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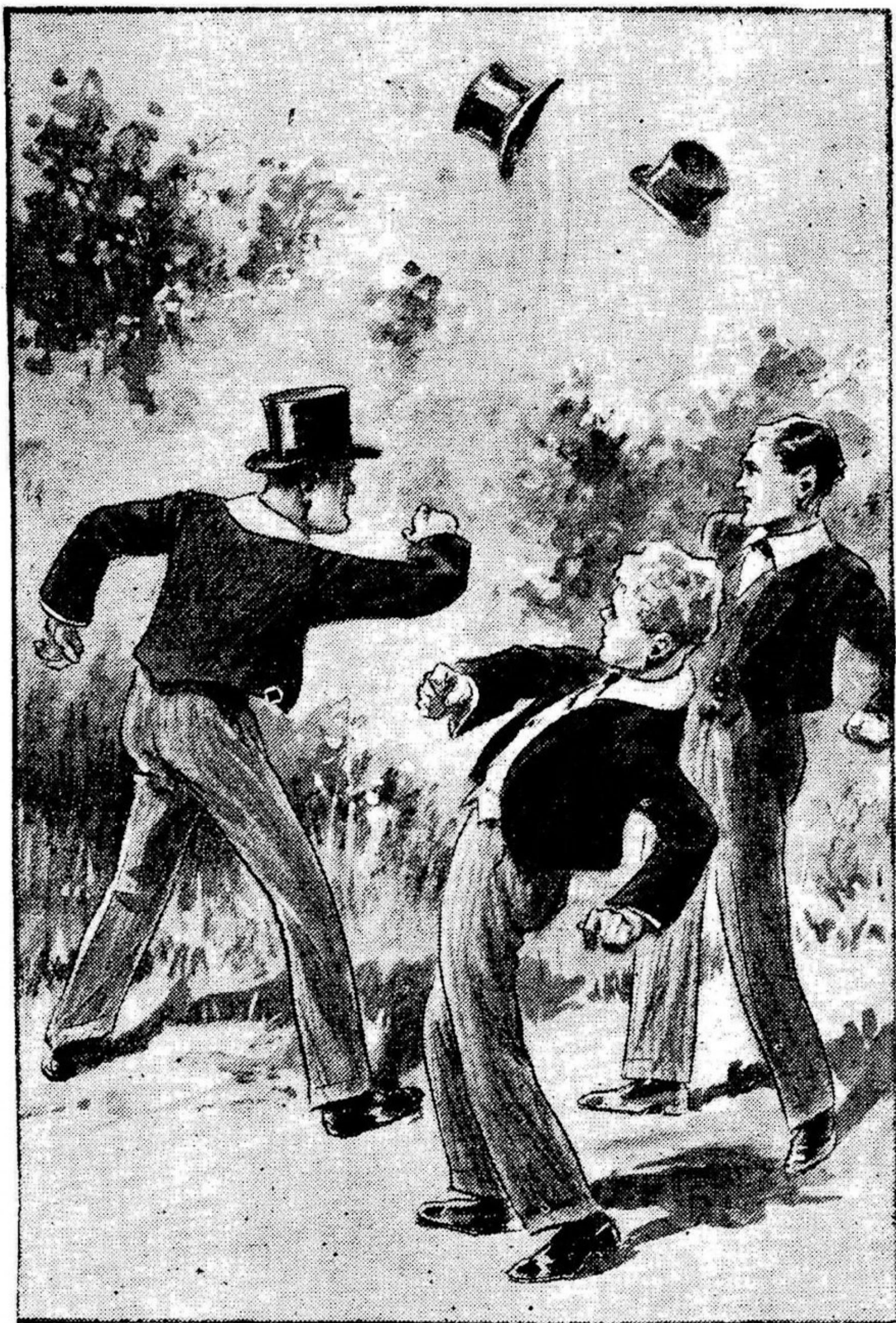
MUTINY!

A rollicking complete yarn of schoolboy fun and adventure
featuring the cheery chums of St. Frank's.

New Series No. 157.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY,

May 4th, 1929.



With one movement Handforth swept his chums' toppers off their heads. With another movement he sent the hats sailing over the hedge into a neighbouring meadow. The breeze caught them and carried them far. "Now go and fetch 'em!" said Handforth coolly.

JAPING IRENE & CO.—Nipper, the popular Junior skipper at St. Frank's, has not forgotten how Irene & Co. "put it across" the Removites recently, and when he learns that a cranky old food professor is to lecture at the Moor View School, he sees here an excellent chance to pay off that score. Unfortunately, the jape comes "unstuck"; complications arise and they lead up to—



By **EDWY SEARLES BROOKS**

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

CHAPTER 1.

Revenge is Sweet!

"**V**ERY interesting," said Nipper musingly. "In fact, thundering interesting!"

"Somethin' about cricket, old boy?" asked Tregellis-West.

"No."

"Football?"

"Not quite."

"Well, never mind what it's about," put in Tommy Watson. "Pass the strawberry jam, fathead, and don't bury yourself so much in that local rag!"

Nipper laid aside the "Bannington Gazette" for a moment, and slid the jar of strawberry jam across the table. Tea in Study C, in the Ancient House at St. Frank's, was proceeding in its usual free and easy way.

"Now, what's the interesting subject?" asked Watson.

"Ever heard of Dr. Huxley Crane?"

"No. What is he?"

"My dear chap, how can you sit there and express such ignorance?" asked Nipper faintly. "Don't you know that Dr. Huxley Crane is a great scientist? Don't you know that he's one of the leading specialists on dietetics?"

"On which?"

"Dietetics—the science of healthful eating, to be exact," said Nipper in his best dictionary manner. "Articles by Dr. Crane on 'Your Daily Food' are always coming out in the newspapers. If he was here now, he'd pull that strawberry jam out of your hand and chuck it away. He'd grab that loaf of white bread and shudder at it. As for these sardines, I think one look would be enough to make him ill for a week. Oh, he's a great specialist, is Dr. Crane!"

"Well, let him specialise somewhere else, old boy," said Sir Montie.

"That's just it," grinned Nipper. "He's coming here on Monday."

"Coming here!" yelled Watson in alarm. "Great Scott! You don't mean to say that he's going to mess about with our grub?"

"Not exactly ours," replied Nipper gently. "When I say 'here,' I don't mean that he's coming to St. Frank's. He'll just be in the district. In point of fact, he's going to deliver a lecture to the Moor View girls."

Tregellis-West and Watson looked relieved.

"Ass!" said Watson witheringly. "Who cares what lectures he delivers to the girls? As long as he doesn't drift in here by mistake, no harm will be done. I've no patience with these scientific specialists. As soon as he's finished one of his lectures I'll bet he goes into a restaurant and has a whacking big steak!"

"That's quite likely," said Nipper. "He may approve of steaks. Anyhow, he's an expert on grub, and the relation of grub to athletics."

"I'm surprised at Miss Bond for allowing the chump to go to the Moor View School with his bunkum," said Watson bluntly.

"That's no way to speak of one of the world's greatest experts on diet," said Nipper sternly. "Schoolboys, of course, aren't interested in diet. As long as they get three or four square meals a day, with an occasional extra feed, they're contented. But schoolgirls are different."

"Are they?" asked Montie mildly. "I haven't particularly noticed it when they've been here to tea!"

"They probably let themselves go when they're out visiting," explained Nipper. "But you know as well as I do that girls will sacrifice any amount of grub for the sake of keeping slim. Not that Dr. Crane will encourage them much," he added, with a grin. "I seem to remember that he's all against the modern girls' starvation diet. He's coming to the Moor View School to warn Irene & Co. against the dangers of under-feeding, I expect. Health before slimness, sort of thing. He'll probably tell them that a good square meal is a lot more valuable than a packet of thinning bath-salts."

"Good luck to him!" commented Watson. "I admit that I like slim girls better than fat ones, but health comes first. Not that I care much either way. Why not talk about cricket for a change?"

Nipper chuckled and glanced at the newspaper again.

Things were more or less normal at St. Frank's now. Nipper had recently been in hot water, and half the school had been very much against him. That half was now doing its best to make amends, having realised that it had gravely misjudged the popular Junior skipper.

Claude Gore-Pearce's Reform Party was as dead as a door-nail, and the cads of the Ancient House were now very subdued. Gore-Pearce, in fact, was so much in the background that the other fellows were hardly aware of his existence. The cricket season was coming on apace; the majority of the fellows were concentrating all their energies

and all their thoughts on the great summer game.

"It seems to me," said Nipper, "that it's about time for us to do something."

"Do something?" asked Watson. "What about?"

"About Dr. Huxley Crane and the girls," said Nipper. "I suppose you haven't forgotten what happened on Easter Monday?"

"Begad! Easter Monday?" repeated Tregellis-West. "Why delve into the past, dear old boy?"

"So you have forgotten," sighed Nipper. "My dear chap, what about our reputation? The girls spoofed us up to our eyes on Easter Monday. They worked a jape on us that had us fooled all along the line. And we haven't had our own back yet. We've been too busy with those rotten reformers, and with the Head's weird ideas on sneaking."

"Bother the Head!" said Watson. "We've cured him. Dr. Morrison-Nicholls is as harmless as a kitten nowadays, and I dare say he'll keep things running quite smoothly now until Dr. Stafford comes back. But you're right about getting our own back on the girls."

"It's a frightfully difficult thing for us to get our own back," said Sir Montie, shaking his head. "We can't jape them as we would jape the River House chaps, for example. We've got to be careful what we do. A fellow can go bald-headed for a crowd of boys and slosh out with enthusiasm; but he can't do that with girls."

"Of course not," agreed Nipper. "No violence allowed. Those sort of japes are naturally out of the running. But there's no reason why we shouldn't get up an elaborate kind of spoof."

"Too risky!" said Watson, shaking his head. "Don't forget Miss Bond!"

"H'm! I'll admit that Miss Charlotte Bond is a bit of a handful, but we can risk it for once," said Nipper. "It says in the paper here that Dr. Crane is coming down from London on the afternoon train. He's going to deliver his lecture at the Moor View School in the evening. That means he'll arrive at Bellton just about tea-time. There's only one train at that hour."

"But what does it matter to us?" asked Watson, staring.

"Well, supposing Dr. Crane went to the Moor View School and told the girls that their present food is all wrong?" asked Nipper musingly. "Supposing he advised them to eat lots of queer things—such as bran and raw oatmeal, uncooked potatoes, and boiled stinging-nettles, and things like that?"

"You ass! Dr. Crane isn't as bad as all that."

"There's never any telling with these dietetic specialists," said Nipper, shaking his head. "It's quite possible that Dr. Crane might lecture to the girls on those lines, and they, knowing what an expert he is, would naturally take a lot of notice of

him. What fun to hear of the girls eating raw potatoes for breakfast, with trimmings of dandelions and mixed herbs."

"You're crazy!" said Watson. "Dr. Crane wouldn't advise the girls to go on a diet like that. He may be a crank, but——"

"Begad!" interrupted Montic, with a start. "You're not suggestin', dear old boy, that somebody should impersonate the worthy gentleman, are you?"

"Myself, to be exact," said Nipper modestly.

"What!" roared Watson.

"Why not?" said Nipper. "I don't suppose the girls have ever seen Dr. Crane, and I'm not so bad as an actor. I think I could manage to pull it off all right. It wouldn't last long, either. Think of the laugh we'd have, even if it only lasted for half an hour!"

"My only sainted aunt!" ejaculated Watson breathlessly. "It couldn't be done. It's too—too terrific! And yet, if only you could spoof the girls to begin with—— Oh, my hat! What a lark!"

"What's a lark?" asked Handforth, in the doorway.

He came in, followed by Church and McClure, his faithful chums. The Study D trio looked at Nipper & Co. with interest.

"What's the excitement?" added Edward Oswald Handforth.

"Nipper's got a brain-wave for spoofing Irene & Co.," said Watson eagerly.

Handforth frowned.

"I'm not sure that we ought to do anything like that," he said, with a judicial air. "The great question is, are girls fair game? I doubt it. It would be different if we could have a scrap with them. But we can't. Girls are—well, they're girls!"

"Go hon!" said Nipper, then added: "It all depends upon the jape, old man. Naturally, violence of any sort is barred. The fair damsels, poor things, mustn't run the risk of getting a bruise or two. So we've got to get up a thoroughly peaceful jape."

"That means it'll be a wishy-washy affair!" said Handforth tartly.

"Not necessarily," replied Nipper. "Listen to this. Wait a minute, though. We'd better fetch Fullwood and Travers and one or two of the others. Might as well get the thing arranged."

So Fullwood and Travers and half a dozen other juniors were brought into the conference. It was Saturday evening, and there wasn't much time to lose if the thing was to be properly planned.

"IT'S the goods!" said Travers approvingly.

"Yes, rather!"

"There's only one improvement that I can suggest," continued Travers. "Instead of you doing the Dr. Crane stunt, Nipper, let me do it."

"Rats! It's my wheeze, and I'm going to be Dr. Crane."

"You're both wrong!" snorted Handforth. "I'm the chap for the job!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You'd give yourself away in ten seconds, Handy," grinned Nipper. "I'm afraid you won't come out very strongly in this affair. You're a good chap in a scrap—none better—but in this business you'll be a mere spectator."

"I shan't even be that," grumbled Handforth. "The wheeze is all right, but where do we come in? You're the only fellow who'll get the fun, as far as I can see."

"Exactly!" murmured Vivian Travers. "That's what I was thinking, too."

"But the girls will be spoofed, and we shall all have the laugh on them afterwards, especially if they adopt the wonderful diet I'm going to map out," said Nipper, grinning. "The general laughs will come later on."

"What about getting somebody else to help you?" suggested Fullwood. "That's what the girls did, you know, and that's how they spoofed us so neatly. Sylvia Glenn got her aunt and uncle to help, so naturally we never twigged. Hasn't anybody got a useful uncle knocking about?"

Nipper shook his head.

"It couldn't be wangled," he objected. "The girls played their jape in holiday time, and that made all the difference."

"Well, how about a senior?" asked Harry Gresham. "Stevens, of the Fifth, for example? He's a born actor. Finest actor in the school, in fact. He could do a thing like this on his head."

Nipper looked round coldly.

"I don't know whether you mean to be impolite, but this isn't very complimentary



to me, is it?" he asked. "Don't you think I'm capable of making up for the part and bringing it off?"

"Every time, dear old fellow," said Travers soothingly. "But a tall, imposing Dr. Crane would be more impressive—and more likely to pull off the jape. That's all we were thinking. Still——"

"Rats!" said Nipper. "Plenty of these brainy professors are no bigger than Third Form fags! In fact, most of them are small, insignificant-looking men. Their brains have developed to the detriment of their frames. They can't have it both ways, you know. Objection number one ruled out! Any more?"

"Yes," said Handforth. "If it doesn't matter about the size of the spoofer, I'm the man for the job."

This objection, of course, was ruled out without even being discussed. Handforth was promptly squashed, and in the end it was definitely carried that Nipper should do the deed.

CHAPTER 2.

Keeping it Dark!

BY the following afternoon the plan was cut and dried.

Nipper had rehearsed his part, he had prepared his speech, and had learned it by heart. It is to be feared that much of Sunday was devoted to this base task.

Nobody else had been told of the wheeze.

"We can't be too careful," said Nipper. "If a thing like this gets talked about all over the school, it'll be the general gossip in no time. And if some fathead lets the cat out of the bag, the whole game'll fizzle out. So it's up to us to keep mum until the thing's over."

The other conspirators promptly agreed.

Church and McClure were vastly worried about Handforth. His will was good enough, but he had an awkward habit of letting things out unintentionally. So Church and McClure haunted him like shadows, and during that morning they had occasion to pull him up on at least four separate occasions.

"We shall be grey by to-morrow evening," said Church wearily, as he and Mac waited for Handforth in the afternoon. "Why does he want to go for a walk now? Supposing we meet some of the girls?"

"We shall have to keep away from the lanes and footpaths," replied McClure. "We can't risk a thing like that! Handy's only got to be speaking to Irene for two minutes and he'll tell her everything—before he realises it."

Handforth soon appeared, looking neat and tidy in his "Sunday best."

"Silly custom, this!" he said tartly. "Why can't we wear the same togs on Sunday as on other days? I feel awful! Daren't biff anybody, or even bend down! Are you chaps ready?"

"Been waiting for ages," said Church.

Handforth inspected them closely and they appeared to pass muster, so they strolled out into the warm spring sunshine, and were soon on their way up the lane in the direction of the Moor View School. This was precisely the direction in which Church and McClure did not want to go, but Handforth went that way, and to let him go alone was unthinkable.

"Look here, Handy—about to-morrow's jape," said Church tentatively.

"Are you going to warn me again?" demanded Handforth. "You silly fathead! If you say another word——"

"But we can't be too careful——"

"You mind your own p's and q's, and I'll mind mine!" interrupted Handforth. "Anybody might think I couldn't be trusted with a secret! I want this jape to be as success-

ful as you do—only I certainly think it would stand a lot more chance if I played the part of old Crane."

"Don't shout it!" gasped Church, in alarm. "There you go, Handy! Out here, in the open lane, talking about the thing in your usual loud-speaker voice."

"My what voice?"

"Megaphone voice!" retorted Church, exasperated. "Oh, what's the use? We're coming with you so that we can gag you if necessary, and it doesn't seem to be any good! It's a pity Nipper ever told you anything about it."

Handforth halted in his tracks, staring.

"Oh!" he said ominously.

"What do you mean—'Oh'?"

"You're coming with me to keep me gagged, are you?" roared Handforth indignantly. "Afraid to let me be out alone, in case I let the cat out of the bag! Well, you can both go back!"

"Not likely!" said Mac.

"I'm going on this walk alone!" insisted Handforth.

"Rats! We're sticking to you—and that's final!" snorted Church. "Try to shake us off—that's all!"

"Easy!" said Handforth.

With one movement, he swept his chums' toppers off their heads. With another movement, he sent the hats sailing over the hedge into the neighbouring meadow. The breeze caught them and carried them far. Church and McClure were so taken by surprise that they stood stock-still for a moment, speechless with outraged dignity.

"Now go and fetch 'em!" said Handforth coolly. "I'll walk on alone."

"Why, you—you——"

"Of course, you can come with me if you like" added Handforth, with a careless air, "but there are some cows in that field, and your toppers won't be improved if they're trodden on. Still, that's your concern."

"You awful rotter!" gasped Church, finding his voice.

"Hi!" howled McClure. "Those cows are quite near!"

They dashed through the nearest gap, alarmed about their precious toppers. They found that the hats had fallen in a particularly boggy patch of meadow, and to reach them was something of a feat.

With feelings too deep for words, they shooed a number of peaceful cows away, pulled some long sticks out of the hedge, and made attempts to reach for those toppers.

HANDFORTH strolled on leisurely and contentedly. If he felt any remorse for his drastic action, this feeling was immediately quelled by the remembrance of why Church and McClure had stuck so close to him.

As luck would have it, he no sooner turned a bend in the lane than he came face to face with three or four of the Moor View girls—who were also out for a Sunday afternoon stroll. They were looking particularly

attractive to-day, since they were allowed to wear fashionable frocks, instead of the ordinary school dress.

And in such sunny weather as this, crepe-de-Chine and similar material was the order of the day. Without doubt, Irene & Co. were looking particularly charming.

"Why, hallo, Ted!" said Irene, as Handforth came up. "All alone to-day?"

"Eh?" said Handforth with a start. "Afternoon, girls!" he added, as he hastily raised his hat. "You mean Church and McClure? Oh, they're behind somewhere!"

