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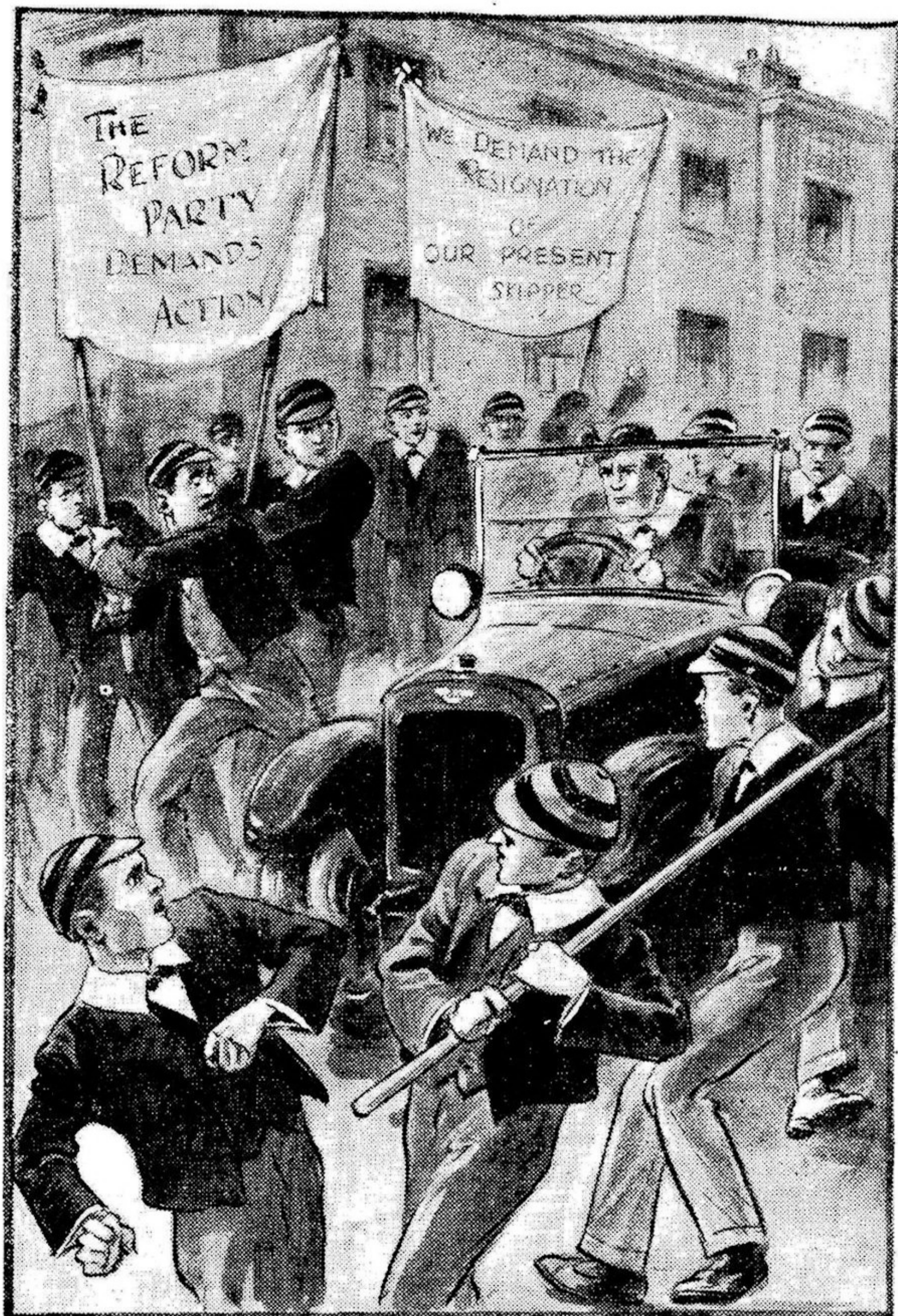
SCORNE
BY
THE **SCHOOL!**

A powerful long complete story of school life, featuring Nipper and
the Chums of St. Frank's,

New Series No. 156.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

April 27th, 1929.



"Hi, mind where you're coming! Run! He's gone mad!" shouted the startled Reformers as Handforth drove his Austin Seven right into the midst of the procession. But Handforth was far from mad. He had intended to disorganise the procession—and he was doing it only too well!

Start This Fine Yarn Now—You'll Enjoy Every Line Of It!

SCORNED BY THE SCHOOL!



By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

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

Nipper faced with expulsion; the school against him—thanks to Gore-Pearce! Nipper is in real trouble—the evidence against him is as black as ink—but he's still smiling. He's leader of the Old Timers, and he's not going to squeal!—Ed.

CHAPTER 1.

A Guilty Conscience!

"WAKE up, Bell! Quick!"

Gulliver shook Bell by the shoulder, and there was an urgent note in his voice; in fact, an agitated note. Bell, of the Remove, blinked and yawned and half sat up.

"What's the matter?" he muttered dazedly.

"Gore-Pearce is ill!"

"Who cares?" grunted Bell.

"There's something wrong with him, I tell you——"

"I'm not a doctor!" complained Bell, falling back on to his pillow. "What's the idea of waking me up, you idiot? Just as I was in the middle of a ripping dream, too! What's the time?"

"I don't know—about three o'clock. I should say," muttered Gulliver uneasily. "Listen to him! What do you think we ought to do?"

The two Removites were not very useful fellows in an emergency. Bell, indeed, was peevish because he had been awakened, and his only desire was to be left alone.

The Ancient House at St. Frank's was very quiet. The April night was calm and windless, and when Gulliver had looked out of the window he had caught a vision of twinkling stars overhead. It was certainly no outside cause that had rendered Claude Gore-Pearce's sleep uneasy.

That it was uneasy became very evident to Bell.

For Gore-Pearce, the millionaire's son, was tossing from side to side in a spasmodic sort of way. Now and again he would mutter something in his sleep, although Gulliver had not been able to catch any actual words.

"Tummy-ache I should think," said Bell sourly. "He'll be all right before long. What's the idea of worrying? Let's get to sleep. Blow him!"

"He's knocked the blankets off twice, and I've put 'em back," said Gulliver in low voice. "I shook him, too, but he didn't wake up. Do you think I ought to run

along and fetch a prefect, or something?"

"What the deuce for?" asked Bell. "Only make things worse. And how do you suppose we can get to sleep with prefects fooling about in here?"

They both looked at the third occupant of their dormitory as he made a louder sound than usual, and rather to their consternation Gore-Pearce sat up in bed. He panted, just as though he had been doing some hard running.

"I didn't—I didn't!" he gasped hoarsely.

"Here, I say!" muttered Bell, with a jump.

"Didn't I tell you?" asked Gulliver.

"There's something wrong with him!"

"Nipper's a liar!" exclaimed Gore-Pearce frantically. "I didn't knock him down—I didn't do it at all! I tell you I—"

His voice trailed away, and he sank back, breathing more evenly. The brief spasm seemed to be over. But Bell, by now, was thoroughly awake, convinced that something was undoubtedly the matter. This was no mere case of indigestion.

"I suppose we had better do something!" he said, looking at Gulliver in the gloom. "I mean, talking in his sleep! A bit thick, what? And what did the ass mean? He said something about Nipper."

"You can't take much notice of what people say in their sleep," said Gulliver. "He was having a nightmare, that's all."

"Rot!" said Bell. "People don't have nightmares unless they've got something on their minds. They don't talk like Gore-Pearce did, anyhow. What does he know about Nipper?"

"A lot more than he'd tell us, anyway," grunted Gulliver. "We suspected something last night, didn't we? And yet when we questioned him he only shut us up. Gad! I wonder if Gore-Pearce knows all about that rotten affair? Looks fishy, anyhow."

They had no desire for sleep again just yet. In fact, they waited, not without curiosity, for Gore-Pearce's next spasm. Their alarm had died down; they had become callously curious. Their leader's indisposition aroused very little sympathy in them. If there was a chance of him talking in his sleep again, they were prepared to listen—with all ears.

"I believe that G.P. could tell us a whole lot about that affair last night," said Bell, after a pause. "It'll be a darned good thing if Nipper goes, of course, but you can't get me to believe that he deliberately got squiffy like that."

"Oh, well, what does it matter?" said Gulliver. "He's going to be sacked in the morning. Good riddance to him!"

GULLIVER and Bell did not hesitate to speak frankly in the privacy of their own dormitory. They would, indeed, be heartily pleased to see the back of Nipper, the sturdy skipper of the Remove.

And there were clear indications that Nipper was booked for a whole pile of trouble on the morrow. Nobody in the school knew any exact details, but rumours

had been flying around. It was known, at least, that Nipper had been found lying in the lane, apparently intoxicated.

What was more to the point, he had been found by Dr. Morrison Nicholls himself, and by Mr. Pycraft, of the Fourth. The evidence, it was whispered, was so strong against him that Nipper didn't stand an earthly chance. Nipper himself had not appeared publicly since the sensation, so his own chums and intimates had had no chance of talking with him, or of getting an explanation out of him. It was said that he had been sent into the sanatorium—to sleep off his stupor.

Anyhow, bed-time had come, and Nipper had not been allowed to mix with his Form-fellows. So rumour had been busier than ever.

Gulliver and Bell, perhaps, were in a better position to judge the true state of affairs than anybody else. For they had noticed a subtle difference in Claude Gore-Pearce, their leader. He had seemed jumpy, nervous and snappy. He had refused to answer their questions, and, when they had mentioned Nipper, he had become positively nasty.

It was significant to Gulliver and Bell that Gore-Pearce had been absent from St. Frank's at the very time of Nipper's escapade; and when he had eventually turned up he had been excited and strange. His refusal to answer any questions spoke volumes.

Just at present, St. Frank's was having a pretty warm time of it, what with the squabbles between the Old-Timers and the Reformers. The Junior School was particularly affected. The Reformers, led by Gore-Pearce, had been making a strong bid for power; and this sudden disaster to Nipper was received with consternation by the Old Timers.

It was really all the fault of Dr. Morrison Nicholls. As a headmaster, he was a bit of a novelty. Nobody doubted his sincerity, his cleverness, his fitness for his appointment. He was a brilliant man in every way—and a kindly, generous man, too. Perhaps he was a trifle too earnest and assiduous. For, in his desire to further the interests of St. Frank's and to "cleanse" the old school, he was putting a very remarkable experiment into operation.

He believed that many boys were constantly and deliberately breaking the school rules—and breaking them in such a way that there was not one chance in a thousand of their being detected by the powers that were. The other boys—the majority—knew of these misdemeanours, but were prevented from reporting them because of their unwritten law against sneaking.

The Head, in a word, was attempting to abolish this unwritten law.

And he had aroused a storm of protest. He maintained that there was nothing dishonourable in a boy complaining to those in authority if he was being persecuted by other boys. Then, again, it often happened that many boys, weak-willed, were con-

stantly being involved in questionable escapades—when, actually, they would much prefer to keep out of them. They were afraid to back out because they would be scorned and laughed at; they were afraid to report these misdeeds because they would be called sneaks, and therefore be treated with contempt.

It was the Head's desire to alter all this. He wanted to make St. Frank's "a school fit for honourable boys to live in." Experience had proved that the old system was wrong. Generation after generation, the evils persisted; they were always undercurrents of wrong-doing which masters could never stem. It was for the boys themselves to co-operate in this great movement.

But St. Frank's received the suggestion with deep suspicion. Most of the fellows, indeed, resented this gross interference with their time-honoured traditions. They regarded sneaking as a crime. Yet the Head said it was permissible! He wanted to reverse the whole order of things.

Whilst the seniors affected a lordly indifference to the whole absurdity, the juniors became actively engaged in warfare. Claude Gore-Pearce saw his chance to gain power. He embraced the Head's suggestions wholeheartedly, and appointed himself president of the Reform Party.

The Reformers pledged themselves to inform openly, and on every possible occasion. They were embracing Dr. Nicholls' theories and putting them into practice. It must be admitted that they had a very powerful "pull," since the headmaster himself was behind their movement and supporting it with his approval. Lots of fellows joined the Reformers because they felt that this was the line of least resistance. Ultimately they would be compelled to embrace these new ideas, so why not now? No sense in fighting against the Head!

It was in this way that Gore-Pearce had got his party together, and there had been some lively encounters between the Reformers and the Old Timers. Nipper, of course, was heartily in favour of sticking to the old principles. He did not believe in sneaking, and he wanted to prove to the Head that this theory was incapable of being put into successful practice.

But there were indications that Nipper would never be allowed to finish his job. At the present moment he was in the sanatorium, and the whole school knew that in the morning he would be hauled into Big Hall and publicly expelled!

"**H**E'S starting again!" said Bell, in an awed voice.

"By gad, so he is!" muttered Gulliver.

Sitting in their own beds, they regarded Gore-Pearce uneasily. This was something new to them—something just a trifle alarming. They could hardly credit that Gore-Pearce was not conscious of his actions.

He was sitting up again, after having violently flung all the bedclothes to the floor, and now he was breathing hard.

"Cheese it, Gore-Pearce!" said Gulliver. "What's the matter with you? Don't you feel well?"

But it was obvious that Gore-Pearce heard nothing.

"That's finished you!" he said, in a harsh, gloating voice.

"Eh?" gasped Bell.

"Shut up!" hissed Gulliver. "Listen! He's talking in his sleep again!"

"You'll get the sack for this!" continued Gore-Pearce. "Nobody will ever guess that



I knocked you out, and then swamped you with whisky. The Head's coming, and he'll find you here——"

His voice trailed away, only to take on a different note—a shriller note—as he began to utter further disjointed sentences.

"It's all fixed!" he panted. "I've 'phoned the White Harp. They'll back me up. You're done, you cad! Don't look at me like that! I didn't mean to hit you very hard—— Keep away from me! Keep away——"

His voice rose nearly to a shriek, and he suddenly fell back, shivering violently. His eyes opened, and he looked round in a wild, terrific way. Then gradually relief came to him.

"Gad!" he muttered. "What a perfectly rotten dream!"

CHAPTER 2.

Improving the Shining Hour!

CLAUDE GORE-PEARCE had no idea at first that Gulliver and Bell were awake, watching him, but he knew very soon afterwards, for when he climbed shakily out of bed to recover his blankets and quilt, he found Gulliver staring at him.

"You gave me a start!" he ejaculated fiercely. "You fool! Why couldn't you speak? Why sit there like a confounded image?"

"Are you awake, Gore-Pearce?" asked Gulliver.

"Awake! Of course I'm awake."

"Sure?" came Bell's voice.

"Great Scott! Are you awake, too?" said Claude, spinning round. "What's the big idea? You fellows off your heads?"

"No," said Gulliver, "but we want to be certain that you're awake. You've been having a nightmare."

Gore-Pearce started.

"How do you know?" he asked sharply.

"Of course, it may be guesswork on our part," said Gulliver, with sarcasm, "but when a fellow tosses about like a ship in a rough sea, and chucks all his bedclothes on the floor, and then starts shrieking, there's a bit of a hint that he's having a nightmare. I may be wrong, of course——"

"Did I do all that?" asked Gore-Pearce blankly.

"You did! And more!"

"More?"

"Lots more," said Gulliver coolly. "But don't stand there staring. Get back into bed, and I hope you won't disturb us any more. How do you think Bell and I can sleep if you spend your time jabbering about your personal affairs?"

"Jabbering?" ejaculated Gore-Pearce, in alarm, as he got back into bed. "Rot! I may have given some sort of yell—I seem to remember that—but that's all. Sorry if I put the wind up you."

"Bell was going to fetch a prefect to you," said Gulliver.

"Jolly good thing he didn't," said Gore-Pearce, with a grunt. "I'm all right. Must have had something squiffy for supper. That veal and ham pie, probably. Queer, too—because it's not often that I wake up in the middle of the night."

"It'll be rising bell soon," said Gulliver impatiently. "We shall be as heavy as lead because of this. Still, there's going to be some excitement after prayers, so I dare say it'll wake us up pretty thoroughly."

"Excitement?"

"Isn't Nipper going to be sacked?"

"By gad! I'd forgotten."

"Draw it mild!" put in Bell. "You know thundering well you hadn't forgotten, Gore-Pearce. Considering it's you that's getting him the sack, you couldn't very well forget it. You played a very low-down trick on him, didn't you? I'm not any too particular, but, dash it, there's a limit!"

"That's what I think, too," said Gulliver gruffly.

Gore-Pearce felt his heart beating more rapidly, and he glanced from one to the other.

"What do you mean, you fools?" he snapped. "I don't know anything about the rotten affair! What should I know? I was at the school all the time."

"That's what you say, of course—but how do we know?" asked Gulliver. "Would you like me to tell you where you really were, and what you did?"

"You're mad!" said Claude sourly. "I was trying to think of some words for a cross-word puzzle, and I was mooching about in the cloisters, where it's quiet. I didn't know anything about Nipper until he was half-carried into the Triangle, squiffy, by the Head and old Pycraft."

Gore-Pearce tried to speak carelessly. Realising, perhaps, the blackguardly nature of his offence, he did not even want his own pals to know of the despicable part he had played.

"You can tell that yarn to the Marines!" said Gulliver, with a sniff. "You were no more in the cloisters than I was. You were in the lane."

"Hang you, I wasn't!"

"Cheese it!" said Bell sceptically. "Why, you told us yourself that you were going down to the White Harp to see that bookie, Poole. You even asked us to go with you."

Gore-Pearce had forgotten this, but he was ready.

"I changed my mind," he retorted. "I didn't go. If you don't believe me, ask Porlock the next time you see him."

"Might as well expect to get Handy to smoke a cigarette," sneered Gulliver. "Porlock would naturally back you up, the old liar! You went to the village, and on your way back you met Nipper."

"I tell you I never went out——"

"And you knocked Nipper out, and then swamped him with whisky," continued Gulliver relentlessly. "You knew that the Head was coming along, and you knew that Nipper would be discovered. That knock-out would be a pretty good imitation of intoxication, and what with the whisky——"

"Stop!" panted Gore-Pearce. "How did you know all this?"

"It's true, then?"

"What's the good of denying it?" snarled Claude. "You rotten spies! One of you must have been watching me! I dare say you were behind the hedge all the time, eh? Of all the filthy tricks——"

"You're a fine chap to talk about filthy tricks!" broke in Bell hotly. "We shall all be glad to get rid of Nipper, but, hang it, there might have been a better way than this! I didn't think you were capable of such a dirty game. And as for accusing us of spying on you——"

"If you weren't spying, how did you know?"

"You told us," said Bell.

"Don't tell lies! I haven't breathed a word to you!"

"You told us not ten minutes ago," said Gulliver unpleasantly. "Didn't we tell you that you'd been jabbering? You were talking in your sleep, you idiot! Conscience pricking you, eh?"

Claude Gore-Pearce could have kicked himself. He had given himself away unnecessarily; for if he had steadfastly denied what his cronies had suggested, they would probably have concluded that his talking had been merely a part of a nightmare. By accusing one of them of spying, however, he had clearly admitted that the story was perfectly true. And now it was too late to deny it. He had given himself away in his sleep.

This thought startled Gore-Pearce—for it proved to him that his conscience was, indeed, affecting his peace of mind.

He tried to convince himself that this was wrong—that he had nothing to worry about. Nipper wasn't hurt, and he would only be expelled. A good riddance to him! And there wasn't the slightest possibility of the truth coming out. For Nipper would never

dream of sneaking. This much Gore-Pearce knew. He, the advocate of sneaking, knew that Nipper would not inform, even when it was to save his own honour.

This only made Gore-Pearce's attitude the more contemptible.

He fought down those conscience prickings. It must not be supposed that he was repentant or remorseful. Not a bit. If his conscience troubled him at all, it was because he felt a doubt for the safety of his own skin.

"Well, what are you going to do about it?" he asked sourly. "I took advantage of the opportunity—that's all. Nipper was knocked out; the Head was coming and I suddenly thought of the whisky."

"What I can't understand is how the deuce you managed to knock him out," said Gulliver wonderingly. "You must have caught him when he wasn't looking."

"You fool!" snarled Gore-Pearce. "We had a scrap, and Nipper lost. I fought him fairly, and knocked him clean out."

Gulliver and Bell were silent—and this silence was significant. They did not believe that incredible statement; for whilst Nipper was the champion boxer of the Remove, Gore-Pearce was soft and flabby. To think of him delivering a knock-out in a fair fight was fantastic.

And Claude's pals were right in their assumption. Actually Gore-Pearce had struck Nipper while the latter had been in the act of peeling off his jacket—whilst his arms had been held by the half-removed garment.

"You'll keep mum, too," went on Gore-Pearce savagely. "By gad! If you fellows breathe a word to anybody else I'll finish with you! Once Nipper has gone, we shall have a good chance of gaining power in the Remove. And we don't want any of the fellows to know that I had a hand in get-



ting Nipper expelled. Don't forget that I'm the president of the Reform Party."

"Don't be such a humbug!" snapped Gulliver. "That sort of piffle may be swallowed by the rank and file, but it's not swallowed by us. We're your pals—and we know you too well!"

"What do you mean, hang you?"

"I mean what I say!" retorted Gulliver indignantly. "You're a fraud, Gore-Pearce—and you know it! A rotten, tricky fraud! This Reform Party is only a stunt—a wheeze to get you a bit of notoriety. You can't fool

us! What do you care about the good of St. Frank's? Not a snap!"

"You—you—"

"And if you want us to keep this rotten secret of yours, you'll have to be pretty nice to us," said Gulliver calmly. "Won't he Bell?"

"Rather!" said Bell, catching on.

EVER since Gore-Pearce had arrived at St. Frank's, these weak, characterless fellows had been under his thumb.

His domination had been fairly mild to begin with; but, gradually, he had exerted an increasing influence.

