk that money on a horse, you'll be a fool. And have you thought of the consequences if you're spotted going out of this dump?"

"Gore-Pearce said there wasn't any risk."

"Confound Gore-Pearce!" retorted Nipper. "Who's Gore-Pearce? He took jolly good care to keep out of it himself, didn't he? If



you'll take my advice, Hubbard, you'll clear out of this place, and keep your money in your pocket. Your two pounds will be a lot safer."

Hubbard, who had had doubts of his own, but who hadn't had the moral courage to stand up against Gore-Pearce, suddenly experienced a sensation of relief. The look he gave Nipper was quite grateful.

"Thanks!" he muttered. "I've been a fool, I suppose."

He fairly ran out of the place, and Nipper would have followed—only he was suddenly seized from behind by the two men.

"Hold hard!" snapped one of them. "What the thunder do you mean by interfering with our business? You blinkin' young rat! What shall we do with him, Bill?"

"Tan his hide, and chuck him out!" said the other man savagely.

THREE minutes later Nipper emerged. He emerged head foremost, dusty, tattered, and bruised. He had stood no earthly chance against those ruffians. And it was just the "cussedness" of things which decreed that Dr. Nicholls himself should be striding past at that particular moment!

CHAPTER 4.

Rough on Nipper!

DR. MORRISON NICHOLLS came to an abrupt halt.

"Good heavens!" he ejaculated, startled.

He beheld the remarkable spectacle of a St. Frank's junior being pitched head first

out of the lowest "pub" in the village. The other establishments were all thoroughly respectable, but, of course, they were out of bounds for the St. Frank's fellows. The White Harp, too, was out of bounds for all decent people.

A moment earlier the stretch of road had been deserted. Hubbard had spotted the Head, and had wisely dodged down an alley, but even if he had thought of warning Nipper he had had no opportunity, for the Head would have seen him going into the inn. It was only by luck that the Head hadn't seen him come out. And it impressed Hubbard mightily. He realised, with a shock, what a cad Gore-Pearce was for sending him on this errand, and how narrowly he had escaped detection.

There was no such luck for Nipper.

"You are Hamilton, I think?" said the Head ominously.

Nipper, who had just struggled to his feet, looked at the Head in a dazed, bewildered way. Until that second he had not known that Dr. Nicholls was there.

"Sorry, sir," he said, attempting to dust himself down.

"What explanation have you to offer, Hamilton, for this extraordinary incident?" asked the Head. "How is it that I find you thrown bodily out of this questionable establishment?"

"I had a bit of trouble with a couple of men, sir."

"It's lucky he didn't 'ave a bit more, too," said one of the men from the doorway. "Interferin' young jackanapes!"

"Are there any more St. Frank's boys in there?" demanded the Head.

"No, there ain't!" retorted the man.

He might have added that Hubbard had been in there, but he didn't.

"Come with me, Hamilton," said Dr. Nicholls.

He abandoned his own visit to the village, and walked along the lane with Nipper. The Remove skipper had managed to make himself a little more presentable, and now he had plenty to think about.

"I am waiting for your explanation, Hamilton," said the Head. "I suppose you realise that the recent incident was utterly disgraceful? I am thankful that nobody else saw, or the fair name of St. Frank's would have suffered. But that makes no difference whatever to your offence. What were you doing in that inn?"

"I was talking to those two men, sir."

"So you told me. Bookmakers, I presume?"

"I think so, sir."

"You mean, you know?"

"Yes, sir."

"So you were in that inn, talking with two bookmakers?" said the Head, by no means unkindly. "Really, Hamilton, you have acted very, very foolishly. Don't you realise the utter folly of such behaviour? And when it involves a brawl, and a public

one at that, your offence becomes greatly exaggerated."

Nipper felt hot.

"You've made a mistake, sir," he said quietly. "I wasn't in there for the reason you think. Those bookmakers weren't friends of mine. I had quite another reason for talking to them."

"What reason?"

"I'd rather say no more, sir."

"If there had been another St. Frank's boy present, I could understand your reluctance to speak," said the Head. "You might have desired to shield him. But there was no other St. Frank's boy."

Nipper was silent. He was glad that the Head had such a view.

"You know my policy," continued Dr. Nicholls. "If you entered that inn on behalf of another boy, I want you to give me his name. I am not unreasonable, Hamilton. Perhaps some senior boy has attempted to make you his tool. Give me his name."

"There's no senior, sir," said Nipper. "I haven't been anybody's tool."

"Then you admit that you entered that place on your own initiative—entirely and absolutely?"

"Yes, sir."

The Head sighed.

"Then I'm afraid, Hamilton, that I shall have to punish you very drastically," he said. "Your offence is even deserving of expulsion, although I should hate to go to that length. I do not wish to signalise my first month at St. Frank's by expelling a boy."

Nipper maintained his silence. He could have saved himself easily. By giving Hubbard away, Nipper could have made a very fair case for himself. In fact, he would have been exonerated completely, since his visit to the White Harp had been praiseworthy in every way.

But Nipper's code was different from that of the Reformers. It was sheerly impossible for him to take any such action.

ARTHUR HUBBARD knew exactly what was going on.

Seeking shelter behind the hedge, he had overheard bits of that conversation between Nipper and the Head as they had passed. Hubbard had dodged down the alley, and had taken to the fields, meaning to join the lane higher up.

"My only hat!" he muttered miserably.

He was stricken with remorse. Nipper had been collared by the Head, and he was refusing to save himself! The thing hit Hubbard like a blow, for he was a Reformer—one of the fellows who considered that it was quite right and proper to sneak on a companion.

"I don't believe he's going to say a word about me," breathed Hubbard dully. "He went into that place to drag me out, and he's got it in the neck! And I heard him tell the Head that he wasn't going to say

any more. Oh, my hat! What the dickens shall I do about it?"

Hubbard was not the kind of fellow to take any strong action. He was too concerned with his own narrow escape. But this affair had been a grim object lesson to him. With a shock, he realised the hollowness of the Reformers, and of Dr. Nicholls' theories—and he realised, too, the fine, sterling qualities of the old code.

When he got to St. Frank's he found everybody agog with excitement. Nipper was surrounded by a crowd of juniors on the Ancient House steps, and Hubbard hung back for a bit. He was afraid to make any inquiries.

"Can't understand the ass!" Handforth was saying. "We can't get a word out of him!"

"Oh, do dry up, Handy!" said Nipper.

"I'm jiggered if I'll dry up!" roared Handforth. "What have you been up to, you ass? You go down to the village on your motor-bike, and you come back—walking—with the Head beside you. And the Head looked as black as thunder! And you tell us that you haven't had an accident, and that you forgot all about your motor-bike. What's the idea?"

"Well, if you must know the truth, I left my motor-bike outside the White Harp," said Nipper. "When the Head spotted me coming out——"

"Out of the White Harp?"

"Yes."

"Rats!" said Handforth. "You can't fool me like that! You never went into the White Harp much less came out!"

"It wouldn't have been so bad if I'd come out in the ordinary way—like a decent human being," said Nipper. "The trouble is, I was thrown out."

"Thrown out!" yelled the crowd.

"On my neck!" nodded Nipper. "The Head saw me!"

He turned, went indoors, and was gone before any of the startled Removites could question him further. Hubbard dodged through the crowd, and dashed up to Nipper in the Remove passage.

"Aren't you going to explain?" he panted.

"Of course not," said Nipper. "You don't think I'm a sneak, do you?"

"But—but——"

"If you don't know what to do, Hubbard, there's no sense in my telling you," said Nipper quietly. "You and your other Reformers can sneak if you like—but there are still a few of us at St. Frank's who know the difference between decency and caddishness."

Hubbard had the grace to wince.

"I'm not a Reformer any more!" he mustered. "I'm sick of 'em!"

"You're reformed, eh?" asked Nipper dryly. "Number One!"

A crowd came along just then, so any further conversation was impossible. Hubbard cleared off, his brain buzzing. And Nipper steadfastly refused to give any satis-

(Continued on page 14.)

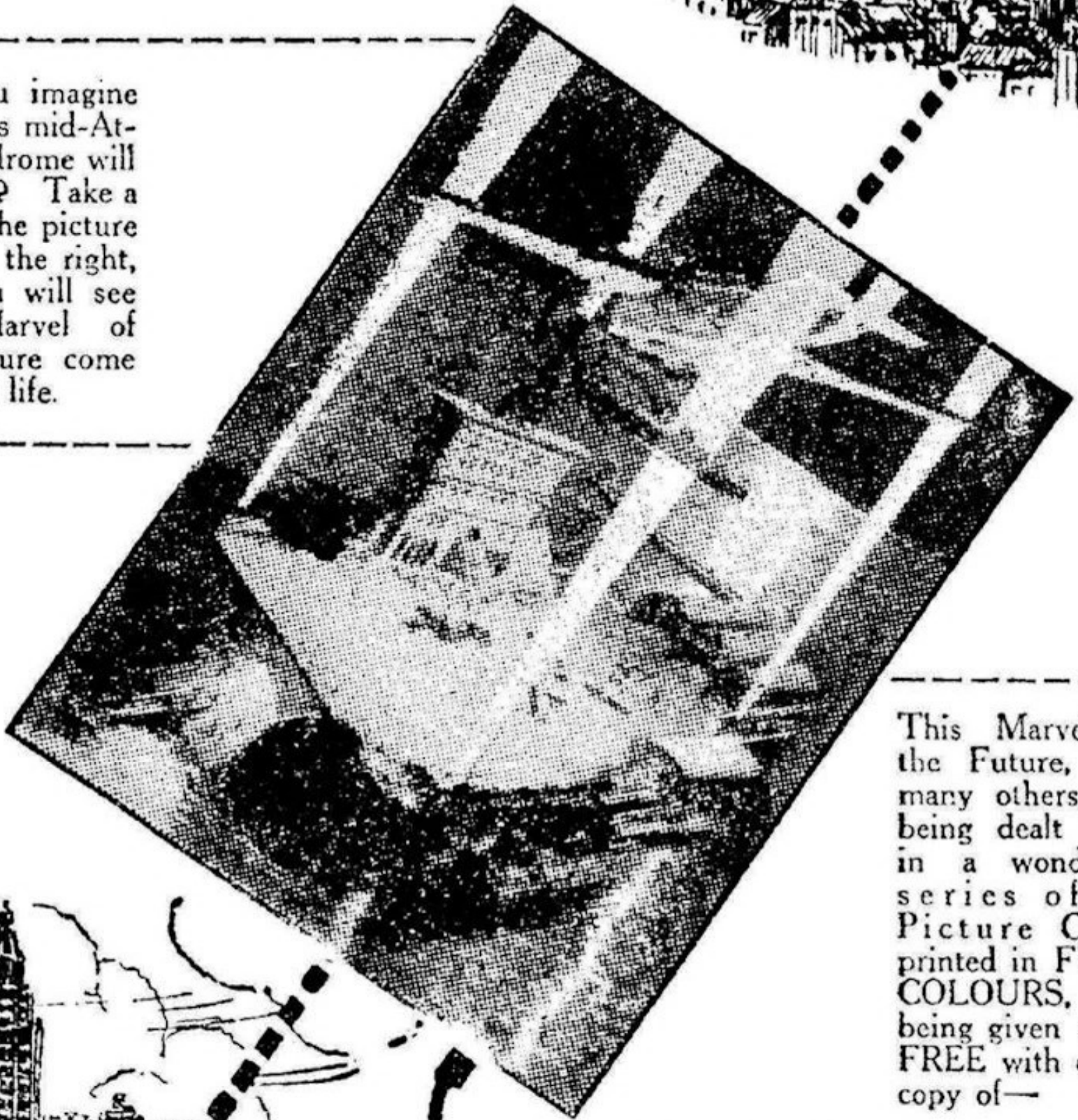
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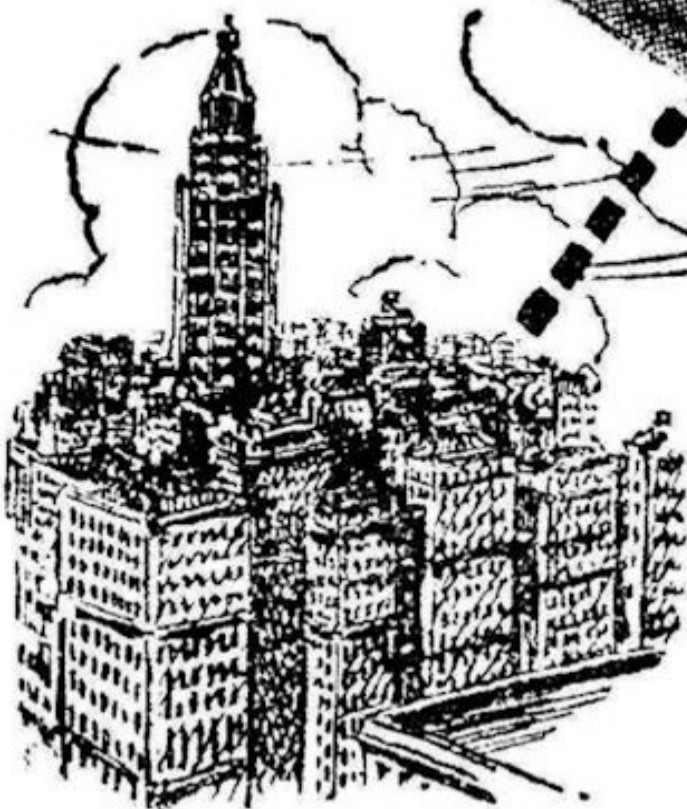
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(Continued from page 12.)

faction to the crowd. He wasn't going to sneak—not even to the other fellows. They would know the truth soon enough, anyhow.

For Nipper, since that little snatch of conversation with Hubbard, felt that Hubbard would do the right thing. It was obviously up to him to confess, and save the fellow who had "copped out." There was really nothing else for him to do.

But Hubbard was no hero. In many ways, indeed, he was a weakling. Although he knew precisely what Nipper had implied, he was terrified at the thought of going to the Head and explaining the true circumstances.

While he was still hesitating, he was pounced upon by Gore-Pearce and Gulliver and Bell. They dragged him into their study, and closed the door.

"What's all this fuss about?" demanded Gore-Pearce fiercely. "Why was Nipper chucked out of the White Harp? Did he go in there after you, Hubbard?"

"Yes!" said Hubbard defiantly.

"What about our money—and our bets?"

"Blow your rotten bets!" replied Hubbard, with some spirit. "If it hadn't been for your beastly advice, I shouldn't have gone down to the place at all! As it is, Nipper's in the cart!"

"A good thing, too!" said Gore-Pearce. "Who cares a hang about Nipper? I hope he gets the sack!"

"He saved me!" muttered Hubbard. "He hasn't given me away!"

"More fool he!" sneered Gore-Pearce. "But what about our bets?"

"Nipper grabbed me before I could hand over the list," said Hubbard. "But they've got your money——"

"What the deuce is the good of that?" roared Gore-Pearce violently. "We shan't get our bets on now! Those bookies aren't there after one o'clock!"

"Well, I don't care!" said Hubbard recklessly. "You can collect your money yourself, blow you! I wish I hadn't had anything to do with it! All this rotten trouble over you and your bets!"

"Hold him!" said Gore-Pearce harshly. "We'll tan the life out of him! We'll show him whether he can play these tricks——"

Clang-clang!

"By gad!" said Gulliver. "That's the bell for Big Hall!"

"But it's lunch-time," said Bell.

"I'll bet Nipper's going to be publicly expelled!" gloated Gore-Pearce, forgetting all about Hubbard. "The Head wouldn't call the school together for anything else. Come on! This is going to be good!"

BIG Hall was full when Dr. Morrison Nicholls came on to the platform.

Everybody was fed up. It was a bit too thick of the Head to butt into the luncheon hour like this. No matter how important the job was, it couldn't possibly be so important as food. The Head might just as well have left it until after lunch.

"Hamilton, stand forward," said Dr. Nicholls quietly.

Nipper went on to the platform, rather startled. He had expected Hubbard to confess long before this. It occurred to him now that Hubbard wasn't going to take the tip.

"It's my painful task to punish this boy for a very grave offence," said the Head, addressing the school. "Hamilton not only broke bounds by entering an establishment known as the White Harp, but he was careless enough to get himself thrown out. There can be no excuse for such a violation of the school laws."

"There's something behind it, sir!" protested Handforth loudly. "Hamilton's not guilty, sir! He wouldn't do anything disgraceful like that!"

"Do you know anything of this case, young man?" asked the Head sternly.

"No, sir."

"Then be silent!" commanded Dr. Nicholls. "I shall request your Form-master to give you a severe imposition for your impertinence. Don't dare to interrupt me again!"

Handforth's jaw dropped, and he was only saved from protesting further by Church and McClure dragging at him.

"It's no good, ass!" hissed Mac. "You'll only get yourself into more trouble!"

"It so happens that I witnessed Hamilton's violent exit from the White Harp with my own eyes," continued the Head. "He has refused to give me any explanation, except that he was ejected by two men who appeared to be bookmakers. Hamilton, if you have anything to say, say it now!"

"I have nothing to say, sir," replied Nipper quietly.

He felt keenly disappointed. After Hubbard's statement that he had renounced the Reformers, this silence on his part was a pity. But Nipper knew Hubbard's character, and he realised that the Removite was probably too terrified to do the right thing.

"Your silence, Hamilton, is sufficiently significant," said Dr. Nicholls curtly. "You may count yourself lucky that I do not send you from the school in disgrace. I have learned that your record is a very excellent one, so I consider that a flogging will meet the case. Prepare yourself, sir!"

"I'm ready when you are, sir," replied Nipper steadily.

