

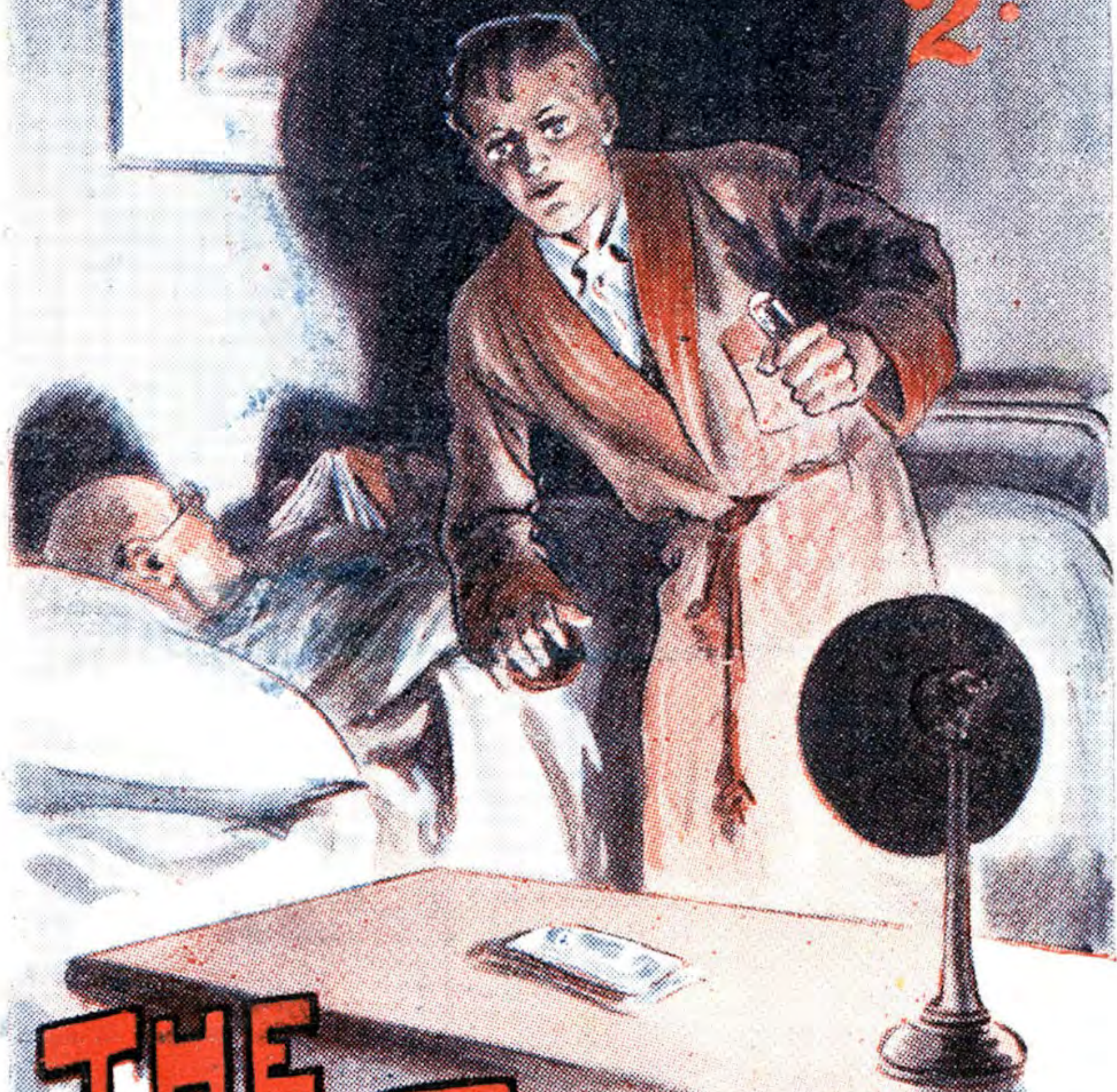
THRILLS GALORE

in the sensational
school tale within!

THE NELSON LEE

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THE THIEF!

Meet Nipper and Co., the famous chums of St. Frank's, in this long complete yarn of schoolboy adventure.

New Series No. 182.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

October 26th, 1929.

YOU'LL ENJOY EVERY CHAPTER—

THE THIEF !

Bernard Forrest and his companions stared at the window in startled amazement. For standing there was a cloaked individual, and in his hands was a camera.



By
EDWY
SEARLES
BROOKS.

Regarded as a hero by the Junior School, Bernard Forrest serenely continues to bask in his popularity. Yet all the time he is scheming, scheming—unaware that at the same time his enemy, Claude Gore-Pearce, is plotting to bring about his downfall.

CHAPTER 1.

The Fraud!

“COMING to tea in our study this evening, Forrest?” asked Harry Gresham genially.

Bernard Forrest smilingly shook his head.

“Thanks all the same, old man, but I’m booked up,” he said. “I’d be awfully pleased otherwise.”

“He’s tea-ing with us,” said Somerton, of Study G. “You fellows had better clear off! We’re not going to have you bagging our guest of honour.”

Gresham laughed.

“All right!” he said. “Keep your hair on! We’ll have Forrest another day.”

The juniors drifted apart, and the lobby of the Ancient House at St. Frank’s became empty for a while. Empty, that is, except for the solitary figure of Claude Gore-Pearce. Gore-Pearce stood there, outwardly cool, but inwardly burning with hatred against Bernard Forrest.

What a fraud the fellow was!

This sort of thing was going on continually nowadays. Juniors were asking Forrest to tea, making a fuss of him, taking him out on visits, and showing him all the friendliness possible.

—OF THIS STUNNING SCHOOL YARN, CHUMS!

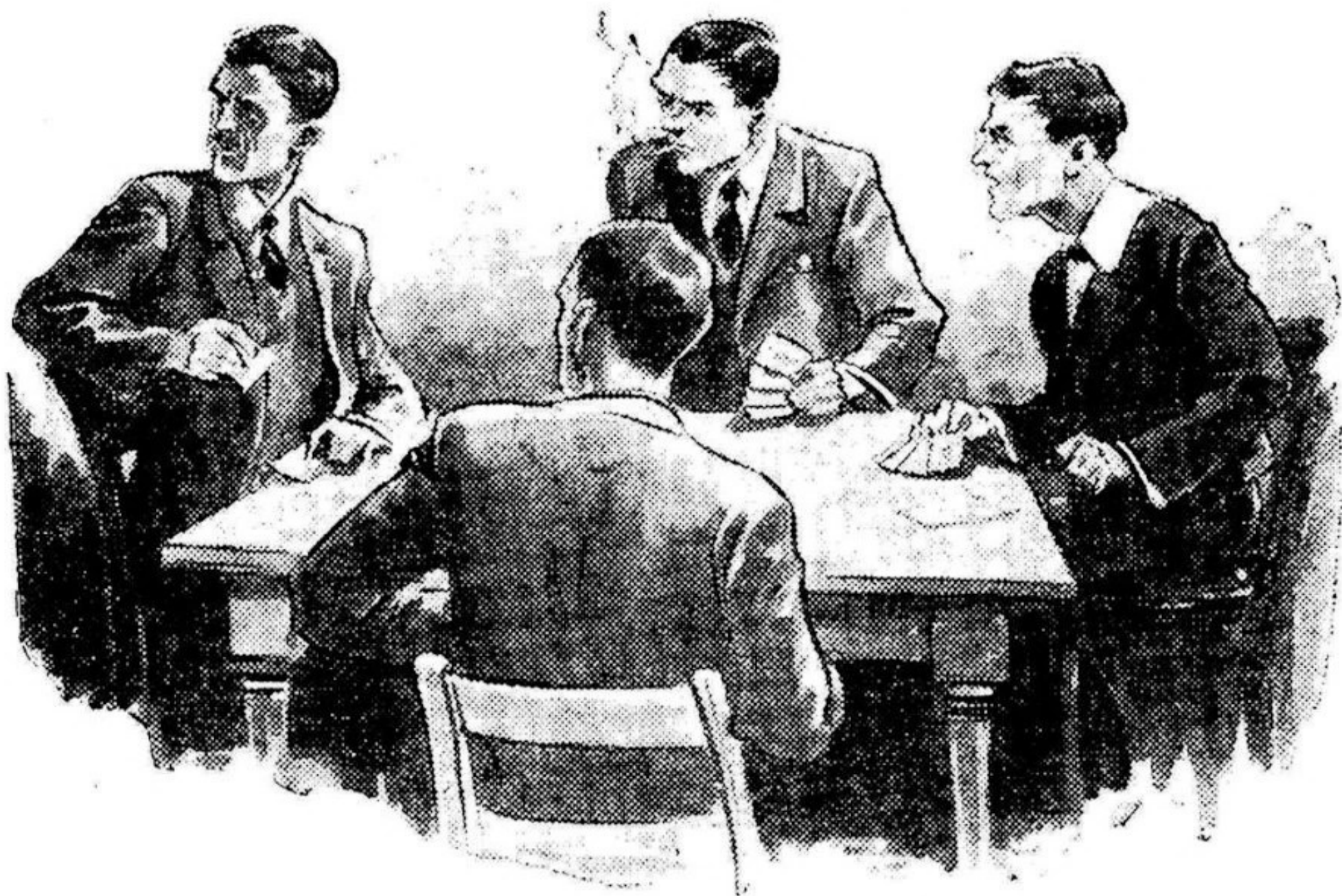
To Gore-Pearce it was incredible; it was well-nigh unbelievable. Forrest, the outsider, the cad, the trickster! And nobody could see through him—nobody could guess that he was laughing up his sleeve all the time, inwardly contemptuous of their friendly advances.

Edward Oswald Handforth, the volcanic leader of Study D, was perhaps different from the ordinary ruck of fellows. He wouldn't have anything to do with Forrest; he regarded Forrest with open suspicion. Not that Forrest took the slightest notice.

There was Nipper, too—Dick Hamilton, the shrewd, popular captain of the Remove. Nipper was rather cool towards Forrest. Perhaps he had the same suspicions as Handforth, but Nipper was more able to contain his feelings. Handforth was always blunt and blundering.

It was a fact that Bernard Forrest, once the despised, was now on the crest of a great popularity. The fact that he had been expelled from St. Frank's in disgrace was forgotten. The juniors even overlooked the fact that Forrest had been actually drummed out by his own Form-fellows. He was back again now, having been re-admitted to the school by special arrangement. He had performed some heroic act before the eyes of the headmaster himself, and Dr. Nicholls had found it in his heart to overlook the old misbehaviour, and to give Forrest another chance.

The leader of Study A had been sacked by a former headmaster—by Dr. Malcolm Stafford, now retired. Little did the present Head guess that that heroic rescue stunt of Forrest's had been a carefully put-up job, performed expressly for his benefit. And



Dr. Nicholls would indeed have been amazed had he known that Forrest's father had had a hand in that unscrupulous business.

Like father, like son. Forrest, senior, was a hard-fisted business man. It was his boast that he had never been beaten, and he had hated the idea of his son being thrown out of a famous school like St. Frank's. It was a sort of challenge, and Mr. Forrest had taken it up. And so, by hook or by crook, he had got Bernard back into the school.

AND now Bernard was consolidating his position. At first he had had an uphill fight. Everybody had been suspicious of him; everybody had taken it for granted that he would be the same old Forrest. He was. As Handforth had frequently remarked, the leopard could not change his spots. But Forrest was cunning, and he was clever. In fact, he was dangerously clever.

His aim was to gain such popularity in the Remove that he would ultimately oust Nipper from the captaincy. He knew that pitchfork methods would be useless. So he was going to work deliberately, insidiously. Already, he had performed many despicable, underhand tricks; but they had been performed in secret. The rank and file of the St.

Frank's fellows believed him to be a changed character.

And, certainly, his general conduct was sufficient to delude anybody. He had given up all his old bad habits, and he was even influencing Gulliver and Bell to behave more decently. He had had his lesson, and he had profited by it. He no longer smoked, he regarded betting as folly. He was wholeheartedly interested in football, and, indeed, played a great game. He was a good fellow generally, standing treat in the school shop to all and sundry. He always had a cheery word, and in the Common-room, of an evening, he would join in a game of chess with such heartiness that it was impossible to realise that he hated chess.

It was all a pose—even including the football. In Forrest's opinion, football was a rotten game. But he played it well because it suited his purpose to play it well. It was essential that he should play it well. It was one of the main ladders up which he was climbing to popularity. He had known this even before he had come back to St. Frank's, and he had practised football diligently and earnestly.

Forrest was a boy of such strong character that he could force himself to do these things that he hated. He was capable—brilliant, even. It was a pity that such cleverness as his should be directed along evil channels. For they were evil—wholly and thoroughly. He was even more contemptible and despicable than he had been in the old days. Then he had been brazen about it; he had even boasted of his "sportiness." Now he was living a lie; he was pretending to be something that he wasn't.

BUT Forrest was making one mistake. Clever as he was, he totally underestimated the menace of Claude Gore-Pearce. He did not realise that Gore-Pearce could really be dangerous.

There was a good and sufficient reason for Gore-Pearce's hostility. This junior—the pampered son of a millionaire—had been the acknowledged leader of Study A after Forrest's expulsion. Just prior to Forrest's return, however, Gulliver and Bell had pitched him out. They had picked a quarrel with him, and had kicked him out, neck and crop. Now Forrest was back, whilst Gore-Pearce had had to seek shelter in Study B, with two miserable nonentities like Hubbard and Long.

It was natural enough that Gore-Pearce should hate Forrest. But there were other reasons.

Quite recently Gore-Pearce had been in trouble with a bookmaker, and this man had written to Gore-Pearce senior—with the result that Gore-Pearce senior had descended upon St. Frank's, and had given Claude a thrashing.

No doubt Claude had deserved a thrashing, but his father had gone beyond all bounds of reason. As a final blow, he had deprived Claude of his pocket-money, re-

ducing him to an absurd half-crown a week for the remainder of the term.

Gore-Pearce, the son of a millionaire, with half-a-crown a week! And hitherto he had never been short of a fiver!

Just at this juncture Claude had discovered Forrest's deception; he had found him out to be what he was. To his everlasting shame, he had then acted the part of a blackmailer. Forrest had been compelled to hand over ten pounds for Claude's silence, and Claude had felt himself on velvet for the rest of the term.

But Forrest, like the clever fellow he was, had suddenly jibbed. He had robbed Gore-Pearce of his power by openly telling a whole crowd of Removites the truth. Yet so cunningly did Forrest do this that only Gore-Pearce knew it to be the truth. The others thought it was a pack of lies, invented by Gore-Pearce in order to squeeze money out of his victim. The trouble was, Claude had no concrete evidence to offer; there was only his bare word.

And this was insufficient. Gore-Pearce was now more or less ignored. Hardly anybody spoke to him. And as he was continually broke, his position was even more hopeless.

But Gore-Pearce was not such a weakling as Forrest believed.

Even now, when he seemed utterly down and out, he was patiently waiting. Sooner or later, he believed, he would be able to obtain that concrete evidence he needed. Then—and how Gore-Pearce dreamed of the hour!—he would expose Forrest to the whole school. It would be his hour of triumph.

He didn't care so much about giving Forrest away to "the beaks"—in other words, the authorities. He wasn't interested in that aspect of the thing at all. He wanted to "square" himself with the Remove. They had practically sent him to Coventry because of his alleged lies. Perhaps they would believe him when he could produce that evidence! He longed for the day when he would be able to triumph over his enemy, and to see him humbled into the dust.

So fiercely had this desire gripped him that it overshadowed every other aspect of his life. He was looking haggard because of sleepless nights. He knew—he positively knew—that Bernard Forrest was still living his old life—still breaking bounds and playing the part of the rake. If only he could catch him red-handed!

And Forrest, secure in his new popularity—certain that he was unsuspected—went on his way sublimely and serenely. Little did he realise that Claude Gore-Pearce was watching him, not only by day, but by night, too!

IT was a fact. For practically a week, now, Gore-Pearce had sat up after lights-out. He had made a practice of waiting until Hubbard and Long were asleep, and then he would creep out of bed, dress himself, and steal out of the dormitory. There, in the passage, he would wait, concealed in a recess.

Every night he waited until one a.m.—watching Forrest's bed-room, which Forrest shared with Gulliver and Bell. One night Forrest would come out, bent upon a night jaunt. Claude was expecting and longing for that night. He had made his preparations—he had his plans all cut and dried.

The fact that he was thus losing precious hours of sleep did not worry Gore-Pearce. Hardly ever did he slumber until one-thirty

and the half-hour now boomed out. Gore-Pearce sat there, patient and grim. He was heavy and sleepy, but his desire for revenge kept him awake. Suddenly he heard a sound, and when he peeped round the corner of the recess he saw the door of Forrest's dormitory quietly opening!

CHAPTER 2.

The Figure
in Black!

WHO'S WHO AT ST. FRANK'S.



SIMON KENMORE.

An East House prefect, and not a very popular one with the juniors. At one time an out-and-out rotter, he reformed to an extent, but is now resuming some of his former bad habits.

or two a.m., with the result that every morning he awoke heavy and leaden. He was growing more and more listless in the class-room, and he was getting into trouble with Mr. Crowell. Not that Gore-Pearce cared. He might as well stay in his study writing impositions and doing extra work, as anything else. He had no money, so he couldn't go out anywhere or do anything.

There was something else, too. He hadn't forgotten that Bernard Forrest was still a possible source of income. Once he obtained that evidence, there was no reason why he should expose Forrest on the spot. It would be pleasant—exceedingly pleasant—to play with his victim for a bit. This thought gave him many moments of joy. How he would play with Forrest! He could get money out of him, too—money that he so badly needed. Already the other fellows were beginning to ask him why he was so close and mean nowadays. There had been many arguments with Hubbard and Long over it, and Gore-Pearce was beginning to get desperate.

AND then, one night, his patience was rewarded.

As usual, he was waiting in that recess. Eleven o'clock had struck,

this was all the better. It was Forrest that Gore-Pearce wanted to trap.

As soon as Forrest had passed out of sight down the stairs, Gore-Pearce became active. He knew it was up to him to be cautious. Forrest, naturally, would be very much on the alert. He would be listening for any slight sounds, and he would take the alarm at once if he heard anything suspicious.

GORE-PEARCE expected to see three figures emerge from that bed-room. He saw only one. Then the door closed as stealthily as it had opened. The figure crept along the corridor, and the hidden watcher could tell that the other was in his stockinged feet.

He came past so closely that Gore-Pearce could have touched him, and in spite of the gloom Claude could just detect that the marauder was Bernard Forrest. Forrest was fully dressed, except for his shoes, which he carried in his hand. He passed to the end of the corridor, and went downstairs. There was little doubt that he was going out "on the spree," but he had elected to go alone. Gulliver and Bell probably knew nothing. They had been left in bed, asleep.

Well, perhaps

However, Claude was prepared for this. He had made his plans very carefully in advance, and had been ready for days.

It was a fairly safe assumption on his part that Forrest would go to some shady resort—probably the White Harp, in Bellton, or to some tavern in Bannington. Forrest had a partiality for such resorts.

Gore-Pearce padded silently to the head of the stairs, and he stood there listening. In one hand he carried his own shoes, and in the other hand he had a medium-sized attache-case. With his ears on the alert, he heard the vague, faint sound of a door closing; and from its direction he gathered that Forrest had gone into Study A.

"Taking the usual route out," muttered Gore-Pearce. "The window, and then through West Square."

He now acted with great speed. He had thought it all out in advance. Everything was going exactly as he had anticipated.

He sped into an empty room, fairly close at hand. It was a sort of store-room at present, although at one time it had been a bed-room. The window was unfastened, and Claude quietly opened it.

He was just in time.

The window looked out upon a corner of the West Square, and, gazing down, Gore-Pearce caught sight of a black, indistinct figure emerging from one of the lower windows farther along. It was Forrest.

The figure vanished round the angle of the building—at the very back. Claude now found it necessary to make haste. There was no time for him to go downstairs and to get out by the ordinary methods. If he did so he would lose his quarry.

He pulled the heavy curtain aside, and threw a thick rope out of the window—a rope with heavy knots all the way down, about a foot apart. This had been in readiness for days.

It was only the work of a few moments for Claude to swarm down that rope, the attache-case in one hand and his shoes slung round his neck.