"I can't see them," remarked Doris Berkeley, looking down the lane.

"They've gone into the meadow," said Handforth vaguely.

"The fatheads lost their toppers— At least, their toppers— I mean— Oh, well, what does it matter? They'll soon be here."

The schoolgirls tacitly understood that any pressing inquiries would be awkward.

"We're just going for a walk," said Irene casually.

"Good egg! What about strolling along the river?" asked Handforth. "I dare say we shall find some of the other fellows there. Still, we'd better avoid 'em, perhaps," he added.

"Avoid them? Why?" asked Mary Summers.

"Well, they've got something on for to-morrow evening—something special," said Handforth. "And as you girls are pretty closely affected— Eh? I mean, might as well go in another direction," he added hastily.

"But how are we affected?" asked Irene curiously.

"Of course you're not!" said Handforth, with such an air of carelessness that the girls' suspicions were instantly aroused. "In any case, you'll be busy to-morrow evening, won't you?"

"Shall we?" asked Doris. "How?"

"Well, that scientist chap is coming, isn't he?" asked Handforth.

"Oh, you mean Dr. Huxley Crane!" said Irene, with a grimace. "It's Miss Bond's idea. I hope he won't make a long speech. We're all dreading it. Just as if we need telling what we should eat and what we shouldn't eat!"

Handforth grinned.

"I'll bet he'll give you a few surprises!" he chuckled. "Nipper's got it all planned out—every word of it! A regular speech!"

"Has he really?" murmured Doris.

"Of course, it's better that we shouldn't meet him this afternoon," put in Irene.

"Perhaps we'd better do as you say, Ted, and walk the other way. Isn't everything looking glorious now?"

"Rather!" replied Handforth.

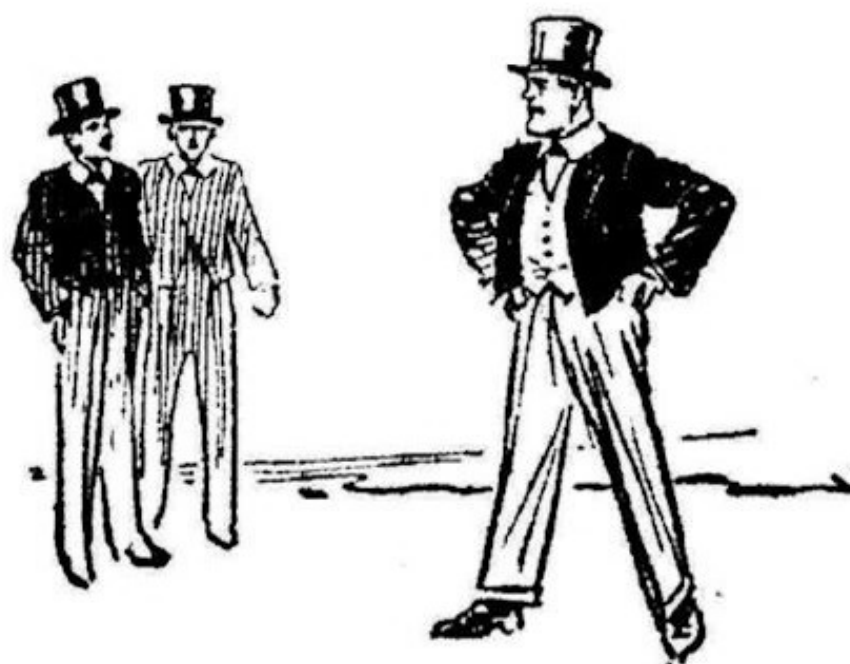
"But what were you saying about Dr. Crane giving us a surprise?" continued Irene, with rare skill. "Do you think that Dr. Crane will do anything awfully outrageous? Is he such a crank as all that?"

Handforth started, warned—as Irene had intended—that he should say no more.

"Eh? Dr. Crane?" he said hastily. "How should I know? Bother him! Thank goodness he isn't coming to St. Frank's!"

"Let's change the subject," said Doris sweetly.

Handforth breathed an inward sigh of relief. Certainly he had not the faintest suspicion that he had practically given the show away—and Irene & Co. said nothing to cause him any uneasiness. They had changed the subject adroitly, and Handforth took care not to raise it again.



"GREAT Scott!" said Church, in dire alarm. "Look!"

"That's done it!" groaned McClure. "The game's up!"

They had got back into the lane, after recovering their toppers, and they could see that the worst had happened. There was Handforth, strolling along with some Moor View girls!

"Quick! Let's join them!" said Church urgently. "We may still be in time."

They hurried up, raised their hats, and looked at the girls closely and searchingly. Not that they made any discoveries.

"Just talking about our big cricket match for Wednesday," said Handforth.

"Oh!" ejaculated his chums.

"We shall try to come and see it," said Irene smilingly. "I hope we shall have strength enough by then," she added, with a chuckle. "There's a food crank coming to lecture us to-morrow, and the outlook is black."

"Oh, we shan't take any notice of him, whatever he says," put in Mary.

"Don't you be too sure," said Handforth. "I've heard that Dr. Huxley Crane is a regular terror—"

"About the cricket!" broke in Church desperately. "If you girls come along on Wednesday afternoon, we might arrange a bit of a tea-party at the same time. Let's hope it keeps fine for the occasion."

They managed to get Handforth off the subject of Dr. Crane, and it seemed to them that this was the first reference he had made to the worthy dietetic specialist. At all

events, there was nothing in Irene & Co.'s demeanour to give them the slightest hint of the real truth.

They were enormously relieved, half an hour later, when they parted with the girls. Bad as the situation had seemed, it was apparently saved. Handforth had managed to "keep it dark."

"**G**IRLS," said Irene impressively, "there's something on!"

They were quite by themselves now, and this was the first opportunity they had had of talking together.

"You mean about Dr. Crane?" asked Doris.

"Ted gave it away—and didn't know it!" went on Irene. "Oh, my hat! A couple of incautious words from us, and he would have seen that he had said too much. But I think we managed it rather neatly."

"You mean you did!" laughed Doris. "You changed the subject in the nick of time, and Ted didn't even suspect. By jingo, then, there's something special in the wind! Didn't Ted say that Nipper's got a speech all ready?"

"We don't need to be detectives to know what the game is," said Irene, with a gleeful laugh. "It's as plain as daylight! Those boys are getting up a jape against us—a sort of revenge, I expect, for what we did on Easter Monday."

"I wondered when it would come," murmured Mary. "It's almost a shame, isn't it, that Ted should have given the game away? I mean, it's awfully rough on Nipper."

"It *will* be rough on him!" replied Irene firmly. "As sure as the sun's shining, Nipper means to side-track the real professor, and come to our school himself and give us a spoof lecture!"

"But he wouldn't *dare*!"

"He's daring enough for anything," declared Irene. "Don't forget that he's the Remove captain, and he feels that the responsibility's on his shoulders. It's a sort of duty. The stain has got to be wiped out! That sort of thing, you know."

"Well, he's an optimist—that's all," said Doris. "Surely he couldn't possibly hope to hoodwink us? We should see through his disguise in no time. We know him too well."

Irene shook her head.

"It needn't necessarily be Nipper himself," she argued. "Ted told us that Nipper had prepared the speech, but he may be arranging with somebody else—a stranger to us, perhaps—to come as Dr. Crane. Don't forget how we spoofed the boys with Sylvia's aunt and uncle. They mean to take a leaf out of our own book."

"Well, what are we going to do about it?" asked Mary practically.

"Nothing!"

"Oh, but we must do something!"

"Nothing until to-morrow night," said Irene firmly. "We'll let him come, we'll pretend to be deceived, we'll listen to his lecture—and then we'll have some fun of our own."

The schoolgirls broke into a chorus of merry laughter as they thought of the possibilities!

CHAPTER 3.

Not According to Schedule!

"**T**RAIN'S due in five minutes," said Handforth, looking at his watch.

"Yes, you fellows had better get off," replied Nipper. "Leave me here. As soon as you've got rid of the poor old professor, give me the signal, and I'll come into existence. At the present moment, I'm nothing."

"But you look something!" grinned Tommy Watson.

This was perfectly true. Nipper looked so remarkably unlike himself that the other juniors experienced a startled feeling every time they glanced at him. They could not help having the impression that they were in the presence of a stranger.

It was Monday evening, and the Remove japers were all ready for the big event. Nothing had transpired to give them the faintest hint of the unhappy truth—that Irene & Co. were aware of the plot, and were preparing a special reception—a very special reception—for Dr. Huxley Crane.

The boys were in a little thicket on the other side of Belton Station—just within sight of the railway line. It was Nipper's plan to lurk here until Dr. Crane had been successfully side-tracked.

Nipper was attired in a somewhat eccentric fashion—although by no means grotesque. He wore a loose-fitting Norfolk suit, careless and professor-like. His hair was long and grey, curling over his collar. He wore large horn-rimmed glasses, and he had affected a drooping grey moustache.

His facial disguise had taken him most of his time, although there was not a great deal of it. The less, the better. It would have been so easy to spoil everything by overdoing it. Handforth, for instance, had suggested a whacking great false beard and even a false nose.

Nipper's make-up was a triumph, but, as Tommy Watson had carelessly pointed out to the admiring group, Nipper had learned his art from Nelson Lee—who, as everybody knew, was a past-master. So there was nothing amateurish about that make-up.

The Remove captain looked learned and thoughtful. He did, indeed, fulfil one's mind-picture of a learned gentleman with scientific propensities. Rather small, perhaps, but this was nothing against him.

"Better buck up," he murmured. "Don't want to be late for the train. You'll do most of the talking, Travers."

"Leave it to me, dear old fellow," nodded Vivian Travers.

"Supposing some of the girls come to meet the train?" asked Church. "That's the point that's worrying me, you know."



The two girls shrieked with laughter as they saw the Removites. "You poor chumps!" said one of them. "Irene & Co. know all about your jape and your fake professor, and now they're giving him the time of his life!"

"Forget it," said Nipper. "I've considered that possibility, and it's only remote. Why should the girls meet a scientific lecturer at the station? We're not in the wilds down here. No; there's practically no danger of that. And if there is somebody at the station to meet him, you fellows will have to take measures to deal with the situation."

"Leave it to me, dear old fellow," repeated Travers.

"I don't think you can do better than work off the stunt we planned," said Nipper. "Hallo, there goes the signal! Only another two or three minutes. As soon as Dr. Crane shows himself, pretend to be interested in him, and get talking. When he mentions the Moor View School—as he's bound to—be shocked."

"Look startled, you mean?" asked Handforth.

"Not you," said Nipper.

"Not me? Why not me?"

"You've got to be a scout," replied Nipper hastily. "Your place will be down the village street, keeping watch, in case any of the girls come along. The most responsible duty of all, Handy."

"Yes—perhaps so," said Handforth uncertainly.

He had a vague impression that he was being pushed out of the main event; and this, of course, was actually true. But it was

always necessary to be diplomatic with Edward Oswald.

"Look properly startled," said Nipper to the others. "Dr. Crane is certain to ask you what's wrong, and then you'll hesitate. Don't tell him at once. Pretend to be a bit confused."

"I'll do most of the talking," said Travers. "I'm not particular about a whopper or two——"

"No whoppers allowed!" protested Nipper.

"For the love of Samson! Not even in a good cause?" sighed Travers. "Oh well, all right! No whoppers, then. I shall have to bow to your delicate susceptibilities. But if Dr. Crane doesn't get the impression that scarlet fever has been raging in the Moor View School, I shall cheerfully eat my topper."

"Don't forget to remind him that the only other train for hours back to London is due almost at once," said Nipper. "It's a lucky thing for us that these two trains come in within five minutes of each other—one up and one down. Once you've got old Crane on the train, we shall have the coast clear."

"My hat! She's coming now!" said Tommy Watson urgently.

"Come on!" yelled Handforth. "Quick!"

"Well, well! What's all the excitement?" asked Travers mildly. "Plenty of time, dear old fellows. The train may be in sight, but

it'll be a long time before it pulls up in the station. You know what these locals are!"

THEY arrived in good time, and without any fluster. In fact, after the train had pulled to a stop, the juniors were casually crowding in the booking-office, waiting for the clerk. They had ostensibly come to inquire after a parcel.

One or two passengers came out. The first was clearly a local gentleman of the farming fraternity—well known by sight to the St. Frank's fellows. The second was Mr. Sharpe, the ironmonger. The third was the cobbler's wife, laden with shopping. The fourth was the vicar, who nodded cheerily to the boys as he went out. The fifth— But there didn't seem to be any fifth.

The train was puffing away again, and the ticket-collector had come back into the booking-office. The juniors, looking puzzled, but trying hard to appear careless, looked at the clerk with some anxiety.

"Waiting for me?" asked this young man.

"Yes," said Fullwood. "Have you got a parcel here for me?"

"Never mind your parcel," said Travers, waving a hand. "Let the gentleman finish his duties first. I expect there are some more passengers—"

"No more," said the clerk. "The crowd has gone."

"But—but isn't there anybody else off the train?" asked Watson blankly.

"Nobody else."

"Are you sure?"

"Well, I'm not sure, of course," said the official sarcastically. "Somebody might have got mixed up with the hen-coops and the milk-churns at the end of the platform. I suppose I'd better go along and look!"

He walked into his office, and the juniors gazed at one another in consternation. Here was an unexpected set-back! Travers took a look on the platform, and the only living person in sight was the aged Bellton porter, who was sorting out a miscellaneous collection of merchandise that had been dumped on the platform.

"Well, well!" murmured Travers. "This is a bit steep."

He knew there was no other way out of the station. It wasn't possible that Dr. Huxley Crane had wandered off alone somewhere. If he had come off that train, they would certainly have seen him. Travers called to mind all the passengers who had passed out. He knew them all by sight—they were all local people.

The distressing fact became obvious. Dr. Crane had not arrived.

"What the dickens are we going to do now?" asked Watson, after they had drifted out into the station courtyard. "We can't give the signal to Nipper, can we? And it's no good waiting for the up train."

"Perhaps Nipper had better go straight ahead with the wheeze?" said Harry Gresham dubiously. "What else can he do?"

"Too risky," replied Travers, shaking his head. "The real merchant may turn up while he's in the middle of his lecture."

"But there's no other train!"

"There's the road," said Travers pointedly. "This is what I call a low-down trick, dear old fellows. Why do these local newspapers get things all wrong? The 'Gazette' distinctly said that Dr. Crane was coming down by train—and by this train. It seems to me that he must have motored instead."

"Oh, my only hat!"

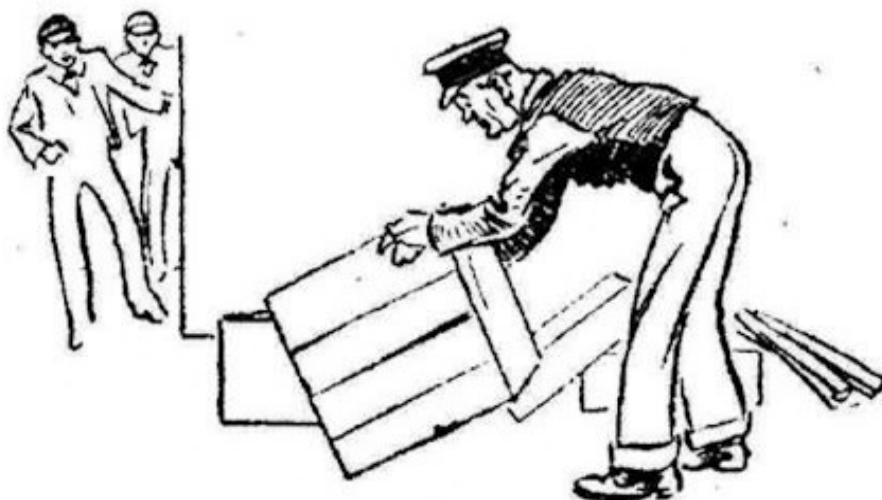
"You—you mean he's gone straight to the Moor View School?"

"What else?" said Travers sadly. "It's most frightfully disappointing, but it seems to me that the wheeze is 'off.' The fates are against us, dear old fellows."

"What an absolute frost," grunted Watson.

It was indeed a keen disappointment. After all their preparations, the whole thing had fizzled out.

"Better go and tell Nipper, I suppose," said Church despondently.



BUT at that moment Handforth came tearing into the station yard.

"Cave!" he panted. "Two of the girls coming!"

"It doesn't matter, Handy," said Church. "The thing's off now."

"Off?"

"Dr. Crane hasn't come."

"Hastn't come?" yelled Handforth, aghast. "Then—then the jape's squashed?"

"Looks very much like it, old boy," remarked Montie.

"But why?" demanded Handforth excitedly. "It's all the better! There's no need to choke Dr. Crane off now! Nipper can go straight ahead—"

"Shush!" murmured McClure.

Two figures had suddenly appeared from the road—figures on bicycles. They belonged to Joan Tarrant and her own special chum, of the Moor View School. This other girl was Maudie Royce, a simpering sort of girl, well fitted to be Joan's chum. Joan herself was by no means the type of girl that the St. Frank's fellows admired. Irene & Co. frankly and freely referred to Joan and Maudie as "the cats."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

For some remarkable reason, the two girls burst into a shout of laughter as soon as they turned into the yard and caught sight of the St. Frank's boys. It wasn't very pleasant laughter, either. It was quite derisive in its tone. They laughed so much that they nearly fell off their machines.

"Anything the matter with us?" asked Handforth bluntly.

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Joan and Maudie.

"There's something queer about this, you chaps!" said Fullwood. "I believe they know about our jape!"

"Great Scott!" yelled Handforth.

The two girls had now jumped from off their machines, and so great was their mirth that they allowed their bicycles to crash over.

"What's the matter?" asked Fullwood.

"Have you girls gone dotty?"

"You poor chumps!" gasped Joan, when she could find her voice. "You thought you'd spoofed us, didn't you, with your fake professor?"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Irene and the other girls knew all about it yesterday!" chimed in Maudie Royce. "Ted Handforth gave the game away—"

"I knew it!" groaned Church, looking at McClure in horror. "Didn't we suspect it? All because we left him alone for one minute!"

"But it's all rot!" roared Handforth indignantly. "I—I mean— Beg pardon!" he added, with a glare at the two girls. "You must be wrong! I didn't give the game away!"

"Yes, you did!" laughed Joan Tarrant with relish. "You met some of our girls in the lane, and they twigged the jape at once, but Irene purposely led your chums to think that you hadn't let the cat out."

"Oh, my hat!" said Handforth faintly.

"But—but what's happening?" asked Fullwood.

"Miss Bond sent us down to the station for a parcel—otherwise we'd be joining in the fun," said Maudie. "Come on, Joan! Let's hurry back. We may still be in time for the chief fun."

"Chief fun?" shouted all the schoolboys in one voice.

"Of course," said Joan. "Your precious Dr. Crane has arrived—and the girls are giving him the time of his life!"

CHAPTER 4.

Ragging the Wrong Victim!

VIVIAN TRAVERS clapped a hand dramatically to his forehead.

"We are undone!" he said mournfully. "Dear old fellows, the jape has not merely come unstuck, but there appears to be some pretty fearful complications."

The two girls broke into fresh laughter.

"You're right about the complications," chuckled Joan. "Oh, it was very smart of you to deliver your Dr. Crane by car. Miss Bond was taken in beautifully. She accepted him as the real article without question."

"But he is the real article!" said Gresham frantically.

"Oh, don't be silly!" said Maudie. "You know well enough that he's only a fake professor—prepared by you fellows. He's giving a lecture now, and the girls are ragging him gloriously."