Now he looked like becoming as unscrupulous and as daring as their former leader—a fellow named Bernard Forrest, who had been drummed out of the school in disgrace. Gore-Pearce was becoming a fitting successor to that young rascal.

And Gulliver and Bell were glad enough to seize an opportunity to assert themselves. Gore-Pearce was a millionaire's son, and he held the purse-strings. Generally, he forced these other two juniors to do all his errands for him, all the work of the study, and, very often, his impots—and occasionally his prep. They were getting a bit fed-up with it all—forgetting, perhaps, that without Gore-Pearce behind them they would have had a pretty lean time of it.

But now there was a ray of hope. Gore-Pearce had a secret—and they knew it. He did not want that secret to go any further. It was in keeping with their characters that they should seek to use the information to their own advantage. They never failed to remember that Gore-Pearce was always well supplied with pocket-money.

"Nice?" said Gore-Pearce, staring.

He was rather startled by that remark of Gulliver's—and more than startled by Gulliver's cool tone. There was an insolence about it which was not in keeping with Gulliver's general character. It instantly occurred to Gore-Pearce that these precious pals of his were seeking to improve the shining hour.

He glared at them in the gloom of the dormitory. He could not see their triumphant expressions.

"Yes, nice," said Gulliver. "You're asking favours of us, and we're ready to oblige—on conditions. I dare say if we try hard enough we'll manage to keep quiet about your trick on Nipper."

"You'd better try hard, then—or I'll take it out of you!" snapped Gore-Pearce. "What's the idea? What do you think you're having a game at? If you use that tone to me, Gulliver, I'll—"

"I'm broke!" yawned Gulliver. "I was wondering if you could lend me a couple of quid in the morning?"

"What!"

"I'm broke, too, funnily enough," said Bell. "What price springing a couple each, Gore-Pearce?"

Claude breathed hard.

"What's this—blackmail?" he asked harshly.

"Here, steady!" protested Gulliver. "No need to use a rotten term like that. But what about our duty?"

"Duty!" gasped Claude.

"We're staunch supporters of the Reform Party," said Gulliver firmly. "In fact, we're vice-presidents. Dash it, we've got to stick to our principles, haven't we? Or, if we don't stick to 'em, we need a little something to inflict us with loss of memory."

"Why, you—you——"

"On your own showing, Gore-Pearce, our duty is plain," said Gulliver calmly. "As Reformers, with our heart and soul in the welfare of St. Frank's, we've got to go to the Head in the morning and tell him the truth. It's the policy of the Reformers—the policy that you have championed. So if you don't want us to do our duty, you'll have to convince us that there's a better way."

"By bribing you, eh?" sneered Gore-Pearce.

"By lending us a couple of quid each," said Bell.

"Isn't it the same thing?"

"You can call it what you like, but we are hard up and we need a bit of cash," said Gulliver, with more assurance than ever. "We asked you to lend us a bit yesterday and you refused. Are you still inclined to refuse?"

Claude Gore-Pearce seemed to swallow something.

"I'll think about it," he said thickly.

"We'll think about it, too," nodded Gulliver. "Let's get to sleep again now. We'll give you until breakfast-time to do your thinking, old man. If, by then, there's nothing doing in the cash line, I'm afraid we shall have to do our duty in Big Hall, and tell the Head that you've developed talking in your sleep!"

And Gulliver and Bell, satisfied that they had got the upper hand, turned over and peacefully went to sleep. It did not occur to them that by this act of petty blackmail they were not only condoning Gore-Pearce's offence, but going one worse.

As for Gore-Pearce, he found sleep difficult.

He was restless and uneasy. He was haunted by the fear that something might go wrong—that some little thing would crop up, and expose him for the rascally cad he was.

To add to his worries, his own study-mates were now in league against him, and likely to cause a lot of trouble before they had done. How could he be certain that this cash demand would be the only one?

It has been well said that the way of the transgressor is hard!

CHAPTER 3

Rallying Round Nipper!

"FIVE past six!" said Handforth indignantly.

He was sitting up in bed, glaring at the innocent face of his watch, which he had just pulled from beneath the pillow. The April sunshine was streaming slantingly through the dormitory window, and there was every indication that the day would be a fine one.

Handforth didn't approve of it.

"Of course, it would be a glorious morning!" he frowned. "On a day like this it ought to be pouring with rain—thick with fog—black with threatening clouds! Poor old Nipper's going to get it in the neck."

He jumped out of bed, and yanked hold of Church and McClure, who were the other occupants of this particular dormitory. He was rather wild with himself for being five minutes late, for he had made up his mind, overnight, to awaken at six o'clock.

Handforth had often done this sort of thing. Almost without exception he had awakened at the sound of the rising-bell, and had expressed amazement that he should have neglected to arouse himself at the appointed hour.

But for once the thing had worked—which indicated, perhaps, the intensity of Handforth's feeling. It was a sign, moreover, of his deep concern for his friend, Nipper. Nipper was in trouble, and Handforth hated the idea of lying in bed doing nothing.

"But what's the good of it, Handy?" asked Church helplessly. "What can we do, even if we get dressed and go down?"

"We can rally round Nipper—and help him," replied Handforth. "He's going to get the sack this morning—everybody says so, even Mr. Lee—and we ought to lend him a hand."

"That's all very well," protested McClure. "But didn't Mr. Lee tell us last night that Nipper is in the sanny? Even supposing we are allowed to see him, what can we do? If he's going to get the sack, he'll get the sack. You're not going to suggest that we should go to the Head, are you?"

"Might as well go to a Spanish Inquisitor!" said Handforth bitterly. "It's a downright shame! Why can't he believe in Nipper? Why should he think such rotten things? We all know that Nipper is innocent, so why doesn't the Head know it?"

Church and McClure had no sympathy with Handforth in this argument. They knew that Dr. Nicholls was acting according to the evidence that was in his possession.

None of the Remove fellows had seen Nipper since the "tragedy." They had seen him marched in, between Dr. Nicholls and Mr. Pycraft, and after that the rumours had flown round at express speed. Before bed-time it was definitely known that Nipper had been found guilty of visiting the White Harp, purchasing whisky, and imbibing it on the way home.



There was a sudden rush of juniors. Nipper found himself bowled over, and next moment he was being pelted with mud. It was a humiliating position for the once popular Junior Skipper.

Naturally, such fellows as Tregellis-West and Watson, Handforth & Co., Archie Glenthorne and Reggie Pitt—such fellows as these scoffed at the story. They simply refused to believe it.

Yet when Nelson Lee—Nipper's own beloved guv'nor, and the Housemaster of the Ancient House—had solemnly assured them that there was very little hope, they had been compelled to fear the worst. Incidentally, Leo had made it clear that he held the personal view that Nipper was the victim of a plot, and that Nipper could say a lot if he chose to do so.

But Nipper preferred to remain silent—and, in consequence, the Head would be compelled to inflict punishment, and nothing less than expulsion could possibly meet the demands of this case.

"There's something we can do, surely?" said Handforth, as he got dressed. "Anyhow, let's rouse up the others, and hold a conference."

TWENTY minutes later, just as the school clock was chiming the half hour, a group of Removites marched out into the sunshine of the Triangle. Tregellis-West and Watson were there, of course; also Fullwood, Harry Gresham, Travers, and one or two more. Even Archie Glenthorne had leapt out of bed without hesitation when he knew what was on the move.

Reggie Pitt and Jack Grey and Castleton and a few other West House stalwarts joined the Ancient House group in the Triangle. This was a very exceptional occasion, and the need was urgent.

"Well, we've kept our word, and we're here," said Reggie Pitt gravely. "But now we're here, what can we do?"

"Absolutely," said Archie. "Rather a knobby one, what? Dear old Nipper needs us, but how can we do the rallying round? It rather seems to me that the outlook is poisonously black."

"I've been thinking," said Handforth grimly.

"Then the situation must be serious," murmured Castleton.

"Don't rot!" frowned Handforth. "I'll put up with your rot at any ordinary time, but not this morning!"

"Sorry!" said Castleton. "Go ahead, old man."

"Well, why shouldn't we go in a body to the Head's house?" asked Handforth eagerly. "If necessary, we'll invade the Head's giddy bed-room! We'll tell him that Nipper couldn't have made a fool of himself like that, and that the Remove won't stand it!"

"The trouble with you, Handy, is that you always think of something violent," said Reggie Pitt, shaking his head. "It wouldn't do. The Head wouldn't listen to us—and, in any case, we haven't even the ghost of a leg to stand on."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, Nipper was found squiffy in the lane—by the Head himself," replied Pitt. "No circumstantial evidence about that. He was reported to be at the White Harp, and according to what we hear, he was at the White Harp."

"I don't believe it!" broke in Tommy Watson indignantly.

"Is it really difficult to believe?" asked Pitt. "Only a day or two earlier, Nipper had been seen coming out of the White Harp, and he was flogged for it—just because he wouldn't sneak and tell the real truth. We all know that he went in the place to save one of our chaps from making a fool of himself."

"That chump, Hubbard!" nodded Handforth gruffly.

"Hubbard tried to confess, but his story sounded so thin that the Head wouldn't listen," continued Pitt. "Can you blame the Head for taking it for granted that Nipper was in the White Harp again? And how do we know that he didn't go there for some purpose?"

"Oh, it's a rotten tangle," said Watson miserably.

"It wouldn't be a tangle if Nipper would only tell his own story, dear old boys," said Tregellis-West. "That's the trouble, begad! He won't sneak because of his principles."

"Good luck to him!" said Reggie Pitt. "Even at any ordinary time he wouldn't sneak, but just now it's more impossible than ever. Isn't he the leader of the Old-Timers! Isn't he the champion of the old code, and hard against Gore-Pearce's sneaking Reformers?"

"I'll bet Gore-Pearce knows something about this business!" said Handforth fiercely.

"I wouldn't be surprised, but there's no proof," agreed Pitt. "And as Nipper won't peach, he'll have to take his medicine. Let's resign ourselves to it. My idea is to save him from the awful ordeal of public expulsion."

"Save him?" asked Gresham. "How?"

"One thing's certain—he's got to leave St. Frank's," said Reggie. "Only his own blabbing can save him—and that's washed out."

"The chap who plotted against him could own up," said Watson.

"He could—but he won't," said Pitt. "So Nipper's got to go. Why can't we smuggle him out of the school before breakfast? Then the Head will be dished. There'll be no public expulsion. We shall be spared that rot, anyhow—and Nipper himself will be well away."

"I don't like it," said Handforth gruffly. "It's almost admitting that he's guilty."

"No, it isn't," argued Castleton. "Pitt's right. If we can spare Nipper that ordeal, all the better. I'm jiggered if I can see how we're going to work it, though."

"He's in the sanny," said Reggie calmly, "and I happen to know that the nurse in charge from six o'clock till eight is Dora Manners. She's rather a pal of ours, by the way."

"By George!" said Handforth, with a start.

It was quite true that the fellows were on very friendly terms with Nurse Dora—the pretty cousin of Irene Manners—and there wasn't much doubt that she would help them in their enterprise.

"It's a wheeze!" went on Handforth eagerly. "But we can't just go there and take him away. What if he's spotted leaving? He'd be collared and taken back. How about taking a trunk with us?"

"A trunk?" asked Church wonderingly.

"We could smuggle him into it and carry him off."

"No good, Handy, dear old fellow," said Vivian Travers. "Too fearfully obvious. How often do we go to the sanny with a whacking great trunk?"

"How often? We've never been before!"

"Then don't you think that somebody would smell a rat?" asked Travers. "A trunk isn't a thing we could tuck into one of our pockets. But how often do nurses leave the sanny?"

"Nurses? Every day, of course—lots of times a day," said Handforth.

"There you are, then!" said Travers, shrugging his shoulders.

"What are you getting at, fathead?"

"Dora's got a kind heart," said Travers dreamily. "She must have, because she's got a kind face. Surely, under pressure, she'd lend us one of her uniforms for once? Nipper may be a bit broad in the shoulder, but I dare say he'd pass muster—"

"Travers, you're a genius!" said Reggie Pitt briskly. "It's a go!"

"You—you mean—" began Handforth, with a yell.

"Exactly," said Travers. "Let's go and find Nurse Nipper!"

DORA MANNERS bore out Travers' estimate of her. Her heart proved kindly enough, anyhow, for the task in hand. She raised no objections when the juniors asked her for the loan of a uniform. Indeed, she expressed wholehearted sympathy in the enterprise, and consented to do everything she could to further it.

"But you'll have to be careful," she warned them. "I'm afraid that Nipper might be recognised by somebody as he goes out—"

"Not if we surround him enough," said Travers. "People will only think that we've all gone sweet on one of the nurses. I'm wondering if you'll get into trouble, Dora? We don't want to involve you, dear old girl."

"I shall be all right," said Dora confidently. "I'm not supposed to be on guard, am I? And Nipper isn't a patient, anyhow. He isn't locked in, either. He's in one of the private wards. I shall take care to be very busy with one of the patients for the next half-hour."

"Good for you!" said Reggie briskly. "You're a brick, Dora."

They were speaking in the lobby of the sanny, and at this early hour there was not much chance of any of the masters being up.

Dora went off at once, and left the coast clear for the conspirators. She had not forgotten to mention that a uniform, direct from the laundry, would be found in the clothes cupboard, on the upper landing.

"Come on!" said Handforth breathlessly.

They crept softly upstairs, and within a minute or two they were outside Ward No. 16. Tregellis-West softly opened the door, and peeped in. Nipper was standing over by the window, fully dressed.

"Hallo, Montie," he said, with a smile. "Come in, old man. By Jove! I must be worse than ever!" he added. "I can see about a dozen of you!"

"Really, old boy, it's frightful to hear you jokin' on such a subject," protested Montie, pained. "We thought you'd be in bed."

They all crowded into the ward, and Nipper regarded them with friendly eyes. He thought it was very decent of them to get up so early, in order to have a private word with him before the ordeal.

"You've got to put yourself entirely in our hands," declared Handforth firmly. "We've got a uniform for you here, and we're going to smuggle you out and get you right away from the school before breakfast. How's that?"

Nipper looked at Dora's uniform; he looked at the juniors, and then he grinned.

"You're a solemn lot!" he said dryly. "My hat! Anybody might think it was my funeral! As for escaping in disguise—nothing doing."

"What!"

"Thanks all the same, but I'm staying here to face the music!" said Nipper.

CHAPTER 4.

The Head's Decision!

EVERYBODY was startled.

"But look here, old man!" urged Reggie Pitt. "You're going to be sacked. According to all we hear, nothing can save you. You're booked for the chopper, so why not skip off before the curtain goes up? Why give the Head the pleasure of publicly expelling you?"

"Yes, why?" demanded Handforth fiercely.

"You're wrong," said Nipper quietly. "It won't give him any pleasure. He's not that sort. If I know anything about Dr. Nicholls, he'll be most fearfully cut up over the whole business. He's got cranky ideas, but he's one of the best."

"You say that after he's sentenced you to the sack!"

"He hasn't."

"But he's bound to give you the sack!" protested Watson.

"I suppose he is—but he hasn't sentenced me yet," said Nipper.

"Don't quibble!" said Handforth sternly. "You know jolly well that you're going to be bunked. And whether it gives the Head any pleasure or not, you ought to take notice of your pals. We've come here to smuggle you out, and we're not going to be dished. What about taking him by force, you chaps?"

"No," said Pitt. "If he doesn't want to come, that ends it."

The others agreed, and Handforth was squashed.

"Why are you so keen on this?" asked Nipper curiously. "You don't think I'm guilty, do you?"

"That's unkind," said Pitt, shaking his head. "We've come here to help you because we know that you're innocent. If you had really got yourself squiffy, as the evidence indicates, we wouldn't help you. You wouldn't deserve to be helped."

"That's true," said Nipper.

"But we rely on our common sense rather than the evidence," continued Pitt. "We just know that you couldn't be guilty of a crazy thing like that. And we're just as certain that some rotter played a dirty trick on you. Shall I be far wrong if I suggest Gore-Pearce?"

Nipper smiled.

"Pretty obvious, isn't it?" he said calmly.

"Then it was Gore-Pearce?" shouted Handforth.

"Of course it was."

"By George! Where is he?" said Edward Oswald, spinning round. "Come on, you chaps! Let's find Gore-Pearce and make him own up!"

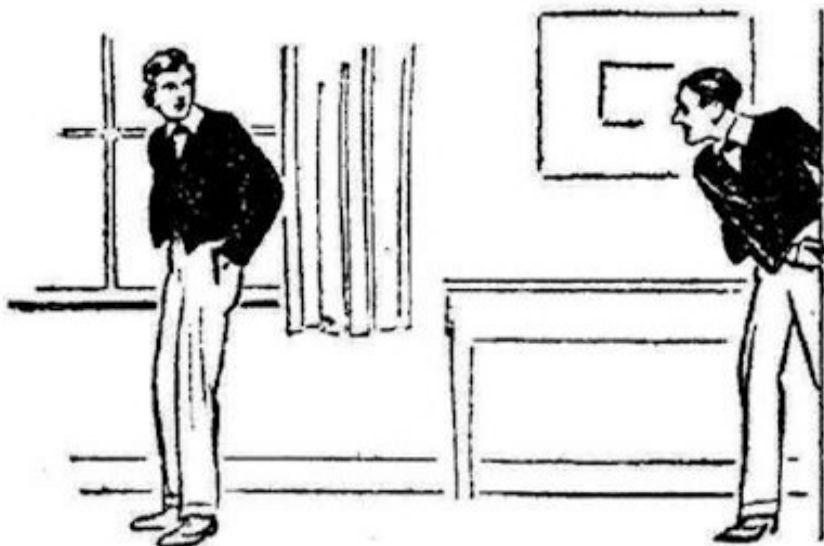
"Wait a minute, Handy," said Pitt, looking worried. "Don't get so excited! Plenty of time—it isn't seven o'clock yet. We want to get to the bottom of this business. How did Gore-Pearce do it, then?"

"Easily enough," said Nipper cheerfully. "You fellows amuse me, you know! I'm the chap who's going to get it in the neck, and I'm finding it quite easy to smile, but you're as solemn as a row of barn owls! Cheer up, you fatheads! There's nothing to worry about."

"But you're going to be sacked!" exclaimed Watson.

"Who cares?" said Nipper. "The guv'nor doesn't believe me guilty, although he can't do anything to save me, and that's what counts most with me. If he had believed it, I shouldn't be smiling now."

"He doesn't believe it any more than we do," said Handforth gruffly. "How could he? My only hat! He calls himself a detective, and yet he can't clear your name in a case like this!"



"No need to run Mr. Lee down," said Pitt. "You forget that the Head found Nipper in the lane, and you forget that Nipper has refused to say a word to save himself. So what can his guv'nor do?"

"Find out the real culprit!" replied Handforth promptly.

"A frightfully difficult posish, old thing," said Archie. "I mean, it isn't like a theft, or an assault, or any foul thing of that sort or description. There was Nipper, absolutely wonky at the knees, and the Head found him. Good gad! Not much hope, what?"

"But how did it happen?" insisted Handforth.

"I was going down the lane when I met Gore-Pearce," said Nipper. "Like an ass, I got into an argument with him. It came to a fight. But as I was peeling my jacket off the cad landed me one, and that one was enough. He caught me when I was helpless, and it was a knock-out."

"Phew!" whistled Pitt. "So that's how it was done!"

"The rotter!" gasped Handforth. "Hitting you while you were peeling! Naturally, you didn't stand an earthly. And yet you tell us that we mustn't do anything?"

"You can do as you like—but I've told you this in confidence, and I shall expect you to keep it to yourselves," replied Nipper quietly. "Gore-Pearce must have poured some whisky down my throat, and he left the flask on my chest. When I sat up, it was in my lap—and that's how the Head found it. My only chance of explaining was to peach on Gore-Pearce—and I couldn't do that."

"Absolutely not!" agreed Archie. "I mean, sneaking, what?"

"So sweetly simple, eh?" said Travers musingly. "For the love of Samson! And the case is as black as night. Hard lines, dear old fellow. I'm afraid you're for it."

All the juniors were glad to know the truth—to hear the details. They appreciated the difficulties of the position, and the impossibility of Nipper exonerating himself by sneaking.

"But why can't we force Gore-Pearce to confess?" asked Handforth. "That's the point I can't get over."

"Because it would be a roundabout way of sneaking," said Nipper. "If we could be certain of the thing being kept dark, with only Gore-Pearce aware of the move, it wouldn't matter. But do you think there's any chance of that?"

"We'd keep it dark," said Handforth.

"You'd try to, old man, but it wouldn't work," said Nipper, shaking his head. "Gore-Pearce's pals would get to know—it couldn't be avoided—and they'd jolly soon let the cat out of the bag. In the end the Head would hear, Gore-Pearce would be lugged up on the carpet, and everybody would be saying that I had done it on purpose—that I'd sneaked."

"There are cases where even speaking is justified," declared Watson bluntly.

"Ordinarily, yes—but not just now," said Nipper. "My dear chap, for weeks we've

been down on sneaking—we've been fighting these Reformers tooth and nail. We *can't* sneak now. I don't want to, anyhow. If Gore-Pearce is crooked enough to stand by and see me sacked, he'll soon come to a bad end, and then I shall be able to come back. That's the way I look at it."

"He's right, you chaps," said Pitt firmly. "Better to suffer a bit now than give the Reformers a chance to call him a sneak. Good man, Nipper! You always were a cool card, weren't you?"

SO nothing was done.

The staunch band of would-be helpers cleared out before there was a chance of them being discovered—after an explanatory word to Dora. Even Handforth appreciated the delicacy of the situation, and he agreed that Nipper's plan was the best.

They all felt much better, too. Nipper's cheeriness had affected them, and they had an idea that he would not be missing from St. Frank's for long.