The flogging commenced forthwith—and still there was no sign from Arthur Hubbard. That wretched junior stood in his place, his face pale, his eyes rather wild.

Swish—swish!

The sound of the flogging came to Hubbard's ears as though from a great distance. He swayed a trifle and butted into Travers, who was next to him.

"Steady, dear old fellow!" murmured Travers. "What's the matter? For the love of Samson! You're as white as a sheet!"

Travers' voice seemed to break the spell. Hubbard looked at him dizzily, and then, with a shout, he ran towards the platform!

CHAPTER 5.

Not Quite Convincing!

"STOP, sir!" panted Hubbard wildly.

"Now, then, you young ass, keep back!" said a prefect, grabbing Hubbard by the arm. "Have you gone off your head, or what?"

"Make the Head stop!" shouted Hubbard. "Nipper isn't guilty. He went into the White Harp to save me!"

Dr. Nicholls, who had only half completed the flogging, paused at the sound of the commotion, and frowned upon the disturbance.

"Hubbard says that Hamilton is innocent, sir," said Fenton, of the Sixth.

"Indeed!" replied the Head. "How is it, then, that he failed to come forward before? Is your name Hubbard?"

"Yes, sir," gasped Hubbard.

"What do you mean by this interruption?"

"I was dazed, sir—I was afraid to come forward!" faltered Hubbard. "It's not fair to flog Hamilton. I was the chap who was with those bookmakers, and Hamilton came in and saved me from making a fool of myself. They chucked him out because they were angry with him. And then he kept mum—to save me!"

The school was silent, and the Head thought hard.

"Are you telling me the truth?" he asked suspiciously.

"Yes, sir."

"I am afraid I cannot believe you."

"But it's a fact, sir. Ask Hamilton."

"I have already asked Hamilton, and he has nothing to say," retorted the Head.

"If you were really associated with this affair, Hubbard, you would have spoken earlier. I can quite understand that your action is merely designed to save your friend from the punishment he deserves. A generous effort, but a wasted one. Go back to your place."

The school had its own opinion. Ninety per cent of the fellows felt certain that Hubbard's version was the true one. Nipper was the victim of circumstances, and Hubbard had gone a little way towards retrieving himself by coming forward before it was definitely too late.

Nelson Lee was glad to hear this, too. He had intended having a word with Nipper later; for Lee was quite upset about this affair. He could not very well question the Head's action, however. The Head had seen Nipper thrown out of the inn, and Nipper had refused to explain himself. Lee had guessed at once that Nipper was shielding somebody else.

"Won't you believe me, sir?" faltered Hubbard blankly. "It's not fair to flog Hamilton like this, sir. I was in that public-house, and—"

"I am sorry to upset this little plan of yours, young man," interrupted Dr. Nicholls, "but I was definitely informed that there was no other St. Frank's boy in that inn at the time. I have no reason to doubt the truth of that information. Your effort to save your friend is wasted. Go back to your place."

"But I was in there, sir!" insisted Hubbard wildly.

"Go back to your place!"

"Ask Gore-Pearce, sir!" shouted Hubbard desperately. "He knows—"

"Go!" thundered the exasperated Head.

Hubbard, overawed by that tone, went. And Gore-Pearce, who had been perspiring profusely for two or three minutes, uttered an inward sigh of relief. At the mention of his name, indeed, he had felt almost faint. From the first he had expected Hubbard to blab. He had expected his dupe to come out with the full truth.

But now he was safe.

The rest of the flogging was administered, but it was noticed that the Head had lost his "ginger." The final swishes were very mild and innocuous. Perhaps the Head felt that it was up to him to go easy now.

After that the school was allowed to transfer its attentions to the more important matter of lunch.

"I TRIED to make him believe me, didn't I?" asked Hubbard pleadingly.

"I'm awfully sorry, Nipper. I'm terribly sorry! It's horrible that you should have been swished like that—all because of me."

Nipper smiled.

"I'm not grumbling, am I?" he asked.



"That's what makes it worse!" said Hubbard huskily. "Other chaps would have given me away like a shot."

"Don't you realise that it was more than necessary for me to keep from sneaking," said Nipper. "I think you know, Hubbard, that I wouldn't have peached on you, anyway—but, with this rotten Reform movement gaining ground, the Old-Timers have got to stick steadfastly to the old code."

"Well, I'm sticking to it from now on," said Hubbard feelingly.

They were in the lobby, directly after lunch. Hubbard had taken good care to buttonhole Nipper at the first opportunity—so that he could thank the Remove skipper for his decency, and so that he could sympathise with him. But Nipper neither required Hubbard's thanks nor his sympathy. He would much prefer to forget the whole unfortunate incident.

Of course, he wasn't allowed to forget it.

"I—I meant to tell the Head all about it before he started on you," said Hubbard awkwardly, "but somehow I couldn't speak. I was sort of dazed, and when I came to myself he wouldn't believe me!"

Nipper grinned.

"Nothing new in that," he said. "When a chap tells a string of lies he's very often believed, and when he trots out the truth he's laughed at. One of the kinks of life, old son. But you can take it from me that the truth's always the best. When you're telling the truth, you needn't think. You haven't got to remember what you said before, because when it's the truth it's always the same. Better still, keep mum."

"That's what you did to-day—and it was jolly decent of you," said Hubbard feelingly. "I've chucked those beastly Reformers now. It doesn't pay to be a sneak, Nipper. I'm glad I get that two quid tip this morning, because it's shown me what a chump I was."

IT wasn't until tea-time that Claude Gore-Pearce got an opportunity of seizing Hubbard. The leader of the Reformers had tried hard to lure Hubbard into Study A prior to afternoon lessons, but Hubbard wasn't having any.

Just before tea, however, he allowed his vigilance to relax. He happened to pass along the Remove passage with Teddy Long while there was nobody else in sight. Teddy had fetched him in from the Triangle.

"Something special for tea to-day, Hubbard," said Teddy, with a sly wink. "Come along to the study and celebrate."

Hubbard was not very enthusiastic. He had never thought much of Teddy Long as a study-mate, and he thought less of him now. Before they could get to Study B the door of the next room flew open, and Gore-Pearce & Co. reached out their hands and yanked Hubbard out of the passage.

It was very much like a conjuring trick. Hubbard was there one second, and he was gone the next second.

"Shut the door!" said Gore-Pearce harshly.

"You bet!" grinned Teddy.

Hubbard looked round wildly.

"You—you young traitor!" he panted, glaring at Teddy Long. "So you fooled me, did you? Gore-Pearce sent you to trick me indoors!"

"What of it?" said Teddy. "It's your fault, Hubbard. You shouldn't have acted the giddy goat."

"You're quite right," said Hubbard bitterly. "If I had had any sense I shouldn't have got mixed up with these outsiders."

He was unusually bold. Gore-Pearce said nothing for the moment. He and Gulliver and Bell were busy. They were roping Hubbard to the back of a chair—in such a way that he stood helpless. It was a heavy chair, and Teddy Long had been ordered to sit on it, too.

"Now!" said Gore-Pearce at length. "We can talk to you comfortably now, Hubbard. Is it true that you've joined Nipper's gang?"

"Yes, it is!" shouted Hubbard hotly. "I'm sick of you Reformers! You might have got me the sack to-day, and if it hadn't been for Nipper I should—"

"You traitor!" interrupted Claude. "You young rat! What the deuce do you mean by mentioning my name in Big Hall? You were going to give me away, were you? You were going to sneak on me, eh?"

"I thought you believed in sneaking?" asked Hubbard tartly.

"Why, you—you—" began Gore-Pearce.

"What about the Reform Party?" jeered Hubbard, becoming bolder. "The Sneaks' Union! Isn't it their policy to peach on their pals? You're a fine chap to jump down my throat because—"

"That's enough!" roared Gore-Pearce. "You know as well as I do that our policy is to sneak on the Old-Timers—not on ourselves."

"You're thundering sincere in your principles!" jeered Hubbard. "Besides, I only mentioned your name as a last resort. Do you think I was going to see Nipper flogged when it was all your doing?"

"He was flogged, anyway—and a darned good thing!" said Gore-Pearce savagely. "Now you're going to get your dose! But I'll give you a chance first. Will you stick to the Reformers or not?"

"No, I won't!"

"I'll let you off if you promise to keep with us," continued Gore-Pearce. "We don't want any backsliders—particularly at this time. I'm willing to treat the case leniently."

"Who the dickens do you think you are?" demanded Hubbard.

"I'm the president of the Reform Party, and Gulliver and Bell are vice-presidents," retorted Claude. "We've held a meeting, and we've already decided to fine you two pounds for your offence—the money to go into the party funds."



Edward Oswald Handforth looked a wreck as he burst into Study C like a young tornado. "I've just slaughtered Gore-Pearce——" he began, and then broke off with a gulp. He had just spotted Irene & Co., and Irene & Co. were looking at him with horrified expressions.

Hubbard stared blankly.

"Fine me!" he gasped. "Two quid!"

"Exactly," nodded Gore-Pearce. "If you had had three quid we should have fined you three quid. If you'll stick to the Reformers we'll let you off the rest of the punishment."

Hubbard's indignation was so great that he became reckless.

"You rotters!" he shouted wildly. "Help! Hi! Rescue, Old-Timers! You blackmailers—you cads! I won't have anything to do with the Reform Party! I'm sick of it. You're a lot of swindlers and frauds!"

"Gag him!" gasped Bell. "Somebody'll hear!"

A scarf was quickly tied round Hubbard's mouth. Gore-Pearce picked up a cane. He swished it viciously through the air.

"Now you're going to get it hot!" he said savagely. "I'll show you how we deal with traitors!"

Slash! Slash!

With brutal force the millionaire's son brought the cane down on Hubbard's side. He also slashed his victim on the legs, across the knees, and even on his face. A wild gurgle sounded from the prisoner, and Gulliver and Bell began to get uneasy.

"Look out!" muttered Gulliver. "Go easy, Gore-Pearce!"

"Mind your own business!" snarled Gore-Pearce.

"But he'll probably sneak!" said Gulliver. "And if he shows these marks——"

"Let him sneak!" snapped Claude. "I've got three witnesses here to prove that Hubbard never came into our study. Nobody will take his word against four of us."

There was something particularly hateful in Gore-Pearce's attitude. He was the leader of the Reformers—and yet he was ready enough to lie and to force his immediate friends to lie in the same way. As Nipper had said from the very first, Gore-Pearce was a humbug. He was an opportunist, seizing the present occasion to gain power.

Slash! Slash!

"Help!" screamed Hubbard, as he managed to work the scarf from his mouth. "Oh, you cads! You dirty rotters! Help, Remove!"

"Better lock the door!" panted Gulliver.

"Fool! It's locked already!" said Gore-Pearce. "Why can't you keep this idiot quiet? Why can't you——"

The door opened with a crash, and Handforth looked in!

CHAPTER 6.

Time for Action!

HANDFORTH seldom troubled about locked doors.

He had heard Hubbard's yell for help, and it had only taken him a moment to guess that something out of the common was in progress in Study A. So he simply charged at the door and smashed his

way in. It was not often that Handforth had to make two charges.

"What's all this" he demanded, looking round. "By George! Why, what the— You dirty rotters!"

Handforth was not given to quick thinking, but he had no difficulty in guessing exactly what had been happening. There was Hubbard, tied to the chair; there was Gore-Pearce, standing back with the cane in his hand; and there, most significant of all, was an ugly weal across Hubbard's face.

"You hound!" said Handforth, with deadly quietness.

Sometimes he would roar at the top of his voice, and he was dangerous. Sometimes, when the circumstances were particularly acute, he would become calm and quiet, and then he was ten times more dangerous.

With one grab he took the cane out of Gore-Pearce's hand. Then he backed to the door, slammed it, and stood there.

"Reformers, eh?" he said ominously. "By George! There's going to be a bit of reform in this study in two minutes! I always knew you were a cad, Gore-Pearce, but I didn't think you were quite such a brute!"

"Get out of this study!" yelled Gore-Pearce. "Here, Gully! Bell! Help me to chuck him out!"

Gulliver and Bell hung back.

"Chuck me out, eh?" retorted Handforth. "Try it, my lads! It's four to one, but I'm ready for you! The time for talking is over. Now it's a time for action—and I'm going to enjoy myself!"

"You fool! If you start any of your rotten violence we'll report you to the Head!" snapped Gore-Pearce. "You can't come in here with your bluff—"

"You're going to sneak, eh?" roared Handforth. "All right—sneak! And, by George I'll give you something to sneak about! I don't care if I get the sack for it! I'm going to have five minutes of real enjoyment!"

He flung the cane aside, leapt forward, and Gore-Pearce received a punch on his nose that sent him staggering back with a wild howl. Before Gulliver and Bell could dodge, Handforth's fists swept round, and they were knocked off their feet, too.

Handforth sailed in enthusiastically. It might be the best policy for the Old-Timers to defer action—to follow Nipper's advice, and wait their opportunity—but Handforth had never been much of a fellow for diplomacy. Here was a golden opportunity to have a scrap in a good cause.

As for the consequences, Handforth didn't care a jot. He knew that he was perfectly justified in thrashing these young rascals, and nothing else mattered. If there was any justice in the world, he wouldn't be punished for performing such a necessary task as this.

Biff! Crash! Thud!

There was no stopping Handforth when his blood was up. Gore-Pearce & Co.,

realising that the time for talking was over, were now doing their best to throw Handforth out of the study. They didn't even get to the point where they could reach him. Indeed, far from throwing him out of the study, they were staggering about, frantically trying to dodge him.

Teddy Long, in the meantime, frightened out of his wits, had managed to cut the ropes that bound Hubbard.

"Quick!" he panted. "Let's get out of this!"

"Not yet!" roared Handforth. "I've got a special one for you, Long, you fat tadpole! As soon as I've finished with Gore-Pearce I'll— Here, keep away from that door, Bell! By George!"

He leapt across as Bell attempted to bolt, and the scrap looked like becoming really interesting. Unfortunately the door opened without Bell's assistance.

"What is all this commotion?" asked Mr. Crowell angrily. "I've never heard such a disgraceful— Handforth! What on earth is this?"

Mr. Crowell was staggered. As a general



rule, he made no inquiries if he happened to hear noises in the junior studies as he passed through the passage. But when there was something exceptionally violent he could not ignore it.

Handforth ceased his activities abruptly. A look of indignation and pain came into his face. This was too bad! He had always regarded old Crowell as a bit of a sportsman. It was altogether too thick for him to butt in like this, just when the scrap was reaching its hottest stage.

Mr. Crowell beheld a torn and tattered Handforth—a collarless Handforth. He also beheld Gore-Pearce with a black eye and a streaming nose; Gulliver with a face that appeared to have been knocked slightly sideways; Bell with a thick ear and a cut lip. All three of them, too, were considerably dishevelled.

"I am amazed!" said Mr. Crowell angrily. "I am willing to overlook a—er—scrap, but this is altogether too much! You boys appear to have been engaged in a free fight."

"One against four, sir," said Handforth tartly. "Dash it, sir, you might have kept out of it until I'd finished with them. My plan was to knock them all out."

"Am I to understand, Handforth, that you were fighting, singlehanded, against all these boys?"

"All of them except Hubbard, sir."

"Good gracious!" said Mr. Crowell. "What an extraordinary fellow you are, Handforth! I knew that you had a liking for violence, but I hardly thought it possible that you would make such a wholesale attack."

"I'm glad you say that, sir!" put in Gore-Pearce fiercely. "We couldn't do anything with him, sir. He charged in here without reason, and before we could stop him he attacked us."

"Why, you—you——"

Handforth paused, aghast. He saw that he was in a queer position. Gore-Pearce & Co. had no principles to consider; and it was obvious that they were going to bring out a number of lies in order to bolster up their case. They knew well enough that Handforth wouldn't sneak. He couldn't tell Mr. Crowell why he had made this attack.

Handforth realised it, too. The Reformers had everything on their side.

"We were all sitting here, sir, chatting quietly, when Handforth rushed in and started hitting out like a madman," said Gore-Pearce. "I think he's opposed to the Reform Party, sir, and he thinks that gives him the excuse to act like a hooligan."

"I am deeply shocked," said Mr. Crowell.

He was trying to get a true impression of what had been happening. He did not believe Gore-Pearce, yet it was an undeniable fact that he had found Handforth fighting with unparalleled fury against these other boys.

"It wouldn't have been so bad if he had given us a chance to defend ourselves, sir," complained Gore-Pearce. "But he knocked me down while I was still in my chair. Didn't he, you chaps?"

"He did the same to us, too, sir," said Gulliver. "And after those first sashes we were a bit groggy, and couldn't defend ourselves properly. He was just like a savage, sir."

"What have you to say to this, Handforth?" asked Mr. Crowell.

"Nothing, sir," said Handforth bitterly. "If you're willing to believe these Reformers, I'm finished! But I'm not making any complaints, sir. I didn't have as much fun as I wanted, but I'll take my gruel."

"Just a minute, sir," said Hubbard quietly.

NOBODY had been taking any notice of Arthur Hubbard. Now he gave Gore-Pearce a glare, and stepped forward.

"Look at this, sir," he said, pointing to his face.

"Upon my word!" said Mr. Crowell, adjusting his glasses. "Have you had an accident, Hubbard?"

"I'll tell you in a minute, sir," said Hubbard, peeling off his jacket. "Look at these, sir."

He rolled up his sleeves and displayed the weals on his arms. Hubbard was pale with his unusual emotion, but he had been worked up to such a pitch that he was provided with a courage and a coolness that were not his own.

"Well, Hubbard?" asked Mr. Crowell, startled.

"I'd made up my mind to chuck the Reformers, sir, and to finish with sneaking," said Hubbard, "but I don't think this is sneaking. These cads have told awful lies about Handforth. He didn't make an unprovoked attack, sir. He went for them because they were torturing me."