"Worse and worse!" groaned Travers.

"They're going to take it out of him properly," put in Joan. "By the time he's finished, he'll wish he'd never been born! Fancy you boys thinking that you can spoof us girls! We've got you beaten every time!"

Handforth gulped.

"There's been an awful mistake!" he said frantically. "It's the real professor who's at your school—not Nipper."

"Of course he's not Nipper," nodded Joan. "We know that! He's somebody you've brought in to help."

"But—but—"

"And after the ragging's over, they're going to chase him off the school premises," laughed Maudie. "In fact, he'll be lucky if he doesn't get ducked in the ditch. It's a case of the spoofer being spoofed!"

The juniors were aghast. The situation was acute. The unfortunate Dr. Huxley Crane, arriving at the Moor View School by car instead of by train, had been mistaken by Irene & Co. for the St. Frank's spoofer! And the girls were treating him exactly as they would have treated the disguised Nipper!

Exactly what the unfortunate man was going through the juniors could hardly imagine, but there wasn't the slightest doubt that the whole position was serious. The worthy gentleman would naturally kick up a tremendous fuss after the rag; the girls would get into trouble over the whole affair. For Miss Bond, their headmistress, would naturally take no notice of their excuses that they had believed Dr. Crane to be a spoofer. The girls wouldn't give Nipper & Co. away—and, in any event, such an explanation, even if it came out, would be no justification.

Irene, as the ringleader, might possibly be expelled, and the other girls heavily punished. It was distinctly time for something drastic to be done. The boys had never intended their fair rivals to get into this mess.

"Listen, girls!" said Travers earnestly.

"Honest Injun, you're wrong!"

The two girls were surprised by his tone, and their laughter ceased.

"What do you mean—we're wrong?" asked Joan.

"We expected Dr. Crane by this train—and Nipper's waiting, disguised, to play the jape," said Travers. "That man at your school is the real Dr. Crane!"

"You can't fool us like this!" said Joan sceptically.

"Honour bright!" urged Travers. "I tell you, the thing's serious! You've got to get back to the school and give the warning. There'll be terrible trouble if the girls go too far. He's the real Dr. Crane, I tell you!"

"But—but you don't mean it!" gasped Maudie.

"I do!"

"My only sainted aunt!" breathed Joan. "Then—then—— Oh, what a surprise! Come on, Maudie!"

The two girls dashed into the booking-office, got Miss Bond's parcel, and hurried off. Travers watched them with deep suspicion, but the other juniors were feeling slightly relieved.

"Let's hope they get back in time," said Tommy Watson.

"I'm a Dutchman if those two girls are going to give the warning," said Travers grimly. "Didn't you notice the look that passed between them. They're not going to say anything."

"Rot!" snorted Handforth.

"Joan Tarrant is the Gore-Pearce of the Moor View School, and she's always up against Irene & Co.," declared Vivian. "Maudie Royce isn't much better. If we leave them to carry this warning, it won't be done."

"Let's go and fetch Nipper!" said Watson, in alarm.

NIPPER took it very calmly. He listened to the excitedly given information, and he made a wry grimace when he heard the report.

"Hard lines on us," he said. "Our game seems to be pretty well snookered. Dr. Crane has dished us."

"By George!" said Handforth. "You think he knew?"

"Of course not, fathead!" replied Nipper. "It's just one of those tricks of fate that you read about in novels. Dr. Crane changed his plan for some reason, and came by road instead of train. Net result—we're dished! But you're right, Travers, about warning the girls. It's got to be done."

Nipper was brisk and businesslike. He peeled off his make-up—which had taken him so long to adopt—and he regretfully abandoned his beautifully prepared lecture. The only thing to be done now was to make a desperate effort to save Irene & Co. from getting into trouble.

"If they're taking it for granted that Dr. Crane is a spoofer, they'll lead him an awful dance," said Nipper. "Even his proper lecture is liable to be a bit steep, and they'll rag him just as much as they would rag a fake. I quite agree that Joan Tarrant and that other girl are capable of sitting tight and saying nothing. So it's up to us."

Church gave a bitter snort.

"It's all Handy's fault," he said. "But for him the girls wouldn't have been in any danger at all. They'd never have known there was a jape planned, and this complication wouldn't have arisen."

"Yes, it's Handy's fault!" chorused the others.

Handforth tried to look indignant, but the circumstances were such that he couldn't do so with any real sincerity. Edward Oswald, above all things, was as open as a book.

"I can't understand it," he said miserably. "I don't remember giving the show away! They must have heard from somebody else."

"Never mind that now," interrupted Nipper. "The fat is in the fire, and we've got to put on some speed. The trouble with you, Handy, is that you give the game away without even knowing it."

"He ought to be kept in a padded cell!" said McClure darkly.

"**H**E'S tall," murmured Irene.

"Quite impressive-looking, too," nodded Doris.

The girls were in the lecture hall of the Moor View School. Everything was very sedate and proper. Nobody would have suspected these young ladies of being anything but prim and demure. It was incredible that they could be contemplating, even at this minute, the biggest rag of the term.

The conditions were all in favour of it.

Here was this fake Dr. Huxley Crane—as they thought. He had arrived by car, and had been interviewing Miss Bond for some little time. The headmistress was now ushering that learned gentleman into the lecture hall. The girls felt that Miss Bond's presence would be a bit of a drawback, but it couldn't be helped. If she became shocked at the way they treated the professor's lecture, she would readily forgive them when she found out about the hoax.

"It's a wonderful make-up!" said Mary Summers breathlessly. "I say, I suppose there isn't any mistake, is there? It would be perfectly dreadful if we ragged the actual professor!"

Irene shook her head.

"I'm certain he's a fake," she said confidently. "We've been keeping a watch on the boys—although they never suspected it. Ted Handforth and lots of others went out immediately after lessons. Missed tea altogether. And they were all chuckling and laughing."

"But he's so tall," murmured Mary. "He can't be a boy."

"That's where Nipper shows his braininess," replied Irene. "He's got somebody to help—and it's really the only successful way. Hush! Miss Bond's going to speak to us."

They became all attention. Miss Charlotte Bond, the headmistress, appeared to be

(Continued on page 14.)

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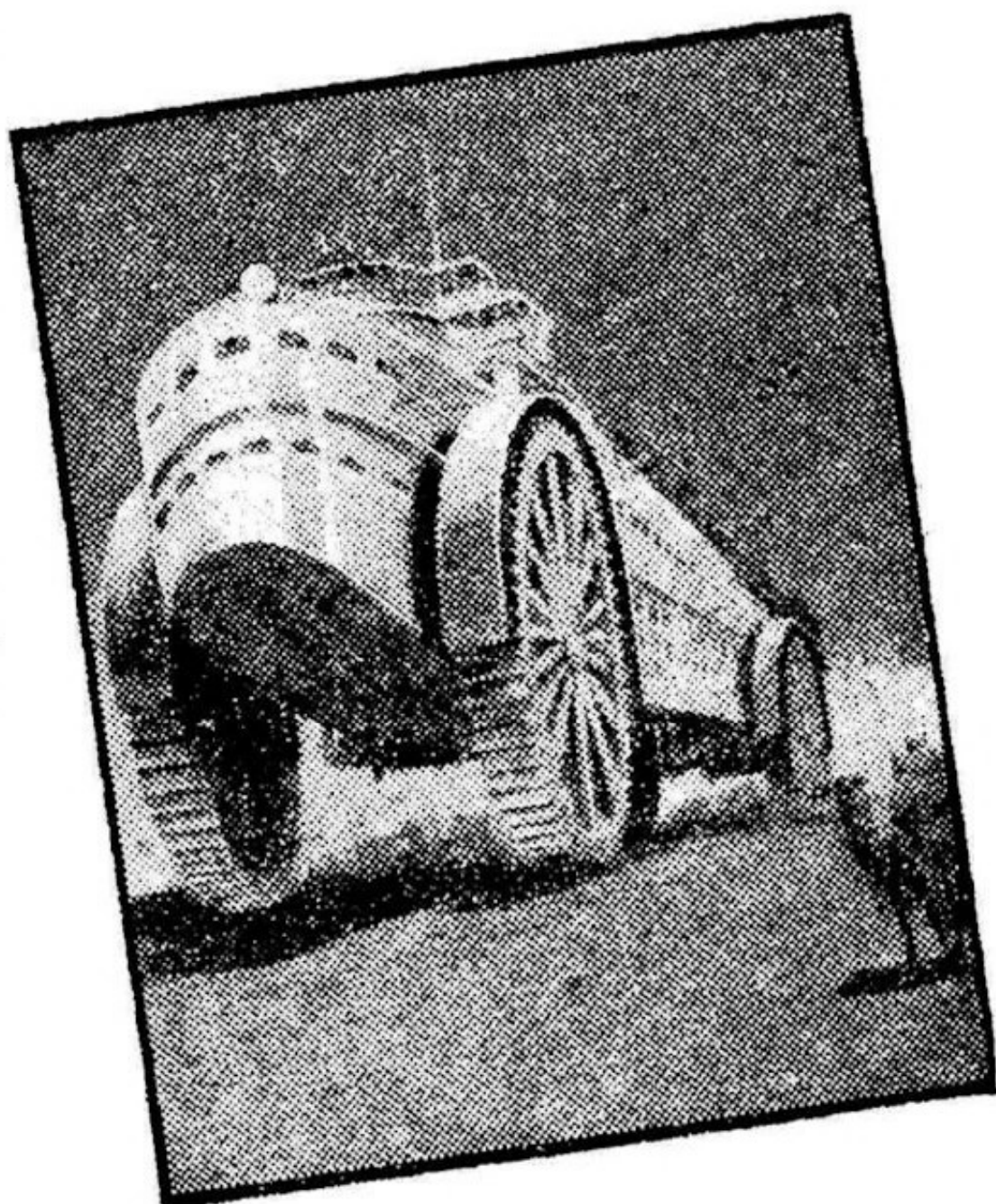
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MUTINY!



(Continued from page 12.)

not only hoodwinked "up to the eyes" by the dud professor, but it seemed that she was charmed by his personality, too. The girls were very much impressed. The man whom Nipper had persuaded to help, whoever he might be, was a very accomplished actor.

The girls also came to the conclusion that he was a past-master in the art of make-up. Dr. Huxley Crane appeared to be a tall, spare man, with slightly-drooping shoulders. He had an iron-grey beard and moustache, neatly trimmed, and pince-nez perched at the end of his nose. His hair was full and worn fairly long. In every way, he looked like the genuine article. Nipper & Co. might have told Irene and her chums why this was so!

Miss Bond said a few suitable words, and prepared the school for the professor's lecture.

"Dr. Crane is an expert on all matters concerning diet and athletics," concluded the headmistress. "I want you to give him your full attention; and I want you, too, to take heed of his words. He has come to the Moor View School to give us the benefit of his learning and brilliant abilities."

Somebody started clapping. It was immediately taken up by the other girls, and the next moment the lecture hall was filled with a perfect storm of applause. Lots of the girls even started cheering.

"Dear me!" said Miss Bond.

She had had the impression that the school was by no means enthusiastic about this lecture. One or two of the undermistresses had hinted that the girls would treat Dr. Crane very coldly. This only proved how wrong that first impression must have been. The girls were giving the great man a wonderful reception.

At last the applause died down.

"I am grateful," said Dr. Crane, in a deep, resonant voice. "I have generally found that my presence—in girls' schools particularly—is somewhat resented. Young people do not like us old fogies to lecture them. My gratification, therefore, at this great welcome is all the more pronounced. I thank you, young ladies, for your tolerance."

"Doesn't he do it well?" murmured Doris admiringly.

"I wonder if he really is a spoof?" said Mary, her eyes full of doubt. "Oh, don't

you think we ought to be careful? It would be dreadful if we made a mistake."

"But there's no mistake," said Irene. "Don't be so silly, Mary."

And Mary subsided, trying hard to still those qualms of hers.

CHAPTER 5.

Thoroughly Enjoying Themselves!

DR. HUXLEY CRANE cleared his throat.

He had taken his stand firmly on the platform. His notes were in his hand, and he had surveyed the girls closely for some moments—freshly gratified, no doubt, to observe the astonishing intentness with which he was being followed. Miss Bond was standing near by.

"Now, young ladies, I don't intend to confuse you with long-winded eloquence, neither is it my intention to select the longest words in the dictionary for the purpose of my address," said Dr. Crane pleasantly. "My object is to talk to you about your daily food, and its effects upon your constitutions. Nowadays, athletics are exceedingly popular—amongst the fair sex just as much as amongst the—ahem!—stern sex. I want to talk to you about dieting—about the appalling habit, which is nowadays amounting to almost a vice, of eating too much."

He glanced at Miss Bond.

"While being honoured by your presence, dear lady, might I suggest that you leave the girls entirely to me?" he went on mildly. "I feel, perhaps, that I can exert a greater influence over them if they are relieved, for the time being, of the stern eye of authority. I hope you will appreciate my meaning?"

"Perhaps you are right, Dr. Crane," said Miss Bond, nodding. "I am sure I don't wish to detract from the influence of your lecture."

The girls hugged themselves. The unfortunate Dr. Crane—or the spoofer, as the girls believed—had played right into their hands. It was almost too good to be true. With the headmistress present, they could not very well indulge in those little pleasantries which they had rehearsed so carefully.

But Miss Bond was going, and everything would be all right.

And Mary Summer's doubts now faded away once more. This suggestion on the lecturer's part seemed to prove—to Mary's mind—that he was without any question a hoaxer.

It did not occur to the girls that Dr. Crane might be perfectly sincere in his suggestion, for it was undeniable that the girls would attend to him with greater freedom if the headmistress made herself scarce. No doubt Dr. Crane was one of those

lecturers who preferred to be on terms of free and easy friendliness with his audience.

"Ah! Splendid!" beamed the great man, after Miss Bond had gone. "Now, young ladies, we can have our little heart-to-heart talk. However, do not fear. Do not have any trepidations. The suggestions that I am about to make regarding your daily diet are ones that you will probably endorse."

"Hear, hear!"

"Go ahead, Dr. Crane!"

There was much enthusiasm, and the worthy gentleman beamed afresh.

"First of all, I want to tell you that the average civilised human being eats far too much," he said impressively. "And not



only too much, but he eats the wrong food-stuffs. Slowly but surely he is undermining his constitution. Great as are the benefits of civilisation, yet it cannot be denied that civilisation has its curses. And food is the greatest of them!"

"I'm glad we're not in it, Dr. Crane," said Irene brightly.

"Indeed! Do you not partake of food?"

"Yes, but you kept saying 'he,' didn't you?" asked Irene, so demurely that the lecturer was unsuspecting. "You didn't say 'she,' did he, girls? So I don't see how we can be affected."

There were one or two giggles, but they were quickly stifled. It was recognised that this was the beginning of the rag. The fun would soon be going strong.

"Really, my dear young lady, I cannot possibly accept this as an indication of your intelligence," said Dr. Crane reprovingly. "You cannot make me believe that you honestly thought that I was leaving the ladies out of the discussion. Let me tell you at once that the ladies are far greater sinners, with regard to foodstuffs, than are the gentlemen."

"Oh!" chorused the girls.

"Chocolates!" said Dr. Crane accusingly. "As I look round this hall, how many young ladies can I see who have not a weakness for chocolates?"

There was a significant silence.

"None!" continued the great man in triumph. "And yet you perhaps fail to realise that chocolates are tantamount to poison."

"Oh!"

"Without any desire to exaggerate, or to aggravate the gravity of the position, I say without fear of contradiction that chocolates are a curse!" boomed Dr. Crane. "Yes, young ladies! A menace! Your pearly white teeth, which you value so greatly—your teeth which are one of the greatest feminine charms—do you suppose for a moment that they will remain sound if you continue the indiscriminate consumption of chocolates? Let me urge you to cut these vile atrocities out of your weekly diet. Cut them out completely. Regard chocolates as you would regard an enemy. Avoid them. And not only chocolates, but sweets of all descriptions. They are definitely bad."

Irene & Co. felt that things had gone far enough. Clearly this man was a spoofer. No genuine lecturer would stand in front of an audience of young ladies and urge that audience to abandon chocolates. It was altogether too steep. Surely he knew that chocolates were one of the mainstays of life?

"Oh, I say!" protested Doris. "We're not going to give up our chocs!"

"No fear!"

"You can tell that yarn to the Marines!"

Dr. Crane started.

"You must allow me to remark that you are singularly frank in your comments," he said tartly. "I was not—er—prepared for such candour. If you imagine that I am attempting to deceive you—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A regular storm of laughter broke out.

"Please—please!" urged Dr. Crane. "I have scarcely commenced my lecture, and this unseemly hilarity—"

"Say that chocolates are good for us, and we'll let you go on!" put in Irene calmly.

"Please, Dr. Crane, let us eat chocolates."

"Yes, please, do!" chorused all the girls, taking their cue.

"But this is nonsense!" protested the startled lecturer. "I am telling you that these sweetmeats are definitely injurious—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll tell you what!" cried Irene, jumping up. "How often do you eat chocolates, Dr. Crane?"

The great man recoiled in horror.

"I?" he said, aghast. "I eat chocolates! Perish the thought! How can you make such an appalling suggestion?"

"Let's make him eat some, girls!" sang out Doris. "Come on, out with your chocolates. We won't let him go on with his lecture until he samples some!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bags and vanity-cases were opened by the dozen, and as though by magic chocolates were produced in great numbers. Fully fifty per cent of the girls had come into

the lecture hall prepared with these delicacies. To listen to a lecture without eating a few chocolates was unthinkable.

The girls entered into the rag with enthusiasm. If he had been a genuine lecturer they would, of course, have taken no action whatever. They would have listened with cold disdain to this denunciation of chocolates—popping one into their mouths every now and again to strengthen their opposition. But as "Dr. Crane" was a spoofer, here was a golden and unexpected opportunity to start something really interesting.

"Come on, girls!" sang out Irene.

In a moment half the young ladies were swarming round the platform. Irene, Doris, Mary, and all their chums were in the forefront, pressing round the startled gentleman and forcing bags and boxes of chocolates upon him. He was surrounded by a veritable sea of the teeth-destroying horrors.

"Have some of mine, Dr. Crane!" pleaded Irene.

"No—mine!" said Doris. "Mine are nut chocolates."

The great man groaned.

"Worse and worse!" he wailed. "Chocolates are bad, but nuts are infinitely more appalling."

"Oh, it's not true!" protested Irene indignantly. "Listen to him, girls! Doesn't it prove that he's a fraud! Every doctor knows that nuts are good!"

"A fraud!" thundered the harassed lecturer. "Good gracious! How dare you say a thing like that? Young ladies! Young ladies! Have you gone out of your senses? Kindly remember——"

"Come on—have some chocolates!" cried Irene. "We won't let you go out until you sample some!"

"Particularly these nut ones!" insisted Doris.

"I am not saying that nuts in themselves are harmful," protested Dr. Crane. "We all know that nuts are beneficial. But in chocolates they are definitely bad. There is no getting away from that established fact. Go away! Upon my word! How dare you press round me—— I protest!"

He was practically overwhelmed by Irene & Co. as they thronged round the platform. By this time the girls had forgotten that Miss Bond might come back. But perhaps not. She might conclude that the lecturer was keeping his fair audience highly amused.

"Have some of these chocolates, or out you go!" said Irene, feeling that the time had come for something more drastic. "I say, girls. Why not chase him out, whether he has any chocolates or not?"

"Hear, hear!"