Yet one or two of the juniors—Travers and Reggie Pitt, for example—were inclined to be dubious, after reflection. Supposing Gore-Pearce failed to come a cropper? Nipper would never get back! It was all very well to take things for granted, but there was an ugly possibility of Gore-Pearce scoring a complete and lasting triumph.

When breakfast-time arrived there was more chatter than usual. Even at the senior tables there seemed to be an air of animation. The whole of St. Frank's was interested in Nipper's case, and endless arguments were entered into by those who were for and those who were against.

It was generally accepted, however, that Nipper would be publicly expelled, and the only doubt was as to whether he would be flogged first or not. After prayers the expectancy had grown to a subdued excitement. The Junior School, in particular, was all agog. A deep and intense silence fell when Dr. Morrison Nicholls came to the front of the platform. The new Head possessed an extraordinary personality, and he was capable of commanding instant attention.

"I think you all know why dismissal has been delayed," he said quietly. "I have a very unhappy duty to perform this morning. I might mention that I have had very little sleep during the night, for the problem has concerned me deeply. Yet I think I have arrived at a satisfactory conclusion."

He paused, and a couple of prefects brought Nipper on to the platform. They stood him between them, as though by prearranged plan.

Immediately an uproar started. Handforth and a few others commenced cheering at sight of Nipper, but their cheers were drowned by the hissing and jeering that arose from the Reformers. Many of the latter, indeed, excitedly rushed to the front of the platform and shook their fists at the pale-faced Nipper.

(Continued on page 14.)

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(Continued from page 12.)

"Silence!" thundered the Head. "How dare you! Get back to your places at once!"

Dr. Nicholls' words had the effect of bringing the juniors to their senses. The jeering stopped as if by magic. Upraised fists were dropped to their owners' sides as the boys went back to their places. A silence settled over Big Hall.

"I am very sorry that some of you should have acted in such a disgusting manner," said the Head quietly. "This is no time to condemn Hamilton—before you have heard the actual facts.

"This boy, Hamilton, was found by me in a most distressing condition," continued Dr. Nicholls. "The details of this you shall hear later. It is my intention to adopt what I think is a novel procedure—but only because of the peculiarities of this case."

The school wondered what was coming. The Head had already proved himself to be a man of unusual ideas, and everybody felt that he was planning a fresh surprise.

"The evidence against Hamilton is, on the face of it, absolutely irrefutable," proceeded the Head. "Yet I am compelled to admit that it is mainly circumstantial, even though I personally found him in the most guilty condition. There is always the possibility, however, that that condition was not brought about by the boy himself, but that he was the victim of foul play."

"By George!" breathed Handforth. "That's fair enough!"

"The Head's got brains!" murmured Reggie Pitt.

"My duty, no doubt, is to accept the evidence before me, and expel this boy forthwith," continued Dr. Nicholls. "If I were to take such a course, I feel that I should be quite justified. However, I desire to give every boy in this Hall a chance to stand forward and give evidence—one way or the other—in the case. Let me once again urge that such evidence will not be regarded as sneaking. Hamilton's fate is in the balance. It is your duty, your plain duty, to come forward if you have any knowledge of this unfortunate affair."

St. Frank's was more interested than ever. The Head was providing them with a novelty. Other headmasters would have got busy on the expulsion straight away, but Dr. Nicholls was keen upon giving his theories another test.

He went even further.

"I propose to place a grave responsibility upon you all," he said quietly. "The evidence

against this boy, as I have told you, is largely circumstantial. Therefore, I want the school to regard itself as a jury. The evidence will be now placed before you, in every detail. Hamilton will have an opportunity of stating his own case. If, after you have heard the evidence, you vote for his expulsion, I shall not hesitate to pass that sentence—since I shall then be satisfied that my own judgment has been confirmed. But if, on the other hand, you vote 'Not guilty,' Hamilton will be completely exonerated, and allowed to go his way as usual."

This was very much of a bombshell, and the school buzzed with excitement.

Many of the seniors had grave doubts as to the wisdom of this procedure; and some of the masters, too, were dubiously shaking their heads. They did not approve of Dr. Nicholls' revolutionary ideas.

But the school, in the main, regarded Dr. Nicholls as a boon and a blessing. He was providing them with something new—something out of the common. Most of the fellows felt, too, that it was only fair that the school should have a say in Nipper's trial.

It was very much like a Form trial—only the whole school was involved, and Dr. Nicholls himself would be the judge!

CHAPTER 5.

The Evidence!

DR. MORRISON NICHOLLS wasted no time.

"We shall, of course, make no attempt to follow the procedure of a Court of Justice," he said. "That would be reducing the whole affair to a farce. My plan is to place the facts before you as simply and as concisely as possible."

"Hear, hear!"

"Go ahead, sir!"

"There have been so many rumours that it is highly necessary that you should know the full truth," continued the Head. "I hope that I shall be able to scotch all the untruths that have been circulated with such ruthless persistence."

There was a murmur of approval.

This case was no exception to the rule. Some of the fellows seemed to take a particular delight in spreading every fantastic variation of a story that happened to be current, and it mostly happened that the more scandalous the variation, the more publicity it received. In a great public school, as elsewhere, people are ever ready to believe the worst. Rumour is just as much a lying jade in a school as in any other walk of life. It was all in the Head's favour that he should grasp this nettle, as it were, and pluck it out. The truth, and nothing but the truth, would soon put an end to the scandal-mongers' tittle-tattle.

"The facts are quite simple," said Dr. Nicholls gravely. "Unfortunately, their very

simplicity renders them serious. If Hamilton is as guilty as the facts indicate, he is certainly unworthy of remaining under this roof.

"Last night Mr. Pycraft and I were walking up from the village in the dusk. We came across a figure sprawling in the grass. That figure proved to be Hamilton. He was incoherent, unable to stand on his feet, and he smelt of spirits."

The Head paused, and the school waited tensely.

"These facts, as you will all understand, are significant," he went on. "When I tell you that I found a half-empty whisky-flask in this boy's lap, you will understand my perturbation. Could anything be more obvious? Hamilton was unquestionably unable to give an account of himself. When he attempted to speak, his words failed to come. He was, in short, muddled. Mr. Pycraft and myself were compelled to half carry him to the school."

"He was intoxicated, sir!" shouted somebody.

"Yes, rather!"

"Clear as daylight!"

"Wait!" commanded the Head. "I have not invited you to make these comments. When somebody tells me that the circumstances were as clear as daylight, I must reluctantly agree. But is that proof that Hamilton had been really drinking? I must tell you the result of my further investigations. I fear you will see, only too distinctly, that the evidence is overwhelmingly black."

"Hamilton denied that he had been drinking; yet he could not give any account of the whisky-flask. He denied this, but volunteered no alternative explanation. That is the crucial point. If he had suggested some other possible explanation, I could have made the necessary inquiries. But what am I to think when Hamilton denies all knowledge of it, and yet refuses to give me any other information? Does it not seem clear that this refusal was dictated by the fact that there was no other information?"

"He's guilty, sir!"

"Of course he is!"

"He ought to be hoofed out of the school!"

"I will tell you this," said Dr. Nicholls. "Hamilton did give some sort of alternative story, but it was so feeble that I had almost forgotten it. It is only fair that I should repeat it to you. When pressed, he said that somebody had knocked him down, and that he knew no more until I arrived on the scene. He suggested, in fact, that his muddled condition was not occasioned by strong spirits, but by the blow; he suggested that the whisky-flask was placed on him by this mysterious person who knocked him down."

"It's true, too!" shouted Handforth excitedly.

"Rot!"

"Who's going to believe a yarn like that?"

"Nobody! It's too thin!"

There were many other murmurs of scepticism; but when the Head raised his hand there was an immediate hush.

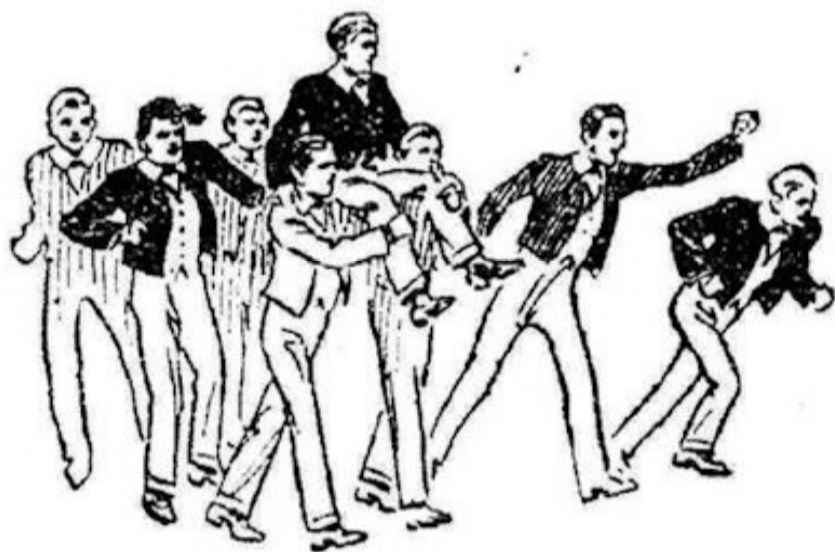
"I must confess that I found it difficult to place any reliance upon Hamilton's so-called explanation," he said, "and I regard it as significant that he could not—or would not—give me the name of the individual who knocked him out."

"He wasn't going to sneak, sir!"

"Sneak!" repeated the Head sharply. "Do any of you think that this boy, in such an extremity, would hesitate to exonerate himself? Ridiculous! He refused to give me the name of his mythical assailant because such a thing was impossible. I have repeatedly urged you to come forward with complaints regarding the breaking of ordinary school rules. Some of you have decided to help me in this new system; others, I am afraid, still hang back."

"In Hamilton's case, it was not a mere violation of an ordinary rule. It was a matter of the utmost gravity. His whole career was at stake. But in spite of this he refused to give me the name. Am I to believe that there actually was an assailant? Or did Hamilton tell me that story on the spur of the moment, as some sort of frenzied explanation to account for his condition? It is for you to weigh these facts, and to pass your judgment."

"Why go on, sir?" shouted somebody. "He's guilty!"



"I do not ask for your verdict until you have heard all the facts—until Hamilton has had a chance of telling his own story," said Dr. Nicholls. "Perhaps he has had time to ponder over his position. Perhaps he will be willing to give us the name of that person who was malicious enough to knock him down, and to plant a whisky-flask upon him?"

It was clear that the Head's tone was sarcastic. He was angry. The more he discussed Nipper's explanation—which, of course, happened to be absolutely true—the more it aroused his ire. He could not understand Nipper's refusal to give the name. Another headmaster might have appreciated this silence on the part of an honourable schoolboy, but not so Dr. Morrison Nicholls. He was so steeped in his pet "reform" that his vision was inclined to be obscured.

AS for Claude Gore-Pearce, he was going through an appalling time.

All this discussion was sheer agony to him. For he happened to be that "mythical person," and if Nipper had indeed changed his mind, things would begin to look rocky. And what guarantee was there that Nipper would keep silent?

Gore-Pearce had been confident enough the previous night. Nipper was no sneak. He wouldn't dream of peaching. He'd rather be sacked!

But Gore-Pearce now trembled. As the Head had said, Nipper's whole career was at stake. A verdict of "Guilty" would mean expulsion — disgrace — ignominy. Perhaps Nipper had weighed these points! Perhaps he would come out with that name when he was called upon to state his defence?

If so, what then? Like a shot, the Head would pounce. He would be as keen as mustard upon investigating this new line. Gore-Pearce would be hauled up and questioned; and, although he would deny all knowledge of the affair, there was always the chance that he would be tripped up.

Without doubt, Claude was suffering, but he managed to maintain a careless, bored exterior. Only Gulliver and Bell, who were near him, appreciated his ordeal.

"It is necessary that you should know one or two more facts," said Dr. Nicholls. "I regret that you should have your patience taxed so severely, but we are here to give this boy a fair trial. Some little time earlier in the evening Mr. Pycraft saw a St. Frank's boy entering the White Harp Inn. He had reason to believe that that boy was Hamilton."

"Quite so," murmured Mr. Pycraft. "I distinctly recognised him."

In this, the master of the Fourth deluded himself. He had wanted to recognise Nipper and, in view of the later circumstances, he now really believed that his eyesight was capable of incredible feats. Actually, he had recognised nothing but a St. Frank's cap.

"Mr. Pycraft made inquiries, but the boy had apparently not been in the inn," proceeded the Head. "However, after Hamilton had been found in such guilty circumstances, I went to this place myself, accompanied by Mr. Lee. It is right that you should know the result of that visit."

The school waited breathlessly. There had been an awful lot of conjecture about that visit, and rumours had been floating about, one on the heels of the other. It was time that the truth should be known.

"Mr. Lee and myself discovered that Hamilton had, indeed, been in the White Harp that evening," said the Head solemnly. "Furthermore, he went there to visit a bookmaker named Poole. This man confessed that he had supplied Hamilton with a flask of whisky. With such evidence in my possession, I should be perfectly justified, I think, in expelling this boy without going

to the length of holding this present inquiry."

"Hear, hear!"

"Why not get on with it, sir?"

"The voting will be against him, anyhow!"

The school was startled. Nipper himself was staggered. He realised that Gore-Pearce had been very clever. It had been an astute move of his to get in touch with Poole, and to get Poole to give that false evidence.

"Convincing as these facts are, I must again remind you that the evidence is largely circumstantial," said Dr. Nicholls. "I do not feel justified in accepting the word of a bookmaker's tout——"

"Good for you, sir!" sang out Handforth. "That's better, sir!"

"This man might very possibly have had some ulterior motive for incriminating Hamilton," continued Dr. Nicholls, with a rare sense of justice. "I must urge you, therefore, to accept his evidence with reserve. And, remember, there is always the possibility that Mr. Pycraft was mistaken."

"Preposterous!" muttered Mr. Pycraft indignantly.

"I am attempting to find every possible point in favour of Hamilton," said the Head. "I am afraid these points are not very conclusive. I shall now call upon the boy himself to state his own defence."

He turned.

"Come, Hamilton," he said. "If you are guiltless of this charge, you now have an opportunity of clearing your name. Do not hesitate to speak the full truth. If this involves the incrimination of any other boy, you are to give his name boldly. If there is such an individual, he is clearly undeserving of any consideration from you."

Gore-Pearce nearly reeled with anxiety. Would Nipper speak?

"Thank you, sir," said the Remove skipper. "I don't think I shall delay these proceedings very long. And I'll only say that I'm not guilty. I've never drunk any whisky in my life, and I'm not the kind of fellow to get deliberately intoxicated. If I was, I don't think I should choose a spot like the lane, knowing, at the same time, that Mr. Pycraft was suspicious of me, and was due to come up the lane on his way back to the school."

There was a hint of irony in Nipper's tone. His point was a powerful one, carelessly spoken though it was. Quite a number of fellows had looked at it in that way. If Nipper was really guilty, surely he must have been utterly insane to select such a spot for his carousal?

"It's up to you fellows to judge me," said Nipper, facing the school. "You've heard all the Head has said, and you know me very well. Things look pretty black, I'll confess, but the truth is as simple as A B C. I met somebody in the lane, and there was a scrap. He knocked me down, planted that whisky on me, and bolted. Poole lied, of



Indignantly the juniors gazed at the procession which was being formed by Gore-Pearce. Handforth, especially, gave a violent snort of anger when he saw the big banners. "By George!" he exclaimed. "I can't stand this much longer. I'm going to put a stop to this rot!"

course. I was not in the White Harp last night."

"Name! Name!" went up in a roar.

"Why don't you give the name?"

"Because I'm not a sneak!" shouted Nipper indignantly. "We've got a code of honour at St. Frank's, haven't we? I can't give the name because it wouldn't be cricket. That's all. If the fellow doesn't like to come forward, I suppose I shall have to take my gruel. But he's safe from me—and I hope his conscience won't hurt him too much."

A mingled roar went up. A surprising number of fellows—seniors as well as juniors—applauded Nipper heartily. He had put it neatly. He couldn't sneak. Nipper's attitude was all the more praiseworthy because he was acting in direct defiance of the Head's instructions.

Gore-Pearce's relief was so acute that he nearly gave himself away on the spot. He positively gulped with emotion.

"Steady!" muttered Gulliver. "You'll have somebody twigging!"

"I'm all right!" panted Gore-Pearce. "I thought the fool was going to peach!"

"It's lucky for you he's so decent," said Bell sourly.

Nipper was speaking again. Somebody had asked him to explain how he had allowed his assailant to knock him down. Wasn't he the champion of the Junior School? Had his opponent been a man, or a senior? It

was only fair that this point should be cleared up. And why didn't Nipper show any mark of the blow?

"You're right!" replied Nipper. "You've got to know the truth about that. The fellow who knocked me down was about my own size and age. He got in his knock-out while I was stripping off my jacket—while my arms were held to my sides by my sleeves. That's how he got in that clean drive."

"Dirty drive, you mean!" bellowed Handforth.

"I didn't mean clean in that way—I meant direct," said Nipper. "My chin's sore, but it doesn't show any bruise. The one blow was enough. I didn't know anything more until I found the Head bending over me. I expect it sounds pretty thin, but it happens to be true." He turned to Dr. Nicholls. "That's all I'm going to say, sir," he added quietly.

There was a deep hush.

"Hamilton, I am sorely distressed," said the Head kindly. "Your confidence and your manner are clear evidence of a guiltless conscience. Your record in this school is a splendid one. I am trying very hard to believe that you are the victim of foul play."

"Thank you, sir."

"Why don't you give that name?" asked the Head tensely. "Cannot you understand

that I *must* think the worst if you maintain your silence? For does it not indicate that your story is a false one?"

"I don't think so, sir. It indicates that I don't want to sneak."

"Nonsense!" said Dr. Nicholls angrily. "How many times must I tell you that it is not a question of sneaking? It is your duty. This person, if he exists, is guilty of something far worse than your own folly. It is more than folly—it is a contemptible, wicked plot. Let me have that name."

"No, sir," said Nipper steadily. "I've said all I mean to say, sir."

The Head shrugged his shoulders.

"Very well," he said resignedly. "The school must form its own conclusions. Let the voting proceed without further delay!"

CHAPTER 6.

The School Decides!

THE voting was done in the simplest possible manner.

Each Form was taken separately, commencing with the Sixth. The Form-masters requested those in favour of Nipper's conviction to raise their hands. These were counted, and the number noted down. Then the fellows in favour of a "Not Guilty" verdict had their turn, the result also being recorded.

It was rather difficult to tell how the voting was going.

The Fifth and the Sixth were unquestionably against Nipper. The Fourth, too, it seemed, voted largely against him. When it came to the Remove there was a big majority in his favour; and the Third provided the surprise of the occasion by recording a solid vote for Nipper's acquittal.

After that came the counting. This was a very brief business, for it was only necessary for the Head to jot up the figures and compare the totals. Everybody was watching him intently, and a dead silence had fallen.

Those nearest the platform detected a look of astonishment in Dr. Nicholls' eyes; an expression of doubt, perhaps—of perplexity. At the same time, he was palpably relieved.

"Hamilton is not guilty!" he announced bluntly.

A perfect buzz went up.

"The voting has been much closer than I would have liked," continued Dr. Nicholls. "Astonishingly enough, Hamilton has been declared 'Not Guilty' by a majority of one vote only."

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Nipper!"

"Bravo!"

"Rats! He ought to have been sacked!"

"Hear, hear!"

The noise was becoming more and more unruly as the rival factions voiced their opinions.

"Silence!" commanded the Head angrily. "What is the meaning of this unseemly com-

motion? I almost regret that I appealed to your sense of justice. It would be paltering with the truth to say that Hamilton has been declared innocent. Let us put it that he has been given the benefit of the doubt."

"He's not going to be sacked, is he, sir?"

"Hamilton will take his ordinary place in the school forthwith," said the Head. "The matter is over. The school has decided. Everybody will dismiss quietly and in an orderly fashion."

The school's idea of quietness and orderliness appeared to be vague, for as the fellows crowded out of Big Hall they made a remarkable amount of noise, some cheering, some booing, others indignantly protesting against this display.

WELL, Hamilton, I am glad," said Dr. Nicholls, patting Nipper on the shoulder. "Yet, in another way, I am sorry. I am afraid your acquittal is not as satisfactory as it might have been. It would have been far better if you had given me the opportunity of punishing the actual culprit."

"I'm sorry, sir; I hope he'll give himself away."

"I doubt it, Hamilton," said the Head. "The inquiry is over now, and he is safe. You see, I am accepting the judgment of the school—I am no longer questioning your story."

Nipper hardly knew what to say. He himself felt that the situation was not entirely satisfactory. A minute afterwards he went down from the platform, and left Big Hall. Outside, he was immediately seized by Watson, Tregellis-West, Handforth and a crowd of others, and chaired.

"Hurrah!" roared Handforth.

"Don't make such a fuss, for goodness' sake!" shouted Nipper as he rocked and swayed perilously on the excited juniors' shoulders. "I don't feel that I've been properly acquitted. Half the school still thinks I'm guilty."

"Blow that half of the school!" roared Handforth. "They're idiots! They're fat-heads! They don't count! You've been voted innocent, and St. Frank's has done jolly well."

"Begad, rather!" said Sir Montie gleefully. "We didn't think it possible, dear old boy. We're most frightfully bucked."

"And we know the truth, don't we?" said Tommy Watson. "We know who that rotter is, and——"

"Better not talk too much about it, Tommy," interrupted Nipper. "Don't forget that I gave you the name in confidence."

"But what does it matter now?" asked Handforth. "The inquiry's over."

"It matters just as much—if not more," replied Nipper. "We're the Old-Timers—and we've got to stick to our principles. No sneaking! Thank goodness I've come out of this affair safely."

There was no time for any further discussion. Morning lessons were already very late, and the Form-masters were impatient. First

lesson would have to be greatly curtailed, even as it was.