Without taking the trouble to don his shoes, he ran to the end of the Ancient House. He breathed a great sigh of relief, for he was just in time to see Forrest climbing the gate which led into the little private lane. With his heart thumping rapidly, Claude halted, watching. Rather to his surprise, Forrest did not turn down the lane, but climbed another gate which gave on to Little Side.

Gore-Pearce waited until Forrest had got well on his way, and then he took up the chase.

He paused for only a moment to put on his shoes, and he caught sight of Forrest at the other end of Little Side, obviously making in the direction of the lane which wound its way through the meadows and fields farther on.

Claude was puzzled now—and not a little worried. What was Forrest doing out here? Why had he gone in this direction?

It led to nowhere in particular. It was possible, of course, that Forrest had repeated a previous dodge of his, and had concealed his motor-cycle somewhere near the lane, so that he could use it to make the journey. If so, Gore-Pearce would be done. His anxiety increased, too, because it was impossible for him to approach very closely. Forrest was naturally on the alert, and he would soon become aware of his shadower if Claude became too venturesome.

There was always the risk, then, that Forrest would get away. However, Claude need not have worried, for when he reached the hedge which separated this meadow from the lane, he heard Forrest's footsteps on the hard road. By the sound of them, Forrest was pacing up and down. Why? Surely this meant that he was waiting for somebody?

Gore-Pearce crouched in a little gap, listening intently. He ventured to peep through the hedge, and he could dimly see Forrest's figure, twenty or thirty yards farther down the lane.

"Waiting for somebody," Claude told himself.

And he was right. Presently the low murmur of a motor-car engine sounded on the night air. Glancing up, Gore-Pearce saw reflection of the car's lights, and he followed the course of the vehicle as it wound its way along the lane. Then Claude pulled himself back as the headlights turned a bend just ahead. He had no wish to be shown up by that glare.

The car was coming at a good speed, and after Forrest had shown himself, the driver over-ran the spot for some yards—until, indeed, the car was quite close to the crouching Gore-Pearce.

"No need to have those headlights," Forrest was saying. "Always a chance that somebody at the school might spot them—"

"My dear kid, can't a motorist come along this road without your schoolmasters getting suspicious?" said the young fellow in the car. "Jump in! Is there any place where I can turn in this rotten lane? It's as narrow as a cart track."

"There's a gateway a bit farther up," said Forrest. "You'll be able to get in there all right. Awfully decent of you to come and fetch me! Is the crowd waiting?"

"They're having a little game until we arrive," said the other.

"Good!" came Forrest's voice. "You don't know how I've been longing for a bit of a spree! I'm sick of things!"

"You'll have a good enough spree at the Wheatsheaf," chuckled the young man in the car. "Just along here, you say? A gateway? All right—point it out as we go."

The car moved off, and Claude Gore-Pearce felt like hugging himself. He thanked that young fellow in the car for being so informative! It had only been a chance word; but it meant much to the hidden listener.

The Wheatsheaf!

Claude now knew where Bernard Forrest was bound for. He had guessed that the rascal of Study A would go to the Wheatsheaf or some other such establishment, but it was very satisfactory to know the exact place. Already Gore-Pearce could see himself gaining that concrete evidence he so feverishly desired.

There wasn't any particular hurry. Forrest was bound to remain at the Wheatsheaf for an hour or two, and although Claude had no bicycle with him, he could easily do the walk in half an hour. And it would be all the better for him to arrive well after midnight—for by then Bannington would be quiet, and all the worthy citizens would be in bed. This would make it much easier for Claude to execute the plan he had in mind.

He waited until the car came back, after it had turned in that gateway, and he crouched low behind the hedge so that there was no possibility of him being seen. He watched the red tail-light vanish round the bend, and then he emerged.

"With luck, I'll have him to-night—I'll have him on toast!" muttered Claude tensely. "By gad, if I can put this over it'll be an absolute triumph!"

WHEN Gore-Pearce arrived in Bannington he did not go along the High Street. There was always the chance that a constable or two would be on duty in the main thoroughfare; and Claude Gore-Pearce did not wish to be stopped and questioned. So he took to the back alleys, and he did not meet a soul. It was after midnight now.

Finally he turned into a narrow little lane which, he knew, joined the High Street quite close to the Wheatsheaf. The back yard of the hotel adjoined this lane, and when Claude reached a certain spot he cautiously pulled himself to the top of the wall and looked over.

As he had expected, a gleam of light was showing from one or two of the hotel windows. He knew those rooms well—he knew which window belonged to the bar-parlour, and which one belonged to the smoking-room.

Everything was quiet in the inn yard. There was no dog there apparently. Claude gently lowered himself over the wall and dropped into the yard. Then, with excessive care, he picked his way over towards those lighted windows—which, of course, were on the ground floor.

BERNARD FORREST sat back in his chair in the smoking-room, and he took a long pull at his cigarette.

"Gad, this is the life!" he said contentedly.

"Feels all right to kick over the traces once in a while, eh?" chuckled one of his companions. "I know the feeling, my son. I used to have it when I was at school."

"Well, let's get on with the game," said Forrest eagerly. "What about the stakes?"

There was a little pile of money in front of him, on the table. The others had money, too. There were glasses and bottles on a sideboard near by, and the air of the apartment was thick with cigarette smoke.

Forrest's three companions were all young men—harmless enough, for the most part, and just out for a bit of sport. But they were not breaking any school rules, or laws of any kind. If they liked this sort of thing, it was entirely up to them. Forrest, on the other hand, was transgressing the regulations of St. Frank's, and he was guilty of a very serious offence.

"I think it's your deal, Forrest, my lad," said one of the young men. "See if you can't give me an abundance."

They were playing solo whist, and the stakes were rather high. Bernard Forrest didn't care; he only had a game occasionally nowadays, and so he preferred the stakes to be high. In any case, he was an exceptionally keen player, and it was seldom that he lost anything. Rather the contrary. He nearly always arose from a card game with winning money.

The cards were dealt, and the game began. Forrest enjoyed it tremendously. It seemed all the more alluring because he had abstained from playing for a long time. He

was heartily sick of acting the part of a "good fellow." And coming out like this was safe enough. Nobody would ever know, and he could repeat the performance quite often.

"What are trumps?" asked Forrest, as he sorted his cards after another deal. "Hearts? Rats! If we were playing bridge I'd go three spades on this hand."

Crash!

Without any warning, a loud noise sounded from the window. Forrest and

the others stared in startled astonishment. The curtains were thrust aside, and there, standing in the open window—which had been flung up suddenly—was a curious figure in black; a cloaked figure, with a kind of cowl which descended completely over the face!

CHAPTER 3.

The Photograph!

Z IZZZZH!

In the same moment, before Forrest or the others could utter a word, there came a blinding, dazzling flash of white fire; so dazzling, in fact, that all four card-players were momentarily blinded.



They heard a kind of click, and, with it, the blinding flash died away. Bernard Forrest was the first on his feet, and he was looking alarmed and anxious.

"Stop him!" he shouted. "He's taken a snap of us!"

He dashed to the window, but there was not a sign of any human being out there. Forrest climbed through, and two of the others followed him. They ran out across the inn yard, but their eyes were still dazzled from the result of that magnesium flare. They found no sign of any intruder. Obviously he had succeeded in climbing over the wall and getting away.

"Some idiot must have been playing a joke," said one of the young men. "I'm hanged if I can understand the idea, though. Who would want to take a flashlight photograph of us playing cards? Never known such a thing."

"Can you think of anyone who might have done it?" asked Forrest.

"There's Jim Wilmore," said the other. "He's always playing practical jokes. But I don't think he knew that we were here playing cards. Besides, there was nothing funny in that idiotic business."

"He was on the safe side, anyway," put in one of the others. "Gave me quite a scare at first when I saw that figure in the black cloak and mask."

"Hadn't we better get over the wall and make a proper search?" suggested Forrest.

"What on earth for? We should never find him. Besides, it was only some fool joke."

They went back into the room and closed the window. But now Forrest had lost a good deal of interest in the game. He was vaguely uneasy. He did not actually suspect that that photograph had been taken by anybody connected with St. Frank's; he rather believed that it was a bit of "fun" on the part of some local joker. However, it was upsetting to know that a photograph had been taken.

Forrest was so unsettled that he only played for another half-hour, and then withdrew. He had won three or four pounds by this time, so he was satisfied. Not that his companions were. They had all lost money, and they wanted Forrest to go on so that they could have a chance of winning it back.

"Don't be a young ass, Forrest!" said one of them. "Plenty of time yet. You don't need to go back—"

"I think I'd better go," interrupted Forrest.

"Well, you'll have to walk then!" said the young fellow who had fetched him by car. "I'm hanged if I'll take you back, confound you! I thought you were a sportsman."

"What are you kicking about?" demanded Forrest. "I'll give you an opportunity of getting your money back another night. To tell you the truth, I'm worrying about that

flashlight photograph business. Who could have done it? And why?"

"No need to worry," said one of the trio. "It must have been some crazy joke. I suppose that some idiot will come up to us to-morrow and show us the result of his handiwork."

"It was so infernally strange," muttered Forrest, frowning. "I just caught sight of the chap for a moment—black cloak, mask, and everything. Absolutely impossible to know who he was. And that flashlight was all against us, too. We weren't prepared for it, and so we were temporarily blinded. That gave the beggar a chance to get away. I'd give five quid to know who he was."

The others made light of it.

"Don't be such a scared kid," said one of them. "Hang it, the thing can't hurt you, can it? We weren't committing a crime. There's nothing wrong in sitting down to a friendly game of cards, is there? Be a sportsman and carry on with the game. It would be different if we could find another fourth, but we can't at this time of night."

But Forrest was obstinate; he wanted to get back to St. Frank's. His interest in cards had vanished. And after a little persuasion the young fellow with the motor-car consented to give him a ride back for a part of the way.

Meanwhile, Claude Gore-Pearce was aglow with triumph.

In that attache-case of his he had his camera and the simple flashlight apparatus. In that attache-case, too, were the black cloak and the mask—crudely-made things, but effective. Gore-Pearce had merely bought two or three yards of black dress material, and had fashioned the cloak and mask himself. They had served their purpose, and he was satisfied.

"Gad! I've got him now!" he muttered gloatingly. "I've got him in the hollow of my hand!"

He ran nearly all the way home, arriving hot and breathless. Forrest, of course, had not yet returned. Not that Forrest had any suspicions regarding Claude. It never entered Forrest's head that his enemy of the Remove might be responsible for that startling incident at the Wheatsheaf. Astute as Forrest was, he did not give Claude the credit for being so cunning and clever.

"HALLO! Come into a fortune, or something?"

It was Handforth who asked the question. He was standing in the Ancient House lobby, with Church and McClure, the next morning. Gore-Pearce had just come downstairs, and there was such an expression of happiness on Claude's face that Handforth could not resist the question.

"Eh?" said Claude, with a start. "Speaking to me, Handforth?"



Forrest looked at the photograph in dismay; the photograph which showed him smoking and gambling at the Wheatsheaf. And as he looked at it he realised that Gore-Pearce, the owner of that photograph, had him in his clutches!

"Yes," replied Edward Oswald. "What's the matter with you?"

"Nothing."

"You've been going about for days looking like a wet afternoon," said Handforth, "and now you're all sunshine. Had some good news?"

"If I wasn't feeling so chirpy, I'd tell you to mind your own business," replied Gore-Pearce coolly. "As a matter of fact, I've had a letter from my pater, and he's sent me a whacking big remittance."

And Gore-Pearce strolled on, turning over the two or three copper coins which represented his sole wealth. But he had told the lie glibly enough, knowing, in his own mind, that he would have an ample supply of cash before long. He felt that he was on safe ground now. He had not been so happy for days.

Immediately breakfast was over he dodged up to a little box-room. He locked the door on the inside, covered the window completely with an old rug, so that every scrap of light was excluded, and then he lighted a little lamp, drawing a red glass over it into posi-

tion. He proceeded to get busy with developer and hypo and similar chemicals.

Gore-Pearce had done a bit of amateur photography in his time, and he was rather an expert at the game. It was one of his few innocent hobbies.

His camera was an extraordinarily good one—a very expensive instrument. Until recently money had meant nothing to him, and so he had been able to buy one of the best cameras on the market. He soon had the film out, and although there was only one exposure on it, he did not care. He ruthlessly wasted the other part of the film.

After twenty minutes' work, his eyes were glittering with a new light. There, swimming about in the chemical solution, was a negative. Claude could see that it was a perfect one, and he was now filled with the keenest anxiety to obtain a print. The negative was good—but would it show Forrest's face clearly in the print? So clearly that there could be no mistake about his identity?

"Hang!" muttered Claude savagely, his expression changing.

The bell was ringing for morning school. Gore-Pearce made his way to the class-room, consoled by the thought that the negative would have a chance to dry during the morning.

Lessons were a bugbear to him that morning. Mr. Crowell had more trouble with him than ever, for he was inattentive and slack. He didn't care, however. Impositions did not worry him to-day. It was only when Mr. Crowell actually applied the cane that Gore-Pearce came to his senses. After that he did a bit of work.

Bernard Forrest did not notice anything in particular. Gore-Pearce's troubles did not interest him. And he kept thinking of that curious incident at the Wheatsheaf; he kept worrying if there would be any sequel.

As he had expected, he had got back into his bed-room without anybody spotting him. Even Gulliver and Bell were in ignorance of his jaunt. He had told them nothing. Experience of that pair had taught Forrest that nothing but harm could come of letting them know too much.

During the mid-morning interval, Gore-Pearce popped upstairs to have a look at his negative, and he was pleased to find that it was drying satisfactorily. He kept the box-room door locked, and the key in his own pocket. He was taking no chances with that precious photograph.

Immediately morning school was over he was collared by Hubbard and Long, his study-mates.

"What about popping to the school shop?" suggested Teddy Long eagerly.

"Not now!"

"But you've got some money, haven't you?"

"Yes, but we can't go to the shop now," said Gore-Pearce impatiently. "I've got something to do, and I don't want you fellows bothering me."

"We hear that you had a whacking great tip from your pater this morning," said Hubbard. "How much did he send? A fiver?"

Gore-Pearce laughed.

"I'll tell you later on," he replied. "Don't bother me now. I can promise you, anyhow, that we'll have a whacking great feed in Study B to-day. Something extra special."

"Good egg!" said Teddy, liking his lips. "All the same, it wouldn't be a bad idea to go along to the tuck-shop now."

But Gore-Pearce walked off, leaving his study-mates flat. He had no desire to linger in their company. Neither had he any wish for them to know what he was doing. So he took a few precautions. He went out into the Triangle, dodged rapidly into the West Square, and before Hubbard and Long could follow him he had slipped back into the Ancient House by the back way. He dodged up the service stairs—which, strictly speaking, were out of bounds for the boys—and he got to that attic without anybody knowing of his movements.

He locked himself in again, and now he examined the negative with evil glee. It was, in all truth, a perfect negative. It was one of the best photographs he had ever taken.

"This is going to give Forrest a surprise!" he muttered. "By gad, I've got him on toast now!"

He busied himself with a frame and printing paper. He used gaslight paper, as this was quicker, and after some diligent work he had produced the first print. He picked it out of the fixer, then carried it, still dripping wet, to the window, which was now uncovered.

"Why, it's marvellous!" panted Claude. "Best snap I've ever taken. Nobody could mistake Forrest! He's facing the camera, and that expression on his face is worth quids!"

The photograph was a beauty. It showed the card table, and the piles of money and the bottles and the glasses. And Bernard Forrest, looking straight at the camera, was shown in bold relief. The other players did not matter so much. Gore-Pearce did not care a snap about them. He wasn't even interested in their identity.

He made three prints, and then he carefully stowed the negative in his pocket-book. He left the prints to dry. Now that the period of suspense was over, his mind was easy. There was no particular hurry. He could make the next move in the game after the midday meal. The time was drawing near when he would be able to get his own back on Bernard Forrest. He remembered, vividly, how Forrest had thrashed him, and how Forrest had made him look despicable in the eyes of the other Removites. Scarcely anybody spoke to him nowadays, although his period of "Coventry" was more or less at an end.

After a while, he took the negative out of his pocket-book again. It was the recollection of the fight which now rendered him cautious. It might be unwise for him to carry that negative about with him. Forrest was a dangerous fellow—he was capable of taking drastic methods. Far better to hide that negative somewhere—hide it so that Forrest could never possibly find it.

The prints didn't matter. He could take as many prints as he liked. Three would be quite sufficient for the present. In fact, one would probably do the trick. But the negative was vital.

He took it to his trunk, in another room, and tucked it away between the leaves of an old story-book. It would be safe enough there. Even if anybody searched through the trunk, there was little or no chance of the negative being found. He always kept the trunk locked, too.

The prints, still damp, were in his pocket. He went downstairs happy. He felt that there was a very pleasant interview ahead of him!

CHAPTER 4.

Two Rascals!

THE door of Study A opened, and in strolled Claude Gore-Pearce. He found Forrest and Gulliver and Bell over by the window, arguing about racehorses. They turned and looked at him with unfriendly eyes.

"Outside!" said Forrest curtly.

"No need to be unpleasant, Forrest," said Claude. "I want to have a word with you in private."

"What you want doesn't interest me," replied Forrest. "Get out of this study!"

Gore-Pearce leaned against the door.

"It's very private," he said, looking hard at Gulliver and Bell.

"Does he mean that he wants Bell and me to go out?" said Gulliver truculently.

"I'm not particular," said Gore-Pearce. "It's up to you, Forrest. If you want these two fellows to hear what I've got to say, all well and good. But for your own benefit, I should suggest a little tête-à-tête just between ourselves. Still, you can do as you please."

Something in Claude's tone warned Forrest that this visit was very unusual. Never before had Gore-Pearce looked so confident and so self-possessed. There was something big behind this. But even now, strangely enough, Forrest did not connect the millionaire's son with the incident of the previous night.

"Well?" asked Gore-Pearce. "Shall I speak out in front of these chaps? I'm in no hurry, so you can take your time. But I'd better give you a hint, Forrest, that the subject is so private that you'll be sorry if I let Gulliver and Bell into the secret."

"Infernal nerve!" said Bell hotly. "Forrest hasn't got any secrets from us."

Forrest grunted.

"All the same, perhaps you fellows had better clear out for a bit," he said bluntly.

"You're not going to take any notice of this cad, are you?" shouted Gulliver.

"Now, don't make a fuss," said Forrest.

"Any fellow has a right to have a private

chat. I'll see you later, Gulliver. You, too, Bell. Do you mind popping out for a bit?"

"Yes, we do mind!" said Bell.

"Well, will you pop out, all the same?"

There was nothing else for it. Gulliver and Bell hated being turned out of the study, but they had to go. They glowered upon Gore-Pearce as they went, and they were amazed that Forrest should take any notice of him. They felt, somehow, that there was something mysterious about this affair. What had Forrest been up to? Why was he afraid of Gore-Pearce?

"Well?" asked Forrest, after his study-mates had gone out.

"Just a minute," said Claude.

He wrenched the door open, and, as he had expected, he found Gulliver and Bell suspiciously near by.

"If it's all the same to you, do you mind going farther down the passage?" he asked blandly. "The keyholes of these doors are ridiculously large."

"Confound you!" roared Gulliver. "You don't think we were listening, do you?"

"Good-bye!" said Gore-Pearce, grinning.

Gulliver and Bell went off in a huff. Not until they had turned into the lobby did Gore-Pearce close the door. Then he strolled over to the easy chair, lowered himself into it, and made himself quite at home.

"If you're going to start that blackmailing stunt again, I'd better warn you

to be careful," said Forrest grimly. "I've given you a thrashing once, and if I have to do it again I'll make such a mess of your face that——"

"The fact is," said Gore-Pearce, "I want you to lend me a fiver, Forrest."

"Oh!" said Forrest. "A fiver."

"Just to begin with," nodded Gore-Pearce.

"I don't think I'm revealing any close secret when I tell you that I'm hard up. A little bit of trouble with the pater. No need to go into details. A fiver from you will come in very handy, Forrest."