"We won't want to hear his silly lecture!"

"Out with him!"

Dr. Huxley Crane looked round him wildly. There was no mistaking that terrified expression in his eyes. The girls, seeing

it, immediately assumed that the hoaxer had scented the fact that he was exposed, and his terror was natural.

Perhaps it was just as natural for a genuine lecturer to be terrified by this flood of young girls, swarming round him menacingly and threatening to chase him out. It was not exactly a safe situation.

"Perhaps—perhaps I had better depart!" said Dr. Crane faintly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It had ceased to be a mere question as to whether he would accept the chocolates or not. That had now become a minor detail. The excited girls, positive in their belief that the lecturer was a fraud, were bent upon throwing him out. Miss Bond would be scandalised if she happened to spot the chase—but she would undoubtedly approve when she heard the truth. So the girls felt that they were safe.

"Quick—collar him!" sang out Doris.

Dr. Huxley Crane pulled himself together. Possibly he had faced dangers in his time, but none so acute as this. He saw that there was one possibility of escape. At the side of the platform there was a window—wide open. It looked out upon the courtyard at the back of the school.

"Yes!" he muttered desperately.

With a sudden effort, he freed himself from the girls who immediately surrounded him. In three strides of his long legs he reached the window. Dignity was cast to the winds. He went through the window like an acrobat, turned a half-somersault, and landed with a thud on the flower-bed beneath.

"Oh, he's gone!" shouted Irene. "Quick! After him!"

They crowded to the window, and were just in time to see the worthy dietetic specialist loping across the courtyard like a youngster of eighteen. The speed he managed to make was astonishing. Hatless, with soil clinging to his coat-tails, he fairly streaked for liberty.

"Round to the front!" cried Doris. "We'll cut him off! Come on!"

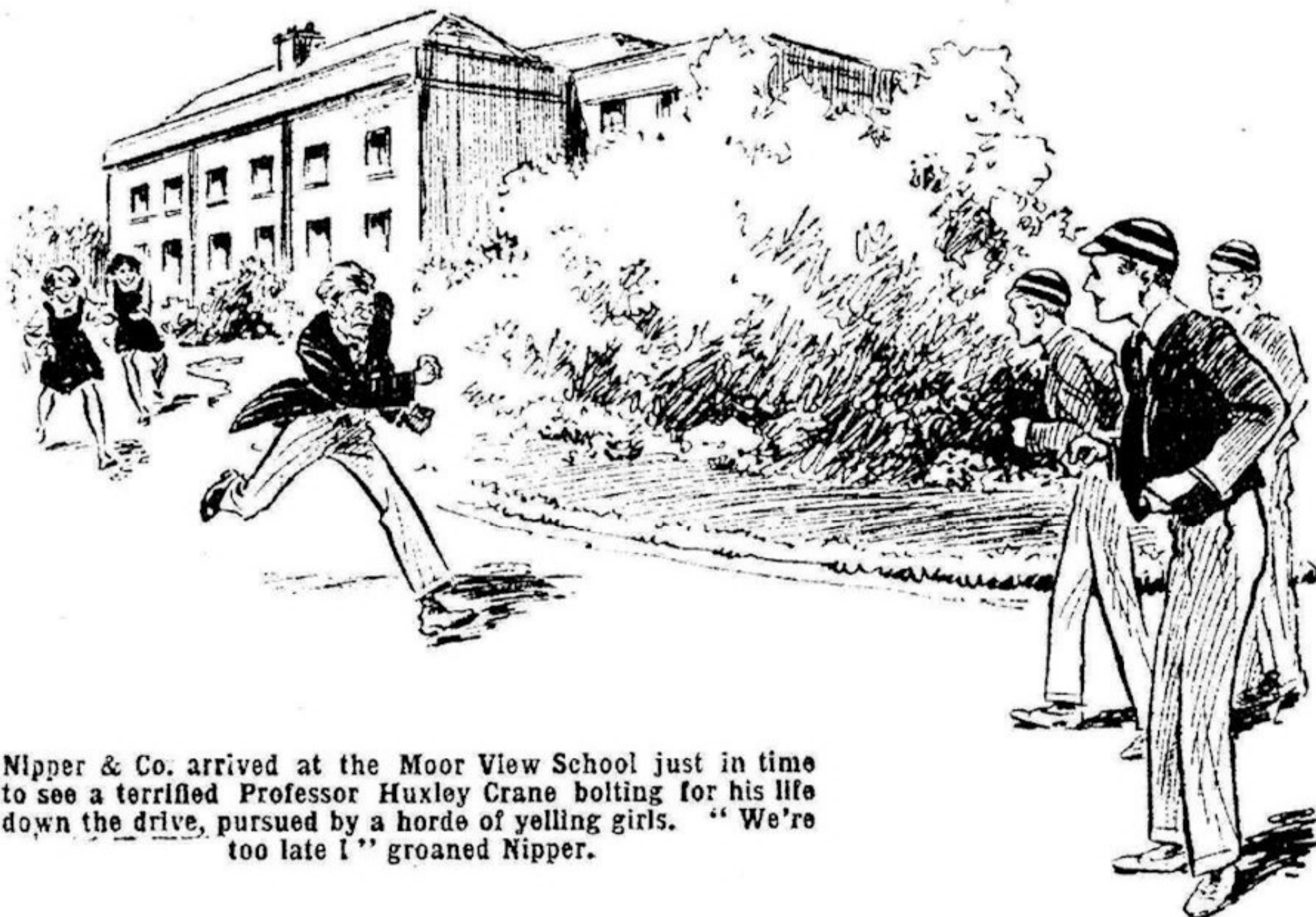
They went streaming out, shouting with excitement and laughter. There was a distinct possibility that they would reach the drive before the professor. It seemed a pity to let him go in this fashion. They hadn't half finished with him yet!

At that same moment Nipper & Co. came running through the gateway of the Moor View School from the road. They were breathless. They were all hoping against hope that they would be in time. But before they had taken two strides into the drive they pulled up short, aghast.

"Too late!" groaned Nipper.

He beheld a grey-bearded gentleman skimming round the side of the house like a Marathon racer, his hair floating in the breeze, his tie unfastened, his whole bearing one of terror.

"It's Dr. Crane!" gasped Handforth. "Great Scott! He's bolting!"



Nipper & Co. arrived at the Moor View School just in time to see a terrified Professor Huxley Crane bolting for his life down the drive, pursued by a horde of yelling girls. "We're too late!" groaned Nipper.

"Head him off!" yelled Nipper. "There'll be an awful row over this—and we've got to explain. Don't forget, you chaps—we've got to take the blame—all of it!"

"Yes, rather!" said Travers. "It's our wheeze, and it went wrong. We called the tune, and we've got to pay the piper."

They sped forward, hoping to outdistance Dr. Crane. At the same time a perfect flood of femininity came dashing out of the school—and Dr. Huxley Crane saw that he was caught between two fires! He gazed in fear at the schoolboys, and in terror at the schoolgirls.

He came to a halt—a beaten man!

CHAPTER 6.

Quite a Sportsman!

"DON'T let him get away!"
"Pull his beard off!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Down with the fraud!"

The girls came swarming round, laughing and shouting. Dr. Huxley Crane regarded them with terror.

"Young ladies! I beseech you!" he urged. "Good heavens! Have you all gone out of your minds?"

"The game's up, Dr. Crane!" said Irene sweetly. "How would you like us to dip you in the ditch?"

"Ha, ha ha!"

The girls were particularly noisy because they had beheld Nipper & Co. on the other side of the drive; and they naturally assumed that the St. Frank's fellows had come along to watch the spoofing of their

victims. Irene & Co. were determined to show the schoolboys that the jape had failed.

Nipper was horrified. Here were these girls, treating the great scientist in the most outrageous fashion—threatening to pull his beard off, and to dip him in the ditch! The situation was even worse than Nipper had feared.

"Just a minute, girls!" he shouted urgently, as he ran forward.

"Stand back!" exclaimed a stern feminine voice. "How dare you boys come running in here like this? Keep back! Dr. Crane, I am overwhelmed with mortification! What has happened? Why are these girls treating you so shamefully?"

Miss Charlotte Bond, the headmistress, had now appeared on the scene. Nipper & Co. glanced at one another, exchanging looks of helplessness, and they remained still. Miss Bond's presence seemed to have paralysed them. The worst had happened, and it seemed that nothing could now be done.

Dr. Huxley Crane produced a silk handkerchief, and mopped his brow.

"I am thankful that you have come, dear lady," he said, with relief. "Without stressing the point, I think I can say that I have passed through a terrible experience. For some reason utterly unknown to me, these young ladies appear to imagine that I am a charlatan. They have treated me with the grossest disrespect, and much against my will I was compelled to dash through— But let me be frank," he added firmly. "I confess. I was compelled to bolt."

"I am shocked beyond measure!" said Miss Bond, her voice trembling with anger,

"Never, in my whole experience, have I known my girls to behave so shamefully. I think they must have gone off their heads!"

She turned to the schoolgirls, and was rather surprised to find that they were not looking frightened or alarmed. Many of the lesser lights were perhaps a trifle uneasy; but Irene & Co. were serene.

"We haven't gone off our heads, Miss Bond," said Irene calmly. "We chased him out deliberately."

"What are you saying?" asked Miss Bond, in horror.

"But it's quite true," declared Irene. "You see, Miss Bond, he's a fraud."

"Miss Manners!"

"We knew it from the very start," continued Irene. "He's not the real Dr. Huxley Crane! He's somebody that these boys—I mean, he's a practical joker. He came here deliberately to jape us."

"To do what?" asked Miss Bond, scandalised.

"To spoof us," said Irene.

Dr. Huxley gazed in bewilderment from the girls to Miss Bond.

"I can only assume that there has been some terrible mistake," he said. "How these young ladies could get such an idea into their heads is beyond my comprehension."

"Oh, come off it!" smiled Doris. "Can't you see that the game is up?"

"Silence!" commanded Miss Bond, her agitation more apparent than ever. "Dr. Crane, I beg of you to be patient. I cannot think that these girls deliberately treated you with such disrespect. There must, as you say, be some terrible mistake. I demand an immediate explanation!" the headmistress added, turning to Irene.

"But I've already told you, Miss Bond," protested Irene. "This man isn't Dr. Huxley Crane at all! He's only a fraud. The whole thing is a hoax!"

DR CRANE looked at Irene, and he seemed to find some difficulty in breathing. He looked almost stunned.

"I cannot believe that there is any truth in this astonishing story," said the headmistress sharply. "I demand a full explanation—"

"May I speak, Miss Bond?" asked Nipper, coming forward.

The good lady fixed him with a stern eye.

"No, you may not!" she replied. "I should be much obliged, indeed, if you boys went about your own business."

"But we know something about Dr. Crane," urged Nipper.

"Indeed!"

"Yes, miss," said the Remove captain. "In fact, we can explain everything."

Miss Bond changed her attitude.

"In that case, perhaps you had better lose no time," she said tartly. "For it seems to me that this regrettable incident will take quite a lot of explaining."

"It's really our fault, miss," put in Handforth eagerly. "You see, we got a wheeze for a jape—"

"I did not invite you to speak, young man!" said Miss Bond.

"Eh? Oh, all right! But I thought—"

"Leave it to me, Handy, old man," said Nipper gently. "We planned to play a little joke on your girls, Miss Bond," he went on. "Quite a harmless affair—only a bit of fun. The idea was to send somebody here in the character of Dr. Crane, so that the girls would be spoofed. In fact, I disguised myself and I was coming along as the professor—"

"I am more shocked than ever," cut in Miss Bond. "I am amazed that you boys should get such outrageous ideas. Well?"

"Well, the jape didn't come off—that's all," said Nipper. "We found that the real Dr. Crane had arrived by car, instead of by train. So our whole plan fizzled out."

"Wh-a-at!" murmured Irene, turning positively pale with the sudden shock.

"We wanted to get here in time to warn you, Irene!" said Nipper. "It seems that we're too late—"

"But—but we thought—" began Doris.

"I know you did," said Nipper soothingly. "It was Handy's fault, really, for letting the cat out of the bag. If he hadn't done that, you wouldn't have made this little mistake. I'm very much afraid that the gentleman you have been ragging is Dr. Huxley Crane himself."

"Thank you, my boy—thank you, indeed!" said the great man fervently. "I am grateful to you for this simple word of explanation. No doubt the young ladies will now appreciate the regrettable nature of their conduct. Not, of course, that I intend to blame them—"

"The real Dr. Crane!" said Irene faintly. "Oh, but we thought—I mean, it's too terrible! I'm dreadfully ashamed!"

She had gone fiery red, and her distress was so painfully obvious that Dr. Huxley Crane lost his expression of severity and anger. The other girls, too, were similarly embarrassed.

"There, there!" said the food specialist. "There has been an error. It is all a mistake. Let us forget it, young ladies. I am not a man of vindictive nature. In the circumstances, I freely forgive you."

"It's—it's very nice of you, Dr. Crane!" said Irene with gratitude. "I hardly know what to say. It's so—so unexpected! We were certain—"

"We never dreamed!" put in Marjorie Temple. "Oh, what terrible girls you must think we are!"

They remembered the way in which they had laughed at Dr. Huxley Crane's statements; they remembered how they had pressed their chocolates upon him; how they had virtually chased him out of the lecture hall. Their consternation was supreme. The one ray of hope was Dr. Crane's present attitude. Undoubtedly he was a sportsman.

"I cannot accept this as a reasonable explanation," said Miss Bond coldly. "You have treated Dr. Crane with scandalous disrespect, and when you tell me that you be—"

lieved him to be a practical joker, I find it difficult to accept such a preposterous explanation."

"But it's true, Miss Bond!" said Nipper. "Please don't blame the girls. It's really all our fault."

"I can readily believe that you boys were at the bottom of the mischief!" retorted Miss Bond, adjusting her glasses, and regarding Nipper with an icy gaze. "I shall certainly make it my business to report you to your own headmaster."

"Oh, I say, is that really necessary?" asked Nipper. "We've done the right thing, Miss Bond. We've come along and explained——"

"It was all a mistake, you know!" said Irene earnestly. "Please don't be hard on the boys, Miss Bond! We've done wrong, and we'll take our punishment. But we didn't know. Really, we didn't."

"Then you should have known," said Miss Bond sharply. "Good gracious. Cannot you tell the difference between the real and the unreal? Cannot you see that Dr. Crane is Dr. Crane? Do you imagine for one moment that a practical joker would present the appearance of this gentleman?"

"Well, we did think the make-up was pretty good," said Doris. "My hat! No wonder. It's not a make-up at all!"

"I am by no means satisfied with this explanation," said Miss Bond icily. "I cannot help thinking that——"

"Dear lady, cease thinking!" put in Dr. Huxley Crane with a smile. "Let me urge you to erase this incident completely from your mind."

The great man had entirely recovered his composure. And the girls, watching him, were not merely relieved, but enormously grateful. Dr. Crane's attitude was all in their favour; his sportsmanship was a real blessing. Another man might have made a tremendous fuss.

"I wish I could do as you say, Dr. Crane——" began the headmistress.

"If it is your desire to do so, there can be no doubt that you will be merciful," said Dr. Crane gently. "Personally, I bear these young ladies no ill-will. To my mind, their explanation is perfectly satisfactory. They assumed that I was a practical joker, and, consequently, they dealt with me as such. Now that the little misapprehension has been cleared up, I have no doubt that they will regard me in a different light."

"Indeed we shall, Dr. Crane!" said Irene quickly. "We all apologise for our disrespect and rudeness. Please do forgive us. We're really dreadfully sorry."

"Yes, Dr. Crane—we are!" chorused the other girls.

The learned man smiled, and waved a kindly hand.

"There, there!" he said, beaming. "Let us forget it. The incident is over. With your permission, Miss Bond, I will return

to the lecture hall, and if these young ladies are willing, I will deliver my lecture——"

"Yes, yes! Please do!" shouted Irene & Co.

THEY were very anxious now to give Dr. Huxley Crane their full attention. They wanted to atone. And it was impossible for them to have any hard feelings against Nipper & Co., for the schoolboys had saved the situation.

Miss Bond had commenced to thaw, too.

"You must be thankful, young ladies, that Dr. Crane is a gentleman of such a generous nature," she said. "Since it is his request, I will overlook this unhappy incident."

"And there will be no punishments after I have gone?" asked Dr. Crane. "I should not like to think that I have been the unwitting cause of such a minor tragedy. Please reassure me, Miss Bond."

"I give you my word, sir," said the headmistress.

"Splendid!" beamed the professor. "Well, we can now return to the lecture hall. I am eager to proceed."

Miss Bond marshalled the girls into line, and then she proceeded to march them back into the lecture hall. Handforth and Travers and most of the other boys were collected in a group, talking in low voices—thankful that the affair had ended so satisfactorily.

Nipper, however, had joined Dr. Huxley Crane, and was helping to brush some of the dried soil from his coat.



"Thank you, young man—thank you indeed!" said Dr. Crane. "My exit from the lecture hall was somewhat hurried, and——"

"Cheese it!" muttered Nipper grimly.

"I—er—beg your pardon?"

"You're a marvel, but you haven't fooled me!" said Nipper, in a kind of hiss. "Great Scott! It's a spoof all the time—and yet we never guessed! Browne, you deserve a barrowful of medals!"

"Hush, brother—hush!" murmured the great man. "Let us proceed with the business in hand. I urge you not to blow the gaff!"

CHAPTER 7.

The King of Spoofers!

WILLIAM NAPOLEON BROWNE!

Here was a staggering development. Just when the Moor View girls were convinced—utterly and absolutely convinced—that Dr. Huxley Crane was the genuine article, it turned out that he was the reverse. He was the King of Spoofers himself! William Napoleon Browne, of the Fifth Form of St. Frank's!

Nipper had experienced a slight sensation of faintness when he had "twigged" the impersonation. None of the other juniors had seen through Browne's make-up; none of them had recognised his voice. He had disguised it superbly, and his whole manner was a masterpiece of brilliant acting.

Browne had had the rare commonsense to admit his identity to Nipper during the very first moment. He realised that any argument would be dangerous. If he attempted to refute Nipper's suggestion it would only cause Nipper to press it, and then the other fellows might come round, and, in the general excitement, the imposture would probably be exposed.

"Well, everything's all right now, sir, thank goodness," said Nipper cheerfully. "How did you do it, you cunning bounder?" he added, in an undertone. "I nearly had a fit when I spotted you!"

"I had a presentiment, Brother Nipper, that your spotting propensities would rise to the occasion," whispered Browne. "Much as I admire your keen eyesight and general faculties, I nevertheless regret this development. I had hoped to remain undiscovered until the conclusion of this interesting episode."

"Don't worry, I won't give you away," breathed Nipper. "Browne, old man, you're a gift from the blue skies. Just when we thought our jape had fizzled out, it's booming better than ever. The girls are convinced that you are genuine now, and they'll swallow anything."

"Precisely my own view, brother," said Browne. "But let me correct the impression that this is your jape. I would point out that I knew nothing of your childish plans, and I will admit that for a certain period I was not only puzzled, but in no small way perturbed. It occurred to me that I was sinking—if not actually sunk. However, I understand now, and the general situation is unquestionably improved. I do not doubt that the young ladies will listen to me with rapt attention. Rely upon me, brother, to complete my task nobly and with that thoroughness which is characteristic of the Brownes."

"That's better, sir," said Nipper briskly. "All the dirt's off now."