"Good heavens! Really, Hubbard——"

"It's true, sir!" insisted Hubbard fiercely. "They'd tied me to a chair, and Gore-Pearce was slashing me with a cane. I've shown you the weals, sir. Handforth came in, and went for them."

"It's all lies!" shouted Gore-Pearce. "If there was any truth in this, sir, why was it that Hubbard wasn't bound to the chair when you came in?"

"Long cut the ropes, sir," said Hubbard.

"I didn't!" shouted Teddy Long shrilly. "It's a lie, sir!"

He had cut those ropes for a purpose. He had had half an idea that a prefect might come barging in—for Teddy knew that the door lock was smashed—and he had intended demanding a fat tip from Gore-Pearce later for saving him. It was certainly a fact that Teddy had had no kindly thoughts for Hubbard.

Mr. Crowell looked at the upset chair, and at the cut ropes on the floor. Then, passing a contemptuous glance over Long, he looked at Hubbard's face again, and then gazed at Gore-Pearce & Co.

"I am shocked!" he said angrily. "I hear this dreadful commotion, and I come in. And what happens? I am told two or three conflicting stories. Some of you have been lying. Handforth is the only one whom I can believe—for the simple reason that he hasn't given any account of himself whatsoever. I believe that he came into this study because he heard cries for help, and I believe that he found Hubbard being cruelly assaulted."

Gore-Pearce panted hard.

"It's not true, sir!" he gasped. "We didn't touch Hubbard. We——"

"Enough!" snapped Mr. Crowell. "I am sick and tired of all this tale-bearing and fabricating! I consider that you were justified in taking matters into your own hands, Handforth. I shall not punish you."

"Thank you, sir!"

"As for you other boys, it appears that you have already received a certain amount of drastic punishment," continued Mr. Crowell judicially. "Upon the whole, I

think that I shall be correct in ordering you three boys to write me five hundred lines each. Long, you will go. You may go, too, Handforth. Hubbard, you will come with me."

"Why, sir?" asked Hubbard.

"I shall take you to the sanatorium—to have those bruises dressed," replied Mr. Crowell. "And if they are more serious than they appear to be, something further will be heard of this matter," he added ominously.

Gore-Pearce became violent.

"But why give us five hundred lines, sir?" he demanded hotly. "We're the fellows who have been getting the worst of it! Look at us! Our study's half wrecked, too——"

"Silence!" said Mr. Crowell. "I have inflicted this imposition as a punishment for your lying. The condition of your study is no concern of mine—or the condition of your clothing, either. I haven't the slightest doubt that you brought it entirely on yourselves."

And Mr. Crowell made a dignified exit.

"Handforth, you had better come out," he called, as an afterthought.

Handforth was disappointed. He had hoped that Mr. Crowell would not insist upon seeing him out—for Edward Oswald had decided that he would finish his job.

Gore-Pearce & Co., however, were quite satisfied for Handforth to leave it unfinished!

CHAPTER 7.

Doris Shows the Way!

BURSTING into Study C, Handforth looked very much of a wreck. He had not attempted to brush himself down, or to repair the damage in any way. He was too eager to tell Nipper of his triumph over the Reformers.

"Well, we've started, you chaps!" he said enthusiastically, as he dashed in. "I've slaughtered Gore-Pearce, and—— Eh? Why, what—— My only hat!"

He broke off in blank consternation.

There was a tea-party in Study C. Nipper and Tregellis-West and Watson were entertaining Irene & Co.—and Handforth had forgotten all about it! Irene Manners and Doris Berkeley and Marjorie Temple and Mary Summers were busying themselves with the bread-and-butter and the teapot—the girls having insisted that, guests or no guests, it was their duty to tackle the domestic side of the party.

"We hoped you would come, Ted," said Irene politely.

"Don't stand there," murmured Doris. "Why not come in and shut the door?"

Handforth felt that he was frozen on the spot. He couldn't move an inch.

He had read of people wanting the floor to open and swallow them up, and he had always considered that such a thing was dotty. Now he knew differently.

Seldom had he been in such a fearful-looking condition. He was smothered with

dust, he was collarless, his jacket was torn, and his waistcoat was stripped of half its buttons. In fact, he was very much of a wreck.

"I'm surprised at you, Handy!" said Nipper severely. "As a general rule, you tidy yourself up a bit when the girls come. You shouldn't let them see you in your normal condition like this."

"Normal condition!" gasped Handforth. "I—I—— I mean, you—you—— I've been having some trouble with Gore-Pearce," he added, with a gulp. "The idiot asked for it. I gave him a—a good talking to."

"Is that all?" asked Irene.

"Eh? Well, there may have been a bit of bother," admitted Handforth.

"But didn't you say that you had slaughtered Gore-Pearce?" put in Mary. "Of course, we don't know the customs in a boys' school, but we hardly thought it likely that you fellows——"

"I—I'll go and brush my hair!" panted Handforth desperately.

"Good man!" said Nipper. "While you're about it, you might as well have a wash, and find a collar, and change your clothes, and——"

But Handforth had gone. He heard a sound of musical laughter as he raced down the passage. He barged into Church and McClure, who had been looking for him.

"Thought so!" said Church, with a sniff. "Look at him!"

McClure sighed.

"As soon as he gets out of our sight he finds some trouble!" he said tartly. "What have you been doing, Handy? How did you get into this awful mess?"

"Clear out, fatheads!" roared Handforth. "My hat! Irene saw me like this! She'll never speak to me again!"

He brushed his chums aside, and raced upstairs. Church made as if to follow, but Mac held him back.

"No good!" he said. "He'll never tell us what's happened now. I'd forgotten that the girls were over here for tea."

Handforth had executed many lightning changes in his time, but he beat his own record by minutes. Almost before Church and McClure could realise it, their leader was down again. He was in another suit, in another collar, in a different pair of shoes, and in a breathless condition.

"You didn't wash your neck!" said McClure, grinning.

"Blow my neck!" panted Handforth. "I'd forgotten all about the girls coming to tea. Come on! We've got to go to Study C, grab a couple of them, and entertain them in our own quarters. I'm jiggered if I can see why Nipper should monopolise them!"

"But he invited 'em!" protested Church. "You can't barge in like that, Handy, and pinch his guests!"

Handforth didn't argue. He led the way into Study C, and Church and McClure naturally followed him.

"All welcome!" said Nipper politely. "The more the merrier. But if you haven't brought your own cups, you'll have to drink out of the empty sardine-tin, and take it in turns."

"Bother the tea!" said Handforth briskly. "Irene, old girl, what about you and one of the others coming along to my study? I'll have a lot better tea than this! It's too crowded in here, anyhow."

"It was quite all right before you came in," said Nipper pointedly.

NATURALLY, the chums of Study C point-blank refused to part with any of their guests. They regarded Handforth's suggestion as a piece of cool nerve—as, indeed, it was. So in the end Handforth decided to invite himself to tea in Study C, as the next best thing.

"You might as well tell us what happened, Handy," said Nipper.

"Afterwards," replied Handforth hastily.

"Don't kid yourself, old man; the girls have seen quite enough," said Nipper. "Unless you explain why you came in looking like a scarecrow after a hurricane, they'll form a wrong impression."

"By George, that's quite likely!" agreed Handforth. "Well, it wasn't much. I had only just started things when old Crowell butted in, and put a stop to 'em."

"I wonder how you would have looked if Mr. Crowell hadn't arrived?" asked Irene solemnly.

"It was a bit thick!" said Handforth, becoming indignant. "I'd hardly started! I'd only given Gore-Pearce a black eye, and Bell a thick ear, and Gulliver a swollen nose, when Crowell dodged in. I rather think I loosened one of Gore-Pearce's teeth, too, and I believe his nose was bleeding. Still, I never got a chance to get going properly."

"Ted!" protested Irene. "I believe you enjoy punching people."

"I enjoy punching Gore-Pearce!" replied Handforth promptly. "Do you know what those cads were doing? They'd got Hubbard tied to a chair, and Gore-Pearce was slashing him with a cane—across the face, too!"

"It's a pity Mr. Crowell interrupted you," said Irene firmly.

By the time Handforth had finished his description of the little affair, the girls were in full possession of all the latest facts. Nipper & Co. were gratified to hear of Mr. Crowell's wise exercise of discretion.

"It's one up for the Old-Timers," said Nipper. "Handy, you've done well!"

"I could have told you that," retorted Handforth. "I don't want to boast, but I must say that my policy is the best. Action!

No messing about! Sail into these cads and smash 'em!"

"It might pay in this instance, but it wouldn't do as a general thing," said Nipper, shaking his head. "It would only lead to a riot."

"All the better," said Handforth. "One good old riot, and the trouble would be over."

"What about the good name of the school?" asked Church. "Do you want to get us into the newspapers? Publicity of that kind wouldn't do St. Frank's much good."

"H'm! I suppose you're right," admitted Handforth grudgingly. "Still, if there isn't a riot over all this beastly sneaking, what's the other remedy? How can we put an end to it?"

Doris Berkeley looked thoughtful.

"There might be a way," she said slowly.

The schoolboys glanced at one another. They hoped they had not got to the stage when they would have to depend upon girls for ideas. However, it was only common politeness to express some interest in

Doris' remark.

"We'll deal with it," said Nipper casually.

"Why don't you join the Reformers?" asked Doris.

"Eh?"

"Begad!"

"Really, Doris—"

"They'll take you, won't they?" asked Doris. "Why not all become sneaks?"

"Cheese it!" protested Nipper. "What about our principles?"

"I'm not suggesting that you should forsake your principles, but it seems to me that these sneaks ought to have some of their own medicine," said Doris firmly. "Join the Reformers, and play their own game! Sneak just the same as they do—only more often."

The juniors looked at her in amazement.

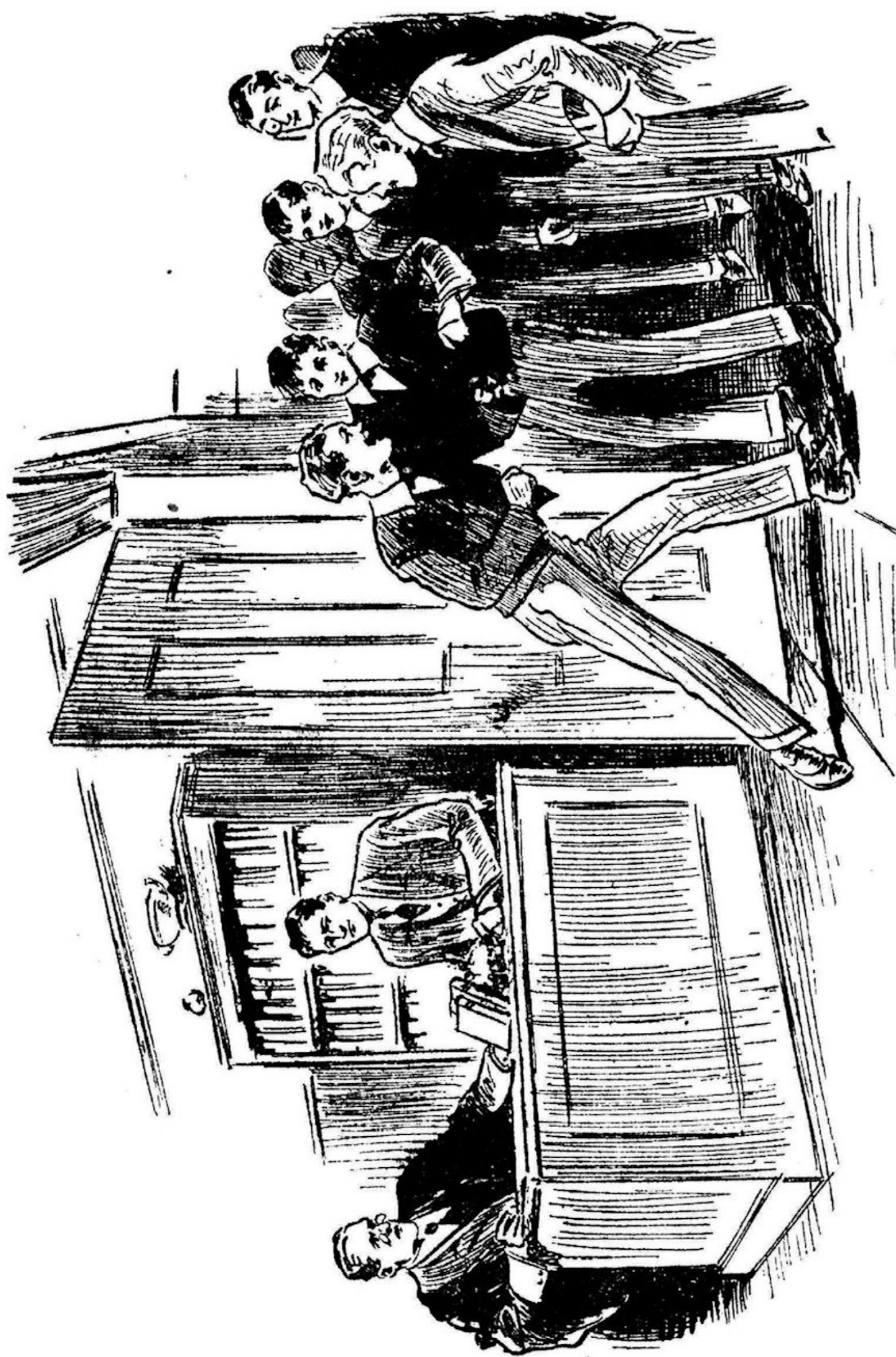
"You're joking, Doris!" protested Nipper.

"I am—and I'm not," said Doris. "I don't mean real sneaking, of course. I don't mean that you should throw your principles overboard. I'm only thinking that it might be possible to kill the headmaster's cranky policy by ridicule. You're up against him, remember—not Gore-Pearce."

"But I don't think we could do it," said Handforth dubiously. "Dash it, there's a limit! I'm surprised at you, Doris! I'd no idea you could think of such things. I'm blessed if you girls aren't worse than us boys!"

"Don't be silly," laughed Doris. "Haven't I told you that I don't mean real sneaking? But why not go in a procession to the Head all through the evening? Keep on going."





As Tich Harborough strode out of Nelson Lee's study, he bumped into Duncan. Tich grinned. Outside the door was a whole queue of boys, all awaiting their turn to make a complaint to Dr. Nicholls!

You needn't think you'll be sneaking, because it'll be a spoof from start to finish. Your complaints won't be genuine—they'll all be invented. And there'll be so many of them that the Head won't be able to punish you all. He'll be bewildered long before the evening's over."

Nipper looked round at the others.

"I believe it's a wheeze, you chaps," he said, grinning.

"Pull the Head's leg, eh?" said Handforth breathlessly. "By George! Doris is right! Why should we bother with such small fry as Gore-Pearce? It's the Head we want to go after."

"Begad, rather!" said Sir Montie.

"We can't take the Head and frog's-march him round the Triangle until he agrees to chuck it all up, but we can spoof him," said Handforth. "You want to leave this entirely in my hands, you chaps."

"And ruin it from the very start?" asked Nipper. "No, thanks! You'll be one of the last to go to him, Handy, or he'll smell a rat."

"You silly idiot!" roared Handforth. "I don't smell like a rat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I didn't mean that, old man," chuckled Nipper. "Why will you take things so literally? Girls, you've shown us the way!"

"Don't include us," said Irene. "It was Doris' wheeze."

"For what it's worth," smiled Doris. "I only hope that you'll be able to wangle it successfully. But it seems so silly to have all this bother over such a cranky idea. If it can only be killed by ridicule, it'll be over in no time. If there's one thing a school-master or schoolmistress can't stand it's ridicule. They must preserve their dignity at all costs," she added dryly.

"By Jove, you're right," said Nipper. "We'll give it a trial, anyhow."

And the juniors frankly admitted that for once, at least, it had taken a schoolgirl to "show them the way."

THINGS could not have happened more favourably for the business in hand.

For Gore-Pearce had announced that a meeting was to be held that evening. After the girls had been escorted out, Nipper became brisk and active.

"We've got to give this wheeze a good test," he said briskly. "Gore-Pearce's meeting is just starting, and before we spoof the Head we've got to spoof Gore-Pearce."

"Why waste time over that?" asked Watson.