"You silly fool!" snapped Bernard. "I've already told you that I won't part with another cent. Understand? I've had enough of your blackmailing. I'm not afraid

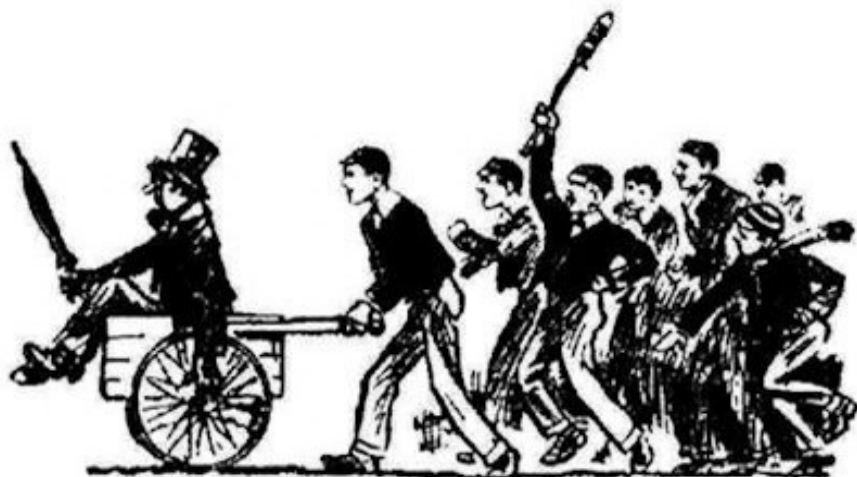
GUY! GUY! GUY!

The Fifth of November is coming, and there's going to be great excitement at St. Frank's.

For Wellborne & Co., the cads of the River House School, hatch a little plot against Nipper and his chums. Unfortunately the plot doesn't work out quite as expected, and all sorts of amusing — and amazing — complications result.

Look out for this stunning yarn in next Wednesday's grand issue, chums; it's entitled:

"THE LIVING GUY!"



of you now. The other fellows are satisfied that I'm on the square——"

"It seems a pity to disillusion you, but you're not really safe at all, Forrest," said Gore-Pearce pleasantly. "You're most infernally unsafe, to tell you the truth. You wouldn't like it a bit, would you, if Nipper and Handforth and Travers and all the rest of the chaps knew you for what you actually are? You've spoofed them nicely; but I know a way to take the dust out of their eyes. Have a look at this."

He carelessly tossed one of the prints on to the table. It gave him a moment of sheer joy to see Forrest's violent start of surprise.

"What's this?" asked Forrest hoarsely.

"Only a photograph, old man. Take a look at it."

Forrest, with a gulp, grabbed the photograph from the table. He took it over to the window and looked at it. His worst fears were realised. In that second he had had a hint of the truth. It had burned itself upon his consciousness like the sear of a red-hot iron. What a fool he had been not to think of this possibility before!

"Quite a nice little snap, isn't it?" asked Gore-Pearce, in a drawling voice, as he lounged back in the chair. "So distinct—and so lifelike. I rather pride myself on that photo, Forrest."

Forrest said nothing. He was looking at the photograph dazedly. It was so startlingly clear. The flashlight had done the trick. There was the table, with the piles of money—even the notes could be seen. And the glasses, and the bottles. And there, the most prominent figure of all, was Forrest himself, looking startled, even frightened.

"Of course, flashlight isn't very satisfactory for portraits," said Gore-Pearce conversationally. "Makes a fellow look too pale. It brings out the details too boldly."

"Where did you get this?" demanded Forrest, his voice charged with alarm.

"Where?" repeated Gore-Pearce. "I took that photograph myself."

"You?"

"Little me!" nodded Claude.

"Then—then you were that figure in the cloak and the mask?"

"Who else?" drawled Gore-Pearce. "I spotted you going out last night, Forrest, and I followed you. Rather a good stunt of mine, eh? As soon as I found you in the smoking-room at the Wheatsheaf, I flung the window open and exploded the flashlight before you could take a really good look at me. On the whole, I think I did deucedly well."

"By gad!" breathed Forrest, still staring fascinatedly at the print.

"I believe it's given you a bit of a turn," said Claude. "At least, I hope it has."

"You fool! Do you think you can make any profit out of this?" snarled Forrest, beside himself with fear and rage. "You've

admitted to me that you were that figure in the black cloak and mask——"

"But only to you, Forrest," nodded Claude. "It's just between ourselves—a purely private matter. As it was perfectly obvious—to you—that I was that cloaked figure, there's no harm in us being frank about it. As I've got this photograph, it must have been me. But who else is to know? I'm safe enough. Those fellows who were with you at that card-table didn't recognise me—and couldn't. And, naturally, if you like to be obstinate and bring my name into the affair, I shall simply deny it. There's not one shred of evidence to show that I was out of my bed last night."

Bernard Forrest felt hot all over. He knew that Gore-Pearce was speaking the truth. There was not one jot of positive proof that that cloaked figure had concealed the identity of Gore-Pearce.

"Well, what do you want?" panted Forrest, glaring across at his tormentor.

"Didn't you hear me the first time?" asked Claude. "I'm hard up, and I need the loan of a fiver."

"Loan! You mean——"

"I mean a loan," insisted Gore-Pearce. "You mustn't think that I'm blackmailing you. In fact, you'd better not mention that word again. All I want is a loan. Understand? I'll pay you back later."

Bernard Forrest understood.

"I won't give you a cent!" he snarled. "You can't bluff me like this! You daren't show this photograph to anybody."

"Oh? Why daren't I?"

"Because you'd be giving yourself away," replied Forrest, with a sudden air of assurance. "Have you thought of that, Gore-Pearce? Show this photograph to people, and you'll have to tell them how you got hold of it. Then it'll come out that you were breaking bounds in order to——"

"Hold on!" interrupted Claude. "I'm not such a fool as all that, Forrest, and you can't kid me with this bunkum. I might have got hold of that photograph from anybody. There's absolutely nothing to prove that I took it myself. It's here—in black and white. There you are, sitting at the card-table, smoking and drinking and gambling. How are you going to explain it? Why, you fool, you can't explain it! The thing speaks for itself!"

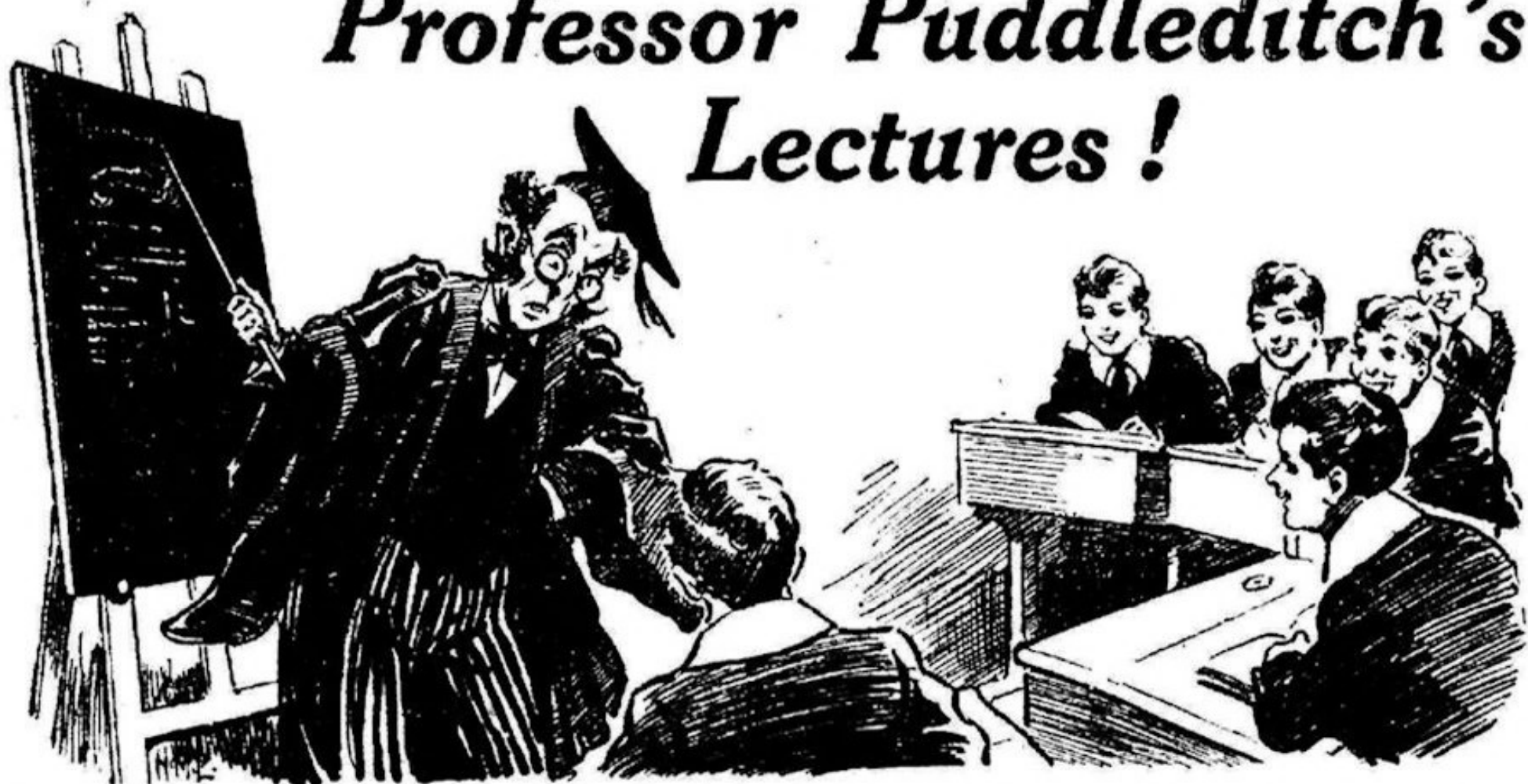
Forrest looked at the photograph again, and his breathing was laboured.

"You must admit that it's good," said Gore-Pearce, delighting over his new power. "And what are the fellows going to say when I show it to them? Forrest, the footballer—Forrest, the sportsman! Here he is, in his true colours—playing cards, smoking, drinking—just as he did in the old days! Why, my beauty, you'll collapse like a pricked bladder when——"

"The old days!" said Forrest, a gleam of triumph coming into his eyes. "Exactly,

(Continued on page 14.)

Professor Puddleditch's Lectures!



Continuing his lectures on "unnatural history," the professor has something to tell you about the "Zunk." And a weird and wonderful creature it is, too, as you will find out in this week's uproariously funny lecture.

By Reggie Pitt

LECTURE 4—THE ZUNK

"**N**OW, boys," mumbled the Professor as, staggering into the Hall of St. Sycamore's College under the weight of his gigantic dictionary, he placed, or rather slid it, with a thud on to the desk, and adjusted his wobbly spectacles. "Now, boys, to-day I propose to deal with the Zunk."

"The Zunk is a bird very rarely seen nowadays, and if there were not a few still left it would be extinct."

"Its many peculiarities entitle it to form the subject of one of my—I hope—interesting lectures on unnatural history, dealing with the weird and wonderful creatures of the earth."

A soft murmur came from the assembled Form. It may have been subdued applause, but was more probably suppressed groans. The Professor assumed the former, and beamed. Waving his spectacles benevolently, he continued:

"Perhaps the strangest of this strange bird's strangenesses is—are—no, is the fact of its having telescopic legs, and not the fold-up ones possessed by the majority of other birds. An exception, of course, is the Yellow-crested Mud-sniffer, whose legs unscrew and take off, to allow of its navigation of shallow waters by floating, and also the Lesser Bun-finch, which has no legs at all, but rolls along the ground when not in flight."

"The Zunk, then, has telescopic legs, by means of which it can raise and lower itself at will."

The Professor, illustrating as he spoke, raised himself on his toes and then lowered himself on his heels with a jar that jolted his teeth and caused his glasses to pitch off and perch in his beard.

After he had retrieved these somewhat doubtful aids to his vision, he went on:

"The bird has a very long beak with a bag or sack where its throat ought to be, something like a pelican, only more so. It feeds chiefly on cocoanuts which it swallows two at a time—whole—and these nuts are stored in the aforesaid bag or sack, where they gradually dissolve, taking about a fortnight to disappear."

"It is therefore obvious that the Zunk stores its food fourteen days before it actually needs it, or, in other words, it provides to-day for its dinner due next Wednesday week. He, he, he!"

The Professor tittered at his own joke, wagging his long whiskers violently, but the class remained impassive and unmoved.

"Further interesting facts are elicited by reference to the Encyclopedia of Rare Beasties, compiled by Cilliass, a scholar of great repute in this field of research. I have the volume here—no, here—no! Now, where is it? Thompkins minor, please go to my study and bring me the book which I left on the table."

After Thompkins minor had left the Hall, the Professor discovered the Encyclopedia in

(Continued on page 44.)

THE THIEF!

(Continued from page 12.)

Gore-Pearce! You've used the right words! The old days."

"What the deuce do you mean?"

"Why, I'm safe!" said Forrest, with untold relief. "Isn't your poor brain capable of grasping that fact? I tell you I'm safe!"

His tone was so confident that for a second Gore-Pearce became alarmed. He sat forward in his chair, his face a little paler.

"What do you mean—you're safe?" he demanded sharply. "That photograph shows you——"

"If you're crazy enough to let any of the other fellows see this snap, I've got a perfectly good explanation," broke in Forrest.

"Oh?"

"The best explanation under the sun," continued Forrest coolly. "I shall simply say that this photograph was taken months ago—when I was at St. Frank's previously. My old record is known; Nipper and Handforth and the rest know that I used to smoke and gamble. I shall tell them that this snap was taken months ago."

"By gad!" muttered Gore-Pearce.

Forrest took the photograph, tore it in shreds and tossed it into the fire. Then he pointed to the door.

"Get out!" he ordered curtly.

"Just a minute!" said Gore-Pearce, his voice soft and smooth. "Don't be in such a hurry, Forrest. I'm not going to leave this study until you lend me that five quid."

"Get—out!" roared Bernard Forrest.

Gore-Pearce took another print from his pocket. He tossed it on to the table, just as he had done the first.

"Have a look at that photograph again," he said, with exasperating calmness. "You're very careless, Forrest. On the wall, at the back of the sideboard, there's a calendar. Rather funny that you should miss seeing it."

Forrest felt suddenly weak; all his confidence oozed away.

"A—a calendar?" he faltered.

"Have a look at it," invited Claude.

Forrest picked up the print, and now he was panic-stricken. Gore-Pearce was right. There, on the wall, plainly shown in the photo, was a calendar. It was one of those particular kinds which have to be changed every day, and the date was clearly and boldly indicated. Yesterday's date!

"Rather strange that yesterday's date should be on a calendar that was hanging in a room months ago," commented Gore-Pearce gloatingly. "And do you notice, Forrest, that the calendar is a special one? 'The Wheatsheaf Hotel.' See it across the top? Not only does this photograph show you indulging in a little pleasure, but it also indicates the date you were there, and it proves where you were. Gambling and drinking at the Wheatsheaf—yesterday!"

"Great Scott!" breathed Bernard Forrest.

"Luck was with me last night," continued Gore-Pearce. "Now, I don't propose to take this photograph to the beaks. They'd be interested in it, I dare say, but I'm just as anxious as you are to prevent any awkward inquiries. But the Common-room will be most interested in this snap. Don't you think so? Nipper and Travers and Gresham and Handforth and the others will be exceedingly enlightened. What's it going to be, Forrest? The loan of a fiver, or shall I take a stroll to the Common-room?"

CHAPTER 5.

Something Wrong!

FORREST knew that that photograph represented a definite hold over him. On that earlier occasion he had refuted Gore-Pearce's suggestions, and had done it so cleverly that the Removites had believed him. For Gore-Pearce, when all was said and done, had such a reputation at St. Frank's that his word was of very little value.

But this was different.

This photograph was a thousand times more convincing than all that Gore-Pearce, or anybody else, could say. It was proof. If the Removites saw that photo, they would know Bernard Forrest for what he actually was. They would know that he had broken bounds the previous night, that he had visited the Wheatsheaf, and that he had been up to his old games.

It would ruin him—with the fellows. They would scorn him and "cut" him. His elaborate pretence would be over, and never would he be able to seize the reins of power, as he dreamed.

Apart from all this, there was always the chance that the photograph might get into the hands of somebody in authority. And then, indeed, the fat would be in the fire. If the headmaster saw that photograph, Forrest's expulsion would follow as surely as the day follows night.

"You—you scheming cad!" he panted, glaring across at Gore-Pearce.

"Rather like the pot calling the kettle black, eh?" drawled Gore-Pearce. "Aren't you a bit of a schemer yourself?"

"I'm not a filthy hound like you!"

"You'd better be careful——"

"Careful be hanged!" snapped Forrest. "You blackmailing toad! You think you've got me, don't you?"

"I've warned you not to use that word!" said Gore-Pearce dangerously. "All I want from you, Forrest, is a loan. As sure as I'm standing here, if you use that word again I'll walk right out of this study and go to the Common-room. I'll show that photograph to everybody in the Remove! Now, fork out that fiver!"

"I'll give you five pounds for the negative of this photograph!" said Bernard.

His companion laughed.

"Fifty pounds wouldn't buy it," he replied contemptuously. "What do you think I am

—a mug? I'm keeping that negative in a safe place, Forrest—just as a precautionary measure. I want five pounds, cash, now. This minute. And, as I've told you about a dozen times, I shall look upon it as a loan."

Forrest made a sudden rush at his tormentor.

"You've got that negative on you!" he panted. "By gad! I'll have it, too! I'll drag it from you—"

"Steady!" warned Gore-Pearce. "I'm not such an idiot as to bring that negative into this room. You're a better fighter than I am, Forrest—no sense in denying it after the way you knocked me about the other day. I haven't got that negative here."

Forrest pulled himself up—knowing, from Claude's very tone, that he was speaking the truth. He suddenly dived a hand into his pocket and withdrew some currency notes. He counted out five and flung them on the table.

"There you are!" he panted. "There's your dirty hush money."

"Thanks," said Gore-Pearce, picking it up. "In the cirs, I don't blame you for using some strong language. But don't you ever lay your hands on me again, Forrest—or you'll be sorry. I've got you where I want you now—and you know it!"

DURING the next two days Forrest lived in constant fear of being dropped on for more cash. But Gore-Pearce took no notice of him. Gore-Pearce had resumed his old life in the Remove, and nobody except Forrest paid any attention to him.

Hubbard and Long, naturally, were pleased. Claude's period of impecuniosity was over. He supplied the study teas as usual, and he was even more lavish. What did he care? As soon as his money was exhausted, he knew where he could get more!

It was half-holiday to-day, and the St. Frank's Junior Eleven was entertaining Helmford College. It was an important match.

As Forrest had been such a success in the centre-forward position, he was being played there again. Nipper had gone to inside-right, displacing another junior who was a trifle off colour just now. Everybody was confident that St. Frank's would win easily.

Just before the game, Gore-Pearce happened to meet Forrest in the Triangle.

"I'd like to see you after the match, Forrest," he said briefly.

"What for?"

"Oh, nothing much—merely a matter of finance," said Claude, with a meaning smile.

"You won't get any more money out of

me, if that's what you mean!" panted Forrest. "You had that fiver two days ago—"

"My dear chap, isn't it a bit unwise to talk out here?" protested Gore-Pearce.

"Leave it until after the match. But if it's going to put you out of suspense, I'll mention that I require ten quid. What's more, I'm going to have it."

"You're mad!" said Forrest. "I haven't got ten quid."

"Then you'll have to get it for me."

"I tell you it's impossible—"

"That's a pity," said Claude, with a sigh.

He moved off, leaving Bernard Forrest glaring after him. Forrest was unsettled now—more than ever. How could he possibly obtain ten pounds to satisfy Gore-Pearce's demands? He only had about fifty shillings, and it might be two or three days before he obtained a fresh supply of cash. Well, Claude would have to wait! If Forrest hadn't got it, he couldn't part with it.

"Anything on your mind, old chap?" asked Castleton, of the West House.

Forrest started.

"Oh, nothing," he said hastily. "I'm all right."

"You look worried."

"It's only that fellow, Gore-Pearce," replied Bernard. "Whenever I see him, I get wild."

"Never mind Gore-Pearce—he's a rank outsider," said the West House junior. "You've got to play a great game to-day, Forrest. Everybody's expecting it of you. We want some goals from you, don't forget."

It was quite true that everybody was expecting goals from Forrest. He had played so well on former occasions that it was taken for granted that he would keep up his form. As a forward, he was brilliant, and his shooting was deadly.

This afternoon he went on to the field with the other players just as jauntily as ever. He was concealing his worry, and he told himself that he would dismiss Gore-Pearce from his mind until after the game.

But it wasn't so easy.