"Thank you, young man—thank you, indeed!" said Browne, changing his tone. "I am glad to have made your acquaintance. I only regret that you will not be able to hear

the lecture that I am about to deliver. Whilst it is primarily intended for the ears of young ladies, it is a lecture which is nevertheless of much benefit to tuck-loving schoolboys."

Some of the other boys were coming along, and it was advisable to be careful. Browne's disguised voice was a wonder of intonation and smoothness. It was totally different to his ordinary speaking voice.

MISS BOND came along just then, and at the same moment Nipper had an idea.

"If you will come with me, Dr. Crane, you will find the young ladies in readiness to receive your lecture," said the headmistress. "I regret very much that this unhappy incident should have——"

"Pray make no apologies, dear lady," interrupted Browne, with a wave of his hand. "I am in full possession of the facts, and I am satisfied that no disrespect was intended to my person. Let me once again suggest that it should be completely forgotten."

"You are very good-natured, Dr. Crane," said Miss Bond, with relief.

"Not at all," beamed the great man. "Merely appreciative of the high spirits that are necessarily part and parcel of youth. It matters little whether the youth is represented by boys or girls. They are equally mischievous. I well remember in my own young days—— But perhaps this is not the occasion for such reminiscences," he added hastily.

"May I ask a favour, Miss Bond?" asked Nipper politely.

The headmistress regarded him somewhat coldly.

"Well?" she said. "I have changed my mind about making a report to your headmaster, young man. Dr. Crane has forgiven you—like the generous man he is. But I cannot overlook the fact that you attempted to perpetrate a singularly audacious practical joke. That it failed was no fault of your own, but largely a matter of chance. I do not approve of such outrageous jokes."

"Oh, it was only intended as a bit of fun, miss!" protested Nipper. "I was wondering if you would allow us to go into the lecture hall to hear Dr. Crane's speech?"

He gave a side glance at Browne at the same time, and the latter nodded gravely.

"Why not?" he said. "I understand, Miss Bond, that visitors are welcomed in your splendidly appointed lecture hall?"

"Well, yes, that is so," admitted the headmistress. "But it is not usual for schoolboys to——"

"A trifle," said the imitation Dr. Crane, waving a hand. "Let them come, dear lady! The larger the audience, the better I shall be pleased. Would it not be a gesture of goodwill if you allowed this? The burying of the hatchet, shall we say? It will indicate, I hope, that there is no ill-feeling."

"Here, I say!" protested Handforth, looking blank. "We don't want to hear—I mean—— Oh, well, of course, perhaps so!"

he added lamely, as Nipper glared at him.

"Well, in the circumstances, I will grant my permission," said Miss Bond grudgingly. "As it is your desire, Dr. Crane, I will not oppose you."

She turned to the boys, and regarded them severely.

"Let me warn you, however, that I will not countenance any high-spiritedness," she said. "Unless you behave yourselves as young gentlemen should, I shall be compelled to ask you to leave."

"Thanks awfully, Miss Bond," said Nipper. "Leave the chaps to me. I'll guarantee that they'll be well-behaved."

"Very well," said Miss Bond. "Come!"

"**F**ATHEAD!" muttered Handforth, as he and the other juniors went indoors.

"It's only fair, Handy," whispered Nipper. "It's up to us to square the old boy."

"H'm! Perhaps you're right," admitted Handforth.

He, like most of the other juniors, had a horror of lectures. They had to suffer enough of them at St. Frank's—from Professor Tucker, from the headmaster himself, and occasionally from the Housemasters. It was generally agreed that lectures, as a whole, were dull and dreary.

This one, however, promised to be something of an exception.

Not that Handforth knew anything about this, or even suspected it. Nipper was the only fellow who knew the truth about "Dr. Huxley Crane," and even now Nipper was feeling somewhat dazed. For the life of him, he couldn't understand how William Napoleon Browne had brought the thing off.

No wonder Dr. Crane had failed to arrive at Bellton station! Browne had got at the worthy man first! Nipper was pleased when he realised this. His own calculations hadn't been so much at fault as he had feared. But how could he have guessed that Browne—a senior—would perpetrate this hoax on the Moor View girls?

It was true that Browne was the champion hoaxer of St. Frank's. He had hoaxed the school on his very first appearance—even before anybody knew that he was a new fellow—and since then he had performed many similar enterprises to maintain his reputation.

It was just coincidence that he had elected to bring off one of his stunts to-day so that it clashed with the Removites' activities. He couldn't have known that they had planned the self-same jape, or he would undoubtedly have given them a warning, or would have co-operated.

On the whole, Nipper felt that the position was saved.

AFTER all, it didn't much matter who performed the actual jape. Browne was even better for this task than Nipper himself—as Nipper would have been the first to admit. And, unsus-

picious as the girls might have been had the original plan worked, they were now trebly unsuspecting.

Considering what had happened, they accepted Browne without question. They had thought that he was a fake, and they had been staggered to learn that he was the genuine article. When Nipper & Co. had named him as such, they had believed that he was. So the girls had no reason whatever to doubt this grey-bearded lecturer a second time.

Browne himself realised the advantages, and he was now glad that the mishap had happened. It gave him much greater confidence. He felt that he would be able to give a much more outrageous lecture than he had originally planned. There was far less likelihood of it being suspected.

Nipper was keen to hear the lecture. He saw no reason why he should miss such a treat. And he managed to whisper a word to Travers, and also to Tommy Watson and Tregellis-West. They could be relied upon not to give the game away by look or word, and it was only fair that they should be placed in a position to appreciate the humour of the situation.

Handforth, of course, was not told. One had to exercise a little precaution. It was rather hard lines on Edward Oswald, but Nipper was taking no risks. Time enough to tell Handforth later—when the game was over.

So, although the majority of the juniors suspected nothing when they took their seats in the lecture hall, a few of them settled down to listen with eager anticipation. This was a development they had never hoped for—to be actually present while the Moor View girls were being spoofed. Failure had become success.

Miss Bond herself was present this time. She was taking no chances. She placed herself on the platform firmly, and one glance was sufficient to show that she meant to be immovable until the lecture was over. The St. Frank's fellows discreetly seated themselves at the very back, where there was plenty of room.

"Now we can begin again, I trust," said Browne kindly, as he scanned his notes and adjusted his glasses. "I was talking, I think, on the subject of chocolates, was I not?"

The girls chorused their assent. They felt extremely guilty, too. Many of them went hot and cold when they remembered how they had pressed round the professor, urging their chocolates upon him.

"Let me repeat my warning," said Browne gravely. "You will, of course, disagree with me, but I am prepared for that. Chocolates and sweetmeats of any kind should be forbidden. Let me advise you to rule them out of your diet."

Several of the girls swallowed rather hastily, and there was a suggestion of rustling bags.

"Being young ladies of the modern age, you will, of course, be anxious to maintain your sylph-like figures," said Browne, beam-



“You heartless wretches——” began Irene, and then broke off as Nipper and the other juniors whipped open their cricket bags, revealing all the delicacies therein. Next moment the girls were swarming round happily.

ing. "Let me say at once that I have seldom, if ever, seen so many charming girls in the course of one evening. That is why I am so anxious to warn you. It would pain me exceedingly to learn that you had all lost that graceful slimness which is such a charming feature of your present appearance."

"Is this really necessary, Dr. Crane?" asked Miss Bond dubiously.

"Madam, it is vital," said Browne. "I would remind you that I am giving this lecture at your invitation, and I beg of you to let me give it in my own way. You may, or may not, approve. Perchance I shall give voice to many views that do not coincide with your own. However, I am hopeful that I shall convince you of the truth of my theories."

"Forgive me," said Miss Bond. "I did not really mean to interrupt."

"Say no more, dear lady—all is forgiven," replied Browne gracefully. "I am well aware that there is some talk to the effect that the present age of slimness is passing. Do not be deluded. Do not be caught in this snare. If you are unwise enough to increase your avoirdupois, under the impression that such an increase is fashionable, you will bitterly regret it. I can assure you that it is far easier to gain weight than to lose it. A few brief weeks of gluttony, and the worst will happen!"

The girls were beginning to listen attentively. The lecture was becoming interesting.

"You will, perhaps, resent my use of the word 'gluttony'; but this is no time for beating about the bush," said Browne firmly. "Let me explain my real meaning. I regard your present diet, as scheduled by the school, as the rankest of gluttony!"

"Really, Dr. Crane?" protested Miss Bond. "I had not meant to interrupt, but I cannot allow such a statement to pass——"

"Patience, dear lady—patience!" said Browne in his deepest voice. "You will see, presently, that my censure is justified. Let us take, at random, a day's menu. Bread and butter for breakfast. Perhaps eggs and bacon, with luck. Jam, or marmalade—concoctions of unspeakable harmfulness. At mid-midday, a joint, or perchance the homely steak-and-kidney pudding, embellished with cooked potatoes and greenstuffs, and, most appalling of all, a plum duff to finish with, or some similar atrocity."

Browne was now speaking slowly and impressively. Also there was a note of indignant exasperation in his tone, as though he couldn't understand why people failed to realise the danger of eating these "atrocities."

"We live rather better at this school, Dr. Crane," said Miss Bond frigidly.

"Better?" repeated Browne. "You doubtless mean worse, although perhaps you do not think so. However, the illustration will serve. Added to the foodstuffs I have mentioned there is, of course, the customary addition of chocolates, biscuits, ice-creams, and such-like abominations which are dear to a schoolgirl's heart. Let me warn you most solemnly against all these pitfalls."



"You heartless wretches——" began Irene, and then broke off, revealing all the delicacies therein.

"But if we can't eat any of these things, Dr. Crane, we shall starve!" protested Irene, voicing the thought that was in many of the girls' minds. "We like to be slim, but we don't want to be as thin as rakes."

"Hear, hear!"

"Wait!" said Browne. "I shall now proceed to tell you exactly what you should eat in order to keep that schoolgirl complexion. Heed my words, and the results will be astonishing!"

CHAPTER 8.

Up to the Eyes!

NIPPER, who had planned to deliver a lecture on quite different lines, was very interested. He was beginning to get a glimpse of Browne's trend. The lanky Fifth-Former was evidently planning to make his spoof a more lasting one than Nipper himself had ever intended.



and the other juniors whipped open their cricket bags, girls were swarming round happily.

"I can say, with all truthfulness, that I have made a study of food since my childhood days," declared Browne stoutly. "I have examined food in all its varying moods. Food is mankind's companion, without which mankind cannot exist. A worthy companion whilst it is well treated, but should you chance to misuse it it is liable to turn against you."

The audience listened, surprised and interested. Without doubt, there was some-

thing fascinating about Browne's style of address. It wasn't exactly the words he employed, for these were frequently outrageous in their exaggeration, but it was his general air of supreme confidence. There was something irresistible about his delivery. He was one of those people who can make black appear white. At St. Frank's it was generally predicted that Browne would one day be called to the Bar.

"Girls should be more careful of their food than boys," he declared firmly. "Boys, as is well known, care very little for appearances. As long as they get a good feed about eight times daily they are satisfied. It is well known that their--er--interiors are double armour-plated. And if there is any danger of excess weight accumulating they easily work it off by fighting one another, playing games, climbing trees, and generally copying the antics of the simians.

You will all agree, however, that girls cannot reasonably be expected to follow this same course. Girls are looked upon as being more careful and particular. That they are every bit as bad as the boys is neither here nor there."

"Oh!" protested the audience. There was also a ripple of laughter, for the girls were beginning to understand that this lecturer was something of a humorist, grave as his manner was. Nipper gave Travers a nudge.

"Amazing!" he murmured. "He's putting it over marvelously!"

"He couldn't have done it originally, though," whispered Travers. "As things are, the girls are swallowing it all whole."

"I am going to suggest something drastic," boomed Browne. "For breakfast you must eat nothing but half a grape-fruit or an orange, with one small piece of unbuttered brown bread. A frugal repast, perhaps, but healthy. Tea or coffee, naturally, is strictly prohibited. The fruit juice will be ample liquid. The midday meal must be similarly Spartan. I suggest that meat should be definitely abandoned.

It has been well said that over-eating is the cause of ninety per cent of mankind's illnesses. And the majority of people over-eat without realising it."

"But isn't it just as harmful to under-eat, Dr. Crane?" asked Miss Bond tentatively.

"I doubt if it is possible to under-eat," replied Browne. "I am earnestly going to suggest that you should try this experiment for at least one month. I will give you a

pale upon mentally reckoning up the amount of money she had spent on "cures."

Dr. Crane's formula was different. It was merely a secret of diet. His suggestions were not revolutionary, although they were startling. To live on the frugal fare that he advised would startle anybody.

"Would there be any effect within a week?" she asked tentatively.

"You are sceptical, Miss Bond," said Browne reproachfully. "But do not think that I am offended. Try this diet for a week, and I shall be very much surprised if you do not carry on with it indefinitely. Start the new regime to-morrow. Weigh yourself before breakfast, and then weigh yourself on the same scales next Monday morning. Without exaggeration, I can say that you will be astonished at the result."

"I am afraid it will be too rigid for the girls," said Miss Bond musingly. "It is my idea, Dr. Crane, to try this experiment alone——"

"In that case, I must beg of you to excuse me," said Browne coldly. "I can see that my efforts have been wasted on the thin air. Either the whole school or nobody, dear lady! Cannot you see that any other course would be grossly unfair to me? If you imagine that you are imposing a hardship on these young girls, let me disabuse your mind of such a fantastic theory. Cannot you see that they are longing for such a change?"

And so, minute by minute, he won Miss Bond round. By his persistency and his eloquence he conquered. Browne was irresistible. Indeed, Miss Bond came to the conclusion that the only possible way of getting rid of him was to give her promise. And by the time she *did* give her promise, she sincerely meant it.

William Napoleon Browne took his departure, cool and debonair. He was rather disappointed by the fact that the girls did not give him a rousing send-off, but he realised that this oversight was reasonable. The girls appeared to be at prep, and were therefore out of reach.

So the King of Spoofers stole silently away into the dusk of the evening—only to run into a crowd of Removites who were waiting patiently for his appearance.

CHAPTER 9.

Waiting for Results!

"**H**ERE he comes!"

"Good egg!"

"Don't let him get away!" said Nipper. "We've got to find out a few things from Browne! Goodness only knows what he's been up to since the lecture! He's probably made Miss Bond promise to fast the school for a couple of days."

"I want to have a word with him, too!" said Handforth indignantly. "Why didn't he tip me the wink? It was like his nerve to keep most of us in the dark. We thought

he was the genuine article while he was lecturing!"

"Browne's a wonder!" said Church admiringly.

It had come as a complete surprise to most of the juniors to learn that the great spoof had been brought off, after all. When the schoolboys had departed from the lecture hall, Nipper had not hesitated to divulge the secret, and those fellows who had not been "in the know" had stared in blank amazement.

"Of course, I suspected something all the time," said Handforth indulgently. "I'm not saying that I actually recognised old Browne, but you needn't think that I was spoofed by all that rot!"

The others chuckled. Fortunately, Browne joined them at this moment, so Handforth was not able to do any arguing.

"Well done, Browne!" said Nipper enthusiastically. "You did it like a master."

"I did it like a Browne!" corrected William Napoleon. "Which, as you will admit, is the same thing."

"What's happened since we left?" asked Fullwood eagerly. "Did you let the girls into the secret?"

"What insanity is this, brother?" asked Browne.

"But isn't it time to let them into the secret?" asked Fullwood. "They've been spoofed, haven't they?"

"A mere beginning," said Browne, waving an airy hand. "I am hoping that this little game will be carried on for at least a week. I trust, brothers, that you will be duly cautious."

"We shall have to give old Handy a sleeping draught, then," said Church. "We'd better make it a long one—so that he doesn't wake up until next week. It's the only way to be certain of him."

"Idiot!" said Handforth hotly. "If you think you're being funny, Walter Church——"

"I'm not funny—I'm serious!" said Church, with a sniff. "Our own jape all went phut because of your silly tongue! The girls knew everything! Trusting a secret to you is like talking in front of the microphone."

"You—you——"

"Hush, brothers!" urged Browne. "Kindly remember that we are on the public highway. At any moment a Moor View damsel might trip out of the offing. Do we wish to give them a clue so early? Let us retreat into safety."

They retreated into the Triangle, and before Browne was allowed to get away they dragged him behind the shelter of the shrubbery. Here they were private, and Browne was able to remove the greater proportion of his make-up.

"All is well, Brother Nipper," he said contentedly. "You need feel no disappointment over the failure of your own infantile effort. In your child-like way you had arranged to jape——"

"Never mind my child-like ways," said Nipper. "What's the result at the girls' school?"

"I fear—I gravely fear—that our fair young friends are booked for an incredibly lean week," said Browne sadly. "Their daily diet will be sufficient, at a rough estimate, to keep a couple of mice free from the pangs of starvation. But it is all in a good cause, as you will no doubt agree."

"But it's impossible!" ejaculated Nipper, staring. "You don't mean to say that you've convinced Miss Bond that your fatheaded diet is worth trying?"

"Whilst agreeing that my suggested diet is indeed fatheaded—since it was intended to be fatheaded—I must nevertheless call you to order regarding the rest of your statement, Brother Nipper," said Browne sternly. "Let me assure you that I can convince anybody of anything. Your implied doubt is a slur upon my ability."

"You long-winded ass!" grinned Nipper. "I'm only doubtful because it seems so impossible."

"Nothing," said Browne, "is impossible. When I start a thing, brother, I finish it. And let me add that when I start a thing, I start it properly. Miss Bond is now busily engaged in the task of emptying the larder. I very much fear that she is making a huge

bonfire in the back garden and burning large quantities of excellent foodstuffs."

"But what are the girls going to live on?"

"Hope, for the most part, I fear," said Browne. "I do not anticipate that the experiment will continue for longer than three or four days. Hunger, brothers, is a great force. It is always liable to make one change one's opinions. My only consolation is that Miss Bond appears to be a lady of great strength of mind. She will doubtless rise above these material gnawings, and will allow the mind to triumph over the flesh."

"When he's done gassing, perhaps he'll explain what's happened?" said Handforth tartly.

"It's simple," said Nipper. "He's spoofed Miss Bond up to the eyes—and she's going to give his crazy diet a week's trial."

"Oh, my hat!"

"What a lark!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Isn't it a bit rough on the girls?" asked Tommy Watson dubiously. "What about my sister? When she finds out the truth, she'll half-slaughter me for being a party to the thing!"

"I trust you are willing to sacrifice yourself in the cause, brother," said Browne sternly.

"I want to know how you worked it,"

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said Nipper. "I suppose you knew nothing about our own plan?"

"Absolutely nothing," replied Browne. "It was merely a case of two great minds thinking alike. And the greater mind, not unnaturally, thought first."

"It was our plan to meet Dr. Crane at the station, and to spoof him up with a yarn about some contagious illness at the school. We were going to pack him off to London by the next train, so that the coast would be clear."

"Crude," said Browne deprecatingly. "Astonishingly crude, Brother Nipper. I am astonished that you should confess to such an unripos plan. Did you not consider the possibility of Dr. Crane writing as soon as he got home? In that event, the gaff would undoubtedly have been blown by the morning."

"Well, we didn't expect the jape to last more than an hour or two," said Nipper.

"I do these things more thoroughly," said Browne calmly. "I made it my business to meet the train at Bannington, and I had no difficulty in introducing myself to Dr. Huxley Crane. Once that feat was accomplished, the rest was easy. With Brother Crane in my Morris-Oxford car, I did my worst."

"And what, exactly, was your worst?" asked Nipper. "You're such a thorough bounder, Browne. I hope you didn't drop the old chap into a wayside pond or something like that."