"If we don't proclaim ourselves as Reformers the cads will spot what we're doing, and they'll throw a spanner into the works," said Nipper. "We mustn't become converted

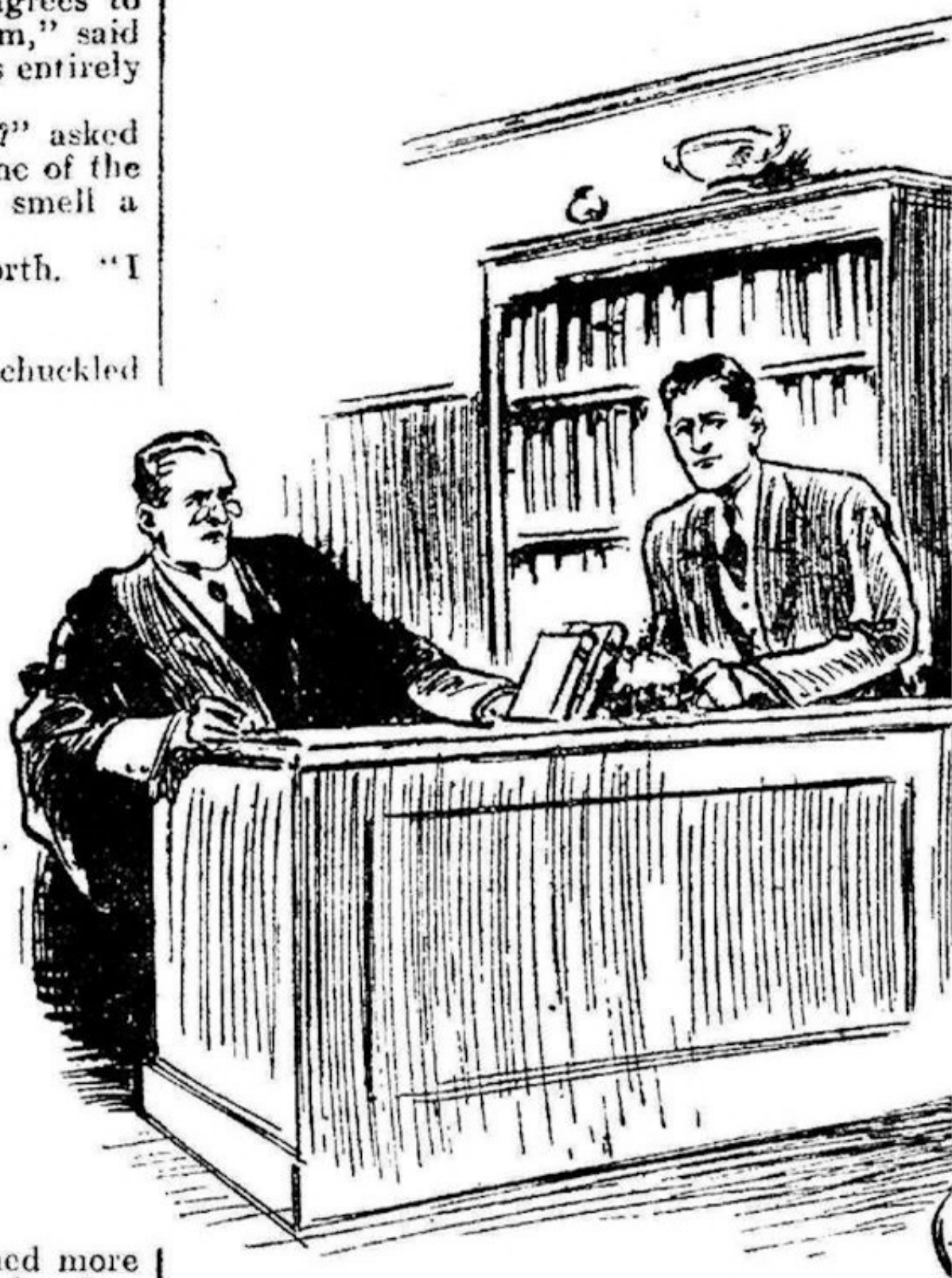
suddenly, either. The Reformers would smell a rat."

"Another rat?" asked Handforth sarcastically.

"They'd guess at once that we were fooling, and that's why Gore-Pearce's meeting is handy," said Nipper. "We can trickle in by twos and threes, and then pretend to be influenced by his eloquence. I think I had better keep out of it—and you, too, Handy."

"Not likely!"

"But we're a couple of Die-Hards, and even Gore-Pearce wouldn't swallow if we pretended to adopt his banner," said Nipper.



As Tich Harborough strode out of Nelson Lee's door was a whole queue of boys, all a

"Particularly you, Handy, after what happened at tea-time. No; a little group of us must hold back, and kick up a tremendous fuss when the rest of the fellows join the Reformers. That'll make it all the more convincing. And Gore-Pearce, in his conceit, won't twig that he's being fooled."

Handforth was reluctantly compelled to confess that Nipper's argument was sound.

There was a few of the "old gang" who would have to hold back.

Without any delay swift word was sent round, and there was much doing!

CHAPTER 8.

Converts Galore!

CLAUDE GORE-PEARCE was in an arrogant mood.

After what had happened in Study A he felt—quite rightly—that something special would have to be done without

spread his own version of the story before Handforth's could gain much ground.

He could be certain of his own supporters turning up to the meeting, but he also wanted to attract a great many of the other juniors, too. For Gore-Pearce was always after converts.

It was his one sorrow, in fact, that so few of "Nipper's crowd" had deserted the old fold. Strictly speaking, Gore-Pearce had converted nobody. The fellows who sided with him were mostly of the nondescript type. Every one of Nipper's friends remained loyal to him.

"We've got to do something quick!" said Gore-Pearce fiercely, as he prepared a notice. "Handforth's talking already. He's setting a lot of lies about. We've got to stop that and tell the fellows the truth. If we don't we shall be losing some more of our crowd."

The cool manner in which Gore-Pearce reversed the thing was characteristic of him. It was Handforth who was telling the truth, and he—Gore-Pearce—who was telling the lies. But Claude preferred to look at it the other way.

Never before had he had such a chance of gaining power in the Remove, and even the slightest set-back might make all the difference.

THERE was a notice on the board soon afterwards. It was the announcement of the meeting to which Nipper had referred. Gore-Pearce had worded it cunningly. After saying that the Reformers would gather together in the Small Lecture Hall at six o'clock prompt, he added that a great secret was to be divulged; he hinted that something exceptionally sensational was in the wind.

"Good egg!" said Nipper when he saw it. "We can all troop in now, and Gore-Pearce will think that our curiosity has brought us. He's playing right into our hands—without knowing it."

"The scheme's all right, but why should I be left out of it?" asked Handforth stubbornly. "My idea is for me to join Gore-Pearce's party, and that'll allow me to get on to the platform. Then I can kick Gore-Pearce off, make a speech, and—"

"Gag him, somebody!" said Reggie Pitt of the West House. "Isn't it already arranged that a few of us must pretend to hold aloof? And you're the most important one of all, Handy!"

Handforth couldn't see it. Being guileless himself, he failed to appreciate the necessity for guile in dealing with Gore-Pearce. But it certainly was necessary. Claude was no fool, and he would immediately "tumble"



d into Duncan. Tich grinned. Outside the to make a complaint to Dr. Nicholls!

any delay. It was certain that word would swiftly go round concerning that "affray." Handforth was prone to exaggeration at the best of times, and he would certainly regard this present affair as a great victory for the Old-Timers.

So it was up to Gore-Pearce to counteract this set-back—and the best way to do it would be to hold a lightning meeting, and

if everybody in the Remove with one accord joined the Reformers.

All the fellows had received their instructions, and in face of the notice on the board fresh orders were sent round. Groups of fellows now collected, asking themselves what the big secret could be. They talked fairly loudly, and scoffed at the idea of going anywhere near the Reform Party's meeting, but many of them were trickling towards the Lecture Hall already.

"I thought it would work!" muttered Gore-Pearce, with satisfaction. "They're coming, you chaps! We need them, too—so that I can tell them the truth about that affair in Study A."

He didn't show himself on the platform until the crowd had become a large one, and until it was clamouring for somebody to start something. By this time over half the West House Removites had turned up, and the only absentees were Nipper and Handforth and Reggie Pitt and a few intimates.

"Come on, Gore-Pearce!" sang out somebody. "What's the idea? We're waiting to hear what you've got up your sleeve!"

"Hear, hear!"

"What's the secret?"

Gore-Pearce faced the impatient crowd—never dreaming that fully half the fellows were prepared to become "converts" at the slightest provocation.

"I dare say many of you fellows have been hearing some rumours," said Gore-Pearce. "There was a bit of trouble in my study just before tea. Handforth barged in, and—"

"Never mind Handforth!" broke in Singleton. "We all know that he took three of you on single-handed, and that he gave you a good hiding. It's no good your trying to explain that away, Gore-Pearce. We want to know this secret."

"It's a lie!" shouted Gore-Pearce indignantly. "Handforth took us unawares. He knocked us down before we could defend ourselves. And then he sneaked! As soon as Crowell came in he complained that we had set on him!"

Gore-Pearce proceeded to give a highly-coloured version of the whole affair. The Reformers cheered him, and the other fellows listened doubtfully. They knew well enough that it was all false, but they pretended to be half-convinced.

"How do we know that Gore-Pearce isn't right?" asked De Valerie. "We all know that Handforth is a fire-eater. He's a good chap, but he's inclined to be too confoundedly hasty."

"Perhaps he did sneak, too," said Jimmy Potts.

"There's no perhaps about it!" shouted Gore-Pearce. "Why can't he be honest? He pretends to be down on sneaking, and yet he does it on the quiet. We Reformers are more open. We're following the Head's lead—and we think that sneaking is a good thing for the school."

"Rats!" came a chorus.

"It isn't sneaking really," continued Gore-Pearce. "The only way in which St. Frank's can be run properly is for the fellows themselves to inform whenever the rules are broken. Follow me! Accept me as your leader! Throw aside these mouldy, out-of-date ideas, and become modernised!"

"Long live the Reformers!" yelled Doyle.

"Hurrah!"

"We're gaining strength every day!" declared Claude. "Sooner or later you've got to join us. As they say in the advertisements—eventually, why not now? You will get nothing by sticking to that idiot Nipper."

"Perhaps he's right," said De Valerie, looking round. "What about joining the Reformers, you chaps?"

"Blow the Reformers!" said Travers, yawning. "We only came here to hear the secret—and there isn't one. We've been swindled! It was a trick to get us in here—so that we should listen to his rotten spouting!"

"Nothing of the sort!" yelled Gore-Pearce. "I'm coming to the secret later on."

He knew that Travers had hit the nail on the head, and he now proceeded to give a wild speech, proclaiming the advantages of joining the Reform Party. Perhaps the fellows would forget about that secret if he only worked them up enough.

HE worked them up in amazing fashion. He achieved a success that he had never dreamed of. Before ten minutes had elapsed his every utterance was being cheered. He was arousing a storm of enthusiasm not only from the Reformers, but from fellows whom he had regarded as confirmed die-hards.

The speech, as a matter of fact, was feeble, unconvincing and ridiculous. Gore-Pearce was so effectively spoofed by the enthusiastic cheering, however, that he was convinced that his oratory was charged with some magnetic quality which even he had not previously suspected.

It was the gradual nature of the process which fooled Gore-Pearce. At first, half the audience had been against him; then, as his speech proceeded, they wavered. They ceased their catcalls, and they listened intently. Finally they began to cheer him. After that they grew madly excited with their new fervour.

"Up, the Reformers!" went up the shout.

"Hurrah!"

"Down with the Old-Timers!"

"Let's all join!" shouted Somerton, looking round with a flushed face. "Gore-Pearce has shown us the way. Let the Reform Party be as big as it deserves to be!"

"Bravo!"

"Why not make Gore-Pearce Remove captain?"

"Hear, hear!"

"You've said something now!" roared Gore-Pearce excitedly. "Make me captain!"

Away with Nipper and his obsolete ideas! If you elect me, I'll be the best skipper the Remove's ever had! I'll show you——"

"By George!"

Handforth had just come in, and he spoke in a tone of amazement. Nipper was just behind him, with Reggie Pitt and Fullwood and Jack Grey.

"You clear out!" roared De Valerie. "If you're going to disturb this meeting, Handforth, we'll squash you! Good luck to the Reformers!"

"What!" thundered Handforth, in such amazement that he nearly overdid it. "Do you mean to say that you've joined the Reformers?"

"You ought to join, too!" yelled De Valerie.

"Wait a minute!" said Nipper sharply. "Stand aside, Handy—and keep quiet. Leave this to me."

He spoke exactly as he would have spoken if this "landslide" of his supporters had been genuine. He strode into the middle of the room, and looked round with a grim, set expression.

"Look here, you fellows!" he shouted. "What does this mean? Lots of you are my own crowd. What do you mean by listening to this gasbag? He hasn't won you over, has he?"

"You clear out, Nipper!" said Gore-Pearce in alarm.

"I'll do nothing of the sort!" snapped Nipper. "Great Scott! This is awful! Val! Potts! Singleton! Goodwin! Are you telling me that you've joined the Reformers?"

"Go and eat coke!" roared Singleton. "Reformers for ever!"

"Ay, by gum!" bellowed Dick Goodwin.

"You can buzz off, Nipper!" said De Valerie. "We've been listening to Gore-Pearce, and there's some talk of making him skipper, too."

"Let's vote for it!" shouted Somerton. "Hands up for Gore-Pearce! Let's chuck Nipper off his perch straight away!"

"Hurrah!"

Hands were raised by the dozen, and Claude Gore-Pearce, on the platform, nearly exploded with excitement. Never had he dreamed of such success as this. Here was the Remove voting for him almost solid!

"That's good enough!" he roared. "Now, hands up for Nipper!"

About ten hands went up, and there was a yell of derision from the rest.

"That's done it!" gloated Gore-Pearce. "You're finished, Nipper! You can crawl away and hide yourself somewhere! Your reign in the Remove is over! Mine starts! I'm the leader now!"

His conceit was amazing. If it hadn't been, he might have suspected that this avalanche in his favour was a bit too sudden. His own supporters—the genuine ones—were far too excited to suspect a spoof.

Nipper turned to Handforth and Pitt.

"We'd better go, you chaps," he said brokenly. "We can't do much against an



overwhelming opposition like this, can we? The Remove has let us down. The Reformers have gained the upper hand."

"Rot!" bellowed Handforth. "Let's fight 'em!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was like Handforth to refuse to admit defeat. But Nipper seized him by the arm and shook his head.

"It's no good, old man," he said. "The Old-Timers seem to be a spent force. Let's hope they come to their senses before it's too late. It's Gore-Pearce's hour, and I'm beaten."

He went out of the Lecture Hall with his head bowed down. Handforth protested wildly, and a yell of laughter went up when it was seen that Church and McClure were forcibly dragging their leader out.

"You've won, Gore-Pearce!" sang out Travers. "Come on, Reformers! Let's go and celebrate!"

The crowd was too excited to listen to any more of Gore-Pearce's speechifying. Everybody streamed off, and there were many private chuckles. The thing was working out well. Gore-Pearce had been spoofed up to the eyes, and it now only remained to spoof the Head. Ridicule would put an end to this fantastic reform!

CHAPTER 9.

Sneaking Gene Mad!

WE'RE in luck!" said Nipper briskly. He had just joined a group of Removites in the lobby. They were wondering what to do—how to begin the next phase of the evening's entertainment. Nobody wanted to be the first one to begin.

"The Head's over in this House," went on Nipper. "A conference with my gov'nor about something. He's in Mr. Lee's study now. Lucky, isn't it?"

"I'm not sure that it is," said Jimmy Potts dubiously. "You mean that we should trot to the Head with our complaints while he's with Mr. Lee?"

"Exactly."

"Better not do it," said Jimmy.

"My dear Sir James, you're a fathead!" said Nipper. "Where's the objection?"

"Well, we should interrupt the conference, for one thing."

"Splendid!"

"And the Head would naturally get wild."

"Good!"

"And Mr. Lee would get wild, too."

"Not so good," said Nipper. "We don't want to include the gov'nor, do we? This is up against the Head. Still, I don't think there's much chance of Mr. Lee raising objections. I've trained him in the right way, and it won't take him long to see through the wheeze. He'll probably help us."

"Yes—with knobs on!" said Gresham sceptically.

"Anyhow, it's a lot better than us all trailing across to the Head's house and wasting time like that. It's an Ancient House wheeze, anyhow, although Reggie Pitt's crowd can do their share just the same. There's no reason why they shouldn't seek out the Head, wherever he is."

"Right-ho!" said Sir James Potts. "Let's get going."

DR. MORRISON NICHOLLS was somewhat troubled as he sat in Nelson Lee's study in the Ancient House.

"I regret, Mr. Lee, that you should consider that the punishment I inflicted upon young Hamilton was undeserved," he was saying. "The case was proved up to the hilt. The boy was thrown out of the public-house, and he admitted his guilt. How

could he do anything else, seeing that I witnessed his ignominious ejection?"

"There can, of course, be no doubt that Hamilton was thrown out of the establishment," said Nelson Lee, nodding. "But I am certain, Dr. Nicholls, that his object in going into the place was quite honourable. I regret that you did not listen more carefully to Hubbard."

"Hubbard?"

"The boy who interrupted the flogging," said Lee. "He was, of course, telling you the truth. He wanted to explain why Hamilton was in that disreputable place. However, this argument can lead to nothing, for the matter is over and done with."

"You are quite right," said the Head. "Let us forget it. It is natural that you should be upset, since the boy is your own ward. For that very reason it was necessary that he should be dealt with summarily. Otherwise, there would be a suspicion that he was receiving favouritism."

"If Nipper transgresses the school rules, he must suffer the consequences, just the same as any other boy," said Nelson Lee quietly. "And talking of transgressing the rules, Dr. Nicholls, I hope that you will rapidly put an end to this experiment of yours."