Within five minutes of the whistle, Forrest was becoming absent-minded and careless. Passes were made to him, and he messed them up completely. Instead of his usual quick-fire methods, he employed slow, clumsy tactics, and he was easily robbed of the ball when he had good chances of scoring.

"Not like you, Forrest," remarked Nipper, after the former had failed to make use of a glorious opportunity to score.

"Sorry!" muttered Bernard. "Can't think what's the matter. I'll buck up now."

He was certainly better after that, concentrating all his attention on the game.



Yet, directly he allowed his thoughts to dwell upon Gore-Pearce, he played badly again. More than anything else, he wanted to achieve a triumph in this match. His popularity was at its height now, and if only he could do big things in this game his chances of attaining his ultimate end would be greatly advanced.

So he steeled himself, and played with amazing brilliance. It was all the more surprising because he did not really care for football. He was doing it merely as a means to an end. And this, in a way, proved more than anything else the utter worthlessness—and thoroughness—of Bernard Forrest's character.

His aim was to oust Nipper from the captaincy. Already he had vague plans in his mind—evil schemes for discrediting the popular Nipper and getting him scorned by his school-fellows.

He had done that sort of thing before, but in such cases he himself had been in a very different position. He had been a suspect, a fellow despised and disliked.

But if he engineered Nipper's downfall now, nobody would dream that he had had a hand in it. And, being so popular, he would be first favourite for the captaincy, and would almost certainly win. After that, perhaps, he would be able to abandon this pose of his. He wouldn't care—when he had achieved his object.

The Helmford players were keen and clever. In the first half of the game they scored two goals. From one of Reggie Pitt's passes, Nipper opened the scoring for St. Frank's, and it was Forrest who kicked the equaliser. At half-time the score was still 2-2.

Handforth was inclined to be despondent. He was always surprised and dismayed when goals were scored against him. He seemed to have a fixed idea that he was invulnerable; and, really, it was like the beastly cheek of any opposing forward to get the better of him. One goal generally made him hot; two goals got him quite indignant. And three goals—on the rare occasions when he had allowed a third to happen—made him positively frantic.

He was frantic enough this afternoon, for soon after the second half had commenced the Helmford centre-forward got right through, beat Church and McClure, who were the full-backs, and sent in a stinging shot which had Handforth beaten all the way. Not content with this, the same Helmford fellow broke through five minutes afterwards and scored yet again.

"Two down!" groaned Church. "We're done now, Handy! What's the matter with you?"

"Me?" said Handforth bitterly. "I like that! You and Mac are the backs, aren't you? It's a pity you can't play football instead of what you are playing! You'd better take up marbles!"

Actually, Church and McClure were guiltless of any bad play, while Handforth him-

self had done his utmost. The truth was, the Helmford team was in tip-top form. For a period the home team was completely outplayed, and only the brilliance of Handforth in goal prevented Helmford from scoring.

Then came an attack by the St. Frank's forward line, and Reggie Pitt created tremendous enthusiasm by swerving in and taking a shot from a sharp angle—a shot which was a winner all the way.

A few minutes later Forrest accepted a pass on the run and kicked a first-time shot which the Helmford goalie only just stopped. He tried to scramble the leather away, but Forrest had followed up his advantage and he literally hammered the ball back, this time to beat the custodian.

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Forrest!"

"Four-all! Let's have the winning one, St. Frank's!"

"Come on, Forrest!"

Bernard did not fail to notice that the shouts were mainly for him. He had done so well in recent matches that the crowds now expected him to win the game for St. Frank's. And, notwithstanding the worry on his mind, he did win it.

Within three minutes of the final whistle, when all hope of a victory seemed at an end, Forrest did the trick. The Helmford players were packing their goal; they were concentrating on the defensive, for they were now being pressed hard and they seemed to realise that the final three minutes would be hot.

It was the indefatigable Reggie Pitt, on the right wing, who provided the opportunity. He made one of his spectacular dashes down the touchline, and when he centred Forrest was on the ball like a flash, to send in a first-time shot which made everybody gasp. It was a stinger—and a winner. The ball slipped under the crossbar just before the goalie's hands could get to it.

"Goal!"

It was a perfect frenzy of triumphant shouting.

"Hurrah!"

"St. Frank's wins!"

"Well played, Forrest!"

"Oh, good man!"

"Forrest's done the trick for us!"

"Bravo!"

It was true. Two more minutes of fierce play in mid-field, and then the whistle blew. The St. Frank's Junior Eleven had won by the odd goal, and without any question Bernard Forrest was mainly responsible for the victory.

CHAPTER 6.

Putting On The Screw!

BERNARD FORREST'S play had been all the more noteworthy because of a secret worry that he nursed within him.

The thoughts of Claude Gore-Pearce and that incriminating photograph had been



Excitement reached fever heat as Bernard Forrest received the ball and sent in a flashing first time shot. The score stood at 4-4, and only a minute or two remained for play. Would Forrest's shot prove to be the winning goal for St. Frank's?

distracting enough. But there was something else. That day had been a bad one for the leader of Study A. The previous night he had met the three young fellows who had played cards with him at the Wheatsheaf. He had told them of that flashlight photograph, and they had been quite indifferent.

"Well, it's nothing to do with us," one of them had said. "We can't help your troubles, kid. It doesn't matter to us if hundreds of such photographs are distributed. We're not ashamed of being in the Wheatsheaf, playing cards."

"It won't harm us," said one of the others. "The Wheatsheaf is a perfectly respectable hotel, and we can play cards if we want to."

Forrest had pointed out to them that whilst they were safe, it was very different with him. The photograph had been taken by one of his school-fellows, and if it got into the hands of the Head there would be an inquiry.

Whereupon he was told, quite promptly and bluntly and callously, that if there was an inquiry they wouldn't lift a finger to help him. They were certainly not going to lie on his behalf.

So Forrest knew to-day that he was completely in Gore-Pearce's clutches. He knew, too, that the one thing he had to do was to obtain possession of that negative and any prints that had been made. Not until they were destroyed could he feel safe!

"WELL played, Forrest!"

Nipper clapped him heartily on the back, and there was warm commendation in his tone.

"That's all right," said Forrest. "No need to make a fuss. You're not surprised, are you, that I can play a decent game?"

"Well, I was surprised at first—but I'm getting used to it now," smiled Nipper. "You'll do, Forrest!"

"Bravo!"

"Come to tea in our study, Forrest!"

"Rats! We're going to bag him for the West House!"

All sorts of juniors crowded round, and Forrest forgot his troubles for the while. Nipper, watching, could see that there was something on Forrest's mind; and Nipper was still vaguely of the opinion that Forrest was not all he pretended to be. However, he played a clean, wholesome game of football, and as long as he behaved himself on the field and played in this way he would remain in the team.

Even if he was exposed in his true colours, Nipper would still keep him in the team—and he would remain there until he proved himself unworthy. That was Nipper's policy. It was not his business what a fellow did in his own time, or what follies he perpetrated. For example, Vivian Travers smoked, and everybody knew he smoked, but he had never been barred from the Eleven. If his wind got bad, however, and he showed signs of cracking up, then he would soon get the order of the boot. The same with Forrest. He was playing well now, and he was worth his place. But Nipper was not fooled like the majority of the juniors. He said little, but he had a pretty shrewd idea that Bernard was living a sort of double life.

It wasn't until after tea that Gore-Pearce had a chance of speaking with his victim. Forrest was carried off into the West House, and he was the guest of honour at a big feed. The juniors were all the more pleased with him to-day because he had started badly, and had shown every sign of cracking up. It was all the more satisfactory, therefore,

that he should have scored the winning goal in such an important match.

Gore-Pearce button-holed him as he was on his way across West Square, escorted by a number of West House juniors. Gore-Pearce managed to pull him aside.

"Come to my study in a quarter of an hour," he said briefly.

"Confound you! I'm not going to take orders——"

"If you don't come, you know what to expect," said Gore-Pearce, shrugging his shoulders. "You'd better be there, Forrest."

It had occurred to Gore-Pearce that it would be more satisfactory to make Forrest wait on him. Why should he always go to Forrest? This time Forrest would have to come to him!

And Forrest came. Hubbard and Long were away—for Claude had purposely sent them to the village to buy a few things, so that Study B would be rid of their presence.

"Good man!" said Gore-Pearce, waving his hand towards a chair. "I thought you'd be here, Forrest. You're just about a minute late, but I'll forgive you for that."

"What do you want?" demanded Forrest grimly.

"I find that that fiver has gone rather quickly," replied Claude. "I'm giving a special kind of party to-morrow, and it looks like being expensive. So if you could lend me ten quid——"

"I haven't got it."

"No? Then I'm afraid you'll have to get it," said Gore-Pearce. "I gave a little party last week to some of the girls. Remember? Joan Tarrant and that crowd. I've invited them again for to-morrow."

"I can't help who you invite, or what you do," said Forrest fiercely. "You're mad, Gore-Pearce! You can't keep up this infernal blackmailing——"

"I warned you not to use that word!" snapped Claude. "I'm asking you for a loan—that's all."

"A loan be hanged! I believe in calling a spade a spade!" retorted Forrest hotly. "You're blackmailing me, and you know it! And I'll tell you straight out that you're not going to get ten pounds out of me. I haven't got ten pounds. I can let you have three, if you like——"

"Three's no good," broke in Gore-Pearce. "I'll give you until supper-time, if you like, but not a minute longer. You can go round amongst the fellows and borrow a bit, can't you? You're popular enough nowadays. Anyhow, it doesn't interest me how you get the money. I need it. Ten quid."

Forrest breathed hard.

"If I get this money for you, will you give me that photograph?" he demanded.

"As many as you like," said Claude generously.

"Don't be a fool! I mean the negative."

"Nothing doing," said Claude, shaking his head. "I'm sticking to that negative, if you don't mind. I've got you in a cleft stick, Forrest, and I'm going to keep you

there. I don't forget the way you smashed me up the other day—and how you made all the fellows turn against me and send me to Coventry. Why, confound you, I'm having a bit of my own back now!"

"I want that negative——"

"I don't care what you want," said Claude contemptuously. "I'm not selling anything. You've got to lend me ten pounds, whether you want to or not. If you don't, you know what I shall do. If I can't borrow money from you, I'll get some satisfaction another way. Do you understand me?"

"It'll give you no satisfaction to show that photograph in the Common-room——"

"Oh, won't it?" said Gore-Pearce passionately. "Won't it? You've got a rotten memory, Forrest! Most of the fellows in the Remove look upon me as a liar and a cad—just because I told the truth about you. Don't you think it'll give me any pleasure to vindicate myself? Don't you think it'll give me any satisfaction to square myself in the eyes of the chaps? I've only got to show that photograph, and everybody will know I was right all the time. I'm only holding myself back from that pleasure because it pays me to do so. But the very instant you jib, then I'm going to have my little laugh."

His tone was gloating, and Bernard Forrest fully realised that he was in the hands of this rascally fellow. Yet Forrest was only getting some of his own medicine; he would not have hesitated to use exactly the same tactics. Not that he appreciated this. He regarded Gore-Pearce as a cad, and he was furiously indignant that any fellow should be such a grasping scamp.

"Look here," he said thickly, "I'll give you three quid. It's all I've got just now. I'm expecting some more at the end of the week——"

"My dear fellow, I'm giving this party to-morrow," broke in Gore-Pearce. "I want that ten pounds this evening—and I mean to have it. You can't get round me like this. You can borrow the money if you want to."

"All right, then—give me till to-morrow morning."

"I don't see why I should——"

"Confound you, you've said that you don't need the money until to-morrow evening!" snapped Forrest. "What difference does it make to you?"

"Are you expecting something in the morning, then?"

"Yes, I am," said Forrest, his eyes gleaming. "I wasn't going to tell you anything about it—but you're so infernally pressing that I've had to. I'll let you have the money in the morning."

"All right, then, I'll give you until breakfast time, but not a minute later," said Claude. "And don't forget—ten quid."

Forrest made no reply. He turned on his heel and walked out of the study, slamming the door after him.

The St. Jim's Inventors/



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HIS feelings against Claude Gore-Pearce were well-nigh homicidal. It was a fact that he only had three or four pounds on him, and he really had no idea how he could satisfy Claude's demands. He wasn't really expecting any money in the morning—and he swore to himself that he would not borrow from any of the other fellows.

A different idea had come into his cunning brain.

He had put Gore-Pearce off for a deliberate purpose. That negative! If only he could find it, and destroy it, all would yet be well!

This was why he had asked Gore-Pearce to wait until the morning. After lights-out to-night, he would get up and he would make a thorough search. If only he could find that negative, and any prints that existed, he would thereafter be able to snap his fingers in Claude's face.

It was an eloquent indication of Forrest's strength of character that nobody noticed any change in him in the Common-room that evening. He strolled in as usual, and he seemed to enjoy a game of chess with all his usual gusto. He chatted with the fellows,

and he discussed football and golf and other things. He was cheery and smiling.

As a matter of fact, Forrest was feeling heaps better. This new decision of his had given him hope. He was confident that he would be able to find that negative. And in the morning he would laugh in his tormentor's face.

AS he lay in bed that night, waiting for Gulliver and Bell to go to sleep, Forrest turned over the possibilities. After all, there weren't many places that would need searching. It was very unlikely that Gore-Pearce would keep the precious negative in Study B. With a fellow like Teddy Long in the place, it would be rash to keep anything of value there. Teddy Long's reputation as Paul Pry was well known.

The same applied to the dormitory. Gore-Pearce shared the same little dormitory as Hubbard and Long. It wouldn't be safe to keep the negative in the dormitory. Where else was there? Obviously, Gore-Pearce's own trunk.

It would be up in one of the box-rooms. Locked, of course, but that was soon remedied. Once Forrest had the negative, he

would burn it. Then there would be the prints. Perhaps Gore-Pearce would have one or two in his pockets; therefore it might be worth while to steal into his dormitory and search his clothes. But the most important thing—the first thing—was to find the negative.

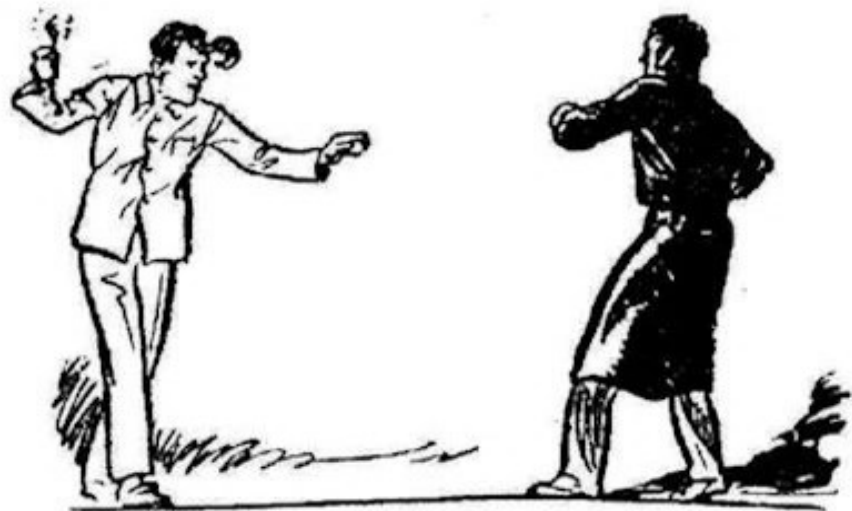
It wasn't until eleven o'clock had struck that Forrest made a move.

He wanted to be certain that everybody was in bed and asleep. He had meant to start his search earlier, but there had been some sort of commotion further along the passage. He didn't know what it was, and he didn't care.

As a matter of fact, Handforth & Co. had been indulging in a bit of horse play in their own dormitory, just before lights out. There was nothing uncommon in this. But tonight, unfortunately, Church had accidentally caught the big toe of his right foot against a part of the iron bedstead, and his toe was deeply gashed. It had bled a lot, and Handforth and McClure had dashed about fetching water and lint, and generally making themselves useful. A prefect had come along, to complicate matters, and it wasn't until well past ten that Handforth's dormitory had settled down.

So Forrest was later than he had meant to be. Not that this really mattered. He had the whole night before him, and he wouldn't care if he kept awake until dawn. It would be worth it, if he could only get himself out of the clutches of Gore-Pearce.

He did not get fully dressed. He slipped a gown over his pyjamas and donned an old pair of rubber-soled tennis shoes. Then, armed with an electric torch, he stole out of the dormitory, leaving Gulliver and Bell sound asleep. If he happened to meet anybody, he could easily say that he was feeling unwell and that he was only going out to fetch some aspirin tablets. Any sort of



excuse would do. Being in his dressing-gown, nobody would doubt his story.

But there was nobody about at this hour. The Ancient House was quiet and still—within. Outside there was a fairly heavy gale blowing, whistling and hooting round the school buildings.

Forrest reached the upper floor, and then proceeded to go through the box-rooms, one after another. And it wasn't long before he located Gore-Pearce's trunk. He might have known it was Gore-Pearce's by its very splendour.

Most of the fellows' trunks were of the ordinary type. Gore-Pearce's was a very sumptuous affair. Being the son of a millionaire—and an ostentatious millionaire at that—Gore-Pearce was provided with everything of the best. This trunk was of solid leather, a magnificent thing which must have cost many pounds. It was provided with patent locks, and Claude's full name was painted right across the top.

"Now!" muttered Forrest, as he knelt down.

CHAPTER 7.

The Temptation!

THE trunk proved to be a stiff hurdle. Those patent locks were very strong and secure, and it would be a shame ruthlessly to smash them. Not that Forrest cared. He was going to get this trunk open, by hook or by crook. The very fact that it was locked indicated that it contained something unusually precious in Claude's eyes. Most of the other fellows' trunks were unlocked.

Besides, Forrest had noticed a weekly periodical flung carelessly on the top of Gore-Pearce's trunk. It was one which Gore-Pearce indulged in weekly, and this was the current issue. It had only been published a couple of days earlier, and Forrest, taking up an obvious line of reasoning, came to the conclusion that Gore-Pearce had finished with it. So he had brought it up to the box-room and had put it on his trunk in readiness to pack away. And as it had only been published two days earlier, its presence here now clearly indicated that Gore-Pearce must have been up in this box-room only the previous evening—perhaps a few hours before.

Yet he hadn't unlocked his trunk. He was keeping something in there that he wanted none but his own eyes to see. Forrest was more certain than ever that he had found the hiding-place of that negative.

He tugged and wrenched at the locks, but they resisted him. In the end he was obliged to make use of a heavy metal rod—part of an old bedstead—which he had found standing in an odd corner. It served his purpose well. Forcing this beneath the locks, he smashed them open, ruining them completely.

He swung the lid back, and took his electric torch from another trunk, where it had been propped. He flashed the light into Gore-Pearce's trunk, and commenced turning over the things.

"It's bound to be here somewhere!" he muttered breathlessly.

He took out some articles of clothing, examining each one as he did so. He found books and papers and all sorts of articles that Gore-Pearce did not require in daily use.

But there was no sign of that precious negative.

THE ST. FRANK'S QUESTIONNAIRE!

Here are twelve testers for you, chums—questions which refer to St. Frank's and its members. Give them the "once-over," jot down the answers to those which you know, and then compare them with the correct list which will be given, together with another set of questions, next week.

1. What is the name of Willy Handforth's pet greyhound?
2. Who is Vivian Travers' particular girl chum at the Moor View School?
3. Has Dr. Brett a private practice in addition to his work in the school sanatorium?
4. What is Nipper's full name?
5. Who is the Jewish junior in the Remove?
6. Who are the occupants of Study Q in the West House?
7. Where is the St. Frank's Private Telephone Exchange situated?
8. What is the name of the gymnasium instructor?

9. Where are the old Roman ruins in the St. Frank's district?
10. What is the name of the river which joins the Stowe some miles up-country?
11. What is the colour of Phyllis Palmer's eyes?
12. What is Owen minor's full name?

ANSWERS TO LAST WEEK'S QUESTIONS:

1. The old thatched barn in the corner of the paddock adjoining St. Frank's.
2. Miss Jane Trumble.
3. In the peak district of Derbyshire.
4. The Hon. Aubrey de Vere Wellborne.
5. Tessa Love.
6. Clement Turner, Joseph Page and Donald Harron.
7. Two.
8. Mr. Robert Grayle.
9. Mr. Francis Weston.
10. The Palladium.
11. Nipper.
12. Rupert.

At last, his confidence waning a little, Forrest went through the books. There were school books, story books, diaries, and so forth. One by one, he went through them, shaking their pages.