"I may be thorough, but I am not so demoniac as you hint," replied Browne, shaking his head. "I merely talked to Brother Crane."

"That's nearly as bad as killing him," said Travers.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I chatted on various subjects," continued Browne, ignoring the slur on his conversational abilities, "and I soon discovered that Brother Crane was a gentleman with absent-minded propensities. Such scientific gentlemen are by no means rare. I profited by this discovery. In a very brief time, Brother Crane imagined that his appointment at the Moor View School was for next Monday and not this."

"My only hat!"

"Do you mean to say you really bluffed him?"

"Brother Crane was led to believe that he had come to Bannington on purpose to chat with me," chuckled Browne. "In the end I placed him in a train for London, and he is definitely booked to deliver his lecture next Monday. The chances are that he won't turn up until that day."

BROWNE'S plan had probably worked because of its simplicity. And the idea of fooling Dr. Huxley Crane into thinking that his appointment was not until next Monday was characteristically "Browne-ish." The audacity of it had as-

sured its success, and with Browne to "put it over" the unfortunate man had been instantly convinced.

The Remove japers yelled at the ruse, and Browne was freshly congratulated.

"I am always willing to help in these little matters," said the lanky Fifth-Former benevolently. "I knew that it was your desire to get even with the young ladies, and I saw an opportunity of putting in some strong work."

"You've done marvels, old man," said Nipper heartily.

"Pity he isn't a Removite, though," said Handforth. "His being a senior rather spoils it."

"Rats!" said Nipper. "He's a St. Frank's chap, and it's a school jape, so what's the difference? Anyhow, Browne's really a Removite at heart. He's one of us. We're proud of him."

"Kind words, brother, for which I am duly grateful," murmured Browne. "But when you point out that I am one of you, I must remind you that I have not yet sunk so low—"

"And we've got to be jolly careful," continued Nipper. "Browne's done wonders with this jape. It's up to us to keep the ball rolling. What a scream if these girls accept that dotty diet! And what a perfect roar if Miss Bond enforces it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It'll be many a long day before Irene & Co. jape us again!" said Fullwood, with a nod. "They'll find it's a bit too costly! I mean, dash it, we can't allow a girls' school to beat us."

"Awful thought!" said Nipper, shocked. "Up, St. Frank's! We'll show Irene & Co. that we can beat them at their own game."

"But always let us remember, brothers, that these young ladies are worthy opponents," declared Browne. "I can say, without fear of contradiction, that I have seldom had the wind up quite so vertically as I had this evening. Consider my position! A mere male against a horde of jape-inflamed maidens. Picture my consternation when I detected that the wheeze had become loose in the joints, and when it was obvious that my impersonation of Brother Crane was twiggled."

"You must have had a lively time," grinned Travers.

"The English dictionary, Brother Travers, could easily provide a better word," said Browne. "None has ever dared question my courage, yet I will confess that my only thought was of flight. There are some odds which even a Browne cannot face."

"But when the girls explained things to Miss Bond, and when we came along and said that it was all a mistake, you were safer than ever," chuckled Nipper. "They accepted you without question after that. You couldn't have worked the thing so thoroughly without it, old man."

"Admitted," said Browne promptly. "As things stand, I was able to spread myself to

some purpose. Our co-operation has been a great success. Let us hope that the success will be lasting."

"Good man!" agreed Nipper. "And now we'll wait for results!"

THEY didn't have to wait long.

Next day a keen look-out was kept, and on more than one occasion some of the Moor View girls were sighted and questioned. They seemed to be losing their enthusiasm. They all had a hungry look.

When Nipper happened to meet Irene Manners and Mary Summers in the evening he found them hungrily eyeing the village tuck shop.

"You're not thinking of going in, are you?" asked Nipper, pained.

"We're desperate," said Mary, in a hollow voice. "Oh, my hat! Now I know what it's like to be cast on a desert island!"

"We've had nothing to eat all day," said Irene mournfully. "Absolutely nothing."

"Nothing at all?" asked Nipper curiously.

"Well, you can't call it anything," sighed Mary. "An orange each for breakfast, with a bit of old brown bread that tasted like dog biscuit. Then, for lunch, we had a stewed apple, more dog biscuit, and as much lettuce as we could eat. But who wants lettuce by itself?"

"Didn't you have any tea in your study?"

"Study teas are prohibited," said Irene. "Miss Bond has cut tea out altogether. We shan't get anything else until supper time, and then it'll only be a slice of lemon, perhaps, with a tablespoonful of bran!"

Nipper shook his head.

"You girls are never satisfied," he said sternly. "What are you grumbling at? This famous specialist comes down and tells you how to keep healthy: and you don't seem to appreciate it!"

"If we go on at this rate, we shall be like lamp-posts," said Mary.

"Nonsense!" said Nipper. "You know very well that it's all for your own good."

The girls seemed somewhat consoled.

"We'll stick it," said Irene, with a determined little tilt of her chin. "We're not going to call a halt. If it's for the benefit of our health, we'll keep it up."

"Good man—I mean, girls!" said Nipper approvingly. "And now, how about coming into the confectioner's and having a doughnut each? Nobody would know, and—"

"Certainly not!" said Mary, licking her dry lips. "I'm surprised at you, Dick, for tempting us. Oh, my goodness—doughnuts! Come on, Renie!"

They fled, and Nipper chuckled to himself. When he got back to St. Frank's he told the others, and there was a distinct chance that Irene & Co. caught some echoes of the laughter even as far away as the Moor View School. Not that the girls could have guessed that they were the cause of this hilarity!

CHAPTER 10.

Tea for Two—and More!

RATS! Blow! Bust!" said Handforth disgustedly.

"It's no good going on like that, Handy," said Church, shaking his head. "It won't stop raining because you use bad language."

"Who's using bad language?" asked Handforth indignantly.

He and his chums were standing in the Ancient House doorway, looking out upon a rain-soaked world. It was Wednesday, and luncheon was over. There had been a shower or two in the morning, but now the clouds had rolled over in earnest, and a regular downpour had commenced.

"Why does it always rain on half-holiday days?" asked Handforth fiercely. "And particularly when we've got a cricket match fixed?"

"It doesn't," said McClure soothingly. "On the average, half-holidays are pretty fine. We only notice them more when they're wet."

The chums of Study D were not the only disappointed fellows in the school. Everybody, in fact, was more or less fed up. A big senior match had been arranged for to-day, too—a sort of trial game.

Nipper was philosophical about it.

"If it's wet, it's wet, and we shan't improve matters by going about with long faces," he said cheerfully. "As cricket is off the board, what about inviting ourselves out to tea?"

"In the rain?" asked Tommy Watson.

They had joined Handforth & Co. in the doorway, and Travers and Fullwood and Gresham and a few others were there, too. They all looked at Nipper without any exaggerated display of enthusiasm.

"And where can we go for tea, anyhow?" asked Handforth heavily.

"Where but to the Moor View School?" said Nipper.

"What!"

Everybody shouted the word at once. They were all stirred out of their gloom.

"The Moor View School?" said Travers. "Well, well! Is your memory at fault, dear old fellow, or are your ideas of tea weird and peculiar? If we descend upon Irene & Co. we shall probably get a couple of grapes each, with a drink of water to wash them down."

"I met Mary just before dinner," said Nipper thoughtfully. "She's looking thinner."

"Well, the wheeze is still working," grinned Tommy Watson.

"Her eyes are getting hollow, and her cheeks seem to be a bit sunken," said Nipper.

"By George! I thought I noticed the same thing about Irene when she popped in this morning," said Handforth, with a start. "Perhaps we're going too far with this thing, you chaps!"



"You wretch!" stormed Miss Bond angrily when she realised that she had been hoaxed by William Napoleon Browne. "How dare you. Take that!" And she commenced to lam the unfortunate Fifth-Former in no uncertain way with her umbrella.

"That's what I was thinking," said Nipper.

Some of the others grinned. They were the fellows who had no particular girl chums, and they were able to regard the affair with less prejudice. In their eyes, neither Irene nor Mary had changed in the slightest degree.

"Rats!" said Church, with a sniff. "The girls aren't coming to any harm. It'll do 'em good to starve for a bit, and teach 'em a lesson, too!"

"You heartless rotter!" said Handforth coldly.

"It's not our doing!" protested Church. "Miss Bond's at the bottom of it. Who'd believe that she would have taken old Browne so literally?"

Nipper nodded.

"I rather think we ought to do something," he said. "If the weather had been fine, cricket would have kept our minds off the starving young things, and we should cheerfully have forgotten all about them. As it is, we must do something on a wet afternoon."

"That's true," admitted Travers. "You think that we should penalise ourselves, too? Sample the frugal fare, as it were? By Samson! We shall need to be heroes!"

"I'm not such a mug as that," grinned Nipper. "In fact, I think it's time that the jape ended. The girls have been spoofed, and that ought to be enough. Let's roll along to the Moor View School and take piles of grub with us."

"My hat! That's a good idea!"

"Rather!"

"A regular spread!" said Nipper. "We can't ask the girls here, because Miss Bond might suspect something."

"Isn't she more likely to suspect something if we go there with lots of grub—right under her nose?" demanded Handforth.

"That's just why she won't suspect," chuckled Nipper. "We can smuggle the stuff in, and give the girls a real feed. A square meal. Pork-pies, ham sandwiches, sardines, tons of bread-and-butter, cakes and pastries. I've got some spare cash, and some of you other fellows are pretty flush, I believe. What about a whip round?"

THE scheme was greeted with enthusiasm, and supported effectively by the immediate production of many crisp notes and lots of silver. Everybody wanted to contribute.

In the end the funds were so ample that Mrs. Hake had some difficulty in dealing with the orders. By the time everything was ready the juniors were loaded up.

Lionel Corcoran and his chums of the Fourth came along and wanted to know what it was all about. They were freely told, and the feed was saved.

"It's a good thing you were frank about it," said Corky. "We were going to raid that tuck."

"What made you think you could get it?" asked Nipper politely.

"We're practically two to one against you," replied Corky, with a grin. "But as the grub is for the starving girls we haven't the heart to raid it. There are exceptions to every rule, and this is one of them. How about burying the hatchet and letting us come along?"

"Nothing doing!" replied Nipper. "Miss Bond would get suspicious, and quite apart from that, you Fourth-Formers would be in the way. The girls are a bit particular about their visitors."

"You silly Remove fathead!" snorted Buster Boots.

The Removites chuckled and prepared to start off on their errand of mercy, while Corky & Co. sadly went back to their own quarters, robbed of the chance of a good feed by their chivalrous spirit. If that grub was for the girls, then their hands were tied, so to speak.

The Removites were smart and trim, and they were carelessly carrying cricket-bags and suitcases. One might easily have imagined that they were on their way back from a cricket match, one that had been spoilt by the rain.

Luck was with them when they entered the Moor View School grounds. Miss Bond was nowhere in sight. She was probably taking her afternoon nap—disturbed to-day, no doubt, by the sensation of emptiness which held sway within her. Nobody was in sight except two or three drooping, sad-looking girls who stood in the main doorway.

"Here we are!" announced Nipper, as he led the group indoors. "We've come to tea, girls."

Doris Berkeley gave him a somewhat glassy look.

"You're welcome," she said sadly. "There's plenty of water in the tap!"

"Where's everybody?" asked Handforth, looking round.

"I suppose you mean where's Irene?" said Doris. "In her study, I think, trying to drown her sorrows in this week's 'Modern Girl.'"

"Haven't you got a Common-room in this place?" asked Nipper briskly. "We've come to tea in real earnest, old things. These cricket-bags are more interesting than they look."

Doris opened her eyes wider, and a sparkle flashed in them. For a moment she seemed to be her old self.

"You mean—food?" she asked in a tense whisper.

"Pies, sandwiches, doughnuts, jam-tarts," said Nipper.

Doris and the other girls swayed with emotion. The vision was intoxicating. Then Doris firmly shook her head and braced herself.

"No," she said sternly. "You can't weaken us like that. Away with your grub, you—you tempters. You ought to be ashamed of yourselves for coming here and— Oh, my

goodness!" She reeled. "I just caught a whiff of something savoury!"

"Mrs. Hake's special meat-pies," said Travers, nodding. "They're all hot."

"Don't!" begged Marjorie Temple. "Oh, how can you be so cruel?"

"Come into the Common-room!" said Nipper briskly. "Gather the rest of the gang if you can. We've something to tell you, as well as something to give you."

The girls gave it up. The thoughts that those bags contained piles of food robbed them of their last defences. For two days

COMING NEXT WEEK!



they had existed on next to nothing, and their will-power was getting undermined.

Irene and Mary and quite a number of the other girls turned up in the Common-room in record time. It wasn't really tea-time yet. It was the quiet, lazy hour of the afternoon. On a wet afternoon like this it was particularly languid, since the usual outdoor sports were abandoned. Nobody had anything to do except read or knit or crochet.

"Girls, let me release the bombshell immediately," said Nipper briskly. "We haven't the hearts to keep it up any longer. You've been spoofed!"

"Spoofed?" echoed the girls.

"Up to the eyes," said Nipper, nodding. "Remember what happened on Monday evening?"

"Shall we ever forget it?" groaned Ema Handforth.

"You thought Dr. Huxley Crane was a fake at first, and then you thought he was genuine," continued Nipper. "The fact is, he was a fake all the time."

"Oh, draw it mild!" protested Irene. "You don't expect us to believe this, do you? Why, you told us yourselves that we had made a mistake. It was you who explained to Miss Bond——"

"I know," said Nipper. "That's because we were spoofed ourselves. Then we found out that Browne of the Fifth was the chap who worked the hoax. It was Browne who

"THE ST. FRANK'S MENAGERIE!"

It's Willy Handforth's idea to have the menagerie at St. Frank's. An excellent idea it is, too, as is to be expected considering whence it comes. Unfortunately snags occur.

For instance, the animals escape—and so we have Edward Oswald Handforth running about in the middle of the night, chased by a bear. Archie Glenthorne wakes up and finds a purring leopard on his bed!

Next week's yarn is the "goods," chums. It contains plenty of fun and schoolboy adventure—which is just the kind of story you like. Look out for it next Wednesday.

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did all that gassing about starving yourselves."

"Browne!" breathed Irene faintly.

"Didn't I tell you he reminded me of somebody?" asked Doris excitedly. "It didn't occur to me till afterwards, but—My goodness! He's right, girls. I know it now. It was Browne!"

"We're risking his displeasure by letting the cat out of the bag, but we couldn't allow you to suffer any longer," said Nipper. "But don't blame Browne—it was as much our jape as his. We told you we'd get our own back for that Easter Monday affair, didn't we?"

The schoolgirls were excited, indignant, and wrathful.

"You heartless wretches!" said Irene feelingly. "I wonder you have the nerve to come here!"

"Oh, I say!" protested Handforth. "We thought——"

"And now that you are here, we'll take it out of you!" went on Irene, her eyes flashing. "Come on girls! Let's make them smart for——"

"Behold!" yelled Nipper triumphantly.

He whipped open his cricket-bag, and the other fellows opened theirs at the same moment. Pastries and other delightful edibles were displayed before the hungry eyes of the girls. But it was really the odour of the hot pies that did it. It arose into the atmosphere, and Irene & Co.'s anger evaporated like mist before the morning sun.

CHAPTER 11.

The Lightning Strike!

"GRUB!" breathed Irene dizzily. "Quick! If somebody wants to save my life, let me have one of those meat pies!"

"Bother the meat pies!" cried Winnie Pitt. "I want a sandwich!"

The schoolboys grinned contentedly. Nipper had expected a storm, and he had been equally certain that the storm would subside upon the production of the feed. Within a minute the girls were chuckling gleefully, and the last frown had vanished.

The tables were swept clear of books and half-knitted jumpers, and the gorgeous spread was laid out. Unfortunately, before any of the girls could touch so much as a mouthful, Miss Bond arrived on the scene.

This was a tragedy that nobody could have foreseen. In the first place, Miss Bond had never entered anybody's thoughts, and in the second place, Miss Bond had never before come to the Common-room at such an hour of the afternoon. As Travers later suggested, perhaps she had caught a whiff of the meat-pies.

"What is all this?" she asked sternly.

It was an entirely unnecessary question, for she could see perfectly well what it all was. The feed was in full view. Irene & Co. and their visitors looked at the headmistress in consternation.

"We—we came along to tea, Miss Bond," said Nipper feebly.

"Indeed! I was not aware that I had permitted such a visit," said the lady, with asperity.

"We didn't like to bother you."

"I don't doubt it," said Miss Bond. "In the circumstances, I can well understand your reticence. Upon my word! How dare you bring all this atrocious rubbish into my school?"

"But it's food, Miss Bond!" pleaded Irene. "We're starving, and——"

"Silence!" commanded the headmistress. "I am amazed. I am shocked. Indeed, I am horrified. Have I not warned you against this very type of food? Have I not repeated Dr. Crane's sound advice? This school is giving the new diet a thorough test,

and I won't have it spoilt. You boys will leave at once. You will take your food with you!"

"Oh, my hat!" groaned Doris.

"On second thoughts, you will leave the food here," continued Miss Bond acidly. "I shall see to it that it is at once destroyed. Such food is just as harmful to boys as to girls. It is little better than poison, and I shall be doing a public service by destroying it."

The schoolboys were as much aghast as the schoolgirls now. And it came home to them with tremendous force how thoroughly William Napoleon Browne had performed his task. Miss Bond was converted—completely and overwhelming. Dubious at first, she had now embraced the new diet with a sort of fanatical fervour.

"Oh, I say!" protested Nipper. "This stuff cost a lot of money, Miss Bond! We can't stop you confiscating it—but don't destroy it! Better send it to the villagers. Some of them would——"

"Why should I encourage the villagers in their debased appetites?" snapped Miss Bond. "This food is harmful to all humanity! It shall certainly be destroyed. As for you boys, you will leave at once!"

"But we thought——"

"At once!" commanded Miss Bond, pointing to the door.

They wilted under her fiery glance, and hastily departed. Out in the passage, Handforth checked.

"Why not tell her that it's all a spoof?" he asked breathlessly.

"Can't do that," said Nipper. "We can't give Browne away."

"My only aunt! I suppose not!"

"We mustn't sneak on old Browne," continued Nipper. "But there's something in the idea, Handy. Perhaps we can—— Yes, let's get back! Miss Bond is bound to know sooner or later."

They hurried back to the Common-room and burst in. Some of the other fellows hovered in the background. Miss Bond turned a baleful eye upon them.

"Didn't I tell you to leave these premises?" she asked.

"Yes, miss, but we've got to explain something," said Nipper. "You were hoodwinked by Dr. Crane. He wasn't Dr. Crane at all!"

"What rubbish is this?" asked the lady. "Have you the audacity to suggest that—— How dare you? Leave at once!"

"Honestly, Miss Bond, he was a fake!" urged Nipper.

"I cannot believe you!" said the headmistress. "Who was this man, then? If he was not Dr. Huxley Crane, who was he?"

"We—we can't exactly tell you, miss," replied the Remove skipper. "I mean, we can't give him away. But he wasn't Dr. Huxley Crane. And you mustn't take any notice of his silly health diet——"

"Once more, I command you to leave!" broke in Miss Bond angrily. "I wonder that you have the temerity to make such an

outrageous suggestion. How dare you speak so insultingly against Dr. Crane? I am afraid I shall have to speak to your headmaster about you."

"But, really——"

"Go!" stormed Miss Bond.

And they went—startled by their failure.

It was not really surprising that Miss Bond was so indignant. On the face of it, it certainly seemed that the schoolboys were attempting a bluff in order to put her off the new food rules. They wanted to conspire with the girls, to defeat the experiment.