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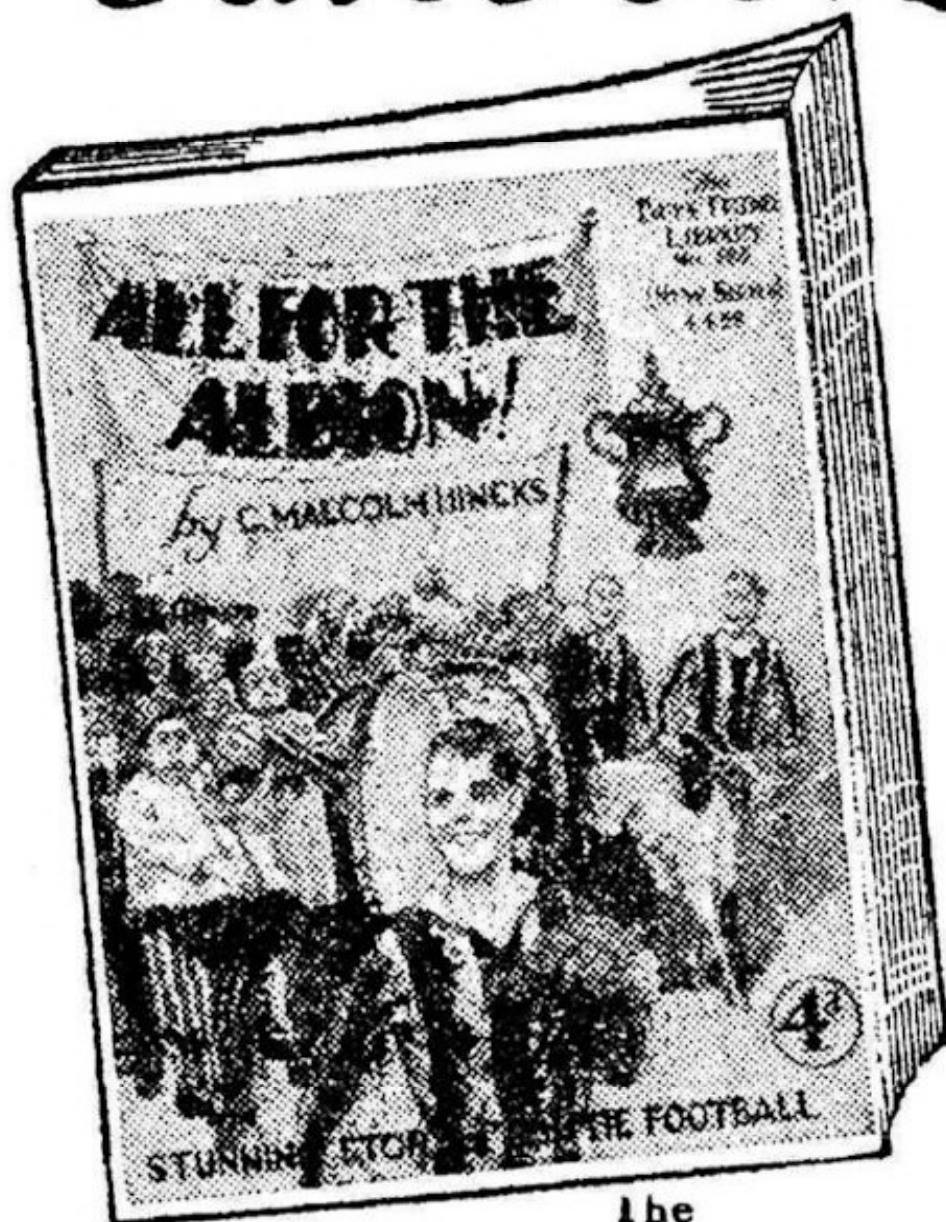
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Dr. Nicholls frowned

"Why should I do that?" he demanded.

"Perhaps you do not know that a certain section of the school is taking a grossly unfair advantage of the situation?" asked Lee. "The majority of the boys refuse to utilise the loophole with which you have provided them. In other words, they won't complain against their own companions. It is against all the traditions of St. Frank's that they should. Only the weaklings will take advantage of your astonishing plan."

"Astonishing?" said the Head sharply.

"Very astonishing," insisted Lee. "The boys who possess any sense of honour will certainly refuse to embrace it. You'll pardon me saying it, Dr. Nicholls, but you cannot come to a great Public school like this and alter the unwritten laws of centuries in a mere week. St. Frank's has great traditions, in common with most other Public schools, and you are treading on dangerous ground when you treat those traditions with contempt."

Dr. Nicholls was astonished at such frankness. One or two of the other Housemasters had been significantly silent over the new order, but they had not expressed themselves so candidly as this.

"Really, Mr. Lee, you have got it wrong," said the Head earnestly. "The last thing I desire is to trample upon the great traditions of St. Frank's. But it is my settled conviction that a great deal of petty tyranny goes on in every Public school. St. Frank's is no exception. The victims have no redress, unless they make complaints to the authorities. I have merely opened the way for them. That is all my plan amounts to."

"It sounds quite innocuous," smiled Nelson Lee. "Unfortunately the genuine victims of the petty tyranny—if such exists—are not the sort to come and complain. Moreover, their Form-fellows take the law into their own hands in such cases, and I can assure you that the tyrants have a thin time of it—without any official inquiries. No, sir, the only boys who will heartily co-operate with you are the boys whose sense of honesty and truthfulness is weak. In other words, they will use your experiment to further their own ends."

"Again, Mr. Lee, I must comment upon your refreshing frankness," said the Head, with some show of acidity. "Are you telling me that my theory is dishonest? If so, be good enough to say so in plain words—"

Tap!

"Excuse me," said Lee. "Come in!"

The door opened, and Jimmy Potts stood there.

"Can I speak to the Head, sir?" he asked diffidently.

"You should not interrupt in this way, Potts," said Nelson Lee. "However, if it is important—"

"Please, sir, I want to make a complaint!" panted Potts, running forward and

looking at the Head. "Harborough's taken all my books and thrown them out of the study. I took them back, and he threw them out again. And when I took them back a second time, he threw me out as well."

Nelson Lee gave Potts a sharp look, and the Head frowned.

"Why do you come to me with this absurd complaint?" he asked curtly.

"Didn't you tell us to, sir?" asked Jimmy. "Please, sir, what shall I do?"

"You will go!" replied Dr. Nicholls. "And the boy who treated you so roughly is named Harborough, I understand? I will make a note of it, and deal with him later."

"Thank you, sir," said Jimmy gratefully.

He dodged out, and the Head looked at Nelson Lee.

"You see?" he said. "Here is a case in point. This boy has been roughly treated by another boy. I dare say Harborough is something of a bully."

"Unfortunately there is nothing to justify your assumption," said Nelson Lee. "Potts and Harborough are study-mates, and, I believe, the best of friends. I am astonished that Potts should have descended to sneaking on such a trivial matter."

"Sneaking!" frowned the Head. "I think you know, Mr. Lee, that I dislike the use of that word."

Tap!

"Come in!" called Lee sharply

Tich Harborough walked in. He was looking somewhat dishevelled.

"Please, sir, my name's Harborough," he said, addressing the Head point-blank. "I want to complain about Potts and Travers, sir. They're my study-mates. They've locked my motor-bike up, and they won't let me have it."

"Is it necessary that you should come to me over such a thing?" demanded the Head angrily.

"Who else should I go to, sir?" asked Tich. "Mr. Lee doesn't like us to come to him with such complaints, but as I heard you were here—"

"Enough!" interrupted the Head. "Go to a prefect and tell him to make these boys give you back your motor-cycle. You may go."

"Thank you, sir!" said Tich, backing towards the door.

He bumped into Duncan, who was just coming in. Outside Nelson Lee's study there was a big queue of juniors, all awaiting their turn to make a complaint to the Head.

"Oh, I'm glad you're here, sir," said Duncan eagerly, as he spotted Dr. Nicholls. "Gresham borrowed my watch, and won't give it back to me. Do you mind seeing him, sir, and making him cough it up? He's got a habit of using it for knocking in tacks, and it doesn't do the works any good."

Dr. Nicholls frowned.

"How dare you come to me with these

ridiculous trifles?" he asked sharply. "I have never sanctioned any such liberties."

"But what can I do, sir?" asked Duncan blankly. "How can I make Gresham return my watch? If I complain to a prefect he'll only laugh at me, and all the other fellows treat it as a joke. You told us to come and sneak to you, sir, and we've decided that it's a good cure for our troubles."

"I will attend to Gresham!" said the Head tartly. "You may go."

Duncan departed, and the Head turned to Nelson Lee again.

"I am sorry that these disturbances should have occurred," he said gruffly. "I did not know that you permitted such liberties, Mr. Lee."

"I don't," replied Lee dryly. "But the boys have evidently found out that you are here, and they are taking advantage of the opportunity. I rather fancy they have made up their minds to take you a bit more literally than you intended."

"It proves, at all events, that there is a great deal of truth in my contention that the boys are constantly suffering from petty tyrannies which the ordinary rules do not cover," said the Head stiffly. "I shall make it my business to inquire fully into—"

Rap-rap!

"Come in!" shouted the Head impatiently.

Archie Glenthorne staggered in, looking dazed.

"What-ho!" he said dizzily. "Thanks frightfully, sir, for issuing the good old invitation! I mean, I'm in, what?"

"What does this absurd boy want?" asked the Head tartly.

"The fact is, sir, I've a frightfully important complaint to make," said Archie, pulling himself together. "A couple of dashed chappies—Brent and Russell, to be exact—have absolutely committed an offence of the most poisonous descripsh."

"They have done what?" ejaculated Dr. Nicholls.

"Oh, rather!" said Archie. "My waist-coat, sir. I mean, just because the good old colour scheme failed to appeal to them, they smothered it with ink. A most frightful piece of frightfulness. Gaze upon it, sir!"

He came closer and displayed his waist-coat. The Head winced slightly, adjusted his glasses, and stared.

"I see no ink-stains!" he snapped.

"Absolutely, sir," said Archie. "Here—and here—and here!"

The ink-stains were so trivial that the Head had not noticed them until Archie pointed them out. But while they were perhaps insignificant to Dr. Nicholls' eye, they were an offence to Archie.

"Nonsense!" said the Head sharply. "An absurd complaint, young man! I shall take no action whatever. You may go!"

"Oh, but I say—"

"Go!"

"Oh, rather! I see what you mean," said Archie feebly. "I take it, dear old thing, that you've given me the bird?"

"You had better go, Glenthorne," said Nelson Lee gravely.

Archie looked sad, and departed. But if the Head thought that he was going to have a respite, he was mistaken. De Valerie was the next complainant, and he burst in excitedly stating that Somerton was sprawling in the study with baggy trousers, an inky collar, and with rents in his jacket.

"What of it?" asked the Head, amazed.

"I'm fed-up, sir!" said De Valerie. "Somerton's too careless. He's a duke, sir—but what does he care?"

"A duke?" said the Head, looking at Lee. "Is this a—joke?"

"The Duke of Somerton is perhaps the most careless boy in the Remove," said Nelson Lee, with a chuckle. "Careless in his attire, that is. I have repeatedly taken him to task over it, but all to no purpose. He is a good scholar, and a thoroughly decent fellow. I am sorry to hear that you have quarrelled with him, De Valerie."

"It's not a quarrel, sir," said De Valerie. "But my eyesight's getting a bit strained. I thought the Head might be able to make Somerton dig out another suit. You told us to complain to you, sir," he added, appealing to the Head.

"I did not tell you to come to me with such preposterous trifles as this!" retorted Dr. Nicholls impatiently. "Leave this study at once! How dare you? Such a complaint is a sheer impertinence!"

De Valerie went, looking rather done.

"These boys have developed a very sudden desire for complaining, haven't they?" asked the Head suspiciously. "Is it possible, Mr. Lee, that they are attempting to ridicule my orders?"

"I would prefer to express no opinion, sir," said Nelson Lee cautiously.

He was convinced in his own mind that Dr. Nicholls had hit the nail on the head. He was more convinced than ever during the next fifteen minutes, for there was no peace in that study. A constant procession of boys flowed in and out, all "sneaking" on matters of insignificance.

And the Head grew more and more exasperated.

CHAPTER 10.

Mr. Pycraft on the Scent!

"IT'S working, my sons!" grinned Fullwood.

"The Head's having a pretty hot time of it," chuckled Harry Gresham.

A crowd of them was in the Ancient House Common-room, and they were comparing notes after their various visits to Nelson Lee's study.

Gore-Pearce & Co. were in the offing, and the cads of Study A were beginning to look suspicious. Gore-Pearce had "smelt a rat" soon after the spoofers had commenced their programme.



Gore-Pearce, panic-stricken, did not realise that his action was that of a coward. Momentarily, Nipper was helpless as he took off his coat, and in that second Gore-Pearce seized his chance. Crash! He brought his fist round and the blow caught Nipper full on the chin.

"Look here, confound you!" said Gore-Pearce, striding forward. "What's the idea of all this? Why are you chaps making all these complaints?"

Gresham looked at him coldly.

"Isn't it what you advised us to do?" he asked. "Aren't you the Sneaks' Champion?"

"If you're trying to be funny——"

"Cave!" came a gasp from the doorway. "The Head's coming!"

"What!"

There was a general ejaculation of consternation. Instinctively the fellows felt that something had run off the rails. Dr. Morrison Nicholls came striding in, his brow black, his eyes glinting with anger.

"Oh!" he said, looking round. "A gathering of some importance, I take it? Most of the boys who have been complaining to me are here, I see."

There was a silence.

"I have come to the conclusion that you have deliberately attempted to hold me up to ridicule," continued the Head ominously. "At first I did not perceive this. You think it funny, no doubt, to act in this way? I trust you will think your punishment funny, so that you may fully appreciate it."

"Pup-punishment, sir?" asked somebody, stammering

"Yes, punishment!" thundered the Head. "I have decided to scotch this absurd conspiracy at once. Your complaints are invalid—every one of them. I am satisfied that they were manufactured complaints."

"But you told us to come to you, sir——"

"With legitimate grievances—yes!" snapped the Head. "But not with these absurd trifles. Every boy who came to Mr. Lee's study with a so-called complaint will write five hundred lines, and I hope that these boys will think twice before adopting such tactics again."

He strode out, and Nipper groaned.

"That's done it!" he said in a hollow voice. "The jape's fizzled!"

"Jape?" roared Gore-Pearce, with a start.

"Yes, jape—fathead!" said Handforth. "By George! You didn't think these fellows were serious, did you? You and your rotten Reform Party are as small as ever. We were only fooling you in the Lecture Hall!"

"Fooling me?" babbled Gore-Pearce, with a jump.

"Come to earth, my son," said Nipper gently. "You may think that you're Form captain, but that's only your imagination. It was all a spoof—an attempt to ridicule the Head's plan. Unfortunately it seems to have sprung a leak."

HANDFORTH was inclined to be bitter about it.

"This is what comes of borrowing ideas from girls!" he said tartly. "We ought to have known better. Things are worse than ever now."

"Not worse, liandy—but in just the same position," said Nipper. "I dare say these fellows with the impots think the position is worse, but that's a prejudiced point of view."

"You chaps were wise to keep out of it," said Gresham, with a sniff. "You wily bounders!"

"But we didn't know the plan would go wrong," protested Nipper. "Don't worry about the lines—we'll all lend a hand and polish them off. I don't suppose Mr. Lee will examine them any too carefully."

It was an undeniable fact that Doris Berkeley's brilliant little scheme had miscarried, but, as Nipper said, it wasn't her fault. She had made the suggestion in all good faith. How could they have known that the Head would "tumble" so quickly, or that he would inflict punishment?

The whole thing was the Head's fault. He had asked for complaints and he had got some. The least he could have done would have been to make some pretence of inquiring into them. The Remove felt that he had not played the game.

"It only proves how hollow the whole thing is," said Nipper, shaking his head. "In practice it fails, and the Head will find that it'll fail just the same even when it isn't spoof."

"And how long will it be before he finds it out?" asked Handforth, with a sniff. "I suppose we've got to go through the whole term like this?"

CLAUDE GORE-PEARCE was furious at first, but he gained much consolation by gloating over the discomfiture of Nipper & Co. It was a shock to Claude to realise that he wasn't really the Remove skipper, however, and that the majority of his "supporters" were mythical.

Still, he had a goodly few under his banner, and more were likely to come after the failure of the Old-Timers' latest stunt.

"Upon the whole, there's nothing for us to grumble at," said Gore-Pearce, as he discussed the matter with Gulliver and Bell in Study A. "Perhaps those fools won't be so eager to try anything like that again."

"But they kidded you properly, didn't they?" said Bell, grinning.

Gore-Pearce scowled.

"Was I kidded any more than you?" he retorted.

"You're the leader—and I'm not."

"Anybody would have been kidded!" snapped Claude. "How the deuce was I to know?"

"The Head knew, didn't he?" asked Gulliver.

"That was totally different!" said Gore-Pearce. "Anyhow, what's the good of jaw-

ing about it? Are you fellows coming to the village with me?"

"What for?"

"I've got to see that fellow, Poole."

"Oh, the bookie?" said Bell, grinning. "Want to get your money back, eh? Perhaps you won't trust it to an idiot like Hubbard again!"

"He might have put our bets on, whether he withheld his own money or not," grunted Gore-Pearce. "That horse won this afternoon. Just our luck! Poole, of course, will be as pleased as Punch."

Gore-Pearce soon found that his cronies

COMING NEXT WEEK!



were not anxious to go to the village. The sky was a bit cloudy, and a shower threatened. So they preferred not to risk it. Gore-Pearce went down alone.

When he arrived at the White Harp he eased his pace, and strolled along casually. Then, seizing his opportunity, he dodged rapidly through the doorway, and vanished. It was always a risky business to enter these sort of establishments during daylight. Masters and prefects were greatly prejudiced against any such moves.

Gore-Pearce congratulated himself that everything was all right; but he had reckoned without Mr. Horace Pycraft.

The master of the Fourth Form was generally on the look-out for victims, and, although he had a special liking for Gore-Pearce—Gore-Pearce being a millionaire's son—he failed to recognise the figure at the distance. For Mr. Pycraft was standing in

the little window of the cobbler's, some little distance up the village street. A nail was troubling him, and he was having it knocked down. And he had distinctly seen a St. Frank's boy dodge into the White Harp. It was Gore-Pearce's misfortune that Mr. Pycraft should have been looking out of the window at that particular second.

"Good gracious!" said Mr. Pycraft.

"Pardon, sir?" said the cobbler, looking up from behind his little counter. "There you are, Mr. Pycraft, sir. I expect that'll be more comfortable."

"SCORNE BY THE SCHOOL!"

Poor old Nipper!