"I hope you will settle down to work without any fuss or bother," said Mr. Crowell, the Remove Form-master, as he gazed severely at his class. "There has been too much waste of time this morning."

"It was the Head's idea, sir," said somebody.

"It does not necessarily follow that I approve of the headmaster's ideas," retorted Mr. Crowell. "In fact, I will tell you quite frankly that I have the strongest possible objections to the scene that has been enacted this morning."

Mr. Crowell spoke feelingly; perhaps he said rather too much. It was certainly unwise of him to air his views regarding the Head in public like this.

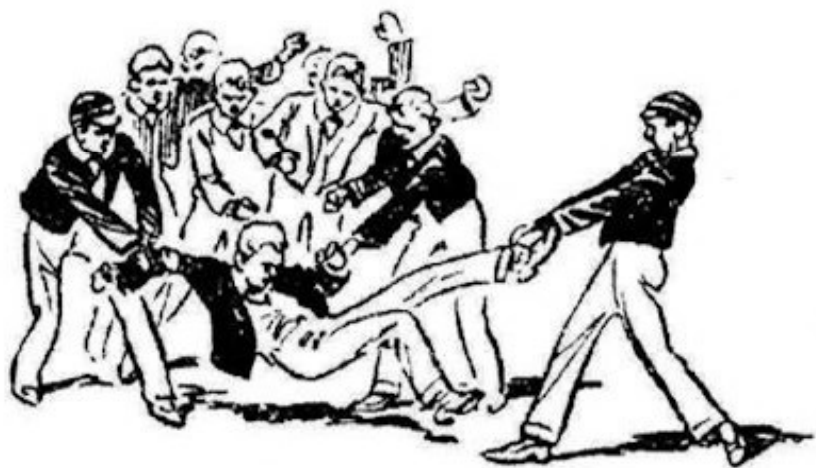
"However, we will not discuss the matter," he went on gruffly. "Hamilton, I congratulate you upon your escape—your very lucky escape."

"Thank you, sir," said Nipper. "Does that mean that you think I ought to have been expelled?"

"It means that I think the whole thing was ill-advised and irregular," replied Mr. Crowell vaguely. "Either the headmaster should have punished you or accepted your word. To place the onus on the school was—was—Ahem! Open your books!"

Mr. Crowell felt that his indignation was carrying him too far. He opened his own book with a slam, shifted his chair noisily, and jammed his glasses on to his nose.

"Let us get to work!" he said sternly.



"Please, sir, may I say something?" asked Doyle, standing up.

"What is it, Doyle?"

"I think a good many fellows will be with me, sir, when I say that it's a bit rotten for us to be compelled to sit in the same room with a chap who has been found guilty by lots of us of drinking—"

"Silence!" shouted Mr. Crowell angrily. "Doyle, how dare you!"

"He's right, sir!" shouted Owen major.

"Hear, hear!"

"You unsportsmanlike young rascals!" said Mr. Crowell bitingly. "Has not Hamilton been acquitted by the majority! Unsatisfactory as the verdict is, it is nevertheless in his favour. If I hear any more such comments I will punish the culprits with the utmost severity. I am ashamed of you."

Doyle sat down, rather abashed. But that little incident was an ominous hint of what

was to follow. Nipper had no reason to feel pleased with the result of that remarkable inquiry!

GORE-PEARCE remained more or less stunned throughout first lesson.

He had taken it absolutely for granted that Nipper would have been escorted off the school premises by this time. And once Nipper had been sacked, Gore-Pearce felt that he could have stilled the murmurings of his conscience. "Out of sight, out of mind." But with Nipper still here, still ready to look accusingly into his eyes, it was a very different matter!

For the rascally Claude could well see that he would never be allowed to forget his guilt. His precious scheme had failed. Nipper was not only occupying his old position as captain of the Remove, but he was on the spot to serve as a constant reminder that the Reform Party was a fake and a fraud.

Gore-Pearce's conscience would probably begin to trouble him again. He would be unable to go ahead with the ambitious plans that he had so carefully thought out. He had seen himself as Junior captain, he had decided that the Reformers should sweep the Remove and the Fourth—with himself as the prime mover. And behind it all would be the Head, giving his moral support.

But how could all this go on with Nipper still on the premises—with Nipper an ever-present menace? Gore-Pearce was well aware of his own guilt—and, rotter though he was, he felt that the ordeal of coming into daily contact with Nipper, of meeting his accusing eye, would be too much for him.

WHEN break came the fellows had an opportunity of talking. The Forms came streaming out into the sunny Triangle, and shouting, excited groups were soon gathering. Nipper, of course, was the subject of every discussion.

"Let 'em jabber!" said Handforth complacently, as he joined Nipper & Co. and Pitt and Travers and a few other intimates. "We know the truth, don't we? They'll soon get over it."

"But will they?" asked Travers. "That's the trouble, dear old fellow. Nipper is free, but heaps of chaps are asking who actually did the deed. The rank and file is inclined to be somewhat restive."

"So many fellows think he's guilty," growled Reggie Pitt. "That's the trouble. It's a half-and-half business. It's a compromise. And there's going to be trouble about it."

"Well, we've got to pull together ourselves, and show these rotters that we're standing by Nipper right through," said Handforth doggedly. "Down with the Reformers! Now's the time for us to squash these cads altogether. Particularly Gore-Pearce!"

"Rather!" said the others.

"We know that Gore-Pearce is a dirty, despicable rotter!" continued Handforth. "He ought to be sacked. But as we can't

sneak on him, the least we can do is to suppress him. No half measures, either! Let's do the thing thoroughly. I wonder he's got the nerve to stay at St. Frank's!"

Just then Crowe and Webb and Crooke, of the Modern House, strolled by, arm-in-arm. The chums of Study No. 5 were looking very aloof, and they apparently did not see the group of Removites.

"My dear chap!" Webb was protesting. "You're not suggesting that we should go and have a ginger-pop, are you?"

"I rather thought so," said Crowe.

"Idiotic!" said Webb. "What about some whisky?"

"Only these silly Removites drink that stuff," said Crooke, with a sniff.

They passed on, leaving the Removites glaring after them with indignation and rage. Nipper, who knew that the gibe had been aimed at himself, was looking rather pale.

"I'm afraid there'll be a lot of this," he said uncomfortably.

"There'd better not be!" snorted Handforth. "Come on, Remove! Let's go and wipe up those rotters!"

"Steady, old man! You'll start a riot," said Nipper.

Doyle and Owen major, of Study P, came past.

"Red noses aren't natural, you ass!" Doyle was saying. "People only get them from drinking. There's one chap in the Ancient House who——"

"Hi!" bellowed Handforth wrathfully.

But Doyle and Owen major took no notice. And then Turner and Page and Harron, of Study No. 13 in the West House, came along. These bright youths were not content with passing loud comments. They came right up to Nipper.

"Just a word of advice, old man," said Turner gently. "It's given in a kindly spirit, and I hope you'll heed it. Don't take it neat in future. Always put more water with it."

Crash!

Nipper simply couldn't help himself. He lashed out at Turner's sneering, grinning face, and Turner, with a howl of alarm and pain, went over backwards on the gravel.

CHAPTER 7.

Worse Than the Sack!

NIPPER rather regretted that blow immediately afterwards. Handforth, however, thoroughly approved of it.

He wanted to follow it up by taking on Page and Harron, but Church and McClure held him back.

"You cad!" panted Turner, scrambling to his feet. "What do you mean by that?"

"You asked for it," said Nipper gruffly.

"Hi, Fourth!" roared Turner. "This boozing rotter lashed out at me. Are we going to stand this?"

Gore-Pearce came rushing up.

"Don't make it a Form row!" he shouted. "There are just as many fellows in the

Remove who are against him! We ought to unite! Let's show this squiffy bounder what we think of him!"

"Hear, hear!"

"On him!"

Handforth and the other fellows were pushed aside. Even Handforth had no opportunity of sailing in. There were too many for him. Nipper was seized, whirled up, and surrounded by yelling mobs.

Bump!

"Give him another!" roared Gore-Pearce.

Bump!

Nipper was treated unmercifully. He was flung to the ground, lifted up, and flung down again. He was knocked this way and that; bewildered, half-blinded, he was sent reeling and staggering.

Never before had the popular Remove captain been treated with such derision and contempt. Quite a number of Remove fellows joined in this vindictive rag, and it wasn't until a prefect came along, whistling a cane, that the mob disappeared, yelling with scornful laughter.

"Better get indoors, young 'un," said the prefect, giving Nipper a cold look.

"I suppose you think the same as they do?" asked Nipper, panting hard.

"Never mind what I think—you get indoors," said the Sixth-Former.

It was enough. This prefect was one of the seniors who had voted "against," and Nipper was liable to knock up against such seniors at any moment. The feeling in the school was intense—and there was not much chance that it would grow less as time went on.

Nipper was late in the class-room.

He had been so mauled about that he had had to go upstairs and change his clothes and wash. However, Mr. Crowell said nothing when he quietly came in and took his seat. He just gave Nipper one glance as he turned from the blackboard, and then went on with the lesson.

"Please, sir, Hamilton's late!" said Gulliver.

Mr. Crowell spun round like a tiger.

"Indeed!" he snapped. "I am grateful to you, Gulliver, for informing me of a fact of which I was already aware. What would you have me do? Shall I inflict a caning upon Hamilton, or would you prefer me to give him an imposition?"

Gulliver's jaw dropped.

"I—I thought you hadn't noticed, sir," he faltered.

"Sit down!" commanded Mr. Crowell. "I witnessed a very disgraceful scene in the Triangle during break, and Hamilton would indeed have been deserving of punishment if he had returned to the Form-room in the guise of a scarecrow. Has any other boy any comment to make?"

"It's not fair, sir, the way you favour that pub-haunting rotter!" said Owen major indignantly.

"Owen major, come here!" said Mr. Crowell.

Owen major went.

"Hold out your hand!"

"Why, sir?" asked Owen major. "Half the Form agrees with me—"

"Hold out your hand!" thundered Mr. Crowell.

Slash! Slash!

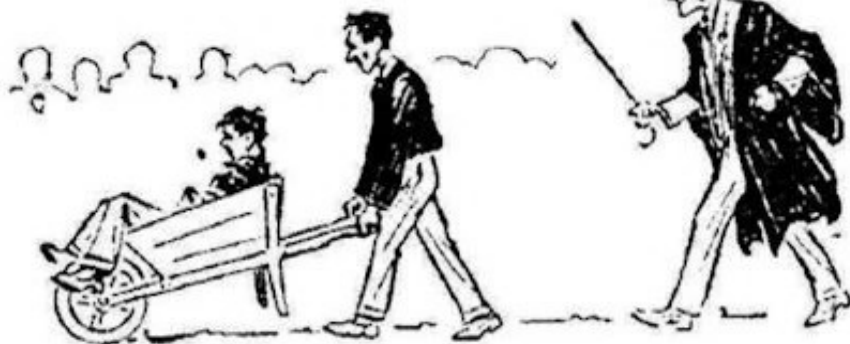
Four times Mr. Crowell wielded his cane, and Owen major felt sorry for himself.

"Now go back to your place!" panted the Form-master. "And if any other boy dares to make such an outrageous remark, I will take him to the headmaster for a flogging!"

He swept his gaze round the room. "Have you no sense of fairness?" he went on hotly. "Hamilton has been acquitted. The matter is settled. It should be forgotten. I am growing more and more ashamed of you!"

"Not all of us!" protested Harry Gresham.

"I do not mean all of you," replied Mr. Crowell. "I am referring only to that section of the Form which appears to have forgotten all ideas of sportsmanship and fairness. I can only hope that these boys will come to their senses."



BUT it was a vain hope. When morning lessons were over, Nipper came in for more taunts and gibes than ever. The fellows who indulged in this kind of ragging were in the minority—but unfortunately it is generally the minority in all matters which makes the biggest noise and creates the biggest disturbance.

Nipper was startled at the widespread extent of bad feeling against him. Seniors would cut him dead; they would walk past, after giving him a contemptuous, withering look. Their looks and their silence were worse than any comments could have been.

It was the same with the juniors. Whilst most of them ignored Nipper completely, occasional groups would hoot at him, and hiss, and pass scathing remarks. Handforth and Pitt and Travers and all the rest of Nipper's set were becoming exhausted. They had had so many scraps since lessons that they were beginning to see that the game wasn't worth the candle.

Nipper himself was miserable—and he almost felt that it would have been far better if the headmaster had sent him away. Expulsion would have been preferable to this torture.

A group of East House fags came along, led by Fullerton. It included Parry minor and Hook and Ryder and Conroy minimus. They were all grubby, inky nonentities in the Third.

"Yah! Look at his hip-pocket!" yelled Fullerton jeeringly. "Look how it's bulging out!"

"That's where he keeps his flask!" said Parry minor.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Nipper, who happened to be crossing the Triangle alone, attempted to push the fags aside.

"Clear off!" he muttered. "Get out of my way!"

"Look!" roared Fullerton. "He's pushing us! Are we going to let this cad knock us about? Yah! Bully! Come on! Let's down him! He won't dare to hit back!"

This sort of thing was incredible. Until to-day, Nipper had commanded the utmost respect among the fags. They would never have dreamed of treating him in this contemptuous fashion. Even these followers of Fullerton had always respected him.

Exactly what Nipper would have done remains obscure, but at that moment Willy

Handforth came through West Arch, and, after staring in amazement for a moment, he ran forward. The skipper of the Third had a grim, aggressive look in his face, strongly reminiscent of his redoubtable major.

"Just a minute, Nipper!" he said ominously. "I saw what these chaps were doing. Leave this to me, if you don't mind."

"Oh, don't bother!" said Nipper wearily.

"It's no bother—it's a pleasure," replied Willy. "Move another step, Fullerton, and I'll slaughter you. You, too, young Ryder! Stand still, all of you! Great Scott! And I'm the skipper of this lot!" he added bitterly.

There was something magical in Willy's personality. Much as those fags wanted to get away, they couldn't move. Or, at all events, they didn't move. They were opposed to Willy's leadership, and they were always causing him trouble in the Third, but only behind his back! Facing him, they were sort of hypnotised.

"Before I start smashing you, I want to ask you one thing!" said Willy, with significant smoothness. "Did you, or did you not, vote for Nipper's acquittal?"

"Of course we did!" blustered Fullerton. "You made us!"

"Never mind whether I made you or not!" retorted Willy. "You voted—and now I find you acting like a set of hooligans! If you thought Nipper should have been sacked, you ought to have said so!"

"I like that!" shouted Ryder. "He makes us vote against our wills, and then—"

"You voted in favour of Nipper, and that's enough!" interrupted Willy. "I've instructed the Third to keep to that verdict. And if you think you can defy me like this, you've made a bloomer! Nipper is to be treated with as much respect as of old!"

The Third skipper whipped off his jacket. "But what's the good of words?" he said tartly. "Come on!"



The Head strode through the bushes and beheld an amazing sight. There was Nipper, tied in a barrow, with straw sticking out of his hair, and a bottle hanging from his hand. Round him danced a number of yelling Reformers. "Good heavens!" gasped the Head, when he had recovered from his amazement. "Stop!"

He went for the lot of them—coolly, calmly, and deliberately. Had they chosen—had they had sufficient pluck—they could have wiped him up. Instead of that he was allowed to distribute punches with lightning-like speed, and the whole group was scattered, howling and dismayed.

"My hat!" said Willy disgustedly. "You see? They can't even fight! Don't take any notice of the rotters, Nipper! Hallo! He's gone!"

Willy was surprised to find that Nipper had walked off. The Remove skipper's bitterness, in fact, was increased. Bad as things had seemed, they were actually worse.

It was something of a shock to realise that he owed his acquittal to Willy Handforth—and Willy Handforth alone. For the Third Form, had it voted according to its inclinations, would have set the balance against him. Apparently Willy had sent word round amongst the fags, in Big Hall, threatening all sorts of violence unless they plumped solid for a "Not Guilty" verdict. After events had clearly proved that the fags were by no means solid in their opinion!

"IT'S no good, you chaps," said Nipper, as he went into Study C, and found Handforth & Co. talking with Tregellis-West and Watson. "I'd better clear out. The school thinks I ought to be sacked, and I'd rather be sacked. Better than this state of affairs, anyhow."

"What rot!" said Handforth. "Ignore them!"

"Easy enough for you—but not so easy for me," said Nipper. "I now find that I wasn't really acquitted. I've got to thank young Willy for being here!" he added, more bitterly than ever. "Can't you see that the position is impossible? I daresay lots of other fellows have had second thoughts, too. Most of the school is against me."

Handforth breathed hard.

"Then why not come out with the truth?" he asked fiercely. "No need to let the beaks know! Only give us permission, and we'll buzz round, passing the good word! That'll put a stop to all this rot!"

"If we do that, they'll think it's a wheeze, Handy," said Nipper, shaking his head. "No; the only solution is for me to clear off. I'm not wanted."

"Begad! You're frightfully pessimistic, old boy," said Montie, with concern.

"You've lost your nerve!" said Handforth sternly.

"Eh?"

"This isn't our old skipper!" went on Handforth, with a glare. "What's the matter with you, fathead? You're innocent, and you know it!"

"I wish the Head had acted on his own initiative, without leaving it to the school," said Nipper. "The school thinks that it's got a perfect right to judge me now. And what can I do? If I start scrapping, I'm jumped on. I can't fight any crowd that happens to jeer at me!"

"We've got to organise," said Handforth grimly. "That's the only solution! We've got to rally round and form ourselves into a defence corps. Fight it out, old man—and



The Head strode through the bushes and beheld an amazing sight. Round his head, and a bottle hanging from his hand. Round his head, when he had re-

we will show 'em what you're made of!"

It was easier said than done. And Nipper's despondency was well-founded. No sooner did he leave the study than there was a sudden rush. An ambush had been prepared. A crowd of juniors swooped down, bowled him over, pelted him with mud, and then bolted.

Handforth managed to dash after one or two, and administer sundry hard knocks—but what was the use?

CHAPTER 8.

Gore-Pearce's Campaign!

"GOOD!" said Gore-Pearce gloatingly. He closed the door of Study A, and his face was alight with satisfaction. He had just seen Nipper hustled away by his chums—hustled upstairs to get cleaned-up before any master or prefect could spot him.

"That went well!" continued Claude, as

might think that he really was guilty! And yet you're the fellow who ought to have been sacked!"

"Beats me!" said Bell.

Claude Gore-Pearce scowled.

"Look here!" he snapped. "You fellows had better shut up about me working the thing! You only found it out by accident—"

"Accident be hanged!" said Gulliver. "We found it out because of your guilty conscience."

"Are we going to have another argument?" snarled Claude. "I've paid you for your silence, haven't I? Aren't you satisfied? You're only a couple of petty black-mailers!"

"Look here——"

"Oh, cut it out!" said Gore-Pearce savagely. "Haven't you got sense enough to see that I must pretend to be more against Nipper than anybody else? If I say nothing the chaps will begin to think that I'm the mysterious person in the case."

"Well, you are," said Bell, staring.

"I know that!" roared Gore-Pearce. "But I don't want anybody else to know it, do I? And if I keep mum, they'll soon begin to think that I know more about it than they do. No! The only thing I can do is to go for Nipper hammer and tongs, and polish him right off while I've got the chance. We shan't get another opportunity like this, remember. We've got to strike while the iron's hot."

"What a nerve!" said Gulliver, with a whistle.

"It seems to me I need a nerve to keep you fellows in order!" retorted Gore-Pearce. "Come on! Let's finish with these arguments. We've got to go ahead with this campaign. Before the day's over I shall be Form captain."

"Some hopes!" said Bell.

"I tell you I'll be Form captain!"

"What about Reggie Pitt?" asked Bell. "Do you think he'll allow it? I'll admit that Nipper's likely to be knocked off his perch, but I can't see you occupying it, old man!"

"Rot!" said Claude. "The Reformers are growing more powerful than ever. Nipper's discredited. Lots of the Old-Timers are coming over to us, and others will do the same. Then, when the new skipper's elected, I shall get all the votes."

Gore-Pearce spoke confidently. What he said was true. Nipper was in disgrace; it was quite likely that he would be called upon to resign the captaincy, in which case Gore-Pearce would stand a good chance of being elected in his stead!



was Nipper, tied in a barrow, with straw sticking out of it. "Good heavens!" gasped the amazement. "Stop!"

he looked at Gulliver and Bell. "Those chaps are following out my instructions pretty thoroughly. The cad's got so much mud on him that he looks like a garden bed!"

"You've got a nerve!" said Gulliver admiringly.

"What do you mean?"

"You know dashed well what I mean," said Gulliver. "By gad! After the way you incriminated Nipper over that rotten affair, I wonder how you can keep it up! Anybody

IMMEDIATELY after lunch there was a lot of feverish activity.

The Reformers were tremendously busy. Fellows were dashing about giving instructions, and it soon became apparent that a sort of procession was being formed in the Triangle.

Gore-Pearce's latest stunt was to march all round the school at the head of this procession, inviting the Old-Timers to change over and join the Reform Party. He reckoned that he would rope in quite a lot of recruits.

"Are we going to stand this, you chaps?" asked Handforth, as he stood on the Ancient House steps. "Where's Nipper? What's he doing?"

"Oh, leave him alone," said Tommy Watson. "He's in the study."

"Alone?"

"Yes."

"Then he's no right to be," said Handforth sternly. "A fellow in his state of mind oughtn't to be left alone. He'll only get morbid!"

"The trouble is, old boy, he's got every reason to be morbid," said Tregellis-West sadly. "Things are gettin' worse and worse—they are, really. The dear old boy can't show his face without a crowd of these frightful jackals swarmin' round him."