"It was true what Dick Hamilton said, miss," ventured Irene.

"I can well believe that you will support that preposterous story," said Miss Bond curtly. "No, not another word! I refuse to listen. I can well see that I shall have to take more drastic measures with you."

"But it was a hoax!" cried Doris. "Surely you can see that now, Miss Bond? It was all a jape! And I don't see why we should be starved——"

"Silence!" commanded the lady. "For the next two or three weeks—during the period of this experiment—I shall confiscate all your pocket-money. This will prevent you from buying such wretched food as this away from the school. I shall further instruct all the local shopkeepers to allow you no credit. I insist upon my orders being obeyed. Come! Your money!"

The girls looked rebellious. This was beyond all reason. It wasn't so much the actual confiscation of the pocket-money, but the implication that they could not be trusted with it. Besides, it was theirs. Miss Bond had no right to take it! Let her alter the school's daily menu if she chose, but she was going beyond her rights by stopping the pocket-money.

"We won't give it up!" cried Ena Handforth, with something of her brother's forceful spirit. "Let's make a stand, girls!"

"How dare you?" ejaculated Miss Bond. "What is this—rebellion? I am amazed! Hand me your pocket-money at once! This instant!"

She strode amongst them, and they surrendered.

"Now," she continued triumphantly, "take all this food and throw it on the rubbish-heap. And do not dare to make any attempt to eat a mouthful on the way. I shall be watching you! Come!"

It was the food that did it. The order was too much for them. The girls picked up the food, but their hunger was so great that they were desperate. Ena took a bite out of one of the meat-pies, and Doris bit into a sandwich.

"Come on—all of you!" shouted Ena.

The next second the mutiny was on. Every girl in the room sampled the particular food she had in her hand. The idea of carrying it out and throwing it on the rubbish-heap was a bit too kick.

Miss Charlotte Bond stared, aghast.

"Have you all taken leave of your senses?" she panted. "Stop this! Good heavens, this is nothing else but open rebellion!"

She might as well have talked to the thin air. The girls, knowing that the whole thing was a spoof, and exasperated because of Miss Bond's obstinacy, were in a reckless mood.

Some of them started marching out, and the others followed. Miss Bond was left with an empty room. She nearly fainted. Such a thing as this had never before occurred in her whole experience as a school-mistress.

"Come back!" she managed to ejaculate. "Come back at once!"

But she was still addressing the thin air. Outside, the girls had run across the drive, and were sheltering from the rain beneath the thick trees. In their excitement, they had not bothered to get their hats or macintoshes. Their only thought had been to run for it.

"We've done it now!" said Doris breathlessly.

"A good thing, too!" cried Ena. "It's a bit thick when she starts grabbing our pocket-money! And fancy trying to destroy this grub!"

"We're finding a better place for it than the rubbish-heap!" said Irene, nodding.

The food, in fact, was disappearing at a remarkable rate. And as it disappeared, so the schoolgirls' appetites were appeased—and so, too, their consternation arose in similar ratio. Hunger had made them desperate, but now that their hunger had gone they could see what they had let themselves in for.

"She'll be furious over this!" declared Winnie. "Goodness only knows what'll happen! Some of us will get expelled, I expect."

"Let's go in!" suggested one of the others.

"No fear!" said Ena firmly. "We've started it now, and we'll go on with it! If anybody's taking the blame, it's me! I was the first to start eating."

"We'll all take the blame," replied Irene. "But we must do something. We can't stay out here in the rain, and if we go indoors it'll be a surrender, and Miss Bond will punish us."

"Then what *can* we do?" asked Sylvia.

"Go to St. Frank's!" replied Irene promptly.

"Go to St. Frank's?" echoed all the others.

"Yes, rather!"

"But what can we do there?"

"Have a good feed, of course," said Irene.

"The boys are bound to help us, and we shall get shelter, too. Oh, my goodness, how I'm dying for a cup of tea!"

"Tea, yes—but we've had a feed," said Winnie.

"Half a one!" said Irene scornfully.

"We've got to make up for two days, don't forget! Oh, those boys! They've had their revenge all right!"

Most of the other girls were in full agreement that the only thing to do was to make a dash for St. Frank's. It was impossible to go indoors, and most unwise to stay out in the rain. The thought of tea was also very alluring.

Without any further hesitation, they ran for it.

"**Y**OU'VE rebelled!" exclaimed Nipper faintly.

The girls were crowding into the gymnasium—the first open doorway they had seen upon entering the rain-swept Triangle. Nipper and one or two of the other fellows had been in there, and now the boys were looking in consternation at the hatless figures.

"Yes, we've started a rebellion," said Ena firmly. "A real one, too!"

"It was more like a lightning strike," said Doris. "One minute we were docile, and the next minute we told Miss Bond to go and eat coke—although we didn't use those actual words. Then we bunked for it—and here we are!"

"Great Scott!" said Handforth helplessly.

He and the other juniors looked at one another in a frightened sort of way. When they had started their jape they had never realised that it would lead to anything so awful as this. A mutiny of the girls! Rebellion against authority! There was liable to be a considerable spot of bother.

"But what are we going to do?" asked Fullwood. "I mean, the position seems to be pretty hopeless! We never thought you'd do a thing like this, girls. We'll own up, of course, and do everything we can to put Miss Bond right, but I doubt if that will pacify her."

"It'll probably make her worse," said Nipper, looking worried. "When she finds out she's been hoaxed, she'll have a fit."

"Still, it'll be proof that we were right, won't it?" asked Doris keenly. "She can't possibly punish us then. She'll be only too glad to forget the whole affair."

"Well, anyway, we came here for some tea," said Irene practically.

"Oh, rather!" replied Nipper. "Let's make a dash for the Common-room, you chaps. We'll have the feed here, instead of at the Moor View School. Come on!"

Within ten minutes the girls were drowning their troubles in cupfuls of steaming hot tea. There was quite a large amount of food on the menu, too. As Doris remarked, there was a lot of leeway to make up!

CHAPTER 12.

Browne's Little Way!

MISS CHARLOTTE BOND arrived at St. Frank's like a human hornet.

She fairly hummed across the Triangle, and she made a bee-line for the headmaster's house. The rain had stopped now, and the clouds were breaking. The early evening sun was peeping out and

shining on the dripping trees. Not that Miss Bond paid the slightest heed to these details. She would have come just the same, even if a tornado had burst over the countryside.

She was, indeed, very much of a tornado herself. When Phipps, the Head's butler, announced that Dr. Nicholls was in, but unavailable, she nearly caused the usually imperturbable Phipps to shrink to half his size.

"Go and tell Dr. Nicholls that I insist upon seeing him!" commanded Miss Bond. "How dare you bandy words with me? Which is Dr. Nicholls' study? I insist upon seeing him!"

Phipps vanished, beaten for once.

And when he returned he informed Miss Bond that the Head would immediately receive her. The fact that he had been disturbed in the middle of his tea was scarcely worth mentioning. Miss Bond fairly bounced into his presence.

"Is anything the matter, madam?" asked Dr. Nicholls, in surprise. "I must thank you for this delightful call, but I trust—"

"This is no time, sir, for the usual pleasantries," broke in the Moor View mistress. "My girls have rebelled against my authority."

"I am distressed," said the Head. "This is indeed a serious situation for you, Miss Bond. But I fail to see how I can be of any assistance. However, if you will be good enough to give me the details—"

"It will be sufficient, I think, if I inform you that your own boys are responsible," broke in Miss Bond. "That is why I am here, sir."

The Head gripped the arms of his chair.

"You have made a very serious accusation, madam," he said anxiously. "You say that my boys have incited your girls to rebellion? This is indeed serious! I shall be glad to know how this unfortunate affair came about."

Miss Bond told him—and the Head was relieved.

"Honestly, madam, I cannot agree with you," he said gravely. "I cannot agree in the slightest. I fail to see how you can hold my boys responsible for this unhappy incident. Be assured that it is only an incident. The girls will very soon come to their senses. I had feared, from your first remark, that the situation was of much greater gravity."

Miss Bond regarded him in amazement.

"Is it not grave enough?" she demanded. "And how can you say that your boys are not responsible?"

"Well, according to your own story, it seems that the boys merely went to your school for the purpose of partaking of tea," said the Head mildly. "Surely there was nothing very wrong in that? And you have told me that the girls did not rebel until after the boys had gone."

"That is quite true," admitted Miss Bond reluctantly. "But these girls are here now—in one of your buildings!"

"There again I cannot find reason for taking any official action," said the Head evenly. "My boys could not tell the young ladies to go away, could they? If they are sheltering them, it is all to their credit. Of course, the case will be different if you order your pupils to leave and the boys incite them to defy you. In such an event I shall have reason to act. But you need not fear that, Miss Bond."

"You evidently do not know your boys!" retorted Miss Bond acidly.

"I think I do," smiled the Head. "Quite recently I have been in very close touch with them, and I know them intimately. Please do not make too much of this affair, madam. If you will quietly ask your girls to leave, I have no doubt that they will obey."

The Head's strong personality soon had its effect. There was something remarkably forceful about him. Before long Miss Bond was calmed, and she was permitted to see the matter in its true light. It was by no means grave.

HIS prediction proved to be quite right, too.

When Miss Bond arrived in the Ancient House Common-room, she found a very merry scene. The air was heavy with the odour of hot tea and toasted muffins. The room was packed. The girls were crowding round the tables, pouring out the tea, and generally making themselves useful.

"Who's this one for?" Irene was asking, as she held aloft a steaming cup.

"Anybody," sang out Gresham. "Sling it over here!"

"Look out! Cave!"

Somebody had seen the door open, and a complete silence fell as Miss Bond entered the room. Irene & Co. had been half expecting such an interruption as this, but now that it had actually come they were a bit startled.

"Now for the squalls!" murmured Doris.

"I expected as much!" exclaimed Miss Bond severely. "I am astonished to witness this—this orgy! Not content with consuming an appalling amount of prohibited food at your own school, you must needs come here and involve these boys in your rebellious conduct. We shall leave at once."

"Can't they stay until after tea, Miss Bond?" asked Nipper.

"No, they cannot!" retorted the good lady. "Not a minute! I command every girl in this room to follow me out."

"Afraid you'll have to go, girls," said Nipper reluctantly.

"Of course," agreed Irene. "We don't want to get you into any trouble, and we've had our tea, anyway."

To Miss Bond's inward satisfaction, her girls lined up without any demur, and marched out into the corridor without any demonstration. The rebellion appeared to be over. Yet it was not precisely a failure

since, because of it, the girls had all partaken of a square meal.

In fact, now that their hunger was so thoroughly appeased, they had no direct incitement to keep up the mutiny. It was better, regarded from every standpoint, to go back to their own school and to face the music.

"Well, that's done it!" said Nipper, after the visitors had gone. "I'm afraid Miss Bond's going to make things pretty hot for them, though. What the dickens can we do about it?"

"Let's get up a deputation and go to the girls' school straight away," suggested Travers. "About six of us. We'll tell Miss Bond all about the jape, and we'll get Browne to go with us."

"Good idea!" said Nipper. "We couldn't sneak on Browne, but if we get him to confess it'll be a different thing. Miss Bond can't keep it up then, after Browne has convinced her that his Doctor Crane was a spoof. And Miss Bond can't get us into trouble, either. Even if she makes a complaint to the Head, it won't lead to anything."

"The chances are that she'll keep jolly mum about it," drawled Travers. "The less said the better, what?"

"Let's go and find Browne," said Nipper briskly.

HOWEVER, William Napoleon Browne was very much in evidence just then, although nobody but his own intimates would have known it.

Miss Bond stood in the gateway of St. Frank's, watching the hatless girls as they filed past her into the lane. She was seeing the last of them out. The sunshine was brilliant now, for the last of the rain clouds had fled.

"Dear me!" said Miss Bond, with a violent start.

For at that moment, just as the girls were about to march off up the lane, she beheld a long-legged figure striding towards her across the Triangle. She instantly recognised the grey-bearded, grey-haired Dr. Huxley Crane. There could be no mistaking that distinctive figure.

"Ah, dear lady!" beamed Browne, as he arrived.

"Dr. Crane!" ejaculated Miss Bond. "This--this is very unexpected. I had no idea that you were in St. Frank's. I cannot tell you how pleased I am to find you here. My girls have revolted against your wonderful diet."

"And who shall blame them?" said Browne stoutly.

"I beg your pardon!"

"Had they done anything else but revolt, they would have proved themselves unworthy to fly your banner, Miss Bond," said Browne. "But they are girls of spirit, girls of courage. By this revolt they have proved that they are not to be hoodwinked by the first impostor who comes along."

"Really, I fail to understand what you mean, sir!" ejaculated Miss Bond. "You're talking in a very peculiar strain. After your earnest appeals that I should give your diet a full month's test--"

"Alas! I reckoned without the noble spirit which your girls have so admirably displayed," interrupted Browne. "Or, to be more exact, and, in fact, to tell the truth, I never intended the experiment to go longer than a few days. You have doubtless been informed, Miss Bond, that I am a fraud."

"Perhaps I was informed correctly," said Miss Bond icily.

"Never," said Browne, "was a truer word spoken. Permit me, dear lady, to remove this growth and reveal my true identity. When you see who I am, you will doubtless forgive me on the spot."

With a deft movement Browne whipped off his wig, removed his beard and moustache, and gave his face a quick rub round with a prepared handkerchief.

"Good gracious!" ejaculated Miss Bond, and in that moment she realised that the professor had indeed been an impostor.

The girls had paused outside the gates, and now they were crowding round, eager and intent. In the Triangle, Nipper and Handforth and a number of other Removeites were cautiously approaching, equally interested.

"You will observe, dear lady, that I am by no means so unprepossessing as you would believe," said Browne graciously. "Behold me in my true colours. William Napoleon Browne, of the Fifth Form."

"A schoolboy!" said Miss Bond faintly.

"I cast myself at your feet," said Browne. "I crave your forgiveness, Miss Bond. I am sure you will realise that the joke was harmless, and--"

"You--you wretch!" interrupted the headmistress, recovering some of her composure. "Oh, how dare you! When I think of the manner in which you brazenly addressed my school. And your interview with me. It is beyond all endurance. Take that!"

And she suddenly raised her umbrella and commenced to "set about" the surprised Browne in no uncertain way. The juniors looked on in amusement. Browne backed away. He felt that his dignity was suffering a severe jolt. At last Miss Bond desisted, but apparently she wasn't yet satisfied.

"There!" she panted. "And now I shall have you drastically punished by your headmaster!"

"Would it not be a pity?" asked Browne, still unruffled in spite of his recent lamming. "If I am punished by the authorities, Miss Bond, considerable numbers of Remove stalwarts will also be dragged into the inquiry with me. Cannot you imagine the publicity. And do you really think that publicity is desirable in this affair?"

Miss Bond saw the point.

(Concluded on page 41.)



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.



KENNETT EDWARDS.

YES—H. Eastmond (Bideford)—the Hon. Aubrey de Vere Wellborne is still at the River House School. Because the River House fellows haven't been featured lately, you mustn't think that they have passed out of existence. They're still there, just as lively and as active as ever, and the Hon. Aubrey, I believe, is still getting up to his old tricks.

* * *

There can be no doubt—Frederick T. Hill (Portsmouth)—that football is more popular in the football season than cricket—I mean with regard to my stories. So your criticism, that I have turned things topsy turvy this year, would be reasonable but for the fact that the Test Matches took place. And I really do think that this winter the interest of readers in general has been more greatly in favour of cricket than of football. Your photograph will appear in due course; but don't forget that lots of others were in before yours.

* * *

Thanks muchly for your kind words—Gordon H. Sewell (Southampton)—regarding my stories. In referring to the recent Australian series, you say: "The young South Africans and Australians and New Zealanders who read them will better understand their English cousins, and we chaps at home can become better acquainted with the people and lands of the Empire in a way which would be impossible by text book or lecture." If this is really the case, I am much gratified. No, Gordon, I was never exactly a journalist. The first thing I ever wrote was an adventure story—called, I believe, "The Treasure of the Barnabys"—which, needless to say, never saw print, being horribly crude, and, in fact, too awful for words.

* * *

Clarence Fellowe is still at St. Frank's—Harold Britton (Nottingham)—but it takes such a long time to record his poetic styles of delivery that I'm afraid I've neglected him. Whenever you read of a big meeting

of Removites, Clarence is always there, even if he isn't particularly mentioned. You complain about the rotters not being "rotterish" enough, but in the recent series I think you'll have to admit that Gore-Pearce has proved himself to be a thorough bad lot. It's a jolly lucky thing for him that he wasn't sacked. You've naturally missed the Moor View girls a lot this year because they weren't on the Australian trip, but they'll appear pretty regularly on the whole.

* * *

While not being rash enough—R. W. Moore (Billericay)—to commit myself to an opinion upon which game is the better, Soccer or Rugger, I certainly think that Soccer will always be the most popular game with the general public. That's why the St. Frank's fellows play Soccer. Just a case of the majority again, old man.

* * *

The empty Remove study—Gwendoline Norman (Dalston)—is Study T, in the West House. All the Ancient House Junior studies are occupied. But Studies 9 and 10 in the Modern House, and Studies 18, 19 and 20 in the East House, are still empty. Plenty of room for new fellows, you see.

* * *

This week's photo is of Kennett Edwards (Muswell Hill). Sorry there isn't room for a few words to you, Kennett, old man; but if you write to me again, and raise some interesting point, I shall be able to do you more justice.

HERE'S ANOTHER SMASHING INSTALMENT OF E. S. BROOKS' FINE SERIAL, CHUMS!

RIVALS OF THE BLUE CRUSADERS!



by
EDWY
SEARLES
BROOKS.



The outcast of Bannington. Scorned by everybody except Fatty Fowkes. Chucked out of the Blues; barred from track-racing any more! That's Rex Carrington, and he's got Burke to thank for this pile of trouble!

Up Against It!

FATTY glared at Mr. Piecombe with fierce resentment.

"Isn't it a bit thick, sir?" he demanded. "Hang it, you might at least give the chap a chance to explain! No need to turn him away from the club because of the yarns you've been hearing!"

"Unfortunately, Fowkes, I have heard more than—er—yarns," said Mr. Piecombe. "It may interest you to know that Mr. Harding has telephoned me, and warned me that

"Harding's blind!" interrupted Fatty hotly. "Dave's blind! You're all blind! Rex has given his explanation, and I believe it. There was a plot against him, and he isn't guilty. You can't turn him away like this, sir. At least, give him until to-morrow to find some lodgings."

Mr. Piecombe stiffened.

"I shall do nothing of the sort," he snapped. "Whilst I admire your loyalty, Fowkes, I deplore that you should be so grossly deceived. I tell you, I won't have this man on these premises again. Carrington, the sooner you go, the better."

"I'm going, sir," muttered Rex. "I don't want to be the cause of trouble."

"By glory!" shouted Fatty. "If you go, I'll go!"

"Look here——"

"And Mr. Piecombe can find another goalie!" went on Fatty, his voice rising to an indignant roar. "Come on! We'll see this thing through together, Rex."

Mr. Piecombe started so violently that his glasses leapt from his nose.

"Fowkes!" he ejaculated, aghast.

"Come on, Rex!" said Fatty, seizing Rex's arm.

"Stop! How dare you, Fowkes!" boomed Mr. Piecombe. "Good heavens! Isn't it enough for the club to be in trouble owing to Carrington's folly? Do you want to make our position more hopeless? This is outrageous!"