And, suddenly, something fell out of one of those books.

It was a sealed envelope—plain—and there was something slightly stiff inside it.

"By gad!" panted Forrest.

He tore open the flap and removed—an ordinary plain postcard. Written on it were these enlightening words:

"To B.F.—You don't think I'm such a fool as to keep it here, do you?—C. G.-P."

Forrest gritted his teeth with rage. It was bad enough to know that his quest had failed; but it was mortifying indeed to realise that Gore-Pearce had had sense enough to anticipate such a search as this. Perhaps he had kept the negative in here at first, but had then changed his mind. And he had left this piquant message in its place! He had prepared it in readiness for Forrest's arrival.

"The hound!" snarled Forrest. "What am I going to do now? Where is it? He must keep it somewhere—and somewhere handy, too!"

He bundled the things back into the trunk, his feelings too deep for words. Then he began a systematic search of the box-room. He looked at all the floorboards, hoping to find a loose one; he examined the fireplace and the cupboard, and almost every square inch of the apartment, but his quest was in vain.

At last, after an hour of fruitless searching, Bernard Forrest admitted himself beaten.

His electric torch was beginning to wane. The battery was becoming exhausted after such a lot of continuous use. And he was just as far from his objective as ever. He was feeling desperate. His move was unsuccessful. What should he do on the morrow? Gore-Pearce would want that money, and he hadn't got it for him! And, judging by Gore-Pearce's manner, the millionaire's son would not hesitate to put that threat of his into effect.

Forrest went downstairs, determined to have at least one search through Study B. Perhaps the negative was concealed in there, after all. It might be in the cupboard, or in a locked cash-box, or in some such place.

But just as Forrest was creeping along the first floor corridor, he checked. His heart leapt into his mouth. He could hear footsteps—and they were only just round the corner.

He switched off his electric torch and pressed himself into a doorway. He could see a flickering light—or the reflection of it—at the angle of the corridor. Somebody was coming. A master! There was no time for him to speed back to the end of the corridor, where there was a recess.

He found a door-handle behind him, and he silently turned it. Opening the door, he slipped in and closed the portal behind him. He was aware of regular breathing—so heavy that it amounted to a snore.

The room was not in complete darkness, and when Forrest glanced round his eyes opened wider. He was in a master's bedroom!



Frantically Forrest searched through the contents of Gore-Pearce's trunk for the vital negative. Suddenly something fell out of one of the books he had picked up. It was a sealed envelope. "By gad!" panted Forrest feverishly.

It was the apartment, in fact, of Professor Sylvester Tucker, the science master. And there was the professor, in bed, his head on the pillow, his mouth wide open, his spectacles still perched on his nose. Gripped in his hands was a book; evidently, the worthy professor had dropped off to sleep while reading.

There was a little electric standard lamp on the bedside table. It was glowing under its shade, casting a bright patch of light near the bed, but leaving the rest of the room in shadow.

Forrest had not bargained for any such adventure as this, and he was filled with alarm. After a few moments, however, he recovered something of his normal coolness. There wasn't much danger. The professor was so soundly asleep that he wasn't liable to wake up until the morning. Forrest had often heard that it was one of the professor's weaknesses to go to sleep with a book in his hand and his glasses on his nose.

Outside, there was now no sound of the footsteps, and Forrest considered that it would be safe for him to creep out.

But just then his attention was attracted by something on that bedside table. A little pile of bank notes!

Perhaps it was the professor's usual custom to put his money on the table beside his bed. Forrest stared at the notes fascinatedly. There seemed to be a number of them—green notes, half-folded. One-pound Bank of England notes, without doubt.

Bernard Forrest's mind was flooded with new thoughts. They mingled with the old ones.

He hadn't been able to find that negative—and, judging by Gore-Pearce's note, there wasn't much chance of him being successful. Claude was too cunning—too clever. He had hidden that negative away where nobody else but himself could find it. Then what of the morrow? Forrest would have to find that money. Ten pounds. If he didn't find it, he would be exposed.

And here, on Professor Tucker's table—

Forrest crept nearer, his gaze fixed upon those folded notes. The professor was still sleeping soundly, still snoring. Nearer and nearer crept Forrest.

At last he stood against the table. He reached forward, and gently went through the notes. He couldn't tell exactly how many there were, but he knew that there were more than ten.

His heart was thumping wildly. He had never intended, when he had started out on this night search, to become a thief. Bad as he was, he had had no such evil thought.

But, in his extremity, it now seemed an easy way out for him. Here was the money, and nobody would ever know that he had taken it. And Gore-Pearce would be satisfied for the time being. Before he made any fresh demands, Forrest would find that negative.

But would it be safe?

To-morrow there would be an inquiry, and perhaps the numbers of the notes would be known—

What if they were? It was Gore-Pearce who would have the notes! If anybody got into trouble, it would be he! He would be captured as the thief!

Then another thought came to Forrest.

He remembered Professor Tucker's notorious absent-mindedness. Why, it was ridiculous to suppose that there would be an inquiry over the missing money! The professor was so absent-minded that he was quite capable of forgetting it altogether.

At least, he would forget it for the time being. And when he needed money he would



Frantically Forrest searched through the contents of G one of the books he had picked up. It was

no doubt remember that he had had a bundle of notes, but he would never be able to remember where he had left them. He would search in vain, and if he made inquiries of the other masters they would only laugh at him. It would be assumed that the

professor had mislaid the notes, and the whole thing would be taken as a joke. Not a single day passed without Professor Tucker mislaying something. His absent-mindedness was a standing joke at St. Frank's.

To take money from any other master's

actually driven; and he considered that he was driven now. This was Gore-Pearce's doing—not his. In this way he stifled any feelings of honesty.

He clutched the notes more tightly, padded softly to the door, opened it and passed out into the corridor.

He paused there, breathing a great sigh of relief.

Then abruptly, dramatically, a match flared out!

"Forrest!" ejaculated an amazed voice.

It was the voice of Edward Oswald Handforth!

CHAPTER 8.

Caught Red-handed!

BERNARD FORREST, for once, was dumbfounded.

He might have attempted to get away, only Handforth had clutched his shoulder, and with the other hand he was holding the flaring match near his face.

"What were you doing—sneaking into Professor Tucker's bed-room like that?" demanded Handforth suspiciously. "What's your game, Forrest?"

Bernard Forrest fought to regain his composure. He tried to think of something to say—something plausible. He was so filled with consternation that his brain was confused. Handforth—the last fellow in the world he had wanted on the spot! Handforth had caught him red-handed!

The match went out.

"Better keep still!" muttered Handforth. "If you try to get away, you rotter, I'll slaughter you!"

For a moment he released his grip from Forrest's shoulder, and another match was struck. This time Handforth lit the candle he was carrying. Then he stepped back and took a good look at the other boy.

"Well, haven't you got a tongue in your head?" he demanded. "What were you doing in the professor's bed-room?"

"I—I thought I heard a sound in there," said Forrest, his throat dry and parched. "I thought the professor was ill, or something. But he was only snoring."

"You took a long time to find that out, didn't you?" asked Handforth suspiciously. "I've been waiting here for two or three minutes—By George, what's that in your hand? Money! What is it? Where did you get it from?"

for the vital negative. Suddenly something fell out of
"By gad!" panted Forrest feverishly.

bed-room might be risky. To take it from Professor Tucker's was no risk at all.

And it was such an easy way out for Forrest. A less unscrupulous fellow would have hesitated longer. Even Forrest would never have descended to theft unless he was





Edward Oswald Handforth undertakes to answer, in his own unique fashion, any question "N.L." readers care to submit to him. But, although of a certainty the results will be amusing and entertaining, the Editor takes no responsibility for their veracity. Write to Handforth, c/o the Nelson Lee Library, to-day.

"JACK" (Hanley). Thanks very much for the rock-cakes you sent me. I can quite believe you when you say that they were home-made. I suggest that next time you make any more of these cakes you use less cement. Still, those you sent me have come in very useful—for cracking nuts.

T. B. (Swanage). Yours was a most impolite letter, and I do not propose to answer any of your questions except the one in which you want to know what stars are. By George! Just let me meet you and you'll know what they are all right. You'll see enough to last you a lifetime!

"ENQUIRER" (Birmingham) writes asking who invented the first locomotive. I'm surprised at you not knowing the answer to this simple every-day question. Robert Louis Stevenson was the gent in question.

W. WARNER (Exeter). You're the kind of chap I like. Your addressing the envelope, "Detective-Inspector Handforth (C.I.D.)," pleased me immensely. Of course, it's not strictly true, but it will be one day. Strange to say, I didn't find any coiners' dens in Arizona, or cattle-rustlers. I suppose the bad lads knew I was coming, and so they cleared off in a panic.

G. RATCLIFFE (Putney). Please tell your sister that the curl in front of my head is quite natural, and is NOT obtained by eating crusts, as you foolishly suggest. If your sister wants to cultivate a similar curl, I advise her to get some fertiliser, rub it well in the hair, and then train it with frequent applications of a curled fork or rake.

"ANONYMOUS" (Langford). I'm going to print this reader's opinion of myself, just to show up you others who call me such names as donkey, old elephant, funny idiot, fatheaded frump, etc., etc. Here is what "Anonymous" says: "You are a great sportsman, a famous goalkeeper, a century-maker, a good detective, a great boxer, a good motor-driver, very popular with all who know you,

and all together one of the best." And I would like to add here that "Anonymous" did not ask to borrow five bob or even five-pence. You're one of the most sensible fellows I know, "Anonymous," and you're my friend for life!

FRED BURTON (Birmingham). You're an optimist if you think you could "knock my protruding chin in a trifle." My chin, like the rest of my anatomy, is cast-iron (including your brain, Handy?—Ed.), and so you've got some hopes.

"OLD ADMIRER" (Manchester) sends me a bright and chirpy letter which bristles with questions. Sorry, old man, but I can only answer a few of them here. The mouldy old Editor only allows me one page for this feature, not the whole of the NELSON LEE LIBRARY. The best boxer, footballer, cricketer, sculler, scholar, poet, author, actor, and playwright in the Remove is myself—and I hope you won't think I'm swanking. I suppose you think you're being very generous to offer me ten pounds an hour to come and look for your missing St. Frank's League certificate. Actually I consider you are jolly mean. After all it would only take me about a minute to find the thing, which means to say that I should receive the huge sum of three shillings and fourpence for my efforts. I think you'd better run away and fish for tiddlers!

"WARBLER" (Chester) writes asking me to give him some hints on singing. He says he can readily believe that I'm an excellent singer, and that I'm just the fellow to help him. You're quite right. If only you could hear me singing—why, a sparrow isn't in it! You can't do better than take plenty of castor oil or olive oil. This lubricates the vocal chords. If you haven't any—castor or olive oil, I mean—try brilliantine. Also eat plenty of jelly, for this will help to give you that "wobbly" effect which all singers aim to cultivate.

EDWARD OSWALD.

himself, Handforth was upon him, and they both rolled over on the floor. It only took Handforth about ten seconds to dive his fingers into Forrest's pocket and to grab those notes.

"If it wasn't for waking everybody, I'd smash you to pulp—here and now!" he panted. "You're a beastly, rotten thief!"

He pulled himself to his feet, and dragged Forrest up, too.

"Come on!" he went on grimly. "We're going back to the professor's bed-room. We're going to put that money back from where you took it. Or, if you like, we'll wake up the professor and tell him everything. We'll leave it to him!"

Bernard Forrest was at the end of his tether. It would be fatal to awaken the professor. Absent-minded though he was, he would remember that money in such circumstances. And when he discovered that Forrest had taken it, he would know that Forrest was a thief. He would report to the headmaster, and that would mean expulsion. Sacked for the second time!

On the other hand, if Forrest consented to put the money back, only the fellows would know. Handforth wouldn't sneak, and none of the other juniors would sneak. The disaster would be serious, but not fatal. So Forrest was trapped.

"All right! We'll go to the professor's bed-room," he panted, his voice so low that

it was hardly audible. "I'll—I'll put the money back on the table."

"You admit you stole it, then?"

"Hang you, yes!"

"You beastly crook!" said Handforth witheringly. "By George, I knew you were a rotter, but—"

"It wasn't for myself," breathed Forrest. "Gore-Pearce is blackmailing me—he's demanded ten pounds by the morning. I haven't got the money—and I had to get it somehow. I didn't mean to steal it when I went to the professor's bed-room. I was only hiding from you—although I didn't know it was you. And then I saw that money—"

"I believe you," said Handforth. "You couldn't have known that the money was there. Not that it makes any real difference. If you had had any honesty in you, you wouldn't have taken it. As for Gore-Pearce, you can't put the blame on him. And if he is blackmailing you, I'll bet he's got something pretty black against you."

"I didn't mean to take the money," said Forrest. "For goodness' sake, Handforth, don't tell any of the other chaps. If you'll only keep this quiet, I'll—I'll go straight in future."

"You couldn't go straight if you tried," retorted Handforth. "You're as crooked as a corkscrew! As for keeping it dark, I don't see why I should respect your rotten secrets."



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"You wouldn't sneak, would you?"

"Sneak be blowed!" said Handforth. "You've been fooling the Remove for weeks, and I'm going to put an end to your game. I'm going to show the fellows that you're not worth touching. You're a fraud and a bounder. Come on! You're coming with me."

They went back to Professor Tucker's bedroom, and Handforth quietly opened the door. He pushed Forrest in, and himself stood waiting on the threshold. The professor hadn't moved; he was as soundly asleep as ever.

"Go on!" breathed Handforth. "Put that money where you found it."

He thrust it into Bernard's hand, and Bernard tiptoed across the room and placed the money on the little table. Then he crept back, and Handforth closed the door again.

"Well, thank goodness," Handforth said, with a sigh of relief. "The professor won't know anything about it now—and you've been saved from the sack. Not that you don't deserve it, you cad! You'd better get to bed!"

"All right," muttered Forrest huskily.

"You'll hear more about this in the morning," promised Handforth. "Let me tell you, too, that I shall give myself the pleasure of thrashing you. By George, I'll give you the biggest hiding you ever had in your life—and after that you'll probably be frog-marched by the Form. Then you'll be sent to Coventry for the rest of the term."

Forrest went off, his feet like lead, his shoulders drooping. Every atom of defiance and bravado and insolence had left him. Caught red-handed in that way, he had been robbed of all his characteristic assurance.

He had only just gone off towards his own dormitory, however, before some figures appeared. They would have stopped him, only they were more attracted by Handforth—since Handforth was holding the candle.

They crowded round, curious and wondering. One of them was Nipper, another Travers, another Gresham.

"What the dickens are you doing here, Handy?" asked Nipper. "I heard some sounds, and I thought something was wrong. When I came out I found these other chaps in the passage. They'd heard rummy things, too."

"Come to my bed-room," said Handforth grimly.

There was something unusually grave about him—and he was so noisy as a rule that the other juniors were impressed. They guessed that something of particular grave import had happened.

They followed him to his bed-room without another word, and by the time they got there they were joined by De Valerie and

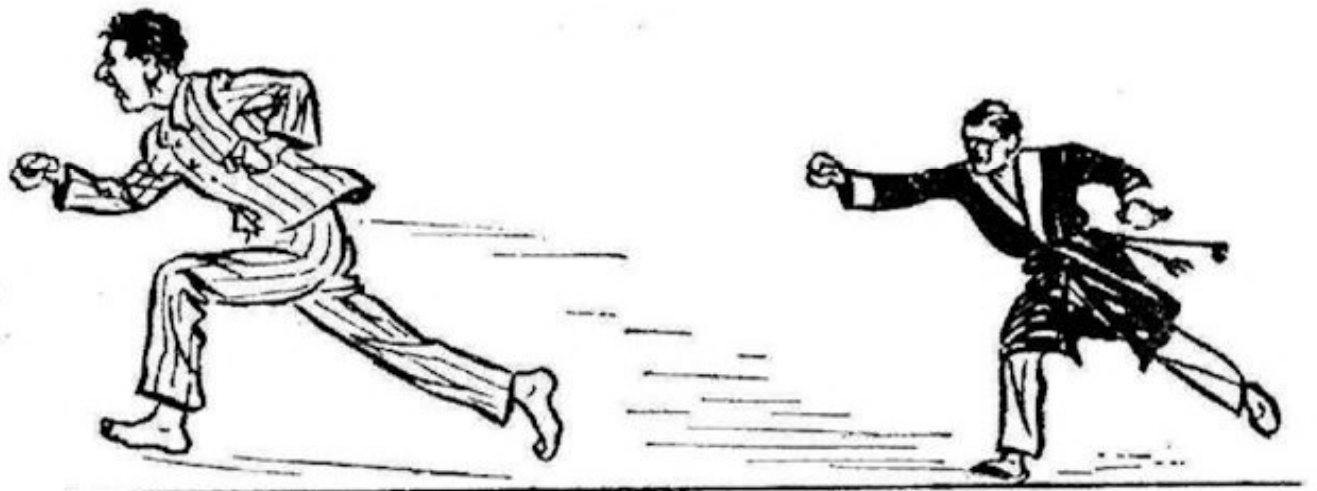
Fullwood and Jimmy Potts and two or three others.

"What's all this?" asked Church plaintively, as they came piling in. "Have you gone mad, Handy?"

"By George," said Handforth, with a start, "I'd forgotten all about your toe, Churchy!"

"Forgotten it?" echoed Church. "But you went out on purpose to get some hot water and some iodine."

"I know, but something happened," replied Handforth. "I say, I won't be a minute—"



"No, don't bother now," said Church. "The toe's feeling better. Isn't throbbing so much. I don't think there's anything really wrong."

"That toe still hurting you?" asked Nipper. "Let's have a look at it."

"Never mind his silly toe!" said De Valerie. "What happened out in the corridor, Handy? Didn't we spot Forrest?"

Before Handforth replied, he bent over Church, and he and Nipper quickly examined the injured toe.

"It's all right," said Nipper. "A bit inflamed, but I don't think there's any danger of complications. I shouldn't bathe it again to-night if I were you, Handy."

"Of course not," said Church. "I told him not to make a fuss. It'll be healed within a day or two. What's all the excitement about? Why are you fellows out of bed like this?"

"I'll tell you," said Handforth, looking round at the others. "Forrest's a thief!"

"Oh, draw it mild!"

"Cheese it, Handy!"

"Don't be an ass, you know!"

Most of them protested vigorously.

"I tell you, Forrest's a thief," repeated Handforth. "I spotted him going into Professor Tucker's bed-room, and when he came out he was carrying a sheaf of banknotes."

"Great Scott!"

"I grabbed him, and he denied that he'd stolen the money," continued Handforth. "But when I put him to the test, when I suggested that we should awaken Professor Tucker, he crumpled up. I made him go back into the bed-room, and I saw him put the notes back on the Professor's bedside table."

"Well, well," muttered Travers. "You can never tell with these black sheep, dear old fellow. We had an idea that Forrest had

changed, but it seems that Handy was right all the time."

"Leopards don't change their spots!" said Handforth, with a sniff. "Forrest's been a rotter all the time. This proves it. He says that he's being blackmailed by Gore-Pearce, and that he pinched the money because of that."

"I don't see that Gore-Pearce makes any difference," said Nipper. "Whatever Gore-Pearce has done, there's no excuse for Forrest. This is awful, you know. We shall have to keep it dark—we can't sneak, but it'll make the position rotten for everybody. I think we'd better keep this just to ourselves, and we'll know how to treat Forrest in future."

IN the meantime, Bernard Forrest had thought of something.

He was done now—he was discredited among his Form-fellows. No doubt Gore-Pearce would be questioned on the morrow, and he would then display that photograph. Was there any possible chance of preventing that added catastrophe?

In his extremity Forrest had a flash of inspiration.

Gore-Pearce was keeping that negative, and the prints as well, in his own bed-room—under his pillow! It was the one place he would choose during the night.

It was a shrewd shot—and Forrest meant to put it to the test at once.

Within a minute he was in the little dormitory. Gore-Pearce and Hubbard and Long were sound asleep. A gleam of moonlight was filtering in through the window, and the wind was buffeting against the panes.

Softly and stealthily, Forrest crept across to Claude's bed. Then, working with extreme caution, he slid his hand under the pillow. A second afterwards, his heart gave a jump. For his fingers closed over some flat object which felt like paper.

"I knew it!" he breathed gloatingly.

He withdrew his find, and, holding it up in the moonlight, he saw that wretched photograph. There were two or three copies of it—and something black. The negative! Here it was!