He's faced with the everlasting disgrace of expulsion, and it's all through Gore-Pearce. Will Gore-Pearce be brought to book, or will Nipper have to suffer the extreme penalty?

In the meantime, St. Frank's turns against its former popular Junior skipper. The fellows jeer at him; they cut him; even the fags pelt him with mud. The whole school is against him, except a few of his staunchest chums. Nipper has a hard—a very hard—time of it!

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"How much?" panted Mr. Pycraft.

"Twopence to you, sir."

Mr. Pycraft paid grudgingly. He considered that the cobbler should have performed the little service for nothing. He had forgotten, perhaps, that he took all his repair work to Bannington.

He slipped his shoe on, laced it, and rushed out of the shop. Then, at the double, he raced along to the White Harp, which was at the end of the village, not far from the Stowe bridge.

Mr. Pycraft was like a hound on the scent. He had not forgotten that earlier incident! He had not forgotten how Nipper had been flogged for entering the White Harp, and he had a secret hope that Nipper was the culprit again. Mr. Pycraft had never had any great love for the cheery Remove captain.

Had he known that Claude Gore-Pearce

was the actual caller, it is quite possible that he would have walked straight past. It is to be feared that Mr. Pycraft's sense of duty was warped by his inclinations for toadying towards the "bloods."

But he didn't know, and he rushed straight into the White Harp without warning. Not that Gore-Pearce was discovered.

Mr. Pycraft was unfortunate enough to collide with a large gentleman in corduroys who had just emerged from the bar-parlour, and as this gentleman was carrying a spade under his arm, and the handle of it caught Mr. Pycraft a crack on the elbow, a loud protest arose.

"What do you mean, fellow, by bringing spades into such a place as this?" snapped Mr. Pycraft. "You might have injured me!"

"In a 'urry, ain't you?" retorted the gentleman in corduroys.

Inside, Gore-Pearce jumped about a foot into the air.

"Gad!" he panted. "It's Pycraft—one of our masters!"

Mr. Poole—one of the sportive gentlemen whom Hubbard had interviewed on that previous occasion—was a man of swift thought. Being a racehorse habitue, he had reason to be.

"Under the table, kid—quick!" he muttered.

Gore-Pearce lost no time, but he did not select the table, good as the suggestion was. There was a wide seat running along one wall of the bar-parlour, with the front of it covered by a faded valance. He dived under like a rabbit, and Mr. Poole nodded approvingly.

"The kid's got brains!" he grinned, to Mr. Porlock, the landlord, on the other side of the bar.

The landlord was in full agreement with this manoeuvre. He did not want to get into any trouble with the St. Frank's authorities. The next moment Mr. Pycraft was inside, looking round with eagle eyes.

"Lost something?" asked Mr. Porlock sarcastically.

"Where is that boy?" demanded the Form-master.

"Boy? Which boy?"

"I saw a St. Frank's boy enter this establishment—not four minutes ago!" said Mr. Pycraft. "Since then I have not taken my eyes off the place. I think you know perfectly well, Porlock, that the St. Frank's boys are not allowed to enter this—"

"Here, just a minute!" interrupted the landlord unpleasantly. "Hadn't you better be careful of your facts before you start saying things like that? There's no St. Frank's boy here—never has been."

"Rubbish!" said Mr. Pycraft sharply. "I saw him enter."

"I ask you, Bill," said Mr. Porlock, appealing to Mr. Poole.

"Me?" said the bookie. "I ain't seen no schoolboy in here. I thought this gent was having a bit of fun with himself."

"You are attempting to conceal something from me," said Mr. Pycraft suspiciously.

"I have every reason to believe that the boy was Hamilton, and it will go hard with you, Porlock, if you are concealing him from me. It might even lead to your licence being withdrawn."

Mr. Porlock knew that his only course was to bluff.

"Look here, Mr. Pycraft," he said, leaning over the bar, and speaking with deliberate unpleasantness, "before you make any more of these accusations you'd better be certain of your facts! See? I told you that before, but you don't seem to 'ave 'eard. There's no St. Frank's boy 'ere! Would you like to search the place?"

"Certainly not!" said Mr. Pycraft, discomfited. "All I can say is that I cannot understand it. I swear that I saw the boy——"

"I don't allow no swearin' on these premises," interrupted Mr. Porlock sarcastically.

"Really!" protested Mr. Pycraft. "How dare you?"

"Good evenin' sir," said the landlord, turning his back.

Mr. Pycraft pursed his lips, and strode out of the inn. He was somewhat startled when he beheld Dr. Morrison Nicholls only a hundred yards away!

CHAPTER 11.

Nipper Knocked Out!

"GOOD-EVENING, sir," said Mr. Pycraft defiantly.

Dr. Nicholls looked his disapproval.

"If it is really necessary for you to obtain refreshment, Mr. Pycraft, I do wish you would select one of the other inns—the George, for preference," he said. "The George is, I understand, a thoroughly respectable hostelry."

Mr. Pycraft went red with excitement and indignation.

"I hope you don't think I was drinking in this disreputable place, sir?" he asked hotly. "Good gracious! What an appalling misrepresentation!"

"A natural assumption, surely, Mr. Pycraft?"

"Perhaps so, sir—but I can assure you that I merely entered this inn in the furtherance of my duty," said the Form-master. "I am convinced that I saw one of our junior boys entering the White Harp. I naturally went into make inquiries—much as I detest any such task."

"I apologise, Mr. Pycraft, if I formed a wrong opinion," said the headmaster gravely. "You saw a St. Frank's boy entering this place? Again, eh? I can see that I shall have to be more drastic."

"You are thinking of young Hamilton?" asked Mr. Pycraft cunningly. "I, too, believe that it was Hamilton whom I saw. But, apparently, he got warning of my approach, and no doubt he escaped by the rear door. A pity, sir. A boy who defies you so grossly should be sharply dealt with."

"Are you sure that this boy was Hamilton?"

"No, sir, I'm not," replied Mr. Pycraft promptly. "But I will say that his figure was reminiscent of Hamilton's, and that he was about the same size and build. It is quite useless to enter the place, for the landlord has assured me that no boy was in the place. Not that we can accept his word for that."

"I'm afraid we shall have to," said Dr. Nicholls. "We cannot forcibly search the building, or, indeed, compel the landlord to oblige us in any way. You are coming into the village, Mr. Pycraft?"

They walked off, and Mr. Poole, at the bar-parlour window, gave the all-clear signal.

"INTERFERING busybody!" said Gore-Pearce, dusting himself down, after he had crawled out. "Thanks for keeping mum about me."

"Thanks for nothing!" grunted Mr. Porlock. "Do you think I want to get into trouble? You'd best get off these premises, young gent, while the coast is clear. I've warned you against comin' here during ordinary hours. It ain't safe."

"How was I to know that Pycraft was nosing about?" asked Gore-Pearce. "Thank goodness he suspects Hamilton, and not me. Well, I want that money of mine, Poole."

"Money?" said Bill Poole. "It was never put on."

"I know that, worse luck—but you've got some money of mine, all the same," said Gore-Pearce. "And while I'm here I'll take a flask of whisky. I'm giving a bit of a party to-night."

"Young rips, aren't you?" grinned Mr. Porlock.

Gore-Pearce soon settled his business. He, too, wanted to get off the premises as quickly as possible. The dusk was gathering now, but it was not yet quite dark, and he knew that Dr. Nicholls and Mr. Pycraft were still in the village. They might be coming back at any moment, and they were certain to cast suspicious glances at the White Harp.

He left by means of the back door, dodged round an alley, and joined the road again near the bridge. He was safe enough here, and he realised that he had been a fool not to go in by the back way in the first place.

"Oh, well, I'm safe enough," he told himself.

He patted the flask of whisky in his pocket. He had planned a little spree that night after lights-out. He did not actually want the liquor for himself, but Sinclair of the Sixth and Grayson of the Fifth had promised to come, and they might think the party rather tame unless there was some whisky and soda on the board. Gore-Pearce, rascal though he was, was not addicted to intoxicants.

Perhaps it was ill-chance which led Nipper to come down the lane at this particular hour—and alone, too. Owing to the excite

ments of the evening Nipper had neglected to post a letter, and as he particularly wanted it to go that evening his only course was to run down to the post office with it.

He made as if to pass Gore-Pearce without even looking at him, but the cad of the Remove halted in his tracks, and elevated his eyebrows in a supercilious manner.

"So you've got time to come for a stroll, eh?" he said sourly. "I thought you'd be busy on your five hundred lines."

"It may please you to gloat over that, Gore-Pearce, but you won't gloat for long," replied Nipper good-naturedly. "You haven't come out of this evening's affair so brilliantly yourself, either. I rather think it's a case of honours even. We both failed."

"You'll keep on failing, too," said Gore-Pearce. "Why, you idiot, you don't stand a chance! The Head's on my side, and he's proved this evening that he's not going to stand any rot from you Old-Timers."

"If you weren't such a humbug, Gore-Pearce, there might be some hope for your cause," said Nipper bluntly. "I believe you're kidding yourself that you're sincere. But the Head alone can't bring this thing off. He's not only up against the majority of the fellows, but Mr. Lee and Mr. Crowell and nearly all the other masters are against the move, too."

Gore-Pearce sneered.

"I'm glad you mentioned Mr. Lee!" he said pointedly.

"What do you mean by that?"

"You know what I mean!" taunted Gore-Pearce.

"You insinuating rotter!" shouted Nipper, losing his temper. "Are you suggesting that Mr. Lee gives me special treatment?"

"I'm not only suggesting it, but it's a fact!" sneered Gore-Pearce. "He's your precious 'guv'nor'—your guardian. He takes jolly good care to wink at the things he doesn't want to see, and he doesn't want to see anything that his favourites do wrong."

"You lying rotter!" shouted Nipper. "What about that flogging I had? Did Mr. Lee try to protect me there?"

"I'll bet he did!" said Gore-Pearce. "But the Head was one too many for him!"

"We're quite alone in this lane, Gore-Pearce," said Nipper grimly. "This is a golden opportunity. We'll have a bit of a fight. To be exact, I'm going to give you a thundering good hiding! Put up your hands!"

"Hang you, I'm not going to fight!" ejaculated Gore-Pearce in alarm.

"Aren't you? We'll see about that!" snapped Nipper. "I'm going to teach you that you can't slander Mr. Lee in my hearing. Off with your coat, confound you!"

Nipper commenced removing his own jacket as an earnest of his intentions. Gore-Pearce was dumbfounded. He knew that he stood no chance in a scrap with the Remove captain. He rather wished he had not pre-

cipitated this encounter. And then, in that second, he saw an opportunity.

Only he, perhaps, would have seen it—for it was a cad's opportunity.

For a split second, as Nipper had his jacket half off, he was helpless. He was at Gore-Pearce's mercy, and in that flash Gore-Pearce, desperate with alarm, acted.

Crash!

He brought his fist round, and all the strength of his body was behind it. The mean, cowardly blow caught Nipper on the point of the chin. He saw the thing coming, and he attempted to avoid it. There was an expression of startled amazement in his eyes. In that fraction of a second he was bewildered by Gore-Pearce's cowardly act.

Then the blow went home, and Nipper was nearly lifted clean off his feet. He crashed on his back, his arms still held helpless by the half-removed jacket, and he remained there, utterly still. Gore-Pearce's face was screwed up with agony. His knuckles hurt atrociously, and his arm was numbed to the very shoulder.

"Get up!" he snarled. "Don't lay there like that, hang you!"

Now that the evil moment was over he was aghast. He hadn't realised what force he had put into that blow. But the pain in his arm told him. He stared down at Nipper in fresh alarm.

"Why don't you get up?" he panted.

But he knew well enough why Nipper did not get up. Nipper was "out." Gore-Pearce was terrified at the result of his savage impulse. At the same moment he heard voices in the distance—men's voices.

Frantically he grabbed Nipper, hauled him on to the grass, and then he realised that he would never have time to drag him through the hedge, as he had intended. The footsteps were only just round the bend; and now, to his fresh consternation, he recognised the voices of Dr. Nicholls and Mr. Pycraft.

He had, perhaps, twenty seconds in which to make his own escape—and it would take him a full minute to get Nipper out of sight. Forty seconds short of the time he needed!

He made as if to dash towards the nearest gap. Then he halted, his thoughts taking a fresh turn. He remembered Mr. Pycraft's dash into the White Harp—and Mr. Pycraft's suspicions. In his extremity his brain worked like lightning.

He realised that if Nipper was found like this—obviously struck down while peeling off his jacket—there would be an inquiry. And he recalled that he had a flask of whisky in his pocket.

It took him just five seconds to withdraw the cork, swamp Nipper's face with a quantity of the spirit, and to drop the bottle on his chest. Then he vanished through the hedge like a shadow in the dusk. He crouched down behind the bushes, not daring to move away. His only chance was to lie low.

IF Gore-Pearce had had time to think the thing out, he might not have done it. He was several kinds of a rascal, but he might have been appalled at the evil nature of his scheme. It had been conceived in an extremity, however, and it had been executed on the spur of the moment. The millionaire's son had had no time to consider—to weigh up one way or the other.

That whisky helped Gore-Pearce's rascally trick in more ways than one. For the raw spirit had the effect of half reviving Nipper from his stupor. He therefore presented a far greater figure of guilt than might otherwise have been the case.

When the Head and Mr. Pycraft came round the bend they beheld a dim figure sitting up in the grass, apparently struggling with his jacket. By the time the two masters came up, however, Nipper's jacket was on, and Nipper himself was sitting there, dully-eyed and dizzy.

"What are you doing there, young man?" asked Dr. Nicholls, peering through the dusk. "Upon my word! Some of you boys are outrageously careless! Do you want to get your death of cold, sitting in that damp grass?"

Nipper, still suffering severely from the effects of that knock-out, heard the voice as though from a great distance.

"I—I—"

He tried to speak, but it was difficult. His jaw hurt him severely, and he was still so dazed that he couldn't form any words, either.

"It is Hamilton, of the Remove!" said Mr. Pycraft, going nearer. "The boy appears to be injured in some way. Can you see his bicycle, sir? It occurs to me that he might have fallen—"

Mr. Pycraft broke off abruptly, sniffing the air like a bloodhound.

"Good heavens!" he ejaculated. "Spirits! Whisky! The boy reeks of it!"

"Nonsense, Mr. Pycraft!" said the Head sharply. "Impossible!"

"But I tell you— Ah! Look at this!" barked Mr. Pycraft, as he pounced upon the whisky flask. "I was right, sir! A spirit flask! The wretched boy has been—imbibing. He is intoxicated."

Dr. Nicholls shuddered.

"Horrible—horrible!" he said, with genuine distress. "Good heavens, Mr. Pycraft, what an appalling thing!"

And who could blame those two masters for coming to this conclusion? It was so palpably and absolutely obvious. There was Nipper, helpless in the grass, alone. Not another soul was within sight. He was dazed and incoherent, and in his lap was a half-empty flask.

Was there any loophole out of this net of circumstantial evidence? One, perhaps! If Nipper sneaked on Gore-Pearce there would unquestionably be an inquiry, and during the course of such an inquiry the truth would equally unquestionably come out.

But would Nipper sneak?

CHAPTER 12.

The Closing Net!

MR. PYCRAFT sighed. "I am afraid I was right, sir," he said, with insincere sadness in his voice. "There can be no doubt that the boy I saw entering the White Harp was Hamilton, as I suspected."

Mr. Pycraft, eager as he was to think badly of Nipper, could not really be blamed for jumping to this conclusion.

"It is certainly most significant," said the Head. "You thought you saw Hamilton entering the inn, and now we find the boy here, reeking of drink. I am very much afraid it is a case of two and two making four, Mr. Pycraft. I shall, of course, make the fullest possible inquiries."

"In the meantime, what shall we do with this boy?"

"We must take him to the school," said the Head. "I think we can manage him between us. Come, my boy. We will help you. No, do not attempt to speak now. You must rest first. You must—ahem!—become sobered."

Nipper was just beginning to realise that the two blobs in front of him belonged to the Head and Mr. Pycraft. His head was wracked with pain, and his jaw felt as though it was broken. Yet when he moved it he was re-assured.

He wondered why there was such an awful smell of whisky all over the place, and it was with something of a shock that he suddenly saw a flask in his lap.

"Come!" said the Head impatiently.

Nipper felt himself dragged to his feet. He tried to steady himself. He swayed. Deadly evidence!

"It's all right, sir—I'll be O.K. in a minute," muttered the junior skipper. "Please don't hold me, sir."

"Take no notice, Mr. Pycraft," murmured the Head. "I am thankful that it is nearly dark. Let us hope we can smuggle him indoors without being observed. This is a terrible disgrace—or will be if it becomes publicly known."

"Why, what are you thinking, sir?" asked Nipper, his brain clearing rapidly.

"Be silent!" said the Head sternly.

He would not allow Nipper to speak. He and Mr. Pycraft succeeded in getting the Remove into the school grounds. In the meantime Claude Gore-Pearce, his heart thumping madly against his ribs, had dashed across the fields. Thus he was lounging in the Triangle when the two masters arrived.

Gore-Pearce had taken good care to call Gulliver and Bell and a few more of his adherents into the Triangle. Claude was still wildly excited, although he cleverly concealed this fact from the others. No remorse came to him yet—if it ever would. But he saw no reason why there should not be an audience on hand.

And a large audience it was, too!

By the time Nipper had been led half-way across the Triangle, the Reformers had shouted the startling news into all the passages and studies and Common-rooms, and fellows were streaming out in their dozens.

To say that a sensation was caused would be putting it mildly. Everybody was pressing round, asking questions and trying to obtain information. Somebody suggested that there was a reek of whisky in the air, and after that there was another sensation.