Handforth didn't know what to say. Fighter as he was, it was impossible for him, or for Nipper's other friends, to be always scrapping. Things had grown too acute for that. It simply came down to the rock-bottom fact that Nipper was unable to show himself.

He wasn't afraid, but for the sake of his staunch chums he felt that he had better keep out of it. Why should he constantly involve them in violent scenes? The only way to save them from such misfortunes was to keep out of sight.

If it hadn't been for this factor, Nipper would have braved the whole crowd of opponents. His conscience was easy, and he had nothing to reproach himself with. As it was, he couldn't see the use of involving his chums in these continuous brawls.

So he sat in Study C—alone. He had almost made up his mind to go to Nelson Lee and suggest that he should be sent away. Life under these conditions was becoming intolerable. It was far worse than the sack. His prestige was gone, and his only remedy was to expose Gore-Pearce—and since that remedy was forbidden him by all the unwritten laws of the public school code, he could do nothing but leave the school.

"I'd stay like a shot if all the rest of you were against me, too," he had said to Hand-

forth, "but I'm hanged if I'm going to be the cause of all these rows. There's no hope of them getting better. They're bound to grow worse. As far as I can see, the only thing for me to do is to clear."

Handforth, of course, wouldn't hear of it. And now the leader of Study D was on the Ancient House steps, racking his brain for some brilliant idea. It exasperated him beyond measure to see Gore-Pearce progressing so rapidly in his campaign. Gore-Pearce! The fellow who was guilty! The fraud and the humbug! Handforth nearly choked.

"Can't something be done?" he asked thickly. "Look at 'em. Getting up a procession now! By George! The first time I catch Gore-Pearce alone I'll pulverise him! I'll leave him so battered that his own people won't know him."

"It's no good talking like that, Handy," growled Church. "There's only one way out of all this mess—and you know it."

"Do I? What is it?"

"Why, for Gore-Pearce to be bowled out, of course," said Church. "We can't sneak, and so there's a fat chance of things coming right, isn't there? The next thing will be Gore-Pearce's election as captain."

"Oh, my hat!" groaned Handforth. "Are we to sink so low as that?"

He glowered as he watched the proceedings in the Triangle. Gore-Pearce was bustling about, as bold as brass, giving final instructions to his supporters. Banners had been produced now, and the wording on them could be clearly read as they billowed out in the breeze.

"For the love of Samson!" sighed Travers. "Look at them, dear old fellows!"

"I'm looking!" roared Handforth in an angry bellow.

They could read the banners clearly: "WE DEMAND THE RESIGNATION OF OUR PRESENT SKIPPER!"—"THE REFORM PARTY DEMANDS ACTION!"—"DOWN WITH NIPPER, THE FRAUD!"

That last one was the limit. Handforth nearly burst a bloodvessel as he read it. That Gore-Pearce should have been responsible for such a banner was staggering. It was he—Gore-Pearce—who was the fraud. Yet this bluff was "getting over."

"I know!" said Handforth abruptly.

"Thought of something?" panted McClure.

Handforth didn't reply. He was streaking off through the lobby. Church and McClure flew after him, thinking at first that he was going to fetch Nipper. Instead, he dashed straight down the passage, and streaked out through the rear door.

"Hey!" gasped Church. "What's the idea, Handy?"

Edward Oswald took no notice. He didn't halt until he reached the garage. When Church and McClure dashed in, they found their leader vigorously applying the self-starter of his Austin Seven. The faithful little engine responded at once, and burst into life.

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"Where are you going?" asked Mac breathlessly.

"Jump in!" said Handforth. "Better look sharp, because I'm not waiting!"

Church and McClure jumped in, knowing that Handforth would be as good as his word.

"But where are we going?" asked Church, as they started.

"Nowhere!"

"Then what's the big idea?"

"We're going to mess up that procession—that's all!" said Handforth fiercely. "By George! I'll show 'em! Wait until I start dashing in and out with this bus. They'll scatter like ninepins!"

Church and McClure were aghast. They were sorry, now, that they had accepted Handforth's invitation to jump in.

"You're mad!" said McClure. "You'll kill somebody!"

"Us, most likely!" said Church.

"Rot!" snorted Handforth.

THE procession started off in fine style. Gore-Pearce took good care that there should be no unruliness. His idea was to make it a dignified event—one that would inspire respect and confidence. He wanted to get as many recruits as possible.

Unfortunately for his hopes, that procession never really got going. No sooner had it marched off than there came a purring hum, and Handforth's Austin Seven shot round the angle of the West House, making a bee-line for the procession's broadside.

Zurrrrh-zurrrrh!

The electric horn buzzed warningly, and the effect that Handforth had hoped for took place with glorious suddenness.

"Hi! Look out!"

"Mind where you're coming!"

"Run! He's gone mad!"

A wild chorus went up, and the procession, finding that Handforth was making no attempt to swerve, scattered like chaff before the wind. In a moment it was completely disorganised.

"Good old Ted!" said Willy approvingly. "If he thought of this idea himself, he's got more brains than I ever suspected!"

Zurrrrh-zurrrrh!

Round came the Austin Seven again, after swerving so giddily that Church and McClure felt that nothing could save them from being overturned. But Handforth, no matter how great a blunderer he was in most things, could certainly drive that little car with uncanny skill.

"Look out! He's coming back!"

"Scatter, you chaps!"

"The fool!" howled Gore-Pearce. "Why doesn't somebody come out? Where are the prefects? The procession's ruined!"

And Claude Gore-Pearce, liar though he was, had spoken the truth for once!

CHAPTER 9.

Unlucky for Claude!

HANDFORTH was obliged to come to a halt at last. Miraculously enough, he had not touched anybody. One or two fellows had come within an inch of getting knocked over, but fear had lent them an unusual agility, and they had dodged like acrobats.

"Well, that's that!" said Handforth, thoroughly satisfied.

"You reckless idiot!" shouted Doyle, of the West House. "Do you know that you nearly killed me just now?"

"I didn't know it, but it's not worrying me," replied Handforth. "And look here, Harold Doyle! If you call me an idiot again I'll—"

"Pull him out of that car!" came Gore-Pearce's yell. "He's ruined our procession, and we'll show him that he can't mess about like that with us Reformers."

"Hear, hear!"

"On him!"

The scene promised to be interesting. Gore-Pearce found it difficult to get anywhere near the Austin, although he was gradually fighting his way towards it. Other excited juniors were pressing round and yelling at the top of their voices. From a distance the Old-Timers watched with approval.

Church and McClure were feeling a bit anxious.

It was all very well for Handforth to dash into the midst of the procession like this, but it was obvious that he had not considered the consequences. The Reformers would not take this thing lying down. And here were the chums of Study D positively hemmed in by the enemy.

Perhaps Handforth began to feel a trifle alarmed now. His foot was still on the clutch, and the first gear was engaged.

"Look out!" he bellowed. "Out of the way there!"

He raced up the engine, and let the clutch in slightly. The little car edged forward, and the press of fellows in front of it fought madly to get out of the way.

"Stop it!" shouted somebody. "Look out! He's going to run into us!"

"Pull him out of the car!" roared Gore-Pearce savagely.

There were several fellows jammed against the Austin's side. Urged on by their leader, they now grabbed at Handforth, pulled him back, and attempted to haul him out bodily. His hands were torn away from the steering-wheel.

"Here, steady!" he gasped. "The gear's engaged, and the engine's running! You idiots, if you pull me— Whoa! Look out!"

The excited Reformers, knowing nothing of the condition of the controls, pulled forcibly. They didn't shift Handforth for more than three or four inches, but it was quite sufficient to jerk his left foot from the clutch-pedal. And as the gear was engaged, and

the engine running, the result was inevitable. The clutch went in with a jerk, and the car leapt forward.

A howl of alarm went up, and by this time Gore-Pearce had managed to push his way through the throng in front of the car. He arrived just in time to meet the Austin's forward plunge. The other juniors had managed to scatter in the nick of time.

Crash!

Gore-Pearce gave a scream; he tried to dodge, but he was a shade too late. The off-side wing caught him, he stumbled, and the radiator struck his head. He crashed over—and at the same instant Handforth acted. Released by his tormentors, he managed to jam both feet down—thus freeing the clutch and jamming on the brake. Only by this swift move did he avoid running right over Gore-Pearce.

For the president of the Reform Party was lying stretched on the gravel, unconscious!

"H'E'S killed!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Handforth'll get arrested for this!"

"Pick him up—quick!"

There were all sorts of shouts from the frightened boys. Handforth went red with indignation as he heard the yells.

"Confound you, it wasn't my fault!" he bellowed. "Gore-Pearce told you to pull me out, and the whole thing was his own fault! You shouldn't monkey with a chap at the controls of a car! It's like your nerve to blame me!"

"Cave!" went up a gasp.

Nelson Lee was bearing down upon the scene, having been attracted by the unusual commotion. The Reformers scattered in all directions; but quite a few of them, seeing that it was impossible to reach cover, remained where they were. There was really nothing else to do.

Lee did not waste any words. He went straight to Gore-Pearce, bent down, and raised him up. There was a gash on Claude's forehead, and he was quite unconscious. He seemed to have escaped any other hurt.

"It wasn't my fault, sir!" said Handforth, climbing out of the car and running round.

"It was your fault, Handforth, for bringing your car into the Triangle," said Nelson Lee. "You know well enough that such a thing is forbidden."

"He ought to be sacked, sir!" said Gulliver frantically.

"Nonsense!" retorted Lee. "Handforth's offence was a minor one—for which he will be suitably punished. He was in no way responsible for this accident."

"But he deliberately ran Gore-Pearce down, sir."

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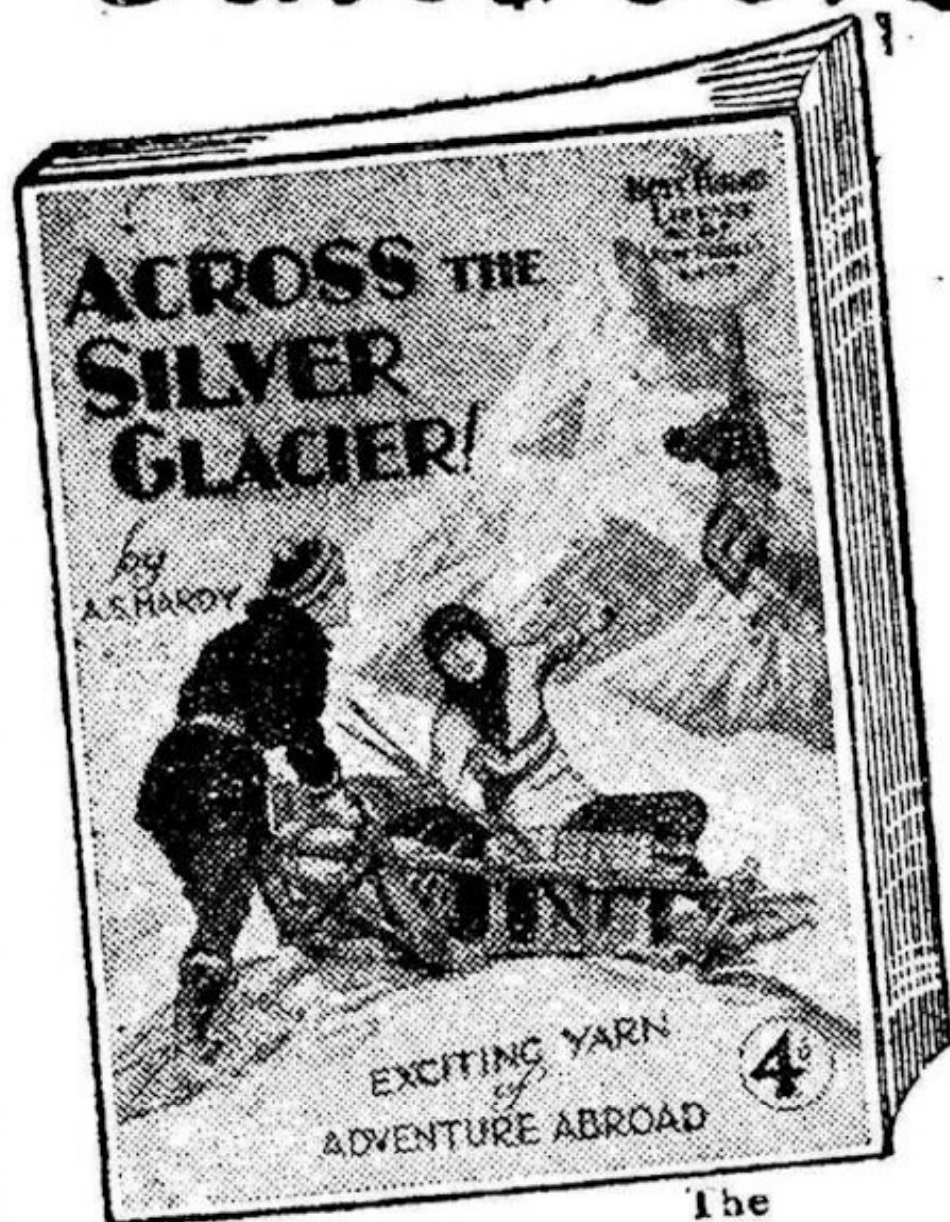
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"Don't be foolish," said Lee angrily. "I witnessed the whole incident, and I am quite satisfied that Gore-Pearce brought the accident on himself. He urged you to pull Handforth out of the car—and that, of course, was an insane thing to do. Handforth lost control because he was interfered with. And Gore-Pearce was the instigator of that interference. A disgraceful scene—and one that you will hear more of."

Nelson Lee had got hold of the truth. The Reformers had no chance of fooling the astute schoolmaster-detective. He wasted no more words on them, but carried Gore-Pearce swiftly away.

The Reformers, scared and uneasy, broke up into clusters and discussed the alarming situation. The procession was over before it had started. Gore-Pearce's injury was the result of a pure accident, mainly caused by Claude's own vindictiveness.

Lee did not think that he was seriously hurt. There were certainly no bones broken. In the sanatorium, Dr. Brett made a swift examination.

"Nothing much," he said at length. "A nasty knock on the temple, of course. Slight concussion, in fact. He may be unconscious for half an hour yet, but he'll be about again by to-morrow. A scrap of sticking-plaster will be the only sign left."

"Lucky for him he wasn't hurt more," said Nelson Lee.

"How did it happen?"

Lee explained.

"These youngsters are incredibly reckless," said the doctor with a grin. "And it's surprising how many hard knocks they can stand. I think I'd better keep him in here until to-morrow, even if he appears all right by this evening. It'll give him time to cool off. He's probably wild with young Handforth."

"He's no reason to be—so far as this mishap is concerned," replied Lee. "He brought it on entirely himself. Don't look so worried, Dr. Nicholls. It's nothing serious."

The Head had just entered the ward, anxious and concerned. Lee's first words reassured him.

"Somebody told me that one of the boys had been half-killed," he said. "Upon my word! How some people love to exaggerate! You're not trying to make light of this injury on purpose to spare me from worry?"

"Not at all," said Dr. Brett. "The boy is hardly hurt. He's showing signs of coming round already."

Dr. Nicholls frowned.

"Then I think I'll make some inquiries concerning the disgraceful scene which led up to the mishap," he said. "What's wrong with the boys, Mr. Lee? They appear to be extraordinarily excited to-day. Do you think it is because of young Hamilton?"

"What else?" asked Lee. "I am afraid that Nipper is having a pretty rough time of it to-day."

"A rough time! But he has been exonerated."

"By half the school—yes. But what about the other half? The boys are very bitter, Dr. Nicholls, and when high feeling of this kind gains ground in a school, it is likely to lead to alarming consequences."

"Surely Hamilton is not being persecuted?" asked the Head sharply.

"Whether he is or not, I am sure that he does not desire any help from either you or I," replied Nelson Lee. "He would much prefer to fight his own battle. I know Nipper very well. If I thought he needed protection, I would have interfered before this."

They were outside by now, and strolling across Inner Court. Dr. Nicholls was looking considerably upset. Aloof from the school, secluded in his own residence, he knew very little of what was going on so near to him. So near—and yet really so far. But Lee was in much closer touch.

"Really, Mr. Lee, I do not regard it as interference at all," said the Head, frowning. "If Hamilton is being persecuted as you suggest, then something should be done. It is an infamous thing! Have these boys no sense of justice or fairness?"

"The majority of them have, I am glad to say," replied Lee. "A few have none, and a small proportion of others are led by the few. These Reformers, for example," he added dryly. "A choice selection, sir."

The Head grunted. He and Nelson Lee had already agreed to differ about the reforms that he was attempting to put into practice.

If the Head expected to find any aftermath of the recent disturbance, he was disappointed. The Triangle was in a very peaceful condition. One or two groups of fellows were standing about, chatting quietly, but that was all.

"I would remind you, Dr. Nicholls, that I have already hinted that I intend to deal with the boys who created the recent disturbance," said Nelson Lee. "The majority of them belong to my House, I'm afraid, and a word from me to Mr. Stockdale, Mr. Gooles, and Mr. Stokes, will be sufficient."

"H'm! You mean I had better keep out of it, eh?" said the Head bluntly.

"I hope my meaning wasn't quite so obvious," smiled Lee.

The headmaster understood, and he decided that it would be far better to leave the matter in the hands of the Housemasters. So he took himself off, and would have gone right back to his own house, only he was attracted by some rather unusual sounds proceeding from behind the shrubbery.

He hesitated at first, and then became resolute. It was not his policy to wink at anything—as he had frequently told the school—and it was certainly disgraceful that this din should be proceeding unchecked.

HE made a remarkable discovery. Striding behind the shrubbery, he came upon a crowd of about twelve Remoyites and Fourth-Formers. They appeared to be led by Doyle, of West

House. The others included Gulliver and Bell and Teddy Long, and Merrell and Marriott, and a few "nobodies." They were executing a sort of war-dance, shrieking with idiotic laughter, and generally behaving as though they had gone out of their minds. The excitement of the occasion had got into their heads.

In the centre was a very peculiar object.

A junior, tied hand and foot, in a gardener's barrow. There was straw sticking out of his hair, and, more significant still, a quart vinegar-bottle was tied to one of his hands. A label had been fixed on the bottle, bearing the one word—"Whisky."

"Good heavens!" ejaculated Dr. Nicholls.

He recognised the hapless junior as Nipper. Nipper was not only torn and tattered, but his face had been daubed with mud, and he was in every respect a good imitation of a guy.

It was a stunning shock for Dr. Morrison Nicholls!

CHAPTER 10.

In the Neck!

"STOP!" The commotion ceased as though by magic. The Head strode rapidly forward, and not one of those juniors had the slightest chance to bolt. There was something almost comical in the way they fell back, their grins changing to blank consternation.

"So this is the kind of thing I find?" said the Head grimly. "You vindictive young rascals! What is the meaning of this? Who is the leader of this outrageous scene?"

"Doyle, sir!" squealed Teddy Long promptly.

"Yes, sir—Doyle!" chimed in several of the others.

"We were all in it!" gasped Doyle, glaring round.

"It was your suggestion!" said Gulliver shakily. "Didn't you ask us to come and help you? Wasn't it your idea to grab Nipper and shove him on a barrow, and make a guy of him?"

"Silence!" ordered the Head angrily. "Doyle, I regard you as the ringleader in this disgraceful affair. Release this boy at once!"

"I—I didn't mean it to go so far, sir," panted Doyle. "I tried to stop these other chaps, but they wouldn't listen to me. I only meant it to be an ordinary rag. I—I thought we'd have some fun."

"Fun!" thundered the Head. "Aren't you ashamed of yourself?"

"Yes, sir," muttered Doyle, flushing.

And this was probably true. Doyle wasn't such a bad fellow, really. It was fairly clear that his companions had carried the rag much further than he had intended.

"I have seldom witnessed such an exhibition of cowardly, despicable behaviour!" commented Dr. Nicholls, as Doyle and one or

two others commenced to untie Nipper's ropes. "A commonplace fight I might excuse, since all boys are high-spirited, but there is no excuse for this. I am shocked!"

Nipper was soon released. He made some attempt to wipe his face, and he appeared to be quite cool. He was rather sorry that the Head had butted in. He would much preferred to have had Handforth & Co. arrive on the scene.

Nipper blamed himself, too, for the whole business. Like an ass, he had walked off behind the shrubbery, to think. He might have known that somebody would spot him, and take advantage of the opportunity.

"Now, Hamilton," said the Head, eyeing him kindly. "What have you to say?"

"Nothing, sir."

"Have you no complaint to make?"

"Of course not, sir!"

"Really, I cannot understand you!" said the Head, in astonishment. "These young rascals treat you not only brutally, but in a grossly insulting manner, and yet you do not even wish to complain!"

"Oh, I don't suppose they meant it, sir!" said Nipper awkwardly. "Lots of these things start as a bit of fun, and before the chaps know where they are they've gone too far. I've done it myself, sir. I hope you won't be too rough on them."

Dr. Nicholls looked his amazement. And, vaguely, he was beginning to acquire an admiration for Nipper's point of view. It was all the more admirable because Nipper himself very obviously thought there was nothing in it.

"I am very sorry, Hamilton, but I am afraid I cannot overlook this disgraceful happening," said the Head sternly. "I am trying to understand why you should desire me to be lenient. Perhaps I shall be successful. However, these boys must be punished—and in a fitting manner, too."

"They're no worse than the rest, sir," said Nipper. "I think I shall ask Mr. Lee to let me leave the school, sir," he added quietly. "Then there won't be any more of these scenes."