Then, before he could take another breath, a wild, devastating scream shattered the stillness.

It came from Teddy Long, who was sitting up in bed, frightened out of his wits. He had seen Forrest's figure in the moonlight, and he had let out that yell in a terrified panic.

Forrest leapt to his feet, and Gore-Pearce and Hubbard sat up in bed, sleepy and bewildered—and very startled.

At the same moment there came footsteps—many of them—in the corridor. Teddy Long screamed again; the door was burst open and somebody switched on the light.

This was certainly not Bernard Forrest's lucky night!

CHAPTER 9.

His True Colours!

"STOP him!" shouted Gore-Pearce frantically.

Claude had taken a moment or two to awaken, but the sight of the photographs in Forrest's hand had effectually cleared his mind of sleep. He leapt out of bed just as Forrest was attempting to make a dash out of the doorway. But Forrest did not succeed owing to the fact that the doorway, at that moment, became filled with figures.

"Oh, my only hat!" panted Teddy Long, white to the lips, staring at Forrest. "I—I thought he was a ghost, or something! I spotted him in the moonlight—"

"You silly young idiot, yelling like that!" said Nipper sharply. "Do you want all the prefects and masters in the school to come down on us?"

"I—I didn't know he was Forrest," faltered Teddy.

"What were you doing in this dormitory, Forrest?" asked Nipper.

"Mind your own confounded business," snarled Forrest.

"Grab him!" said Gore-Pearce excitedly. "He's stolen something from under my pillow!"

"He seems to be well away on the burgling stunt to-night," remarked Travers. "Well, well! I don't suppose he's found much of value."

"Let's have a look!" said Handforth grimly.

Before Forrest could stop him, he wrenched the photographs and the negative away. Forrest had intended destroying them, but he was so startled by this sudden interruption—coming, as it did, on the top of the other disaster—that he had had no time to put his plan into execution.

"By George!" ejaculated Handforth, in a startled voice.

"What is it, Handy?" asked Gresham.

"Hold that chap!" said Handforth.

"Hold Forrest! Don't let him get away!"

Bernard Forrest shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, the game's up, so I might as well admit myself beaten," he said sullenly. "I shan't try to get away."

"Not much hope, eh?" said Travers. "Too many of us between you and the door, Forrest. Now, what's all the excitement about?"

"Look at these photographs!" said Handforth tensely. "By George! Haven't I told you fellows all along that Forrest was spoofing you?"

"What about me?" put in Gore-Pearce. "Didn't I tell you so the other day? And didn't you almost send me to Coventry because I told the truth? You all thought that I was lying, so I made up my mind to get proof. There it is—in that photograph!"

Now that the die was cast, Bernard Forrest recovered some of his old insolent coolness. He stood there with a hard, contemp-



As Forrest made a rush at him, Gore-Pearce [backed against the low parapet. Next second the tragedy happened. Gore-Pearce lost his balance, and with a scream of terror he fell backwards over the parapet!

tuous expression on his face. He realised that the imposture had run its course.

The photographs were handed round, and all the fellows examined them closely.

"I don't quite understand," said Nipper. "Where was this snap taken—and when? Wait a minute, though! By Jove!"

"Exactly!" nodded Gore-Pearce.

"So Forrest was at the Wheatsheaf two or three nights ago," said Nipper grimly. "Playing cards for money—drinking——"

"Having a good time generally," said Forrest, nodding. "The fact is, I was sick of pretending to be so infernally goody-goody, and I had to have a bit of relaxation."

"How did you know that Forrest had been at the Wheatsheaf two or three nights ago?" demanded Handforth, staring at Nipper. "How could you tell from this photo?"

"Haven't you spotted the calendar on the wall?" said Nipper.

"Well I'm blessed!" said Handforth.

"I took that photograph—by flashlight!" said Gore-Pearce triumphantly. "I don't mind you fellows knowing that I was breaking bounds. I only did it so that I could trap Forrest. He's been throwing dust in your eyes for so long that I thought it was

time to show him up. So I followed him to Bannington that night, and I got that photograph—as proof."

"So that you could blackmail me, eh?" said Forrest furiously. "You toad! You reptile! I haven't finished with you yet! I'm going to smash you for this! At least, I shall have the satisfaction of——"

"Don't let him get at me!" panted Gore-Pearce, reading the danger-signal in Forrest's eyes.

"Don't worry," said Nipper. "There's going to be no fighting here. So you're a fraud, Forrest?"

"Who cares?" sneered Forrest. "I've fooled you all ever since I came back——"

"You didn't fool me!" put in Handforth sourly.

"And in some ways, Forrest, you weren't fooling," said Nipper. "You played football well, and as long as you keep up your present form you'll be needed for the Eleven."

"Thanks all the same, but the Eleven can go to the dickens!" said Forrest. "Gad! Do you think I like football? I hate the game! I only played because it suited me to play! Now that this spoof of mine is over, I shall find something better to do

than play football! I don't care a hang for any of you! You can all eat coke! I'm glad, in a way, that the thing's over. At any rate, I can now smash Gore-Pearce!"

"You'd better leave Gore-Pearce alone," said Nipper sharply. "You're in enough trouble already, Forrest. Luckily for you, nobody in authority knows of your visit to Professor Tucker's bed-room——"

"You think I'm a thief, eh?" broke in Forrest hotly.

"Think!" ejaculated Handforth. "Why, you rotter, I caught you red-handed!"

"Gore-Pearce made me do it!" panted Forrest, his voice quivering with fury. "Don't you understand his game? He's been blackmailing me! He only took that photograph so that he could get me into his clutches! He demanded ten pounds by to-morrow morning—or he would expose me. I never meant to steal any of the professor's money. I only dodged into that room because I thought somebody was coming. I saw the money there, and I was a fool to be tempted. But it was Gore-Pearce's doing—he'd made me desperate."

Something in Forrest's tone warned Claude that this apartment was not healthy for him. Even the presence of these other juniors did not reassure him. He had edged his way to the door, and now he suddenly opened it and dashed out.

"I'm going to call the prefects!" he shouted frantically. "He'll half kill me if I don't have protection!"

Bernard Forrest made a rush for the door. "Hold him!" shouted Nipper.

Two or three of the fellows attempted to grab Forrest. They succeeded, but he wrenched himself free, and the next second he was out in the corridor. He held Gore-Pearce responsible for all his troubles; it was Gore-Pearce who had brought about this exposure. Well, Gore-Pearce should receive his payment!

"Help—help!" screamed Claude as he ran.

A glance over his shoulder had told him that the other juniors had failed to hold Forrest back, and Gore-Pearce ran on blindly, unthinkingly. He found himself dashing up the stairs, which led to the attics. In his rear he could hear Forrest's running footsteps and Forrest's reckless shouts of rage.

By now, of course, many prefects had been aroused, and they were already coming out to find out what all the noise was about. Masters were getting up, too.

But none of them could possibly arrive in time to save Gore-Pearce from his enemy. At the top of the attic stairs, Claude did not waste a moment. He realised, now that he was here, that he had made a blunder. There was no way of escape for him now. Forrest was gaining on him.

Claude suddenly gave a gulp. He remembered another little stairway, leading upwards to a door that gave on to the flat

roof. He clawed his way up, found the door, and dragged the bolts back.

"Now I've got you!" snarled a voice behind him.

Gore-Pearce shrieked, and almost fell out on to the roof. He had felt Forrest's fingers clutching at him. Now he ran over the tiles, a wild, frantic figure in the moonlight. He was wearing nothing but his pyjamas, and the chill October wind whistled round his unprotected body.

He ran straight across the roof, knowing all the time that his effort was futile; for when he reached the opposite parapet he was

COMING NEXT WEEK! ~~~~~



compelled to stand at bay. He could go no farther.

"Now I've got you!" panted Forrest savagely. "I gave you a thrashing once before, Gore-Pearce—but now I'm going to make you really suffer!"

"Help, help!" screamed the millionaire's son.

Forrest rushed him. Claude backed against the parapet, horrified, and so great was his terror that he failed to realise that that parapet was fairly low. He staggered, lost his balance, and a scream of terror escaped his lips.

For he felt himself falling—he had lost his balance.

Over he went, clutching madly at the air. He hovered for one awful second, and then vanished backwards into the void!

"GOOD Heavens!" gasped Bernard Forrest.

All his rage had left him in that one dreadful second. He believed that Claude Gore-Pearce had gone down to his death—and that he, Forrest, had sent him. It was enough to sicken him. He was almost afraid to go to the parapet and look over.

"Help—help!" came a moaning shout.

Forrest started. It was Gore-Pearce's voice! And from comparatively near by!

He dashed to the parapet and looked over. The explanation was simple. Claude, instead

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of falling right to the ground, had lodged on a little ledge of stone, only seven or eight feet below the parapet. It was an ornamental ledge, narrow and treacherous. Gore-Pearce was clutching at it with desperation.

"Save me!" sobbed Claude. "I'm slipping! I can't hold any longer!"

In the moonlight Forrest could see that the other junior was in a desperate plight. At any second he might lose his grip and fall—and if he fell it would mean death, or grave injury.

"Hang on!" shouted Forrest. "I'll get you!"

And now the astonishing thing happened. Forrest, the cad, the rascal—performing an act of genuine bravery!

His quick wits told him that Gore-Pearce could never last until ropes were fetched or

ladders were propped up against the wall. It would be only a matter of seconds before he would lose his hold. And Forrest was the only living person who could help at this moment.

He did not hesitate. He shouted for assistance at the top of his voice, then threw his leg over the stone parapet and proceeded to lower himself down the face of the building.

Everything that was good in him came to the surface now. He felt responsible for Gore-Pearce's danger, so it was up to him to act. He forgot all else. It was, indeed, an exhibition of cool courage and sterling worth.

"I'm slipping—I'm slipping!" sobbed Gore-Pearce.

"All right—I'll have you in a tick!" said Forrest. "Don't be scared."

He took no notice of the yawning chasm beneath him. Down there, on the ground, there was nothing but the hard flagstones. One slip, and he would go hurtling down. There was no other ledge to save him if he fell. But never for a moment did he hesitate. His one idea was to get to Gore-Pearce and to support him until help arrived.

It was a strange situation—Forrest going to the rescue of the fellow he had sworn to thrash within an inch of his life. Yet it was quite logical. If Gore-Pearce fell, and killed himself, Forrest would feel that he was responsible for the tragedy. So, at all costs, he must avert the disaster. Another fellow, in Forrest's position, might not have possessed the cool-headedness to essay such a task or the pluck to put it into execution. But, rascally though Forrest was, nobody had ever questioned his courage.

Now, in this dramatic situation, the best in him was revealed.

It was the desperate nature of the situation which led Forrest to risk his own life for the sake of his worst enemy. If he had had time to consider the perils, he might have held back. For that climb down the face of the building was an appallingly dangerous one. He lowered himself gingerly, seeking foothold in the crevices, and gripping fiercely with his fingers. His rubber-soled shoes helped him, for no footgear could have been better for this particular task.

"I'm going!" shrieked Gore-Pearce suddenly.

Forrest felt his feet on the ledge, and he almost flung himself flat, reaching at the same time for Gore-Pearce's shoulder. He obtained a grip under the arm and held tightly.

"It's all right—I've got you!" he said steadily. "Don't struggle, you fool! Here you are—grab my arm! I've got you!"

Gore-Pearce clutched with the ferocity of a drowning man. He nearly pulled Forrest off his precarious perch. Luckily there was a stout root of ivy close at hand, and Forrest gripped his fingers round it and held firmly. It was this which saved him from tottering over backwards into the abyss.

"Keep still and you'll be all right!" he said. "I can't do any more than this. If I try to move I shall lose my own hold, and we shall both go down. Hang tight until help comes. It won't be long."

Gore-Pearce was incapable of speech. He was nearly fainting with terror.

Loud shouts were now sounding on the roof, and there was a rush of feet. Lights were appearing all over the school. Down below there were some seniors, staring up at those two figures high up on the face of the building.

"Great Scott!" gasped Handforth, as he ran to the parapet and looked over. "What's happened?"

"Gore-Pearce fell over—and I came after him," replied Forrest. "Hurry up with some ropes or something. I can't hold for long."

Shouts of consternation were going up all along the parapet, where the juniors were crowded. It was incredible that Forrest should have climbed down to assist his enemy. But it was a fact, as everybody could see.

"Hold on! I can be useful here!" said a brisk voice.

Stanley Waldo, of the Remove, did not hesitate. He swarmed over the parapet, and proceeded to lower himself down with a coolness and a certainty that was fascinating to watch.

"Stop!" ejaculated Nipper. "You'll kill yourself if you slip, Waldo——"

"I shan't slip!" replied Waldo. "Get ready to lend a hand. One of you had better hang head downwards—the others can hold him. These chaps can't last much longer."

Stanley Waldo was a most remarkable boy. He was the son of the famous Peril Expert, and he inherited all his father's amazing qualities. He had phenomenal strength, and he was as agile as a monkey. This task was one which came easy to him.

And while it had been perilous for Forrest to climb down, it was almost a safe job for Waldo. If he had been on the spot earlier there would have been no necessity for Forrest's act. As it was, Forrest had unquestionably saved Gore-Pearce; for the latter could never have lasted until now.

"Give us your hand!" said Waldo coolly.

"No—take Gore-Pearce first," panted Forrest. "I've got a good hold on this ivy, and I'm all right. Gore-Pearce is nearly fainting with terror. Get him up first."

By this time Handforth was hanging head downwards from the parapet, Church and McClure and others holding on to his legs. Waldo seized Gore-Pearce by the arm and he lifted him as though he had been a mere feather-weight. There was something almost uncanny in this display of strength.

Waldo hoisted Claude farther up, and Handforth obtained a grip.

"All right now," said Handforth. "We've got him. You'd better get hold of Forrest, old man. He doesn't look any too safe."

And then, at that moment, there was a sound of tearing roots. A shout of alarm came from Bernard Forrest. Waldo clutched, but he had been giving his attention to Gore-Pearce, and he was too late.

The ivy had been unable to stand the strain!

Forrest, shifting his grip so that he could obtain a better hold, had allowed his full weight to pull on that ivy root.

He tried to clutch at the stonework, but he failed. There was one dreadful second of suspense, and then the worst happened! Bernard Forrest went hurtling down into the void!

CHAPTER 10.

Another Chance!

THUD!

Followed a tense silence. Then a tumult arose—shouts and a rush of feet. Down on the ground juniors and seniors went rushing to the spot where Bernard Forrest had fallen. They found him lying huddled at the foot of the wall, still and silent.

"He's killed himself!" said one of the prefects hoarsely.

Upon the roof Gore-Pearce had been dragged to safety, and Waldo succeeded in getting back over the parapet. Gore-Pearce had really fainted now, but only a few took any notice of him. It was Forrest who mattered. Forrest had given his life, it seemed, for the sake of Gore-Pearce. And all those who had been so bitter against him changed their opinion. This act had wiped out much of the old stain. Forrest had proved himself a real hero this time.

When Handforth and Nipper and the others got to the ground they found that Mr. Nelson Lee had been on the scene, with some of the other masters. Forrest had been carried away to the sanatorium. Everybody believed that he was dead. A car was rushed off to fetch the doctor. Never before had St. Frank's been so disturbed in the middle of the night. In every House all the lights were glowing. Everybody was up, and scores of fellows were excitedly asking what it all meant.

The prefects had a busy time ordering the juniors back into their dormitories, and it wasn't until a full hour had elapsed that any news came. It was Fenton, of the Sixth, who brought it to the Ancient House.

"Forrest isn't dead," he said, with relief, "but he's very badly crocked. His left arm is broken, and there's some talk of his skull being fractured. He's got concussion of the brain, anyhow."

"Will he live?" asked Nipper.

"Dr. Brett thinks so—but it's impossible to tell just now," replied Fenton. "Everybody had better get back to bed. You can't do anything, and there'll be no further news

until the morning, anyhow. There's been quite enough commotion to-night."

"It's a wonder that Forrest wasn't killed!" said Handforth. "Only a broken arm—and concussion? Well, I'm glad. No matter how great a rotter he is, he proved himself to be made of the right stuff to-night."

"Hear, hear!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Well done, Forrest!"

"It's a pity that such a plucky chap should be a rotter," said Nipper. "Let's hope that it'll be a lesson to him—and that he'll be changed when he comes out of the sanny."

"That won't be for weeks—perhaps months," said Fenton. "In fact, he may never come back into the school. It all depends. Now, come along—get to bed, you fellows."

NEXT day Bernard Forrest's father arrived.

He had been wired for by Dr. Nicholls, and he got to St. Frank's at about midday. By this time the whole school had learned that Forrest was delirious, and he was in a grave condition. But there was every hope that he would pull through.

None of the Removites had breathed a word to the prefects or masters about that incident which had led up to the disaster. Nobody quite knew—nobody in authority, that is—why Gore-Pearce had fallen from the roof. Nobody knew that money had been taken from Professor Tucker's bedroom, and put back. Nobody knew about those photographs—which, by now, had been destroyed. The juniors kept these details to themselves. Bernard Forrest had done something decent at last, and it was only fair to him that the evidence of his rascality should be suppressed.

There was quite enough against him without that!

There was more, in fact, than any of the juniors knew. Dr. Morrison Nicholls was grave and grim when Mr. Forrest entered his study.

"Your son is out of danger, Mr. Forrest," said the Head. "Presently I shall take you to the sanatorium, and you may see him."

"I want to see him now!" said Mr. Forrest hoarsely. "Give me the details of this accident. What happened?"

"Another boy fell from the roof and was caught on a ledge," replied the Head. "Your son climbed down, at the risk of his own life, and saved this other boy. Unfortunately, he fell before he himself could be rescued."

"But why should this be allowed to happen in the middle of the night?" demanded Mr. Forrest with heat. "I always understood that this was a properly conducted school—"

"Before you criticise the conduct of this school, Mr. Forrest, I want to ask you an important question," broke in Dr. Nicholls.

"You may remember that your son was re-admitted to St. Frank's because of a plucky action he performed in front of my very eyes."

Mr. Forrest nodded.

"Yes, he saved a young lady from drowning in the river," he said. "What of it?"

"Was that rescue a deliberately arranged plot on your part, Mr. Forrest?" asked the head ominously.

Mr. Forrest started, and he looked taken aback.

"Any verbal answer on your part is unnecessary, sir," continued the Head. "I am amazed that you should have been a party to such a despicable piece of work."

"But—but I protest—"

"Your son, in his delirium, has spoken a good deal of that wretched affair," explained the Head. "There has also been some mystery concerning a haystack that was deliberately set on fire. I have not the slightest doubt that your son is the guilty party. He has said as much, many times, in his delirium. Since he came back to St. Frank's he has apparently been indulging in the same disreputable conduct that earned him his former expulsion. And you, sir, were directly instrumental in hoodwinking me—"

"I acknowledge it," said Mr. Forrest quietly. "I had made up my mind that my son should go through St. Frank's, and I earnestly and honestly believed that he was changed. What you have told me about him setting fire to a haystack is incredible. I understand from the other boys that Bernard has been playing the game properly since he arrived back here. He has made a name for himself in football, and has become popular."

"I very much fear that your son was practising a big deception," said the Head. "However, there is no doubt about his prowess as a footballer—neither is there any doubt regarding his courage. His act last night was beyond all praise."

Mr. Forrest was silent.

"Solely because of that act, I am disposed to forgive him," continued the Head. "I will overlook that former piece of trickery—in which you yourself took part. I can only hope, Mr. Forrest, that you will write a full and complete letter of apology to the Chairman and the Governors."

"I will do so—gladly," muttered Mr. Forrest. "Yet, Dr. Nicholls, was I not justified?"

"There can be no justification, sir, for such unscrupulous methods," replied the Head sternly.

"At all events, my son has proved himself worthy now," insisted Mr. Forrest. "I am glad that you have decided to forget the past. When Bernard recovers, you will allow him to resume his place in the school?"

"Yes," said Dr. Nicholls. "But I warn you frankly that he will be closely watched—that his Housemaster will be warned to keep a special eye on him. And I shall require

you also to make full compensation for the burning of that haystack. Perhaps it was an accident, and your son was afraid to confess."

"Perhaps it would be better, in the circumstances, not to make too close an inquiry," said Mr. Forrest. "I will willingly pay whatever sum is involved. My son is laid very low, Dr. Nicholls, and I urge you to let me see him at once."