Gore-Pearce cunningly affected to know nothing. It was not he who mentioned the fact. He was, indeed, one of the first to scoff at the suggestion. But once the rumour had started, it gained rapid ground.

"It's as clear as daylight!" said Doyle, of the West House, after the masters had disappeared through Big Arch with their charge. "The chap can't walk straight! He was blotto!"

"What's that?" roared Handforth. "Who's saying that Nipper was squiffy? I've never heard such rot! He must have met with an accident."

"Anyhow, he wasn't intoxicated," said Reggie Pitt stoutly. "You'll never make me believe a mad thing like that!"

IN Dr. Nicholls' study Nipper had sufficiently recovered to be questioned. By this time he fully understood what was suspected, and he was fearfully startled about it, particularly so when he appreciated the delicacy of his position. What explanation could he give?

"I had intended making you have a sleep first, Hamilton," said Dr. Nicholls quietly. "But perhaps the shock has served the same purpose. The shock of discovery. Before I make any comment whatsoever, I would like you to give me your own explanation."

Nipper was sitting in the easy-chair, dusty and untidy. His collar was crumpled and limp; his chin was a bit puffy, and there was a dull look in his eyes, too.

"That's very fair of you, sir," he said quietly. "I'm afraid I cannot tell you much. I met somebody in the lane, and we had a bit of a quarrel. He knocked me down before I was ready. That's all, sir."

"All?" said the Head sharply. "What do you mean? Surely, Hamilton, you cannot expect me to believe such an unconvincing statement as this? You say that you met somebody in the lane?"

"Yes, sir."

"Who was it?"

"I cannot tell you, sir."

"Do you mean that you don't know who it was?"

"I know who it was, sir, but I'd rather not say any more," replied Nipper awkwardly. "It's up to the other to come forward and explain what happened."

"But you are not going to give him away, eh?" said the Head grimly. "Sticking to

your principles, young man? Very plausible, but you cannot hoodwink me so easily. I am amazed that you should attempt to throw dust into my eyes by such a palpably untrue statement."

"It's not untrue, sir."

"I am suggesting to you, Hamilton, that there was no other person in the lane—that you were not knocked down by this mythical person—but that you were foolish enough to partake heavily of whisky," said the Head harshly. "Have you forgotten the circumstances in which you were found?"

Nipper was looking rather pale.

"I suppose they were pretty suspicious, sir," he said quietly.

"Mr. Pycraft and myself found you lying in the grass, helpless," continued the Head. "You reeked of spirits, and a flask was in your lap. There was no other soul in sight. And Mr. Pycraft earlier had seen you entering the White Harp Inn. Now do you refuse to admit your guilt?"

Nipper opened his eyes wider at this.

"Let me get this right, sir," he said blankly. "You say that Mr. Pycraft saw me entering the White Harp Inn—this evening?"

"I certainly did!" cut in Mr. Pycraft, who was still there. "I will admit I was doubtful of your identity at the time, but with this additional evidence the inference is perfectly clear."

"I wasn't in the inn, sir. I haven't been to the village this evening," said Nipper steadily. "I was on my way there when I met—When I had that bit of trouble."

"The boy is impossible," said Mr. Pycraft impatiently. "With the evidence as clear as daylight in front of us, he still pretends that he was knocked down by some imaginary person. Not that we need be surprised," he added, shrugging his shoulders. "No doubt the boy really believes it. I have heard that one is apt to have these hallucinations when under the influence of spirits."

Dr. Nicholls had been thinking precisely the same thing.

"We will at least give you the credit, Hamilton, of believing that you think your story of an encounter is true," said the Head gently. "That it is untrue, I have no doubt. As for your visit to the White Harp Inn, I shall take immediate steps to verify that visit."

"Then I wish you'd go yourself, sir," said Nipper earnestly.

It was impossible for Mr. Pycraft to be unaware of the imputation.

"You see, sir," he said sourly, "the boy is implying that I cannot be trusted. Really, I must protest—"

"The boy is right, Mr. Pycraft," said the Head. "His whole future depends upon this inquiry. I would not dream of sending a subordinate on such a mission. I shall go to the White Harp Inn myself at once. Mr. Porlock, I fancy, will not dare to trifle with me!" he added grimly.

Nipper felt slightly relieved. The Head

was an exceedingly fair man. He was not going to accuse Nipper until he had his evidence completed—complete though it already seemed.

NELSON LEE went down to the White Harp with Dr. Nicholls.

The Housemaster-detective had arrived in the Head's study, deeply concerned and icily cool. He had heard rumours, and in the Head's study he heard the full story. He remained icily cool.

"You may rest assured, Nipper, that we'll get to the truth of this matter," he said confidently. "You had better remain here until we return—that is, if Dr. Nicholls will permit you to—"

"By all means," said the Head. "I was going to suggest the same thing."

Outside, the Head gave Lee a curious glance.

"You believe the boy to be innocent?" he asked, as they walked.

"I know he is innocent," said Lee quietly.

"But, my dear sir—"

"I know Nipper better than you do, Dr. Nicholls," cut in Lee. "The suggestion that he should get intoxicated is fantastic. Yet I grant that the circumstances are exceptionally suspicious, and a full inquiry is absolutely necessary."

"You have a wonderful faith in this boy."

"I have reason to," replied Lee. "I am also acquainted, Dr. Nicholls, with the intricacies of circumstantial evidence. To my mind, there isn't the slightest doubt that the youngster told you the truth. He was knocked down by somebody, and his sense of honour prevents him from giving you the name. I believe him implicitly. Somebody has played a low-down trick on him."

"But who?" asked the Head, startled. "Who could have done such a dastardly thing? What becomes of your theory, Mr. Lee, when we consider the evidence? Heaven forbid that I should accuse the boy unjustly, but, for the life of me, I cannot agree with your own view!"

"Let us wait until we have visited the White Harp," said Lee shortly.

He experienced a shock at the White Harp.

Mr. Porlock was startled at first, then embarrassed, and finally informative.

"We wasn't goin' to say anything about it, but if the boy was fool enough to—"

"Who was this boy?" asked Dr. Nicholls impatiently.

"Who?" said Mr. Porlock, staring. "Why, Hamilton, of course!"

"Look here, Mr. Porlock, you'd better be very careful," said Nelson Lee grimly. "You say that Hamilton came into this establishment? You're absolutely certain that the boy was Hamilton?"

Mr. Porlock opened the door of the private parlour, where they were standing.

"Bill!" he called briefly.

Mr. Poole, who had evidently waited, came in.

"Who was that St. Frank's kid who came here this evenin'?" asked the landlord. "The one I pitched out through the back door, and you went after?"

"Why, young Hamilton, of course," said Mr. Poole promptly.

The landlord shrugged his shoulders.

"You see, gents? I ain't told you any lies. Why should I?"

Nelson Lee seized Poole by the shoulder.

"If you have been lying—and I won't say what I think of your statement—you will regret it, my friend," he said. "Come, Dr. Nicholls, it is obviously needless for us to remain here any longer."

Mr. Bill Poole, who had felt so confident a minute earlier, now experienced a spasm of acute apprehension. Inwardly, he cursed Claude Gore-Pearce. There had been something in Nelson Lee's tone which positively frightened him.

Outside, the Head gave a sigh.

"I was afraid of this, Mr. Lee," he said unhappily.

"There's been some trickery here!" muttered Lee, as they walked along.

"Surely you cannot still believe that Hamilton is innocent!" protested the Head. "This last piece of evidence is absolutely indisputable. It dovetails with the rest. Really, Mr. Lee, I can only assume that your faith has led you to blind your eyes to the palpable truth."

"I shall, of course, raise no objection to the punishment that you deem it necessary to inflict," said Nelson Lee quietly; "but one day, Dr. Nicholls, I hope to show you that my faith is not so misplaced as you imagine."

AT St. Frank's, Claude Gore-Pearce was scared—scared by the success of his evil impulse. He had taken good care to 'phone Mr. Porlock—to warn him that an inquiry would come—to suggest a way in which Porlock himself could appear guiltless. The rascally landlord had not hesitated to promise that he would give Nipper's name.

And now the Remove skipper was caught in the net. There seemed to be no possible escape for him. The circumstantial evidence was complete.

When rumours of the affair floated through the school, there was consternation amongst the ranks of the Old-Timers. Leaderless, what could they do? For it was taken for granted that Nipper would be expelled. But would he? Dr. Morrison Nicholls had already proved himself to be a man with new ideas.

Perhaps he would have new ideas for dealing with Nipper!

THE END.

(Next week's dramatic yarn, entitled: "Scorned by the School!" is perhaps the best of the present series. Make sure you don't miss reading this magnificent yarn—order your next Wednesday's issue of the Old Paper now.)

Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!

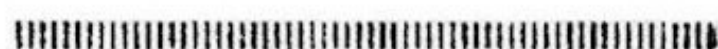
NELSON LEE READER WINS "JAMES" BICYCLE

Result of "Cricketers" Voting Competition
Is YOUR Name Amongst the Prizewinners?

In this contest no competitor correctly forecast the order of popularity of the cricketers according to the voting of all competitors. The fully equipped "JAMES" BICYCLE has been awarded to:—

**A. Ludgate, "Namur," Northern Woods,
nr. HIGH WYCOMBE, Bucks.**

whose forecast containing eight correctly placed names, came nearest to correct.



THE TWELVE "HOBBS'" BATS

have been awarded to the following readers whose efforts came next in order of merit:—

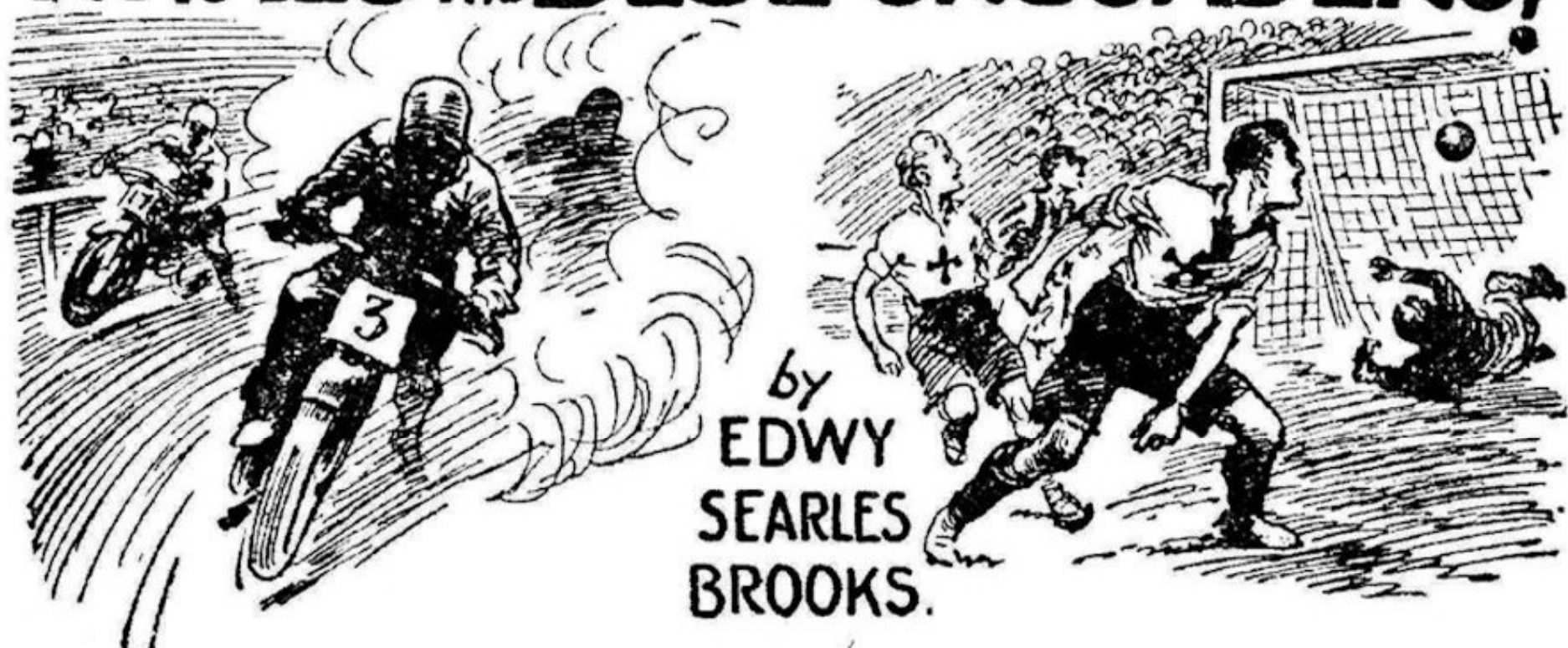
L. Brackley, 3, Cotton Mill Crescent, St. Albans, Herts.	W. Maidment, Jnr., 22, California Road, New Malden, Surrey.
S. Chapman, Ringstead, Eastfield, Peterborough.	H. C. Moule, New Villas, Swards End, Saffron Walden, Essex.
D. Dobson, 82, Borough Road, Darlington.	W. Phillips, Buntingsdale, Market Drayton, Salop.
C. B. Hall, 77, Cauldwell Hall Road, Ipswich.	S. Semple, Jnr., Moor Street, Flushing, nr. Falmouth.
P. Haring, 16, Louisa Gardens, Mile End, E.1.	J. M. Smith, 11, Monument Road, Wigan.
A. J. Hillyer, 1, Green Lane, Shortheath, Farnham, Surrey.	K. Young, 131, Goldhawk Road, London, W. 12.

The order of popularity of the cricketers was as follows:—

1. Hobbs.	5. Sutcliffe.	9. Jardine
2. Hammond.	6. Larwood.	10. Tate.
3. Chapman.	7. White.	11. Ames.
4. Hendren.	8. Duckworth.	12. Leyland.

THRILLS GALORE IN THIS WEEK'S FINE INSTALMENT. CHUMS!

RIVALS OF THE BLUE CRUSADERS!



The future seems bright for Rex Carrington. He's now out of Burke's clutches, and his injured foot is practically better. But Rex has underestimated the rascality of Peter Burke—and that worthy is out for his revenge!

His Last Race!

"**T**OP-HOLE!" said Rex Carrington approvingly.

"Not bad, eh?" smiled Corcoran.

The Blues had moved into their new quarters, at the Stronghold, and the players were delighted to find everything splendidly equipped for their comfort and convenience.

Special quarters had been provided for them in the great main building—which was club house, general offices, and grandstand combined. It was a vast concrete structure, stretching not merely the whole length of the field, but curving round the ends, too. The other side was to be filled in with another covered stand, so that even the "bob" patrons would be fully protected from all weather conditions.

The great enterprise was not yet completed. Workmen were still busy in vast throngs. Scaffolding was everywhere, and the scene was one of continuous industry.

Yet, throughout it all, the pitch itself had remained free, and the public had always found plenty of accommodation on match days. The improvements were being made without any interference with the club's programme.

Now, to-day, the players' private quarters were ready for occupation. There were comfortable bed-rooms, with bath-rooms attached; a fine smoking-room, a library, billiards-room and every other up-to-date appointment. The gymnasium was the finest the Blues had ever seen.

"Any fellow who thinks of leaving the club must be dotty," said Fatty Fowkes

vehemently. "How many clubs give their players all these advantages? By glory! Half the professionals in the League will be fighting to find a place in the Blues' team!"

Rex Carrington grinned.

"That's one for me, I suppose?" he murmured.

"If the cap fits, you can wear it," grunted Fatty. "Anyhow, you've been talking long enough about leaving the club, haven't you? Perhaps you'll change your mind now?"

"I changed it before I saw all this, Fatty—as you know," replied Rex.

Fatty nodded. He was thinking of that unexpected little meeting with Rex on the St. Frank's playing fields, at dead of night, when he had surprised Rex kicking a football about all by himself.

Fatty, true to his promise, had not breathed a word to anybody. Mr. Ulysses Piecombe and all the other players took it for granted that Rex was definitely crooked, and that he would not be able to play again during the brief remaining weeks of this season.

But Fatty knew better. He had grinned that day when Rex had limped more painfully than ever, using a heavy stick to aid him. Fatty knew well enough that the stick was unnecessary, and that the limp was exaggerated. It was Rex's whim to fool Mr. Piecombe—and to spring his surprise on the day of the Denton City match.

Rex, like all the other players, had shifted into the new quarters. They had said good-bye to St. Frank's, and only just in time, because the rest of the schoolboys

were coming home, and the Ancient House was required for its normal occupants.

Fatty Fowkes and Rex Carrington had a bed-room to themselves, and a comfortable little den it was, too. Lionel Corcoran, being a scholboy, had planned the accommodation on very much the same style as at St. Frank's.

Mr. Piccombe was feeling more important than ever. Deep down at heart, he was still the schoolmaster, notwithstanding his undoubted abilities as a football manager, and this present arrangement delighted him. He was the boss of this great white stadium. He looked upon the players as his pupils, and it pleased him to make rules and regulations like those of a school.

"Piecan doesn't seem any too friendly towards me, Fatty," said Rex. "He's given me one or two cold glares to-day."

"He hasn't forgiven you yet," said Fatty, nodding. "Don't forget that you're the black sheep, old man. And old Piecan blames you for the club's troubles, too. If you had remained in form, instead of gallivanting on that rotten Speedway, we shouldn't be in such a rocky position now."

Rex stared.

"What do you mean, you hulking great idiot?" he demanded. "Rocky position be hanged! We're second from the top."

"With Denton City leading by points and points!" grunted Fatty. "And what about Hedingham Rovers? They're running us up pretty closely, and they're only one point below us. Unless we do some miracles in our next three or four matches, there'll be no promotion for the Blues."

"It's not too late," said Rex quietly. "I told you that I've finished with track racing, Fatty, and I mean it."