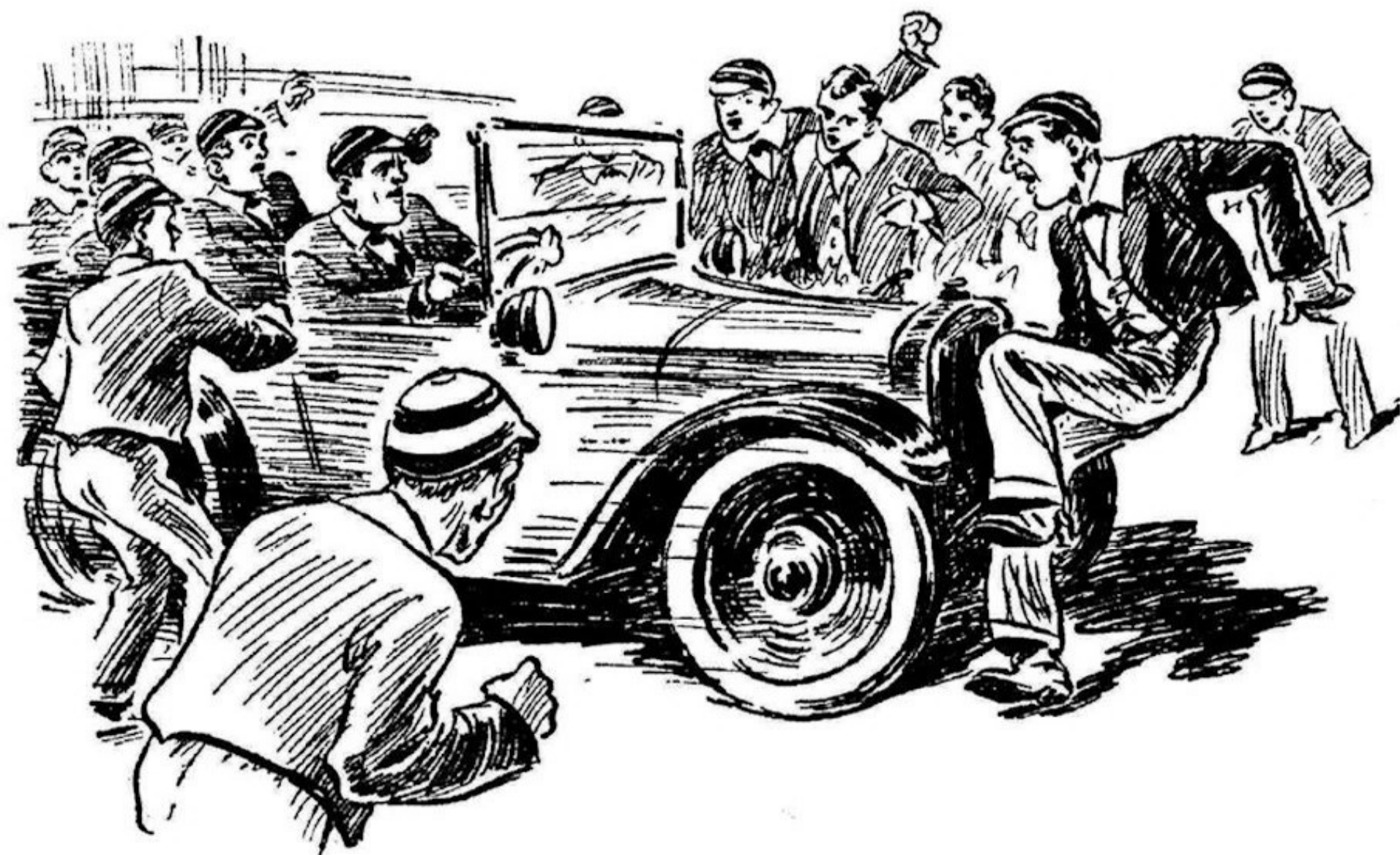
"Why should you leave? You have been acquitted!"

"But the truth of that other affair hasn't come out, has it, sir?" asked Nipper. "Over half the school thinks that I'm guilty, and that I ought to have been sacked. It will be better if I go, sir."

"Not for one moment will I consider it," said the Head sharply. "I shall oppose Mr. Lee in the strongest possible manner if he moots such a proposal. I rather fancy, too, that he has more faith in you. He led me to understand that you are capable of fighting your own battles, but I doubt if he suspects that you are engaged in such a one-sided fight as appears to be the case."

Nipper started.

"I'm not thinking of myself, sir," he said quickly. "I hope you won't think that. I'd stay on like a shot if there was nobody else



Crash! Gore-Pearce gave a scream. He tried to dodge, but he was a shade too late. The wing of Handforth's Austin Seven caught him as he stumbled, and he was sent reeling to the ground!

involved. But it's not fair that I should be the cause of all these ructions. Lots of fellows are being shunned and sneered at because they're friendly with me. For their sake, I think I ought to leave."

"Nonsense! If they're your friends, they will stand by you."

"I know they will, sir," said Nipper promptly. "But what chance is there that the position will ever get better? Oh, it's a beastly awkward position for me, sir! I can't quite explain—"

"Don't try," interrupted the Head. "I think I understand your difficulty, and I can assure you that this trouble will be put down once and for all. It is sheer persecution, and I won't have it! I'll make an example of these boys that the rest of the school will not easily forget."

"But, sir—"

"Enough!" rapped out Dr. Nicholls. "Hamilton, you had better go indoors and make yourself tidy. I will listen to no further pleas on the behalf of these other boys. I have made up my mind definitely."

DOYLE and his fellow-conspirators were pale with apprehension. There was something in the Head's tone that frightened them, and after Nipper had gone they were more scared than ever.

It was strange how they felt Nipper's loss the instant he had departed. He was the fellow they had ragged so unmercifully—and yet he was the fellow who had attempted to get them excused. Even in his hour of disgrace he still made his influence felt. Nipper had always been a leader, and when trouble

came along the other fellows looked to him. This time they looked in vain—but only because of the Head's inexorable attitude.

"Now!" said Dr. Nicholls grimly. "Four of you boys will secure Doyle and tie him in that barrow."

"Wha-a-at!" babbled Doyle.

"You don't relish the idea of suffering the fate of your victim, do you?" asked the Head. "I believe in making the punishment fit the crime, young man! There is an old saying that what is sauce for the goose is also sauce for the gander. We'll see how you like being tied in that barrow!"

Doyle and the other juniors were staggered. Here was something novel in headmasters! Another man, perhaps, would have felt that such a proceeding as this lacked dignity, but Dr. Morrison Nicholls never gave it a thought. He was essentially a man of justice.

Doyle was quickly tied into the barrow. In fact, his fellow-raggers were quite enthusiastic about it. They had an idea that Doyle was to be the only one to "cop out." They were soon disillusioned, however.

"One of you will take this barrow, and wheel it completely round the Triangle," said Dr. Nicholls silkily. "He will wheel it, in fact, until he can wheel it no longer. Now, then! One of you! Why this hesitation? You, sir!"

He pointed at Gulliver, and that wretched youth, with a gulp of dismay, seized the barrow and trundled it awkwardly towards the break in the trees which led back into the Triangle.

St. Frank's was startled, therefore, to see Doyle of the Remove wheeled into the

Triangle, very awkwardly and erratically, by the weedy Gulliver. Behind him came Dr. Nicholls, and a whole crowd of frightened-looking juniors. The Head took up his stand near the fountain, and the culprits were compelled to wait close at hand, so that they could take their turn when the time came.

"Great Scott! Look what's happening!"

"Oh, help!"

"It's a new stunt of the Head's!"

Fellows came running out of the Houses, excited and wondering. They poured from the West House and the East House, and from the Modern House and the Ancient House. Windows were flung up everywhere, and crowds of faces appeared at them. As though by magic, a vast audience gathered.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was a ripple of laughter at first, and then a roar—finally developing into a continuous yell. When the audience found that the Head neither frowned nor made signs, it let itself go.

As a matter of fact, the Head approved.

He was well pleased to see this great throng, and to hear it laughing at Doyle's discomfiture. It would be a lesson that Doyle would not forget for many a term. It was the Head's desire definitely to put an end to malicious ragging.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The laughter swept through the Triangle, was echoed from all the windows, and was carried on in waves. Gulliver had practically collapsed, and his place was immediately taken by Merrell, who had been commanded to carry on. For Doyle there was no rest whatever. He was bumped, jolted and jerked until every bone in his body was aching. All the others were taking their turns at an exercise which did their muscles quite a lot of good. Peculiarly enough, they did not appreciate it at all.

But their worst pain was the humiliation. This particularly applied to Doyle, who was the butt of all the laughter. He bitterly regretted that "brain-wave" of his. In fact, the Head's drastic punishment brought home to Doyle the vindictive nature of his idea. He was sorry now—and rather ashamed of himself.

It seemed that there would never be an end.

Round and round the Triangle Doyle was trundled—until he was dizzy, gasping and full of pains. In the meantime, the laughter continued, long and loud. Everybody was approving of the Head's move. Even the Reformers found entertainment in it. They had little sympathy for their fellows.

"The Head's a caution!" grinned Handforth. "I couldn't have thought of a better wheeze myself!"

"But what's the idea?" asked Church. "Why the dickens should he make these chaps wheel Doyle round the Triangle? It looks mad to me!"

"What does that matter?" asked Handforth. "It's funny, isn't it?"

They were standing at one of the upper windows of the Ancient House, and now Nipper joined them.

"I'm sorry you think it's funny, Handy," he said gruffly.

"Eh? Don't you think so?"

"The Head means well, but I wish he wouldn't do it," said Nipper.

"Why, do you know anything about this rummy business?"

"Yes," said Nipper. "Those chaps collared me, and tied me in that barrow. The Head caught them at it—and this is his idea of teaching them a lesson."

COMING NEXT WEEK!~~~~~



Handforth grinned.

"And a jolly good idea, too!" he said enthusiastically. "The rotters! So that's what they did, is it? The Head's got brains!"

"Poetic justice, eh?" chuckled McClure.

At last the ordeal was over. The culprits were collected in a worn-out, drooping group. Doyle was released from the barrow.

"I hope that you have all taken this lesson to heart!" said the Head sternly. "Let it be a warning to you. If I hear of any other such outrages, I shall deal with them even more drastically. Each of you boys will report to your Housemaster, and you will write one thousand lines each between now and the end of the week. You may dismiss."

They dismissed—dazed and freshly staggered.

They had felt that the first punishment was bad enough—but a thousand lines each! This would mean slogging hard work during every spare moment for the rest of the week! No half-holiday—no recreation during the evenings!

The raggers were dumbfounded—and so was the rest of the school.

For, of course, the word flew round like lightning, and everybody was soon talking about the cause of the Head's anger. And the Reformers came to the conclusion that

“MUTINY!”

It's Irene & Co. of the Moor View School who mutiny, and it happens after a jape—a jape engineered by the St. Frank's boys against their girl chums.

Nipper hasn't forgotten how Irene spoofed the Removites a few weeks ago, and when this chance comes of getting a bit of their own back—well, Nipper seizes it with both hands.

Unfortunately, complications arise—unforeseen complications—and the results are both amusing and startling. Irene & Co. get shocks; so do Nipper & Co.

Readers will ache with laughing after reading next Wednesday's rollicking yarn, but don't let that cause you to miss this treat!

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ragging Nipper was a somewhat costly proceeding!

There was no more of it that day.

CHAPTER 11.

Just As It Should Be!

NOBODY expressed much sympathy for Claude Gore-Pearce.

It was well known that he had escaped lightly, and that there was really no reason why he should be kept in the sanatorium until to-morrow. By the evening he was virtually recovered; except for a nasty headache, and a patch of sticking plaster on his forehead, he was practically normal.

“Serves him right!” was the general verdict.

Even his own Reformers were rather glad to be rid of him for a bit. Of late, Claude had been arrogant and more than usually supercilious. He didn't realise it, but a good many of his own supporters were getting fed-up with him. He had too many airs—too good an opinion of himself.

As for the Old-Timers, they felt that Gore-Pearce had come off all too easily. The accident had been of his own making, anyhow. And his great campaign—his energetic “drive”—was postponed. The Reformers gained no recruits that evening. On the contrary, there were squabbles in the ranks. Without Gore-Pearce to look after them, the rank and file broke away.

“The Head's a rummy sort of chap, but he knows what he's doing,” said Tommy Watson, as Nipper & Co. undressed in their dormitory. “Anyhow, the chaps didn't jeer at you any more, did they, Nipper? They didn't rag you, either.”

“They wanted to,” said Nipper bluntly.

“What difference does that make?”

“Oh, I don't know,” said Nipper, sitting down on the edge of the bed. “Everything's rotten. Why the dickens can't these fellows have their ‘down’ on me alone? I don't like to feel that Handy and you and lots of others are always scrapping for my sake. If I was left to fight it out alone, I wouldn't mind so much.”

“Don't you be so jolly concerned for us—or for Handy, either,” said Watson. “Handy was enjoying himself—until the Head stepped in.”

“Begad, rather!” said Sir Montie. “Handy has been complainin' with the most frightful bitterness this evenin'. He was prowlin' round waitin' for somebody to start a rag, and when nothin' happened he got awfully peeved.”

“Of course,” said Watson. “He enjoys it.”

“Oh, well, let's get to sleep and see what to-morrow brings,” said Nipper. “I feel so confoundedly helpless! These Reformers are such wasters—such sneaks! We can't give them their own medicine, and that's why the position is so helpless. It's not a straight fight at all.”

“There'll never be any change while half the school thinks that you were guilty of that drinking affair,” said Tommy Watson. “That's the whole trouble. If only you can clear your name, Nipper, the rest will be easy. The Reformers will have to pack up, and the Head's wheeze will collapse. After that, perhaps, things'll get normal.”

Nipper sighed.

“You're talking about impossibilities,” he said. “If they're not impossibilities, they're jolly well improbabilities. The inquiry's all over now—it's finished. None of us can sneak on Gore-Pearce, and it's a certainty that he won't peach on himself. So the whole thing remains at a deadlock.”

BUT Nipper was unduly pessimistic. Not that he could have the faintest suspicion of the way things were going to turn out. At the very moment, for example, Dr. Nicholls was in the sanatorium, inquiring of the nurse in charge how Gore-Pearce was getting on.

"He's all right, sir—but a bit restless," said the nurse—an elderly, kindly woman. "He's slept a bit, but I don't quite know what's the matter."

"Do you think his injury is troubling him?"

"I don't think it's that at all," replied the nurse. "If you ask me, sir, I believe there's something on his mind."

"Perhaps I'd better have a look at him?" suggested Dr. Nicholls.

He was by no means satisfied regarding that injury. He still had an idea that there was an innocent little conspiracy between the doctor and the nurse to hoodwink him.

He went into the ward where Gore-Pearce was sleeping, and sat down by the bed. Claude was in the act of tossing over in his sleep, and there was a strained, almost haggard expression on his face.

"H'm! He certainly seems to be a bit uneasy," murmured the Head, frowning. "Really, nurse, I'm half afraid that that knock was nastier than you've led me to believe. I hope the boy will soon get better."

The nurse smiled.

"Honestly, there's no need to worry over that knock, sir," she insisted. "If you had seen him eating his supper, and if you had heard him protesting because he was kept here—"

"Hush!" whispered the Head.

He had just felt Gore-Pearce's forehead, and was reassured. There was certainly no indication of feverishness. But Gore-Pearce, disturbed by that touch, perhaps, rolled over quite violently. He was not awake, and he seemed to be in the midst of a troublesome dream.

"You rotters!" he mumbled. "You black-mailing cads! I'm hanged if I'll pay you any more!"

"It's not the first time he's muttered in his sleep," whispered the nurse.

"You're wrong, sir—you're wrong!" panted Gore-Pearce, quite loudly. "It's Gulliver's fault—and Bell's! They took money from me for keeping the secret. They blackmailed me—Poole's a liar! I know I was at the White Harp, but that's no reason why Gulliver and Bell—"

His voice trailed away, and he rolled over again, breathing heavily.

Dr. Nicholls gave the nurse a sharp glance, and then placed a finger to his lips as she was about to speak. She tiptoed away, not very well pleased with her patient's condition. She was going to fetch him a glass of cold water, in case he awoke in a sudden heat. He hadn't been so restless as this before.

The Head was more than startled. He could not fail to be struck by the significance of Gore-Pearce's mutterings. Perhaps they were only incoherent ramblings of a night-

mare—but was that really probable? What had the boy meant by saying that he had been in the White Harp, and that Poole was a liar? Unless those things were on his mind, how could he have mentioned them, even in his sleep?

Dr. Nicholls was painfully aware of the fact that the recent inquiry had been very unsatisfactory. Nipper had professed his innocence, but nothing had been forthcoming to support his story. And now, in this unexpected manner, Gore-Pearce was referring to those very incidents.

"I wonder!" murmured the Head, as a thought struck him.

Gore-Pearce suddenly turned over again.

"That'll fix you!" he said, a note of extraordinary savagery in his voice. "I've knocked you out, and when the Head finds this whisky on you there'll be precious little chance of explaining! I'll be rid of you this time!"

"Good heavens!" ejaculated the Head, aloud.

"You won't sneak—you're too much of a goody-goody!" went on Gore-Pearce, his voice rising. "Against your silly code of honour, eh? I'm safe! If it wasn't for Poole, and those other cads trying to black-mail me—"

He broke off abruptly, as the Head leaned forward and touched his arm. Gore-Pearce opened his eyes, looked dull and dazed for a moment, and then came to full wakefulness with a violent start.

"Hallo!" he ejaculated. "I—I didn't know you were here, sir! Is—is anything the matter?"

"A very great deal is the matter, Gore-Pearce," said the Head grimly. "Do you know that you have been talking in your sleep?"

The wretched junior turned as pale as a sheet. Nothing could have been more significant. The look of guilt in his face was eloquent.

"Tut-talking in my sleep, sir!" he stammered faintly.

He remembered how Gulliver and Bell had caught him at the same game—and how they had made profit out of their discoveries. It was not surprising that Gore-Pearce felt sick and faint with sudden fear. What had the Head heard?

"I am very glad that I came and sat by your bedside, Gore-Pearce," said Dr. Nicholls ominously. "You have given me some very useful information—some very necessary information."

"I—I don't know what you mean, sir!"

"No?" purred the Head. "It was not you, by any chance, who knocked Hamilton down in the lane, and placed the whisky flask on him so that he would be incriminated?"

Gore-Pearce seemed to shrivel.

"I—I don't know what you mean, sir!" he repeated hoarsely.

"You do!" snapped the Head. "You know perfectly well what I mean, Gore-Pearce! You have just been telling me—"

No, no!" gasped the cad of Study A, making a final effort to pull himself together. "It's not fair, sir! I was dreaming! I was having a nightmare! It's not fair to accuse me because of that!"

Dr. Nicholls compressed his lips and stroked his chin.

"A nightmare?" he repeated thoughtfully.

"Yes, sir! That's all, sir!"

"H'm! A most uncomfortable nightmare, no doubt," said the Head, rising to his feet. "If I have misjudged you, Gore-Pearce, I am very sorry. You had better get to sleep again. Nurse, can't you give this boy something to make him slumber peacefully? These nightmares are not good for him."

And the Head left the ward. Gore-Pearce sank back on his pillow, still pale—but convinced that he had escaped by the narrowest of margins. He did not know that the Head now had the chance of opening up a line of inquiry which had hitherto been unsuspected!

NELSON LEE was surprised when Dr. Nicholls strode into his study in the Ancient House. There was an expression on the Head's face which boded ill for somebody.

"Mr. Lee, I need your help!" he said swiftly. "Something has happened to convince me that Hamilton was the victim of a plot."

Nelson Lee did not move a hair.

"Indeed?" he said mildly. "But surely you knew that already?"

"I may have known it—but I had no means of verifying it," replied the Head. "Your own certainty of the boy's innocence was so strong that I could hardly help being influenced to some extent. Now, by the sheerest chance, I have means of obtaining the proof."

He quickly told Lee of Gore-Pearce's sleep-talking.

"You propose, I take it, to question Gulliver and Bell?" asked Lee keenly.

"What else? We cannot very well fasten the guilt upon Gore-Pearce because of his alleged nightmare," said Dr. Nicholls. "I pretended to swallow his fanciful explanation."

"There can be no doubt that the boy's conscience was at work," said Nelson Lee, nodding. "I'm afraid there's not much good in Gore-Pearce—but I'm glad to know, at least, that he has a conscience. I do not for a moment believe that he was suffering from a nightmare. In any case, I fancy that Gulliver and Bell will be easy to handle. We will go to their dormitory at once."

They went upstairs, and when they entered the dormitory they found Gulliver and Bell still awake. The Remove had not been in bed long, and it was only a few minutes since lights-out. The two young rascals were startled when they saw who their visitors were.

"Certain information has come into my possession during the past half-hour," said

Dr. Nicholls, without any beating about the bush. "I understand that you two boys have been bribed by Gore-Pearce to keep a secret? Is this true?"

Gulliver opened his mouth to speak, but his jaw seemed paralysed. Bell merely gasped. They had both gone pale.

"Is it true?" demanded the Head sternly.

"I—I don't know, sir!" faltered Gulliver, at last. "Gore-Pearce hasn't bribed us, sir."

Gulliver was thin and weedy, and his pasty complexion was now even more unhealthy-looking than ever. His flat blue eyes were full of terror. Bell had lost his usual supercilious expression, and he was fairly shivering with apprehension.

"You had better tell me the truth!" said Dr. Nicholls. "What do you know of that unfortunate incident concerning Hamilton? You know that Hamilton was knocked down in the lane, don't you?"

"Yes, sir!"

"What!"

"I—I mean, no, sir!" gasped Gulliver. "He got drunk——"

"He was knocked down by Gore-Pearce!" thundered the Head. "And you knew of this! It was Gore-Pearce who placed that whisky flask on him, wasn't it?"

The two wretched cads seemed frozen.

"Wasn't it?" insisted the Head.

"Yes, sir!" they babbled.

"I thought we should have very little trouble with them," said Nelson Lee grimly. "Gulliver! Bell! You had better tell the headmaster the whole story. Nothing but the truth will serve you now."