"It is his present condition—and the reason for it—which has influenced me to act with leniency," said Dr. Nicholls, going to the door. "Come, Mr. Forrest—I will take you to the sanatorium."

THE Head made no attempt to disguise the fact that he was very angry with Bernard Forrest's father. And he was by no means friendly. However, the affair was over, and the Head acted with cold politeness.

Mr. Forrest found his son quiet and rational. The delirium had gone, leaving the boy weak. He was swathed in bandages and splints, and he looked very different from his old self. He was never told that he had given many secrets away in his delirium.

And Dr. Brett was optimistic. Complications were not likely; Forrest was healthy

and strong, and he was showing signs of rapid mending. In fact, it was more than likely that Forrest would take his place in the Remove again after only two or three weeks in the sanatorium.

In the meantime, the rest of the school discussed him endlessly, and it was generally decided that he had acted like a good fellow.

He had earned the right to be treated as an equal by all the others when he should return to the Remove. The past would be forgotten. And there was just a chance that he would drop his old bad ways—but, as Handforth pointed out, a very slim chance.

As for Claude Gore-Pearce, nobody in the Remove doubted that he had practised a form of blackmail, and he was sent to Coventry by all and sundry. He was a cad and a rascal; and he was receiving his just reward.

THE END.

(That's the end of that fine series of yarns, chums. And now you must watch out for the stupendous new mystery series which is starting next week with the story entitled "The Living Guy!" This yarn contains a strong "Fifth of November" interest, and is one of the best Edwy Searles Brooks has written for a long time. Don't miss it, chums!)

CORRESPONDENTS WANTED

W. R. Browne, 14, Dacre Street, **Morpeth**, Northumberland, wants correspondents in Australasia, Scotland, Ireland and France.

George Burgess, 271, North Street, **Amberley**, Sussex, wants to hear from Stanley Horsley of Bristol.

J. Newstead, 8, Lawn Avenue, **Burley-in-Wharfedale**, Yorks., offers "N.L.L." new series.

Alfred Taylor, 4, Servia Grove, Meanwood Road, **Leeds**, wants correspondents anywhere; also wants to join a sports club in his district.

W. Warner, 56, East Grove Road, St. Leonards, **Exeter**, would like to hear from readers.

A. H. Porter, 130, Myddleton Road, Bowes Park, **London, N.22**, wants to hear from cycling members in his district so as to form a club.

T. W. Moss, 70, Wennington Road, **Rainham**, Essex, wants correspondents interested in sports; also wishes to exchange "N.L.L." new series, for old series.

R. Canham, 17, Newcomen Road, Stansham, **Portsmouth**, offers "N.L.L." new series, clean and complete.

Miss Ruby Wilson, Armstrong Road, Bayswater, **Victoria, Australia**, wants correspondents—not Australian.

A. B. Tan, c/o Hung, Seng & Co., 231, River Valley Road, **Singapore, Straits Settlements**, wants correspondents interested in football, films, and postcards.

Thomas Fallon, 57, Priory Street, Stockingford, **Nuneaton**, Warwickshire, wishes to correspond with readers in the British Empire and the States.

W. R. Marsh, c/o Mrs. Hastings, Mill Cottage, 17, St. Martin's Hill, **Canterbury**, Kent, wants correspondents who collect stamps.

H. Titchener, 282, Richmond Road, Hackney, **London, E.8**, requires correspondents from Egypt, Siam, China, India, and especially South Africa.

Bert Powell, Jr., 1211, King Street, **West Westlake**, Hamilton, Ontario, **Canada** (aged 17), wants correspondents.

J. Hayes, Fairfield House, Santry, Co. Dublin, desires correspondents in Egypt; interested in stamps and photography.

S. Cox, 98, Crossing, Kings-Road, **Kirton**, wants correspondents.

Guy E. Buck, 16, Rotherham Street, Riccarton, Christchurch, **New Zealand**, offers old series of the N.L.L.

Leslie H. A. Rickson, 32, Pollock Road, Walworth, **London, S.E.17**, wants correspondents.

A Henderson, Jr., 35, Broadlands Road, Hampton Park, **Southampton**, wants members for his Wide World Wireless Club.

William Weltman, 98, Forest Lane, Forest Gate, **London, E.7**, wants correspondents in Australia and the British Isles.

GOSSIP ABOUT ST. FRANK'S



Things Heard and Seen By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

HERE'S a fellow—Arthur R. Brown, of Ilford—who talks about pestering me with a letter as though he is committing some offence. He says that he only started reading the Old Paper about three months ago, and he seems to imagine that he really has no right to write to me at all. I hope his view isn't taken by all our hosts of other new readers, for it's a certainty that we *do* get hosts of new readers every week. I am just as interested to hear from the newest of new readers as I am to hear from the oldest of old ones. The only trouble is that new readers are liable to ask me all sorts of questions regarding the school, the occupants of certain studies, and so on. And I really cannot reply to such questions in these columns, because the information would be boring to the great majority, who know these details already. It is up to new readers to be patient and to follow the stories for a while, when all these points will be made clear to them as they get more and more familiar with the school and its characters. I would also recommend new readers closely to study the Questionnaire, which in itself is a fund of information.

* * *

BASIL ALVARADO, of Newcastle-on-Tyne (somehow, I have my suspicions regarding that name), informs me that my stories of late are getting stodgy. It's just as well to have a little jar like this now and again. He wants something more exciting—something more Edgar Wallace-y, I suppose. Well, according to the way things are going at St. Frank's, I think that our Newcastle friend will get what he wants. I have an idea that the St. Frank's fellows are booked for plenty of thrills in the future. They say that truth is stranger than fiction, don't they?

OUR READERS' PORTRAIT GALLERY



Francis H. Burrow

ARCHIE GLENTHORNE is looking very bucked just now. The reason, I think, is because he has heard about the wonderful flight of his brother, Captain Bertram Glenthorne, across Africa and back. Archie's eldest brother is a very famous airman—and his second brother, George, is almost equally celebrated. George is one of the regular pilots on the cross-Channel service, and on more than one occasion he has been selected to pilot the machines of very famous Cabinet Ministers and other notables. Oliver Coburn, of London, N.W.6, wants me to bring Archie's brothers into the stories again, and I shall certainly do so when they figure in some incident which brings them in association with the old school.

* * *

OUR photograph this week is of Francis H. Burrow, the Tooting reader who has helped me quite a lot in tracking down some old back numbers of the Old Paper that I required. He's one of our most enthusiastic readers, and he has proved his enthusiasm in a very practical manner. All

readers who are hunting for back numbers will find full details of how to obtain them if they turn back to last week's "Gossip."

* * *

JUST at present Harry Gresham is partnering Reggie Pitt on the wing in most of the Junior games, and Harry is doing splendidly. I was just as puzzled about this as Arthur Turek, of Lavender Hill, seems to be. I asked Nipper about it, mentioning that I had always regarded Fullwood as Pitt's ideal partner. I understand that Fullwood has gone off form a bit, but this is probably only a temporary lapse.

A. J. S., of St. Helen's, Lancs., has given me a poser. Who is the most handsome boy in the Remove? And, as if that isn't sufficient, she wants to know (for my Lancashire reader is a girl), who is the most handsome fellow in the whole school? Well, in an endeavour to solve this problem, I had a close look at the chaps when I was last down at St. Frank's—without, of course, giving them any inkling as to my object. I should say that, from a feminine point of view, Reggie Pitt is the most handsome junior, and Edgar Fenton the most handsome senior. What on earth they're going to do to me when they see this I cannot imagine. They'll certainly be after my blood.

THE other day, Stevens, of the Fifth, showed me an excellent descriptive article of St. Frank's that he had written. It's not very long, but it gives a very fine picture of the old school, with all sorts of interesting details. Fred Burton, of Blackburn, says he would like to see a descriptive picture of St. Frank's College. Now, I don't know whether he means a drawing or a pen picture; but if the latter, there's just a possibility that the Editor will consider Stevens' effort good enough to lift from the St. Frank's Magazine (in which it is booked to appear) for publication in the Old Paper. Here's a bit of information that Fred requires. "The River House Raiders" appeared in New Series, No. 124, and it was dated September 15th, 1928.

HERE'S an Australian reader—Max Miller, of Sydney—telling me that quite a number of his friends have been telling him that Nipper and Handforth and the others are purely legendary, and he wants to see a reference to his letter in these columns, so that he can confound the sceptics. All I can say is that if Max's friends felt Handy's fist they would know it wasn't imaginary!

WILLIAM KITCHEN, of Buxton, Derbys., wants to know all sorts of things. Does Fullwood still retain his famous monocle? To tell the truth, it's so long since he wore one that I'd forgotten it. He's given up this affectation long ago. (I hope Archie doesn't see this!) William also wants to know when Fullwood reformed, but as this information was given quite recently, I expect he's got it, and I shan't waste space by repeating it. Is there any chance, asks William, of Lord Pippinton being featured? Well, I don't know. Old Pippy is such a lazy beggar that I doubt if he will ever muster sufficient energy to come to the fore. As for the return of Bernard Forrest, this question is already answered in the current stories.

EDWARD R. BENHAM, of South Shields, is feeling a bit blue, I gather from his letter. He ought to join the League, and get in touch with the Chief Officer—who will give him all sorts of good advice—and he can link up, too, with some cheery correspondents. I hope he won't mind my quoting a few of his words: "I feel I can't end this letter without an attempt, however inarticulate, to express what the 'N.L.L.' means to me, and probably others. It is not just bought to be perused in order to kill time. It has a peculiar atmosphere I am unable to define, which is very attractive. It is against all slackness, and it is all for straight, courageous dealing with everything." I do hope, indeed, that there are plenty of other readers who buy the Old Paper for the same reasons, and that they join in the adventures of the St. Frank's fellows as though they were actually with them. That's how I feel when I'm writing, and it's how I should like our readers to feel when they are reading.

A. C. SMITH and R. W. Wing, of Reading, after telling me that they consider the Old Paper is the finest twopennyworth on the market, proceed to grouse about Edward Oswald Handforth. They feel that old Handy is too much to the fore. But what am I to do? Handy is just the sort of chap who will butt in; and if I'm going to make these yarns a true record of the happenings at St. Frank's, I've got to keep him to the fore. I'm consoled by the knowledge that the majority of our readers like old Handy as much as I do.

HERE'S a Durham reader—Sidney B. Willis—who is absolutely thirsting for knowledge. In a fairly short letter he has asked so many questions about St. Frank's that I am feeling dizzy. If I attempted to reply to them all I should not only fill this week's Gossip pages, but next week's and the week after's, too. I think it would be a jolly good idea for all readers to ask just one or two questions in each letter, so that I'm not frightened off replying. In this way, they would be practically certain of attention if their questions were of general interest.

THE resident chaplain of St. Frank's is never mentioned because he isn't the kind of man who would interest the majority of readers, and he naturally doesn't figure in the incidents which are usually recorded. Gordon H. Sewell, of Southampton, has asked me if there is a resident chaplain. Well, here's his answer. The gentleman's name is the Rev. David Smythe, and he officiates, I believe, more often than Dr. Nicholls himself.

HERE'S ANOTHER STIRRING INSTALMENT OF OUR FINE ADVENTURE SERIAL, CHUMS!

The ISLAND CASTAWAYS!

by ARTHUR S. HARDY



(Introduction on page 39)

The Last of Kemish!

"FOR whoever finds me," Daniel Kemish had written upon the envelope in heavy black pencil, and the protecting pocket had preserved it. Tearing open the envelope, Tom began to read. But he could hear Dave Sellwood coming, and after one swift glance, he stowed the letter away. He did not want Sellwood to see it—yet.

"I've tried to persuade Miss Hanway to keep away, Master Tom," called Dave, as he drew near, "but she says she doesn't see why she should."

Tom did not answer at once. Then he said: "It's Dan Kemish who's lying here, Dave."

"Poor old Dan! Poor old Dan!" David Sellwood's lips twitched as he stared down at the still figure, and that was all he could say.

Tom hardly knew what to say or do. But he did not want David Sellwood to read Daniel Kemish's last letter—yet. Something had caught his eye in it which made him wonder whether it was a letter that David Sellwood ought to read.

Busy with his thoughts, the boy searched in the pockets of the dead man's clothes.

He found some plug tobacco there, and a jack-knife; some pieces of string, a tinder box, and several boxes of matches.

He found a wallet packed thick with dollar notes; a silver watch and heavy chain; a handful of money and a bunch of keys. In a small pocket of the coat he found a packet, which he opened to reveal a blaze of diamonds. Kemish must have prised the precious jewels from their settings after he found them on board the yacht. The very smallest of the gems was as big as a marrow-fat pea.

David Sellwood had lapsed into moody silence. Tom was busy with his reflections. And so the girl came upon them unawares. The sound of her voice startled them.

"It's Daniel Kemish, is it, Tom?"

Starting, Tom looked up at her. She was quite composed, though a little shocked.

"Yes," he answered.

"I somehow felt it would be—like this," she said.

"It's no sight for you, missie," said Sellwood. "Wait for us away up there. We'll join you presently."

"Let me stay!" she begged. "I am not afraid. You were very fond of Kemish, weren't you, Dave?"

The finding of Daniel Kemish comes as a great shock to Tom Perry and his companions; but the discovery of a letter, written by Kemish, comes as an even greater shock—for in it Kemish makes many startling confessions!

"I couldn't help but be fond of him, miss. All the years I spent on that lonely island I gave more thought to him than I did to anyone else, or anything. Dan and me used to quarrel, of course, as was only natural, for he was fiery of temper and me mighty stubborn. The last time I saw him we quarrelled. He had been shirking his share o' duty, miss, and I could never abide that. We came to blows. A storm was raging at the time, and it was so bad that I doubted if the ship would live through it, stout as she was. And a moment after I struck at Dan, a great wave swept the deck clean and carried me away with her. But though Dan's life was in danger, he thought o' me, and hurled the lifebelt after me. He saved my life, missie."

"And yet," said the girl, speaking very softly, "I always thought that Daniel Kemish was a bad man."

David Sellwood drew his mighty figure erect, and squaring his great shoulders, looked at her reproachfully.

"Missie," he said, "speak no ill of the dead."

"I can't help it when I see you taking it to heart so badly, Dave. I am thinking of you," she answered. "He was a coward. Oh, I know very well how he died! You can't hide the revolver from me, David Sellwood. I saw you handling it as I came along."

"The solitude got Daniel, missie."

She shook her head.

"No," she replied vehemently, "I don't believe it, David. After all, when you were lonely you didn't kill yourself. No; it was more than solitude that got Daniel Kemish, Dave."

"Then what was it, missie?"

"Conscience. Daniel Kemish had something ugly on his mind."

Eva's words startled Tom, and his fingers tightened over the letter in his pocket. What strange things girls were, he thought, jumping in that odd way right at the heart of things.

He rose and drew the girl aside, whispering in her ear.

She shook her head.

"No," she replied. "Let me help you and Dave, Tom."

So the three of them together began to hollow out the grave.

The Confession!

DAVID SELLWOOD stood with arms folded in the blinding sunshine, staring down at the mound which marked the spot where Daniel Kemish lay.

"Eva," said Tom, "let's leave Dave for a while. He'll soon join us, and there's something I want to show you."

She accompanied him obediently, and when they had reached a place hidden from Sellwood's view, Tom drew the girl down

beside him, and, producing Kemish's letter, told her where he had found it.

"It's a terrible letter, and I believe Dan was mad," he said.

"Read it, Tom," Eva commanded.

"It's all about David Sellwood, and I want your advice," he explained. "I feel that David ought not to see it; at least, not yet."

Then he began to read.

"The body that lies here is the body of Daniel Kemish, sea captain. Deal with it as you deem fit, but know also that it is the body of a murderer, for I killed my friend David Sellwood just as surely as if I had thrust a knife through his heart. I hurled him overboard to drown, and stole his ship, the Sea Elf, whaler. This ship I sold with its valuable cargo of oil and bone, but the money it brought me could not silence the voice of conscience, and in accepting the position of pilot aboard the Esmeralda yacht, I knew that I was coming out here to die. As I sit writing this I wonder whether at times I have not been mad. But I am sane enough now, and I would have the world know the truth. I beg the finder of this letter to see that it is sent to Mr. Thornton Hanway, if he is still alive, and copies of it be sent to Captain Stanton, if still alive, to Mr. George Perry, to Dr. Fraser, who did his best for me; or, should they all be dead, that copies of it be sent to their nearest relatives and to such relations of David Sellwood as still survive."

Tom moistened his lips, and shot a swift, critical glance at the girl.

"Shall I go on?" he asked.

"Yes, please, Tom."

"Kemish was mad right enough, Eva," said Tom. "Mad as a hatter. Just you listen to this:

"From the moment David Sellwood and I sailed as joint owners of the Sea Elf, whaler, he took almost entire control of the ship," continued Tom, reading. "That was Dave's way, and I hated him for it. 'You take it easy now, Dan,' he said to me, 'for we shall want you when we enter the coral seas.' I grew jealous of Dave. There wasn't a man on board who didn't love him, and they used to turn their backs on me. Dave was a better man, and they showed me they realised it. We had an easy passage to the tropic seas, and then such a spell of bad weather broke as I have never experienced. Steven Passmore was carried overboard. The ship sprung a leak, and we had to put into Chickito port for repairs. After that nothing went right. Dave worked like ten men, and I let him do it. I don't know what led up to my killing him. It's all a blank even now. One night we close on foundered in a hurricane, and Dave came to my bunk and dragged me out.

"It's time you did a bit of work," he cried. "Get up on the deck, Daniel Kemish,

and see if you can help us to save the ship. I've not had my boots or clothes off for more than forty-eight hours, taking your watches as well as mine. Get up on the deck, or I'll flog you up!"

"He made me put on my boots and oil-skins, he forced me out on to the deck. The sea was racing mountains high, and the rain beat down with force enough to fell a man. In the blue of the lightning I stared upon the tossing death around us. And there stood Dave, pointing.

"Go and help, you yellow dog!" he shouted at me. "Take that wheel while I lash you to it, and see if you can weather it for us."

"As I tried to clear my brain a sea came tumbling about us. Dave tore me to the rail and held on there, with his arm hooked round me. But when the sea had passed and the ship rode free, he struck me.

"Go and do your share!" he cried.

"There was nobody near us. The lightning showed me that. Only Dave and me. And I hated him. I wanted to kill him, and, as he loosed his hold of the side and turned to me, I leapt at him, seized him, lifted him up, and tossed him overboard before he even guessed what I was going to do. A wave came aboard and bubbled round us as he went over the side, and when it had gone I loosed a lifebelt and tossed it over, then hurled a deck boat after. I can remember laughing as I did it, knowing that Dave Sellwood, strong swimmer though he was, had not a million to one chance in such a sea. In that way I killed him."

"How dreadful, Tom!" sighed the girl. Then she added: "What else does the letter say, Tom?"

The boy dropped his hands into his lap.

"Eva," he said, "it's just as I thought. After the storm, and while all on board the Esmeralda were wondering what had become of Daniel Kemish, Kemish set the yacht on fire."

"Tom!"

"It's true. Here's his full and complete confession." Tom's eyes raced over the scrawled but very legible lines. "He says that he began to feel funny the moment the Esmeralda entered the tropic seas. David Sellwood haunted him. The nearer the yacht drew to the spot where Dan threw David overboard the worse he got, and you know how he behaved on the eve of your birthday? Afterwards he took a violent hatred to every man and woman on board. He planned to destroy the yacht even if he perished with her. He wanted to die near David Sellwood. After lighting the fire he skulked in the hold, and when the boats were lowered and sailed away, he deliberately hid himself, intending to remain on board. Perhaps it was as well, for I reckon I know what Captain Stanton and your father would have done to him, Eva, had they caught him then. Would you like me to read the rest of the letter?"

The girl's eyes were fixed upon the bluff behind them, and as she looked the towering form of David Sellwood hove into view.

"Not now, Tom, for here comes Dave!" she cried.

"It's best he should not know—yet," said Tom. "I can tell you the gist of the thing. Stanton ordered the boats to stand right away from the burning yacht, and it was just as well, for the flames soon reached the oil tanks and blew the middle clean out of her. But she did not sink as Daniel Kemish had hoped and believed she would. It was a miracle, and in a shattered condition she floated, with only Dan on board. Two days later, he believes, but he is hazy about it, a storm hurled the wreck upon this coral island, and some time afterward the seas broke her back, Dan went ashore, and then——"

Tom broke off hastily as he heard Dave approaching.