That same evening he presented himself before Mr. Julian Harding, the owner of the Speedway. Mr. Harding received him at once. Rex was the most valuable rider of the track.

"I think I ought to tell you, sir, that I have definitely decided to chuck this game up," said Rex bluntly. "My injury isn't so bad as I had feared, and I'm going to play in the Blues' next game."

"But this is ridiculous, Carrington!" protested Mr. Harding. "What an erratic fellow you are!"

"I have been, sir; but I'm not going to be in future."

"What of your prospects, Carrington?" asked Mr. Harding. "Surely you know that there is no very great future for you in football? Your salary is limited, and you never get the opportunity of making big sums of money. On the Speedway it is quite different. For a fellow of your skill there are endless possibilities. There is no reason why you shouldn't make an income of two or three thousand a year."

"It sounds good, sir, but I'm afraid my interest is too firmly wrapped up in football for me ever to become a speedway champion," replied Rex. "And what's going to happen to me if I have a smash, and break a leg? You know well enough that my income would cease, and I should be between the devil and the deep sea. Crooked for football, and no good on the dirt-track. I'd rather stick to football, sir."

"Well, of course, it's up to you," said Mr. Harding. "If you prefer to go back to football next season, it's your own concern. But you will, of course, keep with me until then—"

"Haven't you forgotten that I'm playing in the Blues' next game, sir?" asked Rex. "I mentioned it a few minutes ago. I'm

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 holds an *I O U* from Rex for £150—a debt incurred through gambling—and he suggests that if the centre-forward 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, who goes away vowing vengeance. In a moment of weakness, Rex again plays cards with Burke and succeeds in wiping off that £150 debt, in spite of the other's cheating. By now Rex's injured foot is practically better, but he tells nobody—excepting Fatty Fowkes, who promises to keep it secret, meaning to surprise Piecan upon the day of the match against Denton City. Unfortunately for him, Hankin, Parr, and Brewer, three rascally *Blues'* reserves who are in Burke's pay, also know, and they report the fact to the ex-track manager. Burke tells them that he has thought of a scheme which will ruin Rex and Harding, and at the same time smash up the Speedway!

(Now read on.)

cutting track racing out at once, sir, and I shall do all I can to help the Blues to promotion. There's precious little time left this season."

Mr. Harding looked angry and impatient.

"Hang it, Carrington, that's not fair!" he protested. "You wouldn't sign a contract with me, so I can't force you to abandon this absurd project, but what of our arrangement? You'll race at our next meeting, surely?"

"I'd rather not, sir."

"But you must!" insisted Mr. Harding, getting to his feet. "Man alive! I've got all the posters out! You're advertised to appear! You can't let me down like this, Carrington! Confound your whims and fancies!"

Rex felt uncomfortable.

"I'd forgotten that, sir," he admitted. "Couldn't you find a substitute?"

"I could find twenty substitutes—but that's not the point," retorted Mr. Harding. "I thought you were a man of your word, Carrington. It's up to you to keep faith with me. If you want to go back to football, go—but don't leave me in the lurch like this. Fulfil the engagement for which you have been advertised, at any rate."

"Certainly, sir," replied Rex promptly. "I'll keep faith with you. But please don't advertise me for any more contests."

"You're a queer fellow, Carrington," said Mr. Harding, somewhat relieved. "All right. I shall have to make other arrangements, I suppose."

They parted on the best of terms, but Rex Carrington had definitely arranged to ride his last race. Football was calling him, and his old love was irresistible!

The Plotters!

"THAT'S the place," said Mr. Peter Burke, pointing.

"Where?" asked Curly Hankin.

"I can't see it."

"Can't you see the pits?"

"Yes, but—"

"Well, the shed I'm talking about is only a few yards away from there," said the extra-track manager. "That squat building, standing by itself. There's a lane just behind it, so you can get into it with ease, even when the place is packed. And nobody need see you, either."

Burke and Curly Hankin were standing on the railway line, behind the fence. Strictly speaking, they were trespassing on the railway company's property, but this was only a detail. It was late evening—and moonlight. The Speedway lay in shadow, empty and deserted.

Mr. Burke had taken the precaution of coming on to the railway line in case he and his companion were spotted. He could point out the little geographical details quite easily from here, and there was no danger of them being seen by anybody connected with the race track. Although the place looked

empty, it was quite possible that one or two of the employees were knocking about.

"This is very important, Hankin," said Burke. "We can't afford to have any hitch to-morrow evening—while the racing's on. Everything must go slick. If the game works, it'll be a matter of mere seconds. Don't forget that—seconds. So we can't be too thorough in our preparations."

Curly Hankin looked rather nervous.

"I don't believe it'll come off," he said dubiously.

"It won't come off if you've got that craven spirit!" snapped Burke. "By thunder! If you mess this thing up, Hankin, I'll make you suffer! What you've got to do is simple—and only requires quick thought and a bit of nerve. Any fool could do it."

"That's all very well," growled Curly. "If any fool could do it, why don't you get any fool? You know well enough that I'm necessary—because I'm a Blue. Carrington won't take any notice of a stranger. And what of the risk?"

"Risk? There's no risk."

"Yes, there is," insisted Curly. "I'll admit the job's easy, but there's always the chance that something might go wrong—and then where do I stand? I shall get kicked out of the club, and barred from every other club. My living will be gone. And you say there's no risk!"

"You make me tired," snorted Burke. "You're a gambler, Hankin—and every gambler must take chances. Hang it, do you want a guarantee?" he added sourly. "Don't be such a fool! The thing's going to be easy." He pointed again. "Sure you're got that shed in your mind?" he added.

"Yes, of course."

"Well, have a look at the distances," said Burke. "Reckon up how far it is between the shed and the pits. Make a note of where the door stands. Small things, but they're important."

They stood there for some minutes, and Curly Hankin made a close study of the position.

"Come on, then," said Burke, at length. "It doesn't matter so much about your two pals. We shall need them to-morrow, but you're the fellow who'll have to do the main act. It'll be over in a minute, and there's nothing for you to be afraid of."

They walked along the railway track, reached a fence two or three hundred yards further on, and climbed back on to a foot-path which ran beside the railway. Five minutes later they were in one of the lighted streets of Bannington.

Burke was giving Curly Hankin his instructions.

"It must succeed," he concluded. "It can't do anything else. Carrington's name will be ruined, and Harding will find himself in pretty hot water, too."

"What about this other fellow?" asked

Curly. "How do you know that you can rely on him?"

"Smith, you mean? Oh, I know Smith all right!" replied Burke confidently.

After a few more words they parted. It was evident that the precious rascals were arranging something particularly evil against Rex Carrington. That final dirt-track race of his promised to be sensational.

At that particular moment, Rex himself was at the Stronghold, chatting with Fatty Fowkes in the privacy of their own room. At least, it wasn't exactly a chat. Fatty appeared to be doing most of the talking.

and I couldn't let the man down with too big a crash," said Rex uncomfortably. "He seems to think I'm an attraction at the Speedway, and he's advertised me pretty strongly. If I don't appear he'll be let down—and he'll let the public down. You wouldn't have me break faith, Fatty? I've got to appear to-morrow, and it'll be for the last time."

"How do I know that?" asked the big goalie suspiciously. "You're such a changeable chump that you'll probably fix up another date for next week—especially if you win a pot of money to-morrow. This



The Blue Crusaders inspected their luxurious new quarters with enthusiasm and appreciation. Lionel Corcoran, the club's schoolboy owner, had certainly done things on a lavish scale. "By Jove! Isn't it top-hole?" said Fatty Fowkes approvingly.

"You lunatic!" he was saying, in an indignant voice. "You madman! You crazy idiot! What do you mean by it? Didn't you promise me that you'd cut this dirt-track out?"

"Yes, but——"

"But nothing!" snorted Fatty. "Now you come to me and say that you've arranged to race again to-morrow evening! What sort of idiocy do you call that? Good glory! You'll turn me grey before you've done with me!"

"But I couldn't help it, Fatty," protested Rex.

"Couldn't help it be blowed! Haven't you got any will-power?"

"That's why I couldn't help it."

"What do you mean?"

"Harding reminded me of my obligations,

beastly dirt track racing has turned your head."

Rex Carrington smiled.

"It might have done at first, but I'm back to earth again now," he said coolly. "It wasn't altogether my fault in the beginning, either. Piecan misunderstood me, and practically drove me to it. Honestly, Fatty, to-morrow's race will be the last one."

"But why risk it at all?" asked Fatty, cooling down. "Supposing you get crocked? You know how things are! Your last race—and you'll kill yourself!"

"Oh, don't be such a pessimist!" grinned Rex. "Cheese it, Fatty! I'm advertised to appear, and I've got to keep my word."

"I suppose you have," admitted Fatty reluctantly. "But it'll be the last race, won't it?"

"Honour bright," said Rex. "And after that—football!"

Foul Play!

"COME on, No. 1!"
 "Show 'em what you can do, Rex!"

Rex Carrington could not help feeling a thrill of pleasure as the yells of the crowd reached his ears. It was the evening of the next day, and the Speedway was well filled. Crowds of people were enthusiastically awaiting the big handicap race.

It was a fine spring evening, warm and windless, and the Speedway was gleaming with brilliant electric lights. Fatty Fowkes had condescended to come along as a spectator, with Dave Moran and Ben Gillingham and quite a number of other Blues. Fatty was anxious about Rex. He wanted to see this race with his own eyes—just to be certain that everything was all right.

His appearance had given Mr. Peter Burke a bit of a shock at first, but later Burke was pleased. For Rex had witnessed Fatty's arrival—had waved to him, and had seen him taking his place in the stand, although Burke now observed that from the pits Fatty was not in sight.

"All the better!" murmured Burke, into Curly Hankin's ear. "This'll help us! Carrington knows that that fat fool is on the ground, and he'll be all the more willing to fall when the right moment comes."

Burke and Curly Hankin were within that little shed which was so near to the inspection-pits. It was really a stores shed, but it was never visited by any of the Speedway employees during a meeting. Mr. Burke had good reason to know this, since he had been manager, and was well acquainted with such details.

He and his fellow conspirators had been in that little shed for quite a time. Their presence was suspected by nobody; they had watched the crowds pouring into the Speedway. They had witnessed the opening events.

Meanwhile, Rex, down at the pits, was aware of the old thrill. Great as was the lure of football, he nevertheless felt that it would be something of a wrench to give up this wonderful new sport. Speedway racing was fine—it was exhilarating—it was just suited to his temperament.

Not that Rex was wavering. He had made up his mind definitely now. He was a professional footballer, and he would stick to his job. But that was no reason why he shouldn't thoroughly enjoy this last fling on the dirt-track.

He knew that he was up against something special this evening. In addition to Smiling Billy Ross, he was opposed to Gold Helmet Kemp, one of the most successful riders in the country. Kemp had been at the Speedway on the opening day, and Rex knew what kind of a rider he was. Then there were two crack Australian racers—men who had been winning everywhere, and who confidently expected to beat the local celebrities this evening.

But the crowd relied upon Rex to show

these Australians that the Old Country could produce even better riders. Rex was the favourite. A large proportion of the audience had come especially to see him ride.

Officials were bustling about, and Mr. Harding himself was much in evidence. At the pits, the mechanics were hard at work. Engines were being tuned up, and the din was deafening.

"Ready in a couple of minutes," said one of the mechanics, as Rex prepared to wheel his machine on to the track.

"Right," said Rex.

He pulled on his helmet, and adjusted his goggles. A fresh yell went up from the waiting crowd as they observed these signs. Then, just at that moment, Curly Hankin came pushing his way frantically past one or two of the mechanics, and he grabbed Rex by the arm.

"Carrington!" he gasped. "You're wanted—quick!"

Rex stared at him.

"Don't be an ass," he said. "I can't come now."

"But you must!" panted Hankin, his eyes filled with excitement, and his whole manner one of tense alarm. "Fatty's been injured!"

"What!"

"Didn't you see him come in—"

"Yes, of course," shouted Rex. "But I didn't know—"

"It happened a minute ago," said Curly, with a gulp. "He was trying to get round to speak to you, and he fell through the rotten boards of one of the old pits."

"They've carried him into this shed, just here," said Hankin. "He's in a bad way, Carrington! He's asking for you."

"I'll come," said Rex huskily.

It was a simple trick—a cunning dodge—clever because of its simplicity. The old wheeze! But Burke had chosen it because it was liable to be the most effective. Fatty was Rex's best friend, and it was plausible enough that he should have crashed through the rotten boards of an old pit. Rex had no time to get any suspicions into his head.

Fatty was asking for him, and he had to go. He forgot that the race started within two minutes. Nobody else took any notice of the pair, for the air was thick with petrol smoke, and there was the usual confusion.

Rex left his machine and hurried with Curly Hankin to the shed, which was nearby. He plunged in anxiously—and was immediately seized by unknown figures within.

Before Rex could utter half a dozen words, something thick was flung over his face and drawn tight. His goggles were still on his face, although pushed up from his eyes. Yet he had seen nothing, owing to the instantaneous application of that muffler.

In a flash he knew that he had been tricked!

(It looks as if Burke's villainy will be successful, doesn't it? And what's going to happen now? You'll know when you read next Wednesday's exciting instalment, chums!)



Our Weekly Pow-Wow

By
The Editor.

Your Editor welcomes letters from all his readers: send him one now. Address it to: The Editor, "Nelson Lee School Story Library," Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

Marvels of the Future!

IN these days of rapid scientific progress the inventors and designers of mechanical improvements make us hold our breath in awe at the marvels of their craft.

We wonder whether, in the years to come, flying the Atlantic will be a commonplace event, free from all hazard and danger—a trip comparable with the present-day journey from home to office or works.

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"Scorned By The School!"

Nipper faced with expulsion. Nipper scorned by St. Frank's!

It sounds impossible, doesn't it? Nipper is one of the most popular juniors in the whole school, and it seems hard to believe that "public" opinion could change against him. St. Frank's ought to know their Nipper by now. Times without number the Junior School, at any rate, has had to thank him for getting it out of a tight corner. Time and time again the fellows have had ample proof of his sterling, upright character.

Yet the seemingly impossible is to happen—next week. Nipper is in disgrace, and the school is only too ready to believe the worst of him all except Nipper's own special

chums, like Watson, Tregellis - West, Handforth, and a few others.

Of course, the evidence against Nipper is very black indeed. Claude Gore-Pearce has worked his rascally scheme thoroughly and completely.

How will it all end? Does Nipper get expelled?

Next week's school yarn, entitled: "Scorned by the School!" is the real "goods." Dramatically written by Edwy Searles Brooks, this story will grip you. You will sympathise with Nipper; you will wonder how his former schoolfellows can be so harsh and so dense; you will feel as if you want to kick Gore-Pearce for his rascality.

Look out for this really absorbing yarn next Wednesday, chums.

St. Frank's League Activities.

C. R. Villis, of 132, Belgrave Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham, is keen to start a social club in this district, and he will be pleased to hear from all readers who are interested.

J. Watson, 61, Clarence Road, London, E.16, runs a correspondence club. Already he has a large number of members, but,

(Continued overleaf.)



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OUR WEEKLY POW-WOW

(Continued from previous page.)

being ambitious, he is desirous to extend mine, and wants to rope in "Nelson Lees" from all over the world. Here's a chance for some of you!

Wants to Become a "Copper."

W. E. Swonnell, of Brighton, has written asking me to give him some information about joining the police force. The minimum age to join is twenty-one, and there are no rigid regulations concerning height—except in the case of London City policemen, who must be six feet or over—providing you are of good physique and medically fit, and have a good general knowledge. My chum is nearly nineteen, and stands five feet eight and a half inches in his socks. Will he be the necessary height by the time he finishes growing? he asks. Well, boys do not stop growing until they are at least twenty-one, so I see no reason why my Brighton chum should not be eligible as far as height is concerned by the time he reaches manhood.

The best way to gain height, of course, is to get plenty of exercise—especially stretching exercises.

"Between Ourselves."

This feature has unavoidably been held out of this week's issue owing to lack of space, but it will, of course, appear next Wednesday as usual.

THE EDITOR.

CORRESPONDENTS WANTED.

S. Hanton, c/o Flower & Hart, Solicitors, 313, 315, Adelaide Street, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia, wants to hear from stamp collectors. Will give 10 foreign specimens for every Linderberg or Canberra.

Jack Leader, 219, Alma Road, Ponders End, Middlesex, wants NELSON LEE Nos. 1-12, old series.

R. H. Petersen, Market Street, Riversdale, Cape Province, South Africa, wishes to correspond with readers in England interested in cycling and motoring.

J. Cannon, Glengar, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal, Ireland, wants to hear from readers outside British Isles; letters answered without delay.

Fred Read, 122, Salisbury Road, Reading, Berks, has NELSON LEEs from No. 400 onwards for sale or exchange.

A. Mitchell, 169, Morgan Street, Wagga Wagga, N.S.W., Australia, wants to hear from match brand collectors.

Reg Dixon, 71, Boston Road, Mt. Eden, Auckland, New Zealand, wants to act as New Zealand secretary of a correspondence club.

Leonard Hill, 871, Old Kent Road, Camberwell, London, S.E.15, wants to hear from readers in Ireland.

W. Knight, Merle, New Sandgate Road, Clayfield, Queensland, Australia, wants to hear from readers.

A. Harvey, 63, Kingston Street, Hockley, Birmingham, is desirous of purchasing back numbers of the NELSON LEE.

L. Saunders, 71, Manners Road, Southsea, Hants., has back numbers of the NELSON LEE for sale.

Will Norris, Larnie, 76, Young Street, Cremorne, Sydney, N.S.W., Australia, wants correspondents in Surrey, Essex, and London.

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