"We weren't there, sir!" bleated Bell.

"We didn't know anything about it until it had happened. Gore-Pearce gave himself away in his sleep, sir."

The two masters exchanged glances.

"Oh, indeed!" said the Head. "Indeed! Gore-Pearce gave himself away in his sleep, did he? Very interesting, young man!"

"Yes, sir. He didn't know it until we woke him up," put in Gulliver eagerly.

"Please sir, we didn't have any hand in it! Gore-Pearce hit Hamilton a foul blow, and knocked him clean out."

"What kind of a foul blow?"

"Hamilton was peeling his jacket off, sir, and Gore-Pearce gave him an uppercut while his arms were helpless," said Gulliver breathlessly. "Then he put that whisky flask on him, and dodged behind the hedge. He rang up the White Harp, too, and got those men to tell lies——"

"Enough!" said the Head contemptuously. "Good heavens! You knew all this, and yet you failed to come forward with the information! I am overwhelmed with disappointment. You would have stood by and seen Hamilton expelled in disgrace! You wicked boys!"

"Gore-Pearce scared us, sir," faltered Bell.

"Be that as it may, it was your duty to make your report," snapped the Head. "Have I not already told you that I will not allow persecution. You should have taken no

notice of Gore-Pearce's threats. A thoroughly disgusting affair, Mr. Lee," he added. "These boys have behaved abominably."

He strode out of the dormitory after ordering Gulliver and Bell to report to him on the following morning.

"So that was how it was done?" murmured Nelson Lee, outside. "Nipper was struck while he was removing his jacket! None but a coward and a cad could have delivered such a blow. And this boy was Gore-Pearce!"

"I am appalled!" said the Head brokenly.

CHAPTER 12.

The Last of the Reformers!

BUT Dr. Nicholls' depression was only momentary. Before he and Nelson Lee had got down the stairs he had recovered. He was almost like a tiger. His expression was eager, his movements were jumpy.

"You will come with me, Mr. Lee?" he asked crisply.

"To the White Harp?"

"Yes!" said the Head. "I want to get this evidence absolutely complete. It will not take us long."

Nelson Lee was perfectly willing. He had been expecting something like this to happen. It was certain, in any case, that Lee had never believed that Nipper's disgrace would be lasting. Indeed, if Nipper had been sentenced to expulsion, his "guv'nor" would never have allowed him to leave the school.

The White Harp was reached within a few minutes, for the two masters walked rapidly. It was just after closing-time, and Mr. Jonas Porlock, the landlord, was alone in the bar-parlour.

If he had known the identity of the visitors who had rapped so imperiously on the door, he might not have opened it. As it was, they were upon him before he recognised them. He backed hastily into the bar as the Head entered, relentless and grim.

"What's the idea of this 'ere?" asked Mr. Porlock uneasily.

"Porlock, when I saw you last you lied to me!" said the Head, with absolute bluntness. "You told me that a boy named Hamilton had been in this establishment."

"So he 'ad!" snapped the landlord. "And you'd best be careful what you call me!" he added unpleasantly. "Think you're somebody, don't you? Pushin' your way into a man's 'ouse and insultin' 'im—"

"I doubt," said the Head, "if anybody can insult you, Mr. Porlock! You know perfectly well that the boy was Gore-Pearce. Do you admit this?"

"No, I don't!" roared Porlock.

"Very well!" said the Head, his manner ominous. "Perhaps you can tell me, Mr. Lee, where the policeman's house is situated? I'll soon show this rascal whether I am in earnest or not!"

"The policeman can't do nothing to me!" ejaculated Porlock, frightened more by the Head's tone than by his words. "I suppose a man can be mistook, can't he? I ain't supposed to know all your boys by sight."

"For the last time, Mr. Porlock, was that boy Gore-Pearce?" said the Head harshly. "I would remind you that the licensing magistrates will not deal kindly with your next application if they receive information—"

"'Ere, you wouldn't take my livin' away, would you?" gasped Porlock. "I couldn't 'elp the kid comin' in 'ere!" he added defensively. "It was that young rip, Gore-Pearce, if you want to know!"

"Then why couldn't you tell me so at first?"

"It's the last time I'll make myself out a liar for the sake o' them kids!" snapped Porlock savagely. "But believe me or believe not, it was that fool, Poole, who put me up to it. I couldn't afford to lose his custom—and the custom 'e brings in. As for the boy, I've told 'im fifty times that I won't 'ave him on these premises. So it ain't fair to blame me!"

"In future, Mr. Porlock, there is only one course that you must pursue," said the Head curtly. "If any St. Frank's boys enter your premises, report them to me. It's no good warning them. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir," muttered the landlord.

"Then I shall be grateful if you will bear this advice in mind," said Dr. Nicholls. "Come, Mr. Lee."

They went out, and the Head breathed more freely in the cool night air.

"Amazing," he commented, as they walked back. "A string of lies and conspiracy. I never dreamed of such duplicity."

"And the guilty boy is Gore-Pearce," remarked Nelson Lee pointedly.

"Why do you use such a tone?"

"My dear sir, need I explain?" asked Lee. "Perhaps you have forgotten that Gore-Pearce is the leader of the so-called Reformers—the boys who are embracing your principles?"

"Good gracious! Is that a fact?"

"You don't like to admit that the whole thing is a farce, do you?"

"A farce!" protested the Head.

"A sheer, ridiculous farce," insisted Nelson Lee. "Let me point out that whilst Hamilton, who was perfectly innocent, refused to give the culprit away, Gore-Pearce, who was guilty, has not hesitated to seek every opportunity of sneaking."

"It is incredible!" muttered the Head.

"It is merely an instance of the schoolboy code of honour," replied Nelson Lee quietly. "Hamilton did not sneak, because such a thing is totally against the unwritten law, which he has always respected. Let me say at once that I approve and respect that unwritten law."

"Then you still oppose me?"

"I shall never cease to oppose you," said Nelson Lee. "Can't you see, Dr. Nicholls,

that you are going the right way to make St. Frank's a hotbed of falsehood and vindictiveness? Look how absurd your theory is when it is put to the test! These Reformers have been breaking the school rules with impunity—knowing that the other boys would respect the unwritten law and not sneak on them."

"Upon my word!"

"Have they sneaked amongst themselves?" continued Lee. "Not a bit of it! These boys have been bluffing you. They have only sneaked against the boys who have stuck to the old code. And what of Gulliver and Bell?"

"Eh?"

"They failed to give Gore-Pearce away, even when Hamilton was faced with expulsion," said Nelson Lee. "The thing has been working one-sidedly. And I fail to see how it can work any other way. None of the honourable boys will descend to the depths of becoming informers."

"It's not a question of descent at all," complained the Head. "What I want is to cause a general *ascent*—to make all the boys in the school work hand in hand with me towards making St. Frank's the ideal school."

"By becoming informers, one and all?"

"It may seem so, if you put it like that, but in actual practice it would be different," protested Dr. Nicholls. "Carried to its logical conclusion, there would be no rules broken, and therefore no informers. That is the point I have been striving to reach."

Nelson Lee chuckled.

"You'll pardon my saying so, sir, but I think you'd be far more likely to reach the moon," he said dryly. "Haven't you had an example of your theory in practice? What has it led to? Falsehood and corruption! An honourable boy prepared to suffer expulsion rather than sneak!"

Dr. Nicholls sighed.

"I suppose there's no answer to your argument," he said sadly. "Well, Mr. Lee, I am not a coward. I am not afraid to admit when I am beaten. And I am beaten now. I shall not again interfere with the unwritten laws of this school. The old ways are perhaps the best!"

CLAUDE GORE-PEARCE didn't sleep much that night.

For he received another visit from the Head before eleven-thirty, and the interview was brief, but to the point.

"Gore-Pearce, I want to tell you at once that Mr. Porlock has informed me of the truth concerning your visits to the White Harp," said Dr. Nicholls sternly. "I have, furthermore, learned that you deliberately attempted to get Hamilton expelled from the school."

"But—but you're not taking any notice of that nightmare of mine, sir!" gasped Gore-Pearce. "I was only dreaming—"

"You are awake now, Gore-Pearce," broke in the Head. "I have all the proof I need. Can you suggest any reason why I should not

expel you, as you attempted to contrive Hamilton's expulsion?"

The cad of Study A crumpled up.

"Please don't do that, sir!" he gasped. "I confess, sir! And, honestly, sir, I've been tortured ever since the thing happened! I only acted on the impulse. I was sorry for it afterwards, but I was afraid to say anything then."

"You would have seen Hamilton disgraced."

"If he had been sacked, sir, I should have confessed!" faltered Gore-Pearce. "Please don't send me away, sir! My people would never forgive me, sir. My pater would disown me!"

"That is no argument," said the Head coldly. "You have been guilty of a very despicable act. Were it not for the fact that your conscience was obviously troubling you, I would not hesitate to inflict the extreme penalty. Furthermore, I will give you the benefit of the doubt, and believe that you would have confessed if Hamilton had been expelled. I believe, too, that you committed your offence on impulse, and not by deliberate intention."

"It's true, sir—really it is!" sobbed Gore-Pearce. "I should never have done it if I had had time to think, sir."

"Well, I shall consider the matter, and you will know your sentence in the morning," replied the Head. "That is all for to-night, Gore-Pearce."

He went, and Claude Gore-Pearce rolled over in bed, suffering mental agonies. For he had been left in doubt—and no punishment could be worse than that. Small wonder that no sleep came to him that night.

NEXT morning the news hit St. Frank's completely by surprise.

Nobody knew that anything had happened. Gore-Pearce had not yet returned from the sanatorium, and Gulliver and Bell, for their own sakes, didn't breathe a word about the Head's visit after lights-out. If the fellows noticed that the pair was pale and shaky, no particular notice was taken.

So, after prayers, just as the school was ready to dismiss, the Head sprung his bomb-shell. The school found itself in for a rare piece of excitement.

First of all, Nipper was ordered on to the platform, and the Head quietly told the school the true details of that unhappy incident. Then Gore-Pearce was produced, and he was made to confess in the hearing of all St. Frank's.

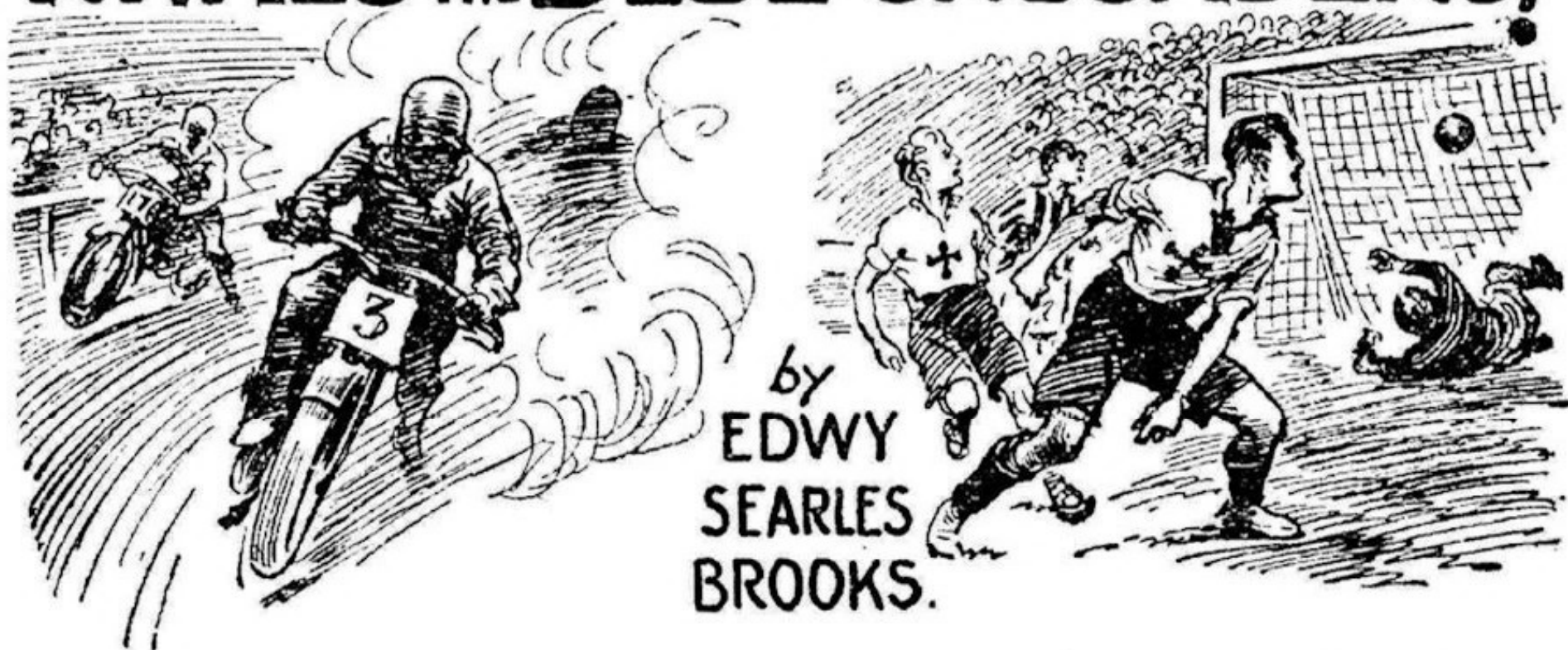
After that came Gore-Pearce's flogging—a particularly severe one. Let it be said, to Claude's credit, that he uttered no sound whilst the punishment was being administered, but took it pluckily.

"I want to say a few words to those boys who have persecuted Hamilton so cruelly," exclaimed the Head afterwards. "No doubt they are now feeling thoroughly ashamed of themselves—as they should. This boy—

(Concluded on page 42.)

ANOTHER FULL-O'-THRILLS INSTALMENT THIS WEEK, CHUMS!

RIVALS OF THE BLUE CRUSADERS!



by
EDWY
SEARLES
BROOKS.

Rex Carrington thinks he has finished with Peter Burke, but that's where he makes the biggest mistake of his life. Burke is out to get his revenge—to ruin Rex—and this week he achieves his object!

Trapped!

INWARDLY, Rex upbraided himself for being such a fool—for falling into such a preposterously childish trap. But he had suspected no trap because he could not see, for the life of him, why anybody should want to prevent him riding.

He struggled madly, his rage at fever pitch, but it was hopeless from the start. Everything was in readiness. His legs were secured in a flash, his arms were held and bound.

If anybody had seen Rex enter that shed—which was quite possible—nothing much would have been thought of the incident, because he came out again three seconds later. Curly Hankin was patting him on the shoulder, and grinning.

"Go ahead, old man," Curly said boisterously. "You're bound to win."

The other nodded, and walked back to his machine. How could anybody have guessed that this figure was a substitute? For no sooner had Rex been trapped in that shed than the other man emerged. He was with Rex's motor-cycle so soon after Rex had gone that many of the mechanics would have been willing to swear that he had never left the pits at all.

And it was well nigh impossible for them to see the difference. The helmet and goggles hid his face almost completely.

There was the figure "1" boldly emblazoned on his riding suit. The next moment he was wheeling his machine towards the starting-point, and not a soul in that vast audience knew anything of the recent quick-change act.

Yet Rex Carrington was a prisoner in that shed, right within the walls of the Speedway. The audacity of the thing was startling. Off hand, one would have said that it could never have been worked; but it had succeeded because of its very daring.

And now Rex was held tightly, not only by ropes, but by strong hands. Nobody spoke. He had not the faintest suspicion who his assailants were, or why he was being held captive. His whole mind was in a whirl.

He did not guess that Peter Burke was one of his attackers, and that Burke was now staring eagerly out of the little shuttered window on to the track—through a prepared spy-hole.

The big handicap race was on the point of starting.

And in Rex Carrington's place was that substitute—that mysterious stranger—who, for some reason, was bent upon riding under Rex's name. What was behind this audacious scheme?

Burke's Cunning Trick!

FATTY FOWKES grunted.

"Well, I hope he doesn't kill himself—that's all!" he said gruffly.

"A mere broken leg won't matter?" asked Dave Moran, chuckling.

The big goalie of the Blue Crusaders did not deign to reply. They were in the grandstand at the Speedway, and the big Handicap Race was just on the point of starting.

The footballers were looking at the helmeted, begoggled figures of the riders, who

were already sitting astride their gleaming, roaring mounts. There was nothing to identify one from another except the figures which were plainly visible on their riding-suits.

Fatty was concentrating upon "No. 1." Fatty was the only Blue who knew that this was to be Rex Carrington's last race on the dirt track. Rex had given his word. After this he would confine himself whole-heartedly to football—to helping the Crusaders towards winning promotion.

Dave Moran and Ben Gillingham and the other Blues were under the impression that Rex had cut adrift for good—that he had become a speed fiend in earnest. His appearance in this race seemed to prove it.

How could any of these footballers know that "No. 1" was not Rex Carrington at all? Not even the mechanics at the pits knew it. The substitution had been performed so adroitly that the men had seen nothing, although it had been done under their very eyes.

"They're off!" muttered Peter Burke to himself, as he crouched in the stores shed, his eye applied to the spy-hole. "Now it's up to Smith."

He was counting on "Lightning" Smith to do something spectacular. It was this man who was riding on Rex's machine—this man whom everybody believed to be Rex himself.

Burke had engaged him especially for this job, and was paying him well. Lightning Smith hailed from the American tracks, although he was not an American. Burke didn't quite know what he was, and he didn't care. He only knew that Smith was a man who had been barred from every speedway in England. He was a man who, at the opening of the sport in the Old Country, had quickly earned a name for himself as a brilliant racer, but an unscrupulous one. He had

committed so many fouls, indeed, that he had been "warned off."

He was ruthless. He had nearly caused the death of at least two men, and had injured several. He always maintained that such incidents were purely accidental; but on the last two or three occasions his intentions had been so palpable that no speedway would now employ him.

Burke had known him for some time. And he was the very man for the job this evening.

The crowd cheered vigorously as the race started, and there was no reason why anybody should be suspicious. "No. 1" was riding with all of Rex Carrington's brilliance and daring—with, perhaps, an added touch of recklessness.

"The big idiot!" groaned Fatty, as he watched the racers bucking and broadsiding round one of the turns. "Oh, by glory, I can't look at him. He'll come an awful cropper soon! Why can't he be careful? His last race, too!"

The race was about half-way through. Gradually No. 1 was creeping to first place. At the commencement of the straight he was riding neck and neck with Billy Ross, who was No. 4. Now the false Rex put on a terrific spurt, and gradually forged ahead.

Suddenly he swerved—a deliberate, dangerous swerve right across No. 4's track. There was no possibility of that move being accidental.

"Oh!"

A mighty shout went up. People leapt to their feet. Billy Ross, in order to save himself, was obliged to skid broadside towards the railings, sending up a terrific shower of dust which almost hid him. If his front wheel had happened to touch No. 1's back wheel, he would have been over.

"He's over!"

"Foul—foul!"

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 also a clever dirt-track rider, and he appears regularly at the Speedway. Just recently he has fallen foul of

PETER BURKE, ex-manager of the Speedway. Burke it was who disabled Rex for footer, thus adding to Piecan's troubles, for without Rex the team is going to pieces. However, the centre-forward's injured foot is practically better now, but he tells nobody of this—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 mean the ruin of Rex. Thus it happens that on the day of Rex's next—and final—race on the track, the footballer is told by Hankin that Fowkes is seriously injured, and is asking for him. Rex, unsuspecting, accompanies Hankin to a nearby shed, in spite of the fact that the race is due to start in two minutes' time. Just as he enters he is collared by unknown hands and made a prisoner!

(Now read on.)

There was a confusion of shouts and angry yells. Smiling Bill Ross, with rare skill, kept his machine upright, but was out of the race. He pulled up near the railings, having saved himself by a hair's-breadth, and he was seething with rage.

"The hound!" he panted thickly.

"Play the game, Rex!" bellowed the crowd.

"Yah! Dirty!"

Fatty Fowkes groaned afresh as he heard these shouts. Here was a difference. Until that incident, Rex had been the idol of the crowd. Now the crowd was against him.

Peter Burke chuckled inwardly.

"Good!" he muttered. "Gosh! But that

With an abrupt swerve, No. 1 cut in on the final curve. It seemed incredible that he could find space between the Australian rider and the edge of the track—and at that speed, too, the manoeuvre was appallingly dangerous.

No. 1 fairly wrenched his machine round, and the broadside skid that followed was terrifying in its spectacular effect. The machine simply went hurtling forward, and shot through the narrow gap between the edge of the track and the leading rider. The unfortunate Australian found his path barred. He tried to swerve, but it was too late. No. 1's rear caught his front wheel as it skidded past.



No. 1—Rex Carrington's machine—shot through the narrow gap between the edge of the track and the other rider. Next moment there was a tremendous crash as the latter went over amid a smother of dust. And immediately a roar of anger arose from the crowd. "Yah! Dirty riding, Carrington! Sling him off!"

fellow's got a nerve! He might have killed Ross that time—and he wasn't particularly safe himself."

The shouts were still continuing, but now they were not quite so angry. No. 1 was riding well—broadside with terrifying nerve round the curves, and handling the machine with a skill that was almost uncanny. Rex seemed to be surpassing himself.

It was the last lap now, and only one of the Australian champions was left in the race with No. 1. This man was just ahead—an almost certain winner. There seemed to be no possibility of Rex catching up.

"It's not enough!" muttered Burke. "He ought to do something else—something to anger the crowd—Ah, that's better!"

Crash!

The next moment there was a tremendous crash as the Australian went over in a smother of dust and livid flames. Fortunately, the rider was flung clear of the blazing machine, but he had not escaped injury. He rolled over and over, and then lay ominously still.

And No. 1 roared on—easily the winner.