"I just had to stay a while with Dan, missy," he apologised. "Tom, boy, what's that you were reading?"

"A letter, Dave."

THE OPENING CHAPTERS IN BRIEF.

THORNTON HANWAY, American millionaire and business magnate, is the owner of the yacht *Esmeralda*, which is touring among a number of unknown islands in the Southern Pacific. He is accompanied by

EVA HANWAY, his pretty daughter, and her chum,

TOM PERRY, a plucky, adventure-loving English boy. Tom's father,

GEORGE PERRY, a lifelong friend of Hanway's, is also on board. At the moment there is great anxiety on the yacht owing to the pilot,

DANIEL KEMISH, having developed a sudden illness. In years past Dan and his partner, David Sellwood, had owned a small vessel, which traded in these parts. Dan had been the cause of Sellwood losing his life—or so he thought—and since then the former has never forgiven himself. Sailing these seas once more has brought back old memories, and this fact, combined with the heat, has turned his head. Tom and Eva decide to visit a nearby island, but they are caught in a terrible storm, and the motor-boat is swamped. They are plunged into the mountainous seas, and finally are cast upon an unknown island, on which they meet David Sellwood. Later, unknown to the two chums, Hanway's yacht is set on fire by Kemish. The three castaways have many exciting adventures together before sailing for a neighbouring island. Here they are horrified to find the wreck of the *Esmeralda*. Of the passengers there is no sign—only a note, signed by Kemish, which says that everybody has taken to the boats. On the island itself Tom discovers the lifeless body of Kemish, who apparently has killed himself. Tom searches through the dead man's pockets and finds a letter.

(Now read on.)

"Ay! Master Tom——"

"Yes, Dave?"

"I've been turning things over in my mind, and I fancy it wasn't only the loneliness of this horrible place got on his nerves so much as me. I've a notion he was thinking of me."

"I've no doubt he was, Dave," said Tom, making a furtive sign to Eva to remain silent.

"For Dan loved me. You see, we were shipmates, pals, partners. He came out to these seas to find me, and now I am here—and he's gone. I've told you about our quarrel during the storm when our ship was likely to sink, and how a heavy sea swept me overboard. Master Tom, I reckon Dan would have given his life for mine that night."

"And it was a heavy sea swept you overboard? You are sure of that? Dan did not struggle with you, eh, Dave?" asked Tom.

"No. I was to blame. Dan wasn't near me. I'd just loosed my hold of him, and he'd backed away."

Tom sprang to his feet, helped Eva up, and then took Sellwood by the arm. It would be sheer cruelty to shatter David Sellwood's ideal and show him Kemish's letter. He vowed that he never would.

"Let's get away from this wretched place, Dave," he cried, "and go back to the boat."

The three started on their walk together.

Their New Home!

TOM was anxious to get away from the dreary, barren island, and the appealing looks Eva gave him as they tramped back to their sailing-boat told him that she had been greatly shocked by the finding of Daniel Kemish and the discovery that her father's yacht had been wrecked.

Kemish, having set the yacht on fire, had deserved the fate that overtook him, but it was agonising to think that he might have sent all aboard to their deaths in the Southern Seas.

Sellwood trudged along in silence a few strides ahead of Tom and Eva, turning every now and again to glance backward. He, too, was thinking of Kemish, who had been his old partner and shipmate, but in a kindlier way.

It was a deep relief to push the sailing-boat down into the sea and get aboard. They rowed alongside the wrecked yacht and climbed on to her deck again. And for the next hour or more they loaded the sailing-boat with a heap of impedimenta, most of it more ornamental than useful, which was salvaged from the yacht. Eva took dresses and hats, shoes and other garments so dear to a woman's heart; also her jewels, piled in a deep mahogany box. Tom found a suit for Dave, and some shirts and things, but the boots and shoes Tom discovered were brusquely rejected by the old sailor.

"I've no use for such things out along here, Master Tom," he objected.

But the firearms and ammunition, and a few tools they found, together with a lot of odds and ends likely to be useful, he stored in the boat with the utmost care. The store-rooms and ice-rooms were all flooded with water, so that there was no getting to them, but they found quite a quantity of tinned meats and tinned fruits for'ard near the men's kitchen. These were prized.

It wanted some hours to darkness when at last they were ready to sail. David scanned the skies, and, with a nod of the head, declared that it was safe to start.

"Reckon there'll be no bad weather for a day or two," he said, "and you're as anxious to leave this place as I am, I'm sure, missy."

The girl's radiant look was in itself a sufficient answer of her acquiescence.

Tom laughed as he looked at Eva. Half an hour ago she had begged to be excused, and, retiring to her shattered cabin aboard the wrecked Esmeralda, had slipped into a frock, some stockings and light shoes, all of which might have come from Paris. The matted dress she had made for herself on the island had been tossed aside into the boat.

She certainly looked more charming now, but her hair, grown long and growing ever longer, was entirely out of place with the fashionable frock. And when she went and stood alongside Dave, Tom laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks at the odd contrast they made.

"I only wish I had a camera," cried the boy. "By George! What a picture you two would make to illustrate the story Dave will have to tell when he gets back! Dave, do you realise that, after all you've gone through, you'll be able to make a fortune out of the story of your life?"

Sellwood frowned.

"I can spin a yarn, none better, perhaps, Master Tom," he said; "but I'm no writer wi' a pen."

"It makes no difference. I'll tell your story for you, Dave. We'll go fifty-fifty with the proceeds—and I reckon we'll make a fortune at that."

Having cast a last, lingering look about the wrecked yacht, they all three left her and sailed away in their boat. Tom sat on the bow thwart whilst he opened a can of bully-beef, and the meat was passed around. It was the first meat David Sellwood had tasted for years; the first that had passed the lips of Tom and Eva since the wreck—and there was nothing left in the tin when they had finished. Even Sellwood's parrot ate his share, but very cautiously and with much noise, for he screamed as he eyed it doubtfully. A tin of pineapple slices followed, Tom finding the can-opener they had found aboard the Esmeralda of the utmost use.

While they ate they drifted on a sea as smooth as glass, and when Tom cast the tins over the side and watched them fill and sink the island and the wreck were already far away.

Dave sang as Tom ran the sail to the mast-head, and he felt the boat heel over under the breeze. By the time a subtle change in light told of the waning day, the island was



Sellwood pointed into the blackness ahead, and there Tom could see land. Calmly the sailing boat drifted towards the island which was to be a new home and the scene of many an exciting adventure for the three castaways.

just a smudge on the skyline. It faded with the birth of the starry night.

Dave steered a course by the stars, whilst Eva slept and Tom nodded drowsily. Dave was for keeping his post all night, but Tom would not hear of it.

"We'll take turns of four hours each, and let Eva sleep until she is rested, Dave," said the boy.

Protesting that he was not tired, and would not sleep even if Tom relieved him, Dave stepped cautiously over the sleeping girl and nestled in the bows; but a minute after he had curled himself up his regular, deep breathing told Tom that he was asleep.

Steering was easy work. The cleated sail stiffened to the wind, and Tom just kept an even course. Above hung a bespangled sky. The water that rippled from the nose of the tiny craft soothed the boy, who almost slept as the boat sped on.

He was to awaken Dave should the weather break, but there was no sign of a break. The shifting bilge gurgled musically for'ard and aft as the boat dipped or rose to the gentle swell. There was no need to bail out now, for the boat was almost watertight.

Every now and again Tom eyed the Pole star to make sure that he was steering a true

course, and in this happy, idle way the four hours passed and Dave came to relieve him.

With Dave at the tiller, Tom sank to sleep beside the old whaler. He was awakened by Dave tugging roughly at his shoulder.

"Tom, lad, wake up! Thunder and lightning! I almost ran the boat ashore!"

Blinking the sleep out of his eyes, Tom scrambled into the seat beside Sellwood. Eva had awakened, too, and, climbing over the thwarts, came to join them.

Sellwood was pointing into the blackness ahead of them, and there Tom could make out the line of a beach marked by the gentle frothing of the tumbling sea that broke upon it. He could see the nodding coco-nut palms some distance inland. The breeze wafted to them strange, alluring scents of tropical flowers.

"Here was I steering just as you see," David explained, "when suddenly the land loomed up right afore me. I could not hear the break of the waves upon the sand. Maybe I was dozing like. I'd have run her nose ashore in another half a minute, Master Tom, if I hadn't put the helm hard over."

"It wouldn't have mattered much if you had," answered Tom. "The bump would have awakened us, of course. That's all."

"And maybe have knocked a hole in the bottom, Master Tom. We don't want to lose our boat."

They were running close in to the shore. The sky grew lighter as the stars faded. And before them appeared a panorama so lovely that they eyed it breathlessly. Waving coco-nut palms fringed the shore, whilst inland the rising ground was covered by trees and a vegetation as dense as a forest. The island stretched far ahead of them, and they judged it to be a good deal larger than Sellwood Island.

"I think, Dave," said Tom, as the sun shone gloriously, "that we'll land as soon as we find a suitable spot. We'll make this our new home!"

"Aye, aye, Master Tom. But we must be careful. We don't want to run into another tribe of cannibals."

Eva laughed gaily. Her narrow escape from the savages on Sellwood Island had been shelved among a host of half-forgotten impressions.

"Of course we mustn't," she replied, "for they might eat me next time."

The three companions ran the boat into a sheltered bay and drew her on to the beach. Then, shouldering a sporting rifle, and with a loaded revolver slung at his side, David Sellwood set out upon a tour of exploration. He would not hear of Tom going with him.

"You stand by missy, Master Tom," he cried. "If there's any danger lurking, she'll have you to protect her. If you hear me fire a gun or revolver, push the boat into deep water, up-sail, and stand off shore until you know all's well."

Dave was gone four hours, and when he came back he was smiling happily.

"There's not a soul on the island as far

as I can make out, Tom," he called, as he came down the shelving beach, "only a mighty lot of birds. I never saw a smell of an animal. But there's heaps of fruit to eat, and fresh water as well."

"It's all safe, then? You think we can stay? Then we had better haul the boat right up. Shall we like this place as well as we did Sellwood Island, Dave?"

"I'm not sure, Master Tom. It's a change, anyway."

They pulled the boat farther up the beach, then bathed and afterwards ate, spending the remainder of the day lazing in the shelter of the palms. The second day was given over entirely to exploration, and established the fact that the island was pleasant beyond expectations.

They found some bananas and cut some bunches of the palatable fruit, which they carried with difficulty back to the boat. Then followed lazy, idle days of eating and sleeping, bathing and walking, or watching the sea in the hope that they might sight a sail—days of almost unbroken calm, the sea tumbling musically upon the reef instead of thundering upon it in the terrifying way it did when a hurricane blew or a storm broke.

There were myriads of gulls and other birds upon the reef, and the castaways found edible shell-fish in the pools of salt water which were dotted about the beach.

They forgot all about Daniel Kemish and the tragedy of the wreck. They spoke very seldom about Thornton Hanway and Eva's mother, or of Captain Stanton and Tom's parents. In the utter quietude of their peaceful life it seemed impossible to believe that anything terrible had happened to Hanway and the others, and once again Tom began to feel certain they were alive. The misgivings aroused by the finding of the wreck and by Kemish's rambling letter were cast aside.

One morning Tom and Eva awakened as the dawn broke. David Sellwood was sleeping. The boy and the girl strolled along beneath the coco-nut palms until they came to a favourite resting-place, and sat down side by side. There was no need for them to return, for Dave would prepare their breakfast and come for them when it was ready.

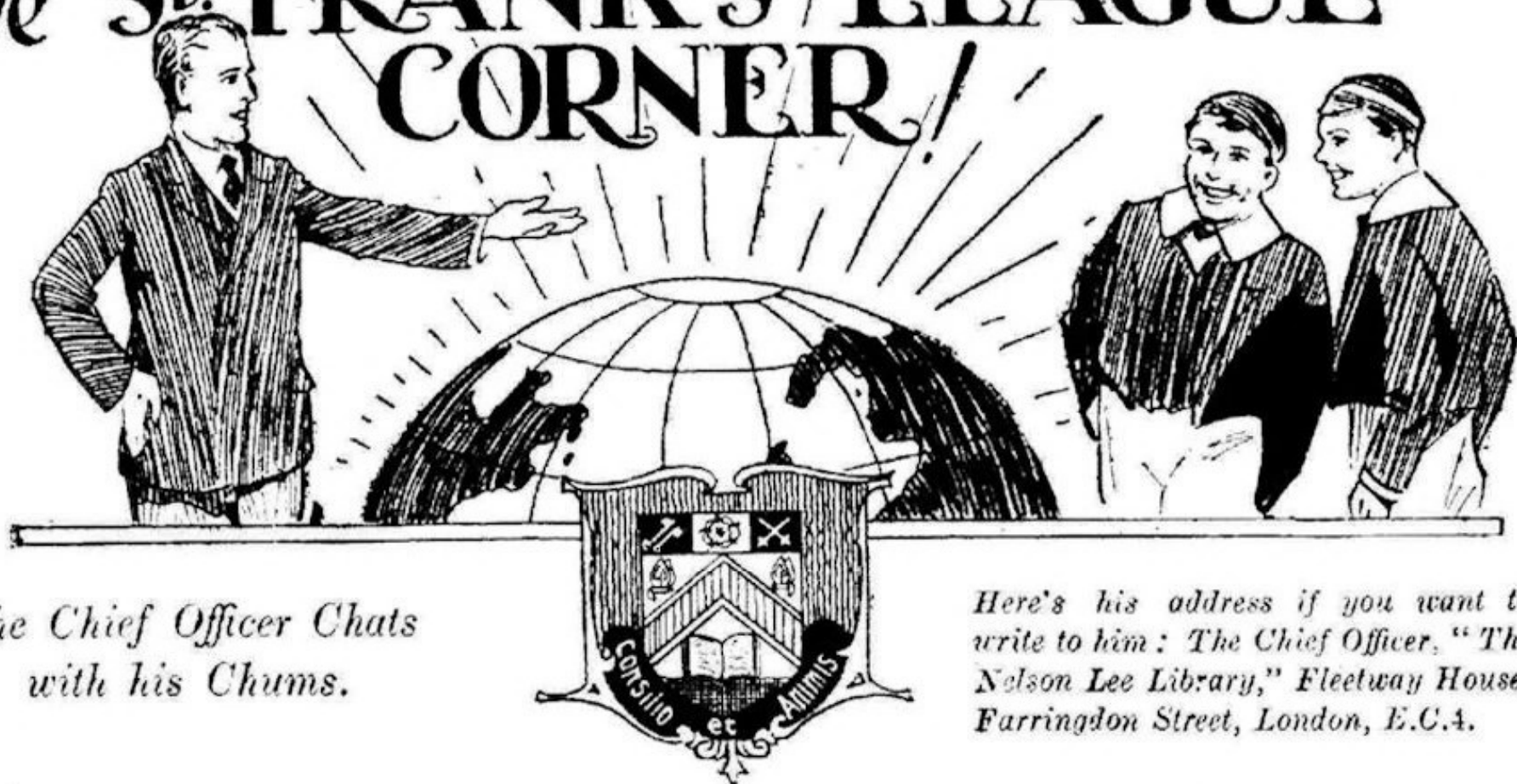
"Tom," said the girl, after they had been there awhile, and he looked down into her eyes, startled by her tone. Eva was seldom serious.

"What's the matter, Eve?" he asked.

"I had a dream last night, and I somehow feel as if we shall not be on this island very much longer," she said.

(Dreams never come true! That is the saying. Will this be so in Eva's case? Certainly there is little to indicate that rescue is near at hand at the present moment. However, strange things happen sometimes, and that's why you want to make sure you read next week's stirring instalment of this thrilling serial.)

The ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE CORNER!



*The Chief Officer Chats
with his Chums.*

*Here's his address if you want to
write to him: The Chief Officer, "The
Nelson Lee Library," Fleetway House,
Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.*

A Complaint!

I'M sorry, chums, but I regret to say that I shall have to open my chat this week with a grouse. For a reader of the Old Paper has made a complaint against some of you League-ites—a justifiable complaint it is, too.

He says that he has written to certain readers who have asked for correspondents, and that his letters have been completely ignored. He considers that this is most unsportsmanlike on the part of the readers in question, and wants to know what I think about it and what I propose to do in the matter.

I have dealt with this same point in the past, but as it has cropped up again, I feel I had better repeat my former remarks on the subject.

Actually, of course, I can do nothing in the matter—except appeal to these defaulters to play the game.

After all, they have asked for correspondents, and therefore it is only fair that they should answer all inquiries that result from their request.

Admitted it is rather unfortunate if they are inundated with replies, for this probably means an unlooked-for—perhaps unwanted—expense, besides a great amount of trouble.

But there again, those of you who advertise for correspondents must be prepared to "stand the racket." Out of common courtesy you should at least acknowledge all communications.

I tender my sympathies to the reader who has been so unfortunate, and trust he will have better luck with future correspondents.

THIS WEEK'S WINNING LETTER

DEAR CHIEF OFFICER.—I have received my certificate of enrolment and membership badge to the St. Frank's League, and I wish to take this opportunity to thank you for them.

Although I have only been in the League for about a month, I have secured six new readers for the Old Paper, and hope to secure many more.

I have been reading the Nelson Lee Library for five years now, and I can honestly say that not a week has passed in those five years without my reading and thoroughly enjoying every copy. In my opinion the N.L.L. is the finest paper of its kind on the market.

I am enclosing forms of the three new readers I have secured this week, which makes six introductions to my credit, thereby securing for myself the bronze medal. I will now do my best to gain another twelve readers and thus earn the silver medal.

With best wishes to you, Mr. Brooks and the St. Frank's League.

(signed) RICHARD HARPER (S.F.L. No. 9784.)

(For this interesting letter, Richard Harper, of Liverpool, has been awarded a useful pocket wallet.)

side winger.

I hope my Scottish correspondent will write to me and let me know how he gets on. Who knows, but he may be a budding Alan Morton!

Where Shall He Play?

A SCOTTISH chum writes to tell me that he is in a quandary, and asks me to help him out of his difficulty.

Apparently he is very keen on Soccer. He wants to take up the game from a playing point of view, but doesn't know for what position he is best suited.

My chum, it seems, is of small build, but sturdy, and a good runner. Then, obviously, he should go in the forward-line, either as a centre-forward, or, perhaps better still, as an out-

THE CHIEF OFFICER.

All members of the St. Frank's League are invited to send to the Chief Officer letters of interest concerning the League. The most interesting will be published week by week, and the senders will receive pocket wallets or penknives. If you don't belong to the league, look for the entry form which will appear next week—and then join immediately.

Professor Puddleditch's Lectures!

(Continued from page 13.)

his coat-tail pocket. He turned the pages and read:

"Chapter six. Birds Great and Big Birds. The Zunk (Zunkus telescopus). A rare bird, found chiefly in Old Japan. Its plumage is of a green colour, and when standing with its legs at maximum extension, could be mistaken for a small, slim tree.

"This is nature's means of protecting the Zunk, and not only allows the bird to escape its enemies, but also enables it to approach quite close to its food and to pounce upon an unsuspecting coco-nut, almost without the nut being aware of its danger.

"This unique bird, as has been said, is a native of Old Japan, and inhabits the swamps and marshlands surrounding Hoki Poki, one of the highest mountains in the south-eastern and great western parts of that country.

"Once a year it breaks into song, commencing on New Year's Day and continuing without pause until the following Christmas.

Eye. It misses, however, Whit Monday, and only does half a day on each Wednesday.

"The closest imitation of the song of the Zunk may be obtained by rattling some stones in a tin can and then sneezing, and professional Zunk catchers use this device to snare their quarry. The innocent creature imagines it is the voice of its companion Zunks calling, and, of course, reveals its whereabouts.

"As may be expected, the Zunk, owing to the length of its legs, is the victim of poor blood circulation, and suffers cruelly from cold feet. It overcomes this disability a little by frequent flights over the local active volcano, and thus warms its feet with nature's foolwarmer.

"As the Zunk ages, alas, it finds it more and more difficult to keep its feet warm, and it ultimately falls a victim to chronic rheumatism, which causes its legs to assume the spiral shape of corkscrews. This entails great inconvenience when the Zunk endeavours to raise and lower itself, the corkscrew action causing the bird to twist round and round and become so giddy, that it finally expires from vertigo."

So saying, the Professor closed the Encyclopedia with a bang, and dismissed the Form.



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