"I can't help it, sir," snorted Fatty. "I'm standing by my pal, and even the club is of less importance!"

"It isn't, old man," urged Rex earnestly. "You don't know how I appreciate all this, but—but please don't upset Mr. Piecombe any more. Don't desert the club, old man. You're badly wanted."

Fatty took a deep breath.

"We'll sink or swim together!" he said stubbornly.

"No," replied Rex. "There's no need for two of us to sink. You must think of the Blues, Fatty. They come first—always."

"Indeed!" cut in Mr. Piecombe. "Since when have you had this remarkable opinion, Carrington?"

"Since I have been a mug, sir," replied Rex bitterly. "I've caused enough trouble, without making things a lot worse. Fatty, old man, do be sensible. I shall be all right. Can't you see that you'll make me miserable if you insist upon breaking away? The old club needs you."

"All right—I suppose you're right," muttered Fatty. "But let me know your lodgings to-morrow. I want to keep in touch with you!"

"If you are sensible, Carrington—which I

doubt—you will obtain lodgings in London!" said Mr. Piecombe tartly. "Or Manchester—or Sheffield! As far away from Bannington as possible!"

Rex's eyes flashed.

"You can turn me out of the club, sir, but you can't turn me out of Bannington!" he said. "I'll choose my own lodgings, if you don't mind. Good-night, Fatty."

He nodded, and strode off. Fatty Fowkes made as if to move after him, but he checked, and turned on Mr. Piecombe with such a menacing movement that the manager took a step backwards.

"I hope you're feeling pleased with yourself, sir," said Fatty fiercely.

"Really, Fowkes—"

"It's a rotten trick!" said the big goalie, his voice hot with indignation. "Turning a chap away at this time of night! Couldn't you have given him until to-morrow, so that he could collect his things? And what about the roughs? After what happened at the Speedway, lots of them are waiting for Rex, and they might half-kill him!"

"If Carrington is half killed, it will be entirely his own fault," retorted Mr. Piecombe. "He acted with criminal brutality on the race track, and he must—er—be prepared to take the consequences. I am ashamed of him."

"And I'm ashamed of you," declared Fatty.

"How dare you, Fowkes! Really, I must protest—"

"So I am, sir!" said Fatty stubbornly.

"You might have given the chap a chance. As for all the other Blues, they're just as bad as you are. One day you'll be sorry for this."

"I forgive you, Fowkes, and I shall allow this matter to drop," said Mr. Piecombe

quietly. "You are obviously—er—excited. To-morrow, perhaps, you will see things in their correct light. Carrington is so obviously guilty that I marvel at your misplaced faith. In no circumstances could I allow him to re-enter these premises. I'm more disgusted with him than I can say."

And Mr. Piecombe went in, leaving Fatty to follow a minute later.

Rex, in the meantime, was wandering off, strangely calm. It hadn't surprised him to find that he was barred from the Stronghold. It was, in fact, just what he might have expected.

Rex remained level-headed. He tried to look at the affair from the others' point of view, and he could see that the evidence against him was overwhelming. They weren't to be blamed for condemning him. And he was absolutely convinced that Peter Burke was the culprit.

Somehow, Burke had wangled that substitution.

Rex wandered about idly, little realising that he was in some personal danger. The townspeople were in an ugly mood—particularly the rougher element. All those who had seen that race were furious. No. 1—presumably Rex—had ridden so dangerously that he might easily have killed two of the other competitors, and the crowd could not forget that it had been robbed of its victim.

Fortunately for Rex, the hour was now late, and the streets were practically empty. It was so dark, too, that there was little chance of his being recognised.

"Oh, well, I suppose I deserve it," he muttered, with a sigh. "I'm in the cart properly now! No more racing—and I'm barred from the Denton City match on Saturday! I'm finished! Nearly broke, too," he added bitterly.

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 his plans, Burke has thought of a scheme which will mean the complete ruin of Rex. The ex-track manager has arranged for somebody to ride under Rex's name at the Speedway, and this man races in such a foul and dangerous fashion that he earns for himself—or for Rex—the hatred of the crowd. Thus Rex, his protests of innocence unheeded, finds himself an outcast. Everybody shuns him—except Fatty Fowkes—while Piecan provides the final shock by telling him that he has been kicked out of the *Blue Crusaders Football Club*!

(Now read on.)



A roar of indignation went up from the crowd as they recognised Rex Carrington. Men pressed round him menacingly and he was hustled off the pavement. "The road's good enough for you!" said one man contemptuously.

He walked on more disconsolately than ever.

"But I hate the idea of clearing out—of bolting!" he muttered. "I didn't do the thing, and if I left Bannington I should practically confess that I did! Yet what's the good of staying? There's no hope unless—unless—"

A keen light came into his eyes—totally different from the hopeless expression which had previously been there.

"Unless I can manage to get hold of Burke and trip him up!" he went on fiercely. "By Jove! It's the only chance! There's Hankin, too! I'm only suspicious of Burke—but I know that Hankin was mixed in it."

He felt better now that he had taken on this line of thought. What was the good of taking things for granted. Sitting down and remaining idle would get him nowhere.

"I've got to think of Harding, too," he told himself. "Harding will suffer over this. If I can clear my own name, I shall clear Harding at the same time. And I shall be able to get back into the Blues, too. I'm not going to admit that I'm whacked!"

The Rising Storm!

"YE gods and little fishes!"

Rex Carrington muttered the startled exclamation as he looked at the "Bannington Gazette," which he had found on the breakfast-table, next morning. He had obtained lodgings overnight without much difficulty. There

was a kindly old lady who kept a little tobacconist's not far from the stronghold. Rex often patronised the little shop; and, seeing a light in the window next to the shop, he ventured to knock at the door.

The good lady had heard a few rumours, but she liked Rex, and she was inclined to rely on her own judgment first. Without hesitation, she had welcomed him in, and had provided him with a room.

Rex was grateful. He felt that while there were good souls like Fatty and this old lady, he needn't be so downhearted. And now, this morning, he was able to appreciate the extent of the storm that was rising in the town.

The "Gazette" had some startling headlines:

"DISGRACEFUL SCENE AT SPEEDWAY LAST NIGHT.

EX-FOOTBALLER'S MAD RIDE.

SHOULD THIS DANGEROUS RIDING BE PERMITTED?

GROWING PUBLIC INDIGNATION."

"It's a wonder to me they don't arrest me!" muttered Rex.

He went hot all over as he read the reports. The entire front page was devoted to the previous evening's excitement. The "Gazette" reporters had not stinted themselves. Rex was condemned wholeheartedly and overwhelmingly. Even Mr. Harding

was involved. The newspaper took the attitude that such dangerous riding would not be allowed on a properly-conducted dirt-track. It was the fault of the management as much as the rider. The Speedway was condemned. The newspaper asked if it wasn't time that the place should be publicly banned.

"Tough on old Harding," said Rex, as he put the paper aside. "By gosh, I'm more certain than ever that Burke's mixed up in it! He's killed two birds with one stone—he's finished me, and he's ruined Harding."

After breakfast he went out. He had a vague idea of going to a telephone and ringing up Fatty, to tell him where he was lodging. But he soon forgot his objective. He hadn't been in the street long before people recognised him, and he was rather startled to find that a crowd was gathering. He heard all sorts of comments—loudly uttered so that they should reach his ears.

"Ought to be put in gaol!"

"A horsewhipping would be better for the likes of him!"

"It's a wonder he dares to show himself!"

Rex knew that these remarks were intended for his ears, and at first he fired up and turned on his tormentors.

"You're all wrong!" he said hotly. "It wasn't me. I didn't—"

Of course, he was not allowed to continue. No sooner did he open his mouth than a roar of indignation went up. Men pressed round him menacingly, and he was hustled off the pavement.

"The road's good enough for you!" said one man contemptuously.

Rex managed to get away, only to find that a gang of boys had followed him up and these were hooting and jeering at him, while now and again stones were thrown. It was fortunate for Rex that the roads were of asphalt and scarcely any stones were available.

In the High Street he found himself more or less secure. There was plenty of traffic here, and police, too. The urchins were dispersed. But Rex still found that all the decent townspeople were recognising him. They were staring at him openly, with scorn and anger in their eyes. It hurt him, particularly when practically all the girls he met turned away at his approach, and either crossed the road or made some other deliberate movement to avoid him.

Rex was a well-known figure in Bannington. Everybody was familiar with his tall, well-built frame and his handsome face. He had always been particularly popular with the feminine football fans. Now they ignored him completely.

On all sides he heard the same sort of comment. The Speedway was condemned; it should be closed. The unfortunate Mr. Harding was blamed and fiercely criticised.

"What's a fellow to do?" muttered Rex miserably. "I dare say old Piecan was right.

I'd better clear out of the town altogether. What can I do against this sort of thing?"

He drifted into a tobacconist's.

"You get out of this shop!" roared the man behind the counter, when he saw whom his customer was. "I don't want your sort in here. Go somewhere else for your cigarettes."

Rex started.

"But my money's as good as anybody else's!" he protesting, flushing.

"Get out!" repeated the owner. "I'm not obliged to serve you."

Rex walked out, quivering. Things were much worse than he had believed. He began to feel helpless—hounded. He even made a move towards the railway-station.

But before he got halfway there he stubbornly checked. No; he wasn't going to run away. That would be the very thing to stamp him as definitely guilty. He had done nothing wrong, and he wasn't going to bolt.

He decided that he would ring up Fatty. He wanted to talk to him. Perhaps the sixteen-stone goalie would be able to give him some good advice. He noticed a sign—"You May Telephone From Here." He went into the shop—a chemist's. The man behind the counter flared up as he recognised the customer.

"You're Carrington, aren't you?" he demanded.

"What of it?"

"I don't want you in my shop—that's what of it!" said the chemist.

"I've come in to use the telephone!" said Rex, with set teeth.

"Well, you can't use it here. I don't want you in this shop," said the other. "A man like you ought to be hounded out of the town, and I don't mind telling you so to your face."

Without a word Rex turned on his heel and strode out. He was rather pale now, and his powers of resistance were weakening. Once again he turned towards the station. But this time he saw the post-office. There were plenty of telephones there. They couldn't turn him out of the post-office. He went in truculently and jerked open the door of the first telephone-booth, for there were several of them all in a row. He went in, half expecting that somebody would try to pull him out. But this didn't happen.

He gave his number, inserted the two necessary pennies, and a moment later he heard Mr. Piecombe's voice.

"I want to speak to Fowkes, please," said Rex.

"Indeed!" came Mr. Piecombe's acid tones.

"You are Carrington, are you not?"

"Yes."

"I marvel at your audacity, Carrington!" snapped Mr. Piecombe. "You had better not ring up again."

"But look here—"

Rex paused as the line became dead. Mr. Piecombe had hung up. This was getting

into a nightmare. Rex stood quite still for a few moments, wondering what he should do. Then he suddenly started. Fate had decided what he should do.

Somebody was in the next telephone-booth, and Rex could see him clearly through the glass. He recognised the figure of Curly Hankin!

Rex on the Warpath!

CURLY HANKIN swung round as the door of his box was opened.

"Yes, that's right," he was saying. "Five shillings each way on— Here, what the— Gosh!"

"I want you, Hankin!" said Rex Carrington grimly.

"Confound your rotten nerve!" snapped Curly, trying to fight down his alarm. "Can't you see that I'm using the 'phone?"

Rex reached forward, tore the receiver from Curly's hand, and hung it on its hook. Then he linked his arm through that of the rascally Blues' reserve.

"Come on, Curly," he said ominously. "We're going to have a heart-to-heart talk, and the less trouble you make, the better."

"Let me go!" panted Hankin. "You're not wanted in Bannington. Everybody's saying that you ought to be kicked out!"

"Never mind what everybody's saying," replied Rex. "Listen to what I'm saying. If you attempt to get away or if you shout for help I'll knock you clean out, Hankin. Understand? I'm in a mood for mischief. I'll give you such a knock that you won't wake up until this time next week."

"I'll come!" muttered Curly, with a gulp.

He knew Rex Carrington's reckless nature, and something told him that Rex had never been more determined than he was now. Curly knew that he would be unconscious in all truth if he goaded this desperate companion of his. Far better to humour him.

They went out of the post-office into the High Street. People stared at them. Perhaps it was wondered why anybody should be so friendly with the outcast. For they were pacing along with linked arms, and Curly was acutely aware of his unfortunate position. But Rex took no notice of anybody. He forced Hankin along, and did not utter a word of any kind until they reached that little tobacconist's shop where he was staying.

"I've brought somebody with me, Mrs. Wilkins," said Rex steadily. "You don't mind if I take him up to the bed-room, do you?"

"Not at all, Mr. Carrington," said the old lady.

"Look here—" began Curly in dire alarm.

"This way!" said Rex, tightening his grip.

(Good old Rex! He's been waiting for a chance to get hold of the rascally Curly Hankin, and now that he's got him you can bet he won't stand any nonsense. Curly's booked for a hot time, and next week's stunning instalment tells you what happens!)

MUTINY!

(Continued from page 35.)

"No, no!" she said hastily. "Let there be no publicity—no scandal!"

"Madam, if you will grant your forgiveness to me and conveniently forget the whole incident, no harm will be done," said Browne, beaming. "I also urge you to take your girls back, and to make no further mention of the little rebellion. You will agree that there was some justification for that. Hunger is a driving force. I would mention that Dr. Huxley Crane himself is under the curious impression that he is not due at your school until next Monday."

"I have no doubt that you gave him that curious impression," said Miss Bond, with a snort.

"I regard your conduct as reprehensible in the extreme. You should be ashamed of yourself, sir! How dare you play these absurd practical jokes!"

BUT five minutes later Miss Charlotte Bond was actually smiling. William Napoleon Browne had won again. His magnetic influence had won her over. In fact, he persuaded her to see the humour of the situation, and although she didn't like to admit it, she realised that her girls had been more or less justified in their brief mutiny.

At all events, no more was heard of it. Miss Bond was only too anxious to let the whole matter drop. Browne had smoothed the troubled waters in his own inimitable way.

THE END.

(Jolly fine yarn that, ch, chums? Next week Edwy Searles Brooks has written another corker, entitled, "The St. Frank's Menagerie!" in which Willy Handforth and his chums of the Third Form play a prominent part. If you miss reading this grand yarn you'll miss a treat!)



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Three Cheers For Cricket!

HURRAH! Once more King Cricket is with us. Good old football has had its long run of many months; is now on its last legs; and into the arena comes cricket. Mention of cricket always brings the same vivid picture into my mind's eye. I see white-flannelled figures against a background of green turf, with overhead the sun shining in all its glory from a turquoise sky. Yes, I always associate that entrancing picture with cricket—in spite of the many occasions on which I have been disappointed with the actuality!

But never mind. Cricket is with us; the summer is coming. Those two go together, and that's why we welcome them with open arms. Once again—hurrah!

Nipper and his cheery chums of St. Frank's, especially, are looking forward to cricket this season. They had plenty of practice during their recent world trip, and now they're feeling in fine fettle. Also there's "Boomerang" Bangs, the Australian junior. This new addition to the Remove is hot stuff at cricket—by Jove, can't he send 'em down!—and he's going to be a great acquisition to the junior eleven.

A New Series on the Way!

At this juncture I have an announcement to make. It concerns a new series of yarns, featuring the Boys of St. Frank's, which will be starting within a few weeks' time. The idea behind this series of stories is an unique one, a startling one, and one which will be hailed with delight by readers all over the country. Cricket will play a prominent part in these stories—the St. Frank's eleven is going to perform doughty deeds of valour—and also—but that is all I intend to say at the moment. Keep your eyes open for more details of this amazing new series in next week's issue, chums!

Also a New Serial!

Last week I mentioned in these columns that I already had in hand a new serial to follow on after "Rivals of the Blue Crusa-

ders," which will shortly be ending. I further intimated that I would give you a few details concerning same this week.

This yarn is about the Navy; or, at least, about a naval training school. The author is Stanton Hope, an old favourite amongst boys, and one who has penned many popular and successful tales in the past. In writing about the Navy, Mr. Hope is always at his best, for he himself has been in the Navy, and knows all there is to know about it. Let me add that his latest story, which has been specially written for the NELSON LEE, is the real "goods," and a worthy successor to our present serial.

Look out for full particulars of this magnificent new story next Wednesday.

THE EDITOR.

CORRESPONDENTS WANTED.

Ernest Adamberry, 23, Flat Bastion Road, Gibraltar, has back numbers of the NELSON LEE for sale.

Harry Rudd, 12, Workhouse Lane, West Bromwich, wants Australian correspondents.

C. H. Gosling, 82, Bloy Street, Easton, Bristol, wants members for his club.

V. G. B. Hill, Burrington, King's Road, High Barnet, Herts., would like to hear from readers; also wants back numbers of the NELSON LEE.

Norman Winston, 367, Bury New Road, Hr. Broughton, Manchester, wants correspondents in Paris.

Syd G. S. Thornton, Box 155, Longreach, Queensland, Australia, wants to hear from members of the Austworld C.C., as his register of names has been destroyed.

Bill Davies, 10, Gaol Reserve, Adelaide, S. Australia, wants to hear from readers in London and America.

H. Sykes, 8, East Street, Batley, Yorks., would like to correspond with readers anywhere.

S. Dyer, 5, Melville St. Jeppes Extension, Johannesburg, Transvaal, S. Africa, wants correspondents anywhere.

CORRESPONDENTS WANTED

(Continued from previous page.)

Miss Gwendoline Jacobs, 51, St. Albans Road, Watford, Herts, wants girl correspondents; ages 14-16. Readers in Australia and Africa especially.

Bert Longstaff, 13, Vivian Street, Wellington, New Zealand, wants correspondents in India, Straits Settlements, and Ceylon.

Peter Coppenhall, 6, New Street, Congleton, Cheshire, offers NELSON LEES, new series, Nos. 25, 26, 31, 41-48, 55-125.

Miss Betty Coad, Royal Street, Hayle, Cornwall, wants NELSON LEES, old series, Nos. 23, 25, 27, 561.

Solomon Arkin, 55, Mount Street, Cape Town, South Africa, wants correspondents in Europe, especially stamp and postcard collectors.

L. Coffey, 5, Ingrave Road, wants correspondents.
J. Kelly, 14, Kelburns, North, S.E. 7, Melbourne, wants correspondents interested in the world, and motor-cycling.

Frederick Williams, Jun., 3, Casine Avenue, Herne Hill, London, S.E., wants a correspondent in Australia.

Miss Sheila Creed, Post Office, Lordship Lane, Wood Green, London, N. 22, wants to hear from girl readers anywhere, especially abroad.

E. O. Hammond, P.O. Box 48, Accra, Gold Coast, wishes to hear from readers.

Sidney Smith, 63, Moorside Road, Heaton Moor, Stockport, wants to hear from readers who collect stamps or who have NELSON LEES for sale containing the "Deluge at St. Frank's" series.

Kevin McMahon, 24, Murphy Street, Richmond, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, wants correspondents.

D. Grogan, 38, Dresden Road, Highgate, London, N. 19, wants to hear from readers.



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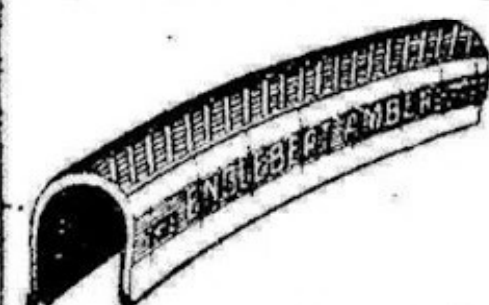
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