"Yah! Dirty riding, Carrington!"

"Grab him!"

"Pull him off his machine and smash him!"

The shouts were now furious. That move had been no accident—it had been a deliberate foul.

"Fine!" gloated Burke. "Just what I wanted!"

Rough on Rex!

"AFTER him!"

It was a concerted roar. Men were leaping over the barriers and racing along the track. No. 1 seemed to realise that he had gone beyond the limit. He pulled up near the pits, well clear of any members of the infuriated public. He flung his machine away and then faced round, as though at bay.

"Have you gone mad, Carrington?" shouted Mr. Harding, running up.

No. 1 turned, gave one glance at Mr. Harding and the approaching mob, and then he bolted. He ran full-tilt into the stores shed, as though seeking some haven of refuge.

But apparently the stores shed was no good, for it seemed to everybody that he reappeared a second later, reeling unsteadily. Nobody guessed that this was not the same figure!

The thing had been done like a flash.

Rex was held ready. The instant Lightning Smith dashed in, Rex was thrust out. True, there was no means by which Burke and Curly Hankin & Co. and Smith could leave that shed, but what chance was there that the shed would be searched? It was a risk that had to be taken—but such a small one that it hardly amounted to a risk at all.

And Burke was right.

For the angry crowd, seeing the helmeted, begoggled figure staggering out of the doorway, immediately assumed that it was the man they were after. Rex himself assisted in the plot, quite unconsciously, for his first action was to tear his goggles off and to reveal himself.

"What—what's all this?" gasped Rex, stupefied.

There was every reason for his utter bewilderment. He found himself surrounded by an infuriated, menacing mob. Everybody was shouting at once. Fists were being shaken in his face. Mr. Harding was trying to push his way through the crowd, as angry as anybody.

"You hound!"

"Yah! You ought to be horsewhipped!"

"I—I don't know what you mean!" stammered Rex. "I've been in that shed! Somebody's been holding me there! Why don't you look—"

"Collar him!" went up the roar.

His words were not even heard. Nobody thought of paying any heed to them, and he was seized and whirled away towards the track. Within a minute there wasn't a living soul near that shed. Peter Burke and his companions had not the slightest difficulty in boldly emerging and mingling with the outskirts of the crowd. Nobody had noticed them—nobody had taken any heed of them.

Exactly what would have happened to Rex, if the crowd had had its way, remained a problem; luckily for him, however, the police on duty forced their way through the mob to his protection.

Alone, they could not have saved him, but Fatty Fowkes came charging through with

his fellow Blues, and they, with the help of the constables, succeeded in forming a cordon round the dazed, bewildered Rex.

"Better take him into the office, or somewhere," said a police-inspector, in a grim voice. "We can't keep this up for long."

"This way!" replied Mr. Harding.

(Continued on next page.)



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(Continued from page 39.)

The noise was tremendous. The crowd, finding itself robbed of its victim, was now resorting to a veritable hurricane of hooting. A few of the roughs were even throwing things, but these were soon stopped.

In a way, the crowd was justified in its attitude. The Australian rider had been carried off on a stretcher, and he was obviously badly hurt. Not because of an accident, but because of Rex Carrington's foul riding. At least, the crowd attributed it to Rex Carrington.

The mechanics were equally convinced—so was Mr. Harding—and so were the Blues. Hadn't they seen it with their own eyes? Not a soul ever dreamed of any other possibility. The more kindly people excused Rex by thinking that he had lost his head—that the excitement had got the better of him.

Rex himself was completely dumbfounded. He was in an unenviable position. He didn't even know what all the bother was about. He had been held a prisoner, and as soon as he had been released the crowd was on him! The crowd wanted his blood! Why? What could they possibly have against him?

In a complete daze, Rex found himself in Mr. Harding's office—with Fatty Fowkes and Dave Moran and the other Blues. The police had remained outside, attending to the mob.

"You can consider yourself lucky, Carrington, that you are whole," said Mr. Harding harshly. "I am not sure that it wouldn't have been just if you had been given to the crowd. You infernal blackguard!"

"But—but I don't know what you mean!" gasped Rex. "I've done nothing!"

"Done nothing!" thundered Mr. Harding. "Do you know that Ross came within an ace of being burnt to death? Do you know that Poole, the Australian, has been taken to hospital with a fractured thigh and a broken arm? Done nothing, indeed! You deserve to go to prison!"

"You're a rotten cad, Carrington!" said Dave Moran curtly.

Rex looked round, his astonishment so palpable that everybody in the room was puzzled. Fatty Fowkes was the only one who felt the slightest doubt.

"Pull yourself together, Rex!" he urged. "Don't you remember? Glory! Perhaps he doesn't know what he did, boys!"

"Doesn't know he hanged!" snapped Mr. Harding.

"All I know," said Rex, "is that I was grabbed by somebody in that shed and kept there. Then I was bundled out, and the crowd mobbed me."

"Shed?" said Dave, staring.

"What's this about Poole being hurt?" went on Rex. "How do I know anything about it? I wasn't in the race! I didn't ride! I heard the shouts, but——"

"Didn't ride!" burst in Mr. Harding furiously. "Good heavens! Do you expect us to believe that lie? What do you mean—you didn't ride?"

"But I didn't!" protested Rex frantically.

"Perhaps he lost his memory for a bit!" put in Fatty. "Honestly, boys, it's too thick! Rex wouldn't play dirty——"

"I'd like you young fellows to be quiet!" said Mr. Harding harshly. "I am grateful for your help, but I'm going to deal with Carrington myself. His denial is the most ridiculous nonsense——"

"Look here, Mr. Harding, let me know what happened!" said Rex hoarsely. "I tell you, I don't know! You think I'm lying, but I'm not! What happened on the track?"

The Speedway's owner told him—impatiently, angrily.

"Great Scott!" gasped Rex. "So that was the dodge!"

He was thunderstruck. He saw now how cunningly Burke had "wangled" the thing. So that was why he had been lured into that shed, kept there, and then released! Another rider had been lurking in readiness, dressed in exactly the same kind of clothing—and bearing the same number!

In that moment, Rex forgave Mr. Harding and the Blues for their suspicions. What else were they to think?

Curiously enough, he connected Peter Burke with the affair automatically. He had not seen Burke, or heard him—he could only say for certain that Curly Hankin was involved—but his instincts and his common-sense told him that nobody else but Burke could be the real instigator. Curly Hankin, alone, was not possessed of the necessary nerve—indeed, had he the motive.

"Dodge?" repeated Mr. Harding sharply. "What are you trying to imply? Have you the unparalleled audacity to suggest that there's been a mistake?"

Rex took a deep breath.

"Yes, there's been a mistake," he said quietly, "and I'll tell you how."

The Outcast!

SILENCE, ominous and significant, followed Rex Carrington's explanation. He had told everything—how somebody—he did not mention Curly's name—had told him that Fatty Fowkes was badly injured. He explained how he had rushed into the shed, and how he had been held.

"I am startled, Carrington, that you should bring forward such a palpable tissue of falsehoods," said Mr. Harding, his voice breaking that grim silence. "I am more disappointed in you than ever."

"But, sir——"

"I was thinking, perhaps, that Fowkes was right—that you had either lost control of your machine, or that you were temporarily off your head," continued Mr. Harding. "This so-called explanation, however, proves quite clearly that your head is quite normal. You could not invent such a story if——"

"It's not invented, sir," said Rex. "It's the truth."

He looked round at Dave Moran and the other Blues. He saw nothing but disappointment and condemnation. But he did not resent these looks. How could he expect such a story to be believed? Even in his

own ears it sounded preposterous. Indeed, he was startled to realise how terribly feeble it did sound.

"What's the use?" he said bitterly. "Burke's at the bottom of it, I believe, but you'll never take any notice of me."

"I believe you, Rex," said Fatty quietly.

Rex gave him a grateful look.

"Thanks, old man," he said.

"I'm believing you against all the evidence," went on the big goalie with a defiant look round. "I'm believing you because I know thundering well that you couldn't play such a dirty trick. I've got more faith in you."

"Your faith is misplaced, my friend," said Mr. Harding harshly. "Good heavens! Didn't you see Carrington riding? Who else could ride like that? Every other track-racer was on the spot, and above suspicion, too. Who is this mysterious man who was substituted? Pah! It's not worth talking about!"

"At least, you'll come to that shed and examine it, won't you?" asked Rex steadily.

"You'll give me a chance? There might be some sort of clue in there."

"Of course we'll go!" replied Fatty eagerly.

Mr. Harding pointed to the door.

"You'll get out of this office at once, Carrington—and I don't want to see you again," he said, his voice quivering. "You've done me incalculable harm—for I, too, shall be blamed for to-night's outrageous work. The Speedway will suffer more than you!"

"That's what Burke wanted," said Rex quickly. "Can't you see it, Mr. Harding? It's a plot against you—as well as me!"

But Mr. Julian Harding refused to listen. There was no shred of evidence to support Rex's fantastic story.

As for the prize-money which Rex had apparently won, he received nothing. He had been disqualified for fouling, and the race was null and void.

The Blues accompanied Rex out, and they were relieved to find that the crowd had been dispersed by the police—who, by this time, had received reinforcements. The Speedway was locked and barred. Even the streets outside had been cleared.

Rex had no hopes as he led the way into the stores shed. It was dark in there, and matches were struck by Fatty and Dave Moran and Wally Simpson. They looked round curiously.

"H'm!" said Dave significantly.

To imagine that there had been a struggle in here, as Rex had described, was difficult. The shed was half-filled with oil-drums, boxes of spare-parts, and so forth. There were three oil-drums in the centre of the space just in front of the door—one of them perched on the tops of the two others. The tap was dripping, and there was a pot on the floor underneath it.

Everything was orderly. No dust or foot-marks. Dave touched the oil-drums, and the top one wobbled somewhat. A couple of

drips missed the pot and splashed on the floor.

"Well, Fatty, you've got to have plenty of faith now," said Dave grimly. "Look at all this! Why, even when I touch this drum by accident the oil splashes on the floor! There's been no struggle in here! And where do you suppose Carrington's three or four assailants were hiding?"

"Glory!" said Fatty, looking worried.

"Very pretty—and rather convincing," commented Rex bitterly. "Hasn't it occurred to you fellows that the brutes could have prepared this scene within a couple of minutes? Those oil drums weren't there when I was dragged in, but they could easily have been perched there after I was pushed out. Don't forget that the crowd mobbed me for some minutes—and nobody thought of looking in this shed. There was plenty of time for Burke and his pals to set the stage."

"He's right, boys," said Fatty eagerly. "I hadn't thought of that!"

"I don't wonder," said Ben Gillingham, with a glare. "Nobody but a born idiot would think of it. Why, you fat blockhead, you're allowing Rex to bluff you all along! He's ready with his explanations on the instant—just the same as in the old days."

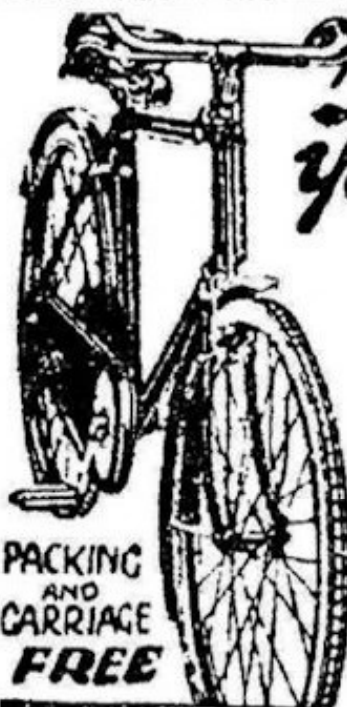
Rex flushed. He had thought that his reckless past had been forgotten. But it was on an occasion like this that it was remembered.

"Oh, we'd better go," he said quietly. "You don't believe me—and it's not to be wondered at. Burke's too clever for me. He's finished me this time."

"I'm with you, Rex," said Fatty staunchly. "You faithless rotters!" he went on, turning to the others. "Can't you see that Rex is telling the truth? If you'll only make up your minds to it, you'll see that every single thing he has said is possible—yes, and reasonable, too. But you can't see beyond your noses!"

The other Blues wanted to believe in Rex, but they simply couldn't. He wasn't so much their pal as he was Fatty's.

(Continued on next page.)



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So when Rex wandered towards the Stronghold, he only had Fatty Fowkes with him. The others had gone on ahead.

"Fatty, old man, you'd better chuck it up," said Rex earnestly.

"Rot!" retorted Fatty. "Buck up! Nothing's happened so far, but there might be some roughs lurking about and they'll still be excited. We don't want to get into a brawl."

"I tell you, you'd better chuck it up," repeated Rex. "You'll only get into trouble with Piecan and the players. It's decent of you, old man, to believe in me like this. Honestly, I'm most awfully grateful. But I shall be hard hit if you get into trouble over me."

Fatty laughed.

"When I stand by a chap, I stand by him," he said obstinately. "We're pals, Rex—and if those other fatheads choose to think that you could be such a cad, I'm ashamed of 'em. Let's get in. We'll talk it all over in our bed-room."

When they arrived at the Stronghold they found Mr. Ulysses Piecombe in the entrance. The tall, gaunt figure of the Blues' manager was drawn to its full height, and his face wore a grim expression.

"You are not coming in here, Carrington," he said curtly.

Rex halted, startled by this blunt statement.

"Not coming in, sir?" he said. "But—"

"I have had a full report of the—er—disgraceful occurrence at the Speedway," said Mr. Piecombe. "Indeed, the whole town is talking of it. It is no exaggeration to say that the whole town is seething. You have disgraced your own name, and you have brought discredit upon the Club."

"I am sorry you think that, sir," said Rex dully.

What irony it was! Just as he had decided to throw up the dirt-track racing—just when he was ready to enter wholeheartedly into the battle for the Blues' promotion—Mr. Piecombe was turning him adrift!

He had fallen between two stools. Never again would he be allowed to race in the Speedway—or on any other track after Mr. Harding had made his report—and professional football, it seemed, was to be barred, too.

"You know my views on track-racing," continued Mr. Piecombe harshly. "Hitherto I have regarded your conduct as mere folly, and I have not debarred you from these premises, but now you are revealed as a cad unfit to mix with decent men. You are not coming back into this building, Carrington! Go!"

"But it's not true, sir!" shouted Fatty. "It's all a mistake—"

"I was not aware, Fowkes, that I—er—solicited your comments," snapped Mr. Ulysses Piecombe. "Carrington is no longer attached to the Blue Crusaders Football Club. That is my final word."

Rex tried in vain to swallow something that had risen in his throat. He was an outcast—scorned by all except the staunch Fatty Fowkes!

(Burke's villainy has succeeded. Rex has been chucked out of the Blues; he'll be barred from track-racing; he's an outcast! What's he going to do now? One thing is certain, of course; he'll be after Burke's blood, and when he gets hold of that rascally individual—Don't miss reading next week's dramatic instalment of this powerful serial, chums!)



(Continued from page 35.)

Hamilton—acted honourably and splendidly. Rather than inform against the real culprit, he was prepared to pay the penalty. It was a fine thing."

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Nipper!"

"Bravo!"

"He deserves your cheers," said the Head approvingly. "His attitude has proved to me that my own theories are not capable of being put into practice with any hope of real and lasting success. So I shall make no further attempt to coerce you, but will conduct this school, until Dr. Stafford's return, in the old way."

"Hurrah!"

"Three cheers for the Head!"

"Down with the Reformers!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The boys went crowding out of Big Hall, excited and happy. Nipper was surrounded by shouting, cheering crowds.

"Cheese it, you asses!" he grinned. "Everything's O.K. now! The Reform Party is squashed out of existence, and Gore-Pearce has had his teeth drawn. Now we can get ahead with the cricket!"

"Good old Nipper!"

The ones who shouted most lustily were those who had been so down on him. Perhaps they felt their consciences pricking them, and they wanted to make amends.

Anyhow, the Reformers were relegated to the past. The old code had proved triumphant. And Claude Gore-Pearce was the most subdued fellow in the whole of St. Frank's for quite a few days afterwards.

But only a few days! It is well said that the leopard cannot change his spots!

THE END.

(That's the end of this fine series, chums. Don't forget to write and tell your Editor what you think of it. Next week's story is an extra special one, entitled: "Mutiny!" Order your copy NOW, chums!)



E. S. BROOKS

BETWEEN OURSELVES!

OUR AUTHOR CHATS WITH OUR READERS

NOTE.—If any reader writes to me I shall be pleased to comment upon such remarks as are likely to interest the majority. All letters should be addressed, EDWY SEARLES BROOKS, c/o The Editor, THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.



JULIUS HERMAN

MATTHEW NOYS is not at St. Frank's now—Harold Branney (Nottingham)—and Archie Glenborne's introduction to the school was recounted in "The Coming of Archie" (Old Series, No. 352, dated March 4th, 1922).

From all I can gather—Reggie Shirley (Pendleton)—you're one among a great many who would like a series mainly about the St. Frank's fags. I shall have to think seriously about writing me.

Yes—Charles A. Stanley (Thornton Heath)—it is a difficult task to remember what you want to, and not to remember what you want shut out of your mind. Your sentence, long as it is, puts this very clearly, and I'm going to repeat that sentence for the benefit of all our readers. I've an idea some of you may like to commit it to memory. Here it is: "If you remember how much easier it is to remember what you'd rather forget than remember, than to remember what you'd rather remember than forget; then you can't forget how much easier it is to forget what you'd rather remember than forget, than to forget what you'd rather forget than remember." Quite so, Charley, old man!

As I am most decidedly of the opinion—Julius Herman (Tarkastad, South Africa)—that "a middle-aged pedagogic's physiognomy" will interest our readers, your photograph appears above this week. It may interest you, and many other readers (especially parents), to know that the St. Frank's yarns have met with the approval of quite an astonishing number of masters, and even headmasters, of schools, and I can assure you this fact has been a source of great encouragement to myself.

I'm awfully glad to learn—Rosamond Woods (St. Albans)—that you are deriving

so much interest from the Australian series—which was appearing when you wrote me. You say you are getting to know twice as much about Australia than you were able to from "the stuffy atlases," as you put it. I certainly do try to make my yarns instructive, as long as I can do so without making them stodgy. Anyhow, although my imagination is responsible for most of the incidents, the descriptive matter is true. As you want full descriptions of Handforth & Co., I can't do better than quote from the Portrait Gallery, which appeared some time ago. Handforth: Big and burly, clumsy, generally untidy. Rugged features, with square jaw, prominent ears, and wide mouth. Attractive looking, healthy complexion, slightly freckled, determined expression. Eyes, blue-grey. Hair, medium chestnut. Masterful, impulsive, aggressive. Full of confidence, and generous to a degree. Staunch, honest. Very hasty temper, but with a heart of gold. Church: Normal, well-set-up figure, but slightly round shouldered. Cheerful face, with small nose and wide mouth. Dimple in chin. Infectious smile. Brown eyes and curly brown hair. Has a patient, long-suffering nature. Good-tempered, but can be dangerous when aroused. Upright and true blue. McClure: Square-shouldered and inclined to be angular. Bright, attractive face, with rather wide nose. Pointed chin and deep-set eyes. Twinkling grey eyes and sandy hair. Amiable disposition, but shrewd and quick-thinking. Hard to arouse, but usually easy-going. A bit inclined to be sulky after a quarrel. Tolerant, but not as patient as Church. There you are! I hope this information will be of interest to lots of other readers, too.



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 Library," Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

A MONTH my postbag this week is a letter from a keen reader who lives in South London. He has just bought a bicycle and now he's anxious to give the country a "look over" on same. Can I recommend any runs? Most certainly I can; and in giving this one—which I have done myself and therefore know to be the "goods"—I feel sure that there will be many other readers interested. It will make an ideal week-end trip.

For anyone living on the south side of the Thames, I do not think they can better Sussex. My chum should make an early start before Old Kent Road is busy, and work out via Dunton Green and Knockholt to Tunbridge Wells. He will find hills, but these have their compensations, and with a three-speed gear they will not worry him much.

The country to be reached is the land of hop gardens and the Weald of Sussex. This district has scarcely changed at all in hundreds of years. Accommodation is cheap. Cyclists are catered for well in all the villages.

Marvellous Views.

From Tunbridge the best way is to ride down to Heathfield. This is an interesting little village for quite other reasons than that associated with the rioter, Jack Cade, to whom a memorial stone is raised in the section of the village known as Cade Street.

From Heathfield there is an A.L. ride through Burwash to Etchingham. When you see Burwash you realise why Mr. Rudyard Kipling selected this spot to live in. It is one of the beauty spots of the county, with marvellous views.

The road runs along a sort of terrace. On the left is the spreading view fading off into the blue distance. On the right you get

occasional villages with as well-cared-for gardens all ablaze with flowers as may be seen anywhere in the length and breadth of England.

Downhill!

But the gem of the whole run out of Heathfield is that you sit on the bike and it does the rest. No pedalling is necessary for miles. Farther on in the Hurst Green and Bodiam district you get hills, fair corks! Brakes—both of them—are wanted, for the narrow tracks are on the steep side.

A Pleasant Experience.

Bodiam Castle is a place to be seen, one of the most interesting strongholds in the country. The best way—if time will allow, of course—is to ride on to Ryde, and have a peep at the bird life on the stretching marshes.

Keep an eye on the Rother River. A motor-boat does the seventeen miles from Bodiam to the old Cinque Port of Ryde.

But a cyclist is not going to desert his wheel. He will find the journey through the jolly little villages between Bodiam and the sea a mighty pleasant experience.

A New Serial on the Way!

Edwy Searles Brooks' popular serial, "Rivals of the Blue Crusaders," is now nearing a thrilling climax and within a few weeks' time will come to an end. Already I have made arrangements for a corking new serial to follow on. Look out for an announcement concerning same in next week's issue.

THE EDITOR.

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