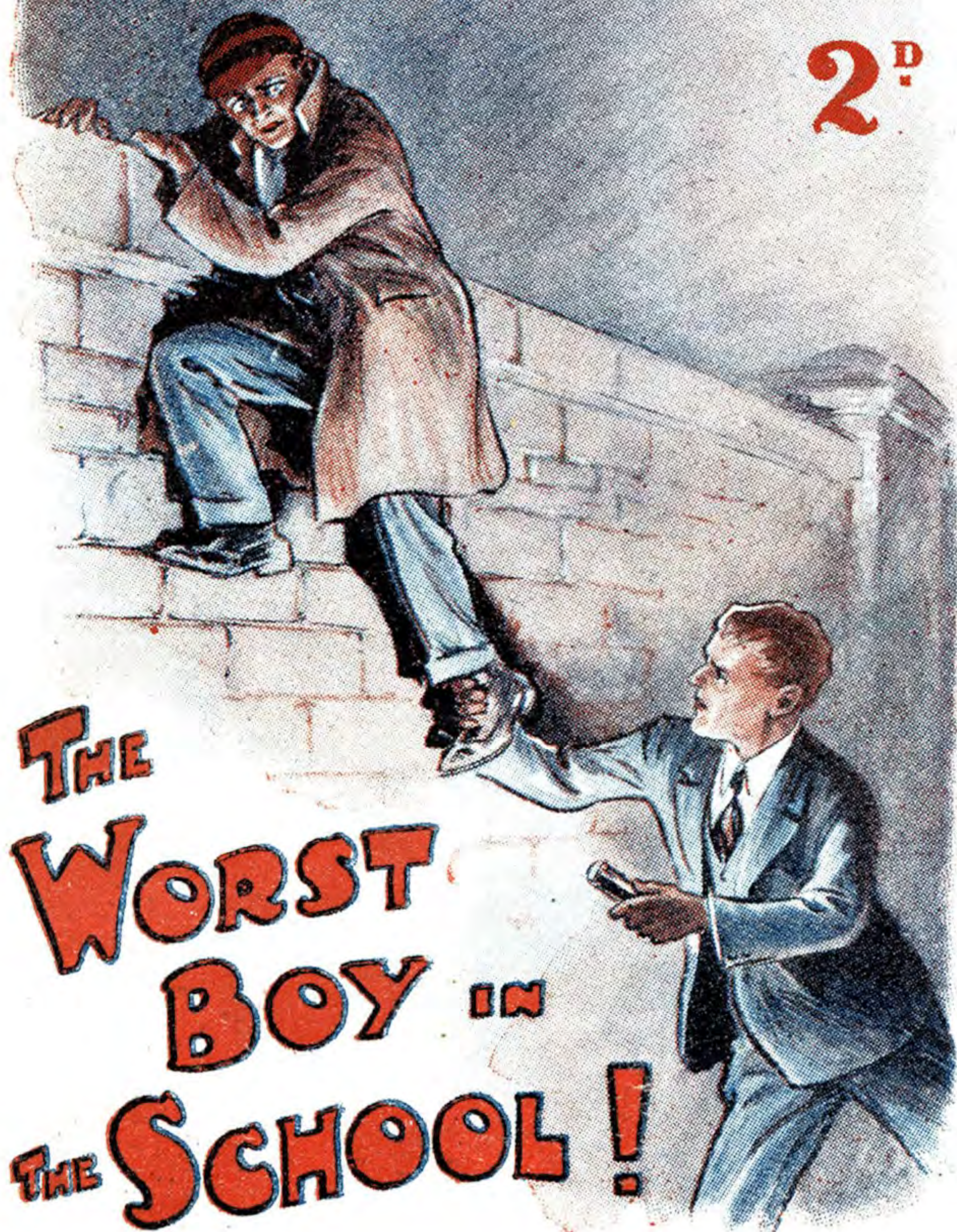


THE NELSON LEE

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THE WORST BOY IN THE SCHOOL!

A corking long complete yarn of school life and adventure, featuring the Chums of St. Frank's.

New Series No. 190.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

December 21st, 1929.

THE WORST BOY IN THE SCHOOL!



By EDWY
SEARLES
BROOKS.

CHAPTER 1.

A Letter For Fenton!

EDGAR FENTON, of the Sixth Form at St. Frank's, wore a brooding frown on his handsome face as he stood in the Ancient House doorway, gazing abstractedly out into the misty afternoon air.

A figure loomed up, and it proved to be Morrow, the head prefect of the West House.

"I quite agree with you!" said Morrow feelingly.

"Eh?" exclaimed Fenton, with a start. "What do you mean—you agree with me?" Morrow smiled.

"You didn't know I was a thought-reader, did you?" he inquired. "And yet, to a fellow of my acute perspicacity, it's as clear

—FEATURING EDGAR FENTON, THE POPULAR SKIPPER OF ST. FRANK'S!

Saddled with an uncle in the Junior School! Such is the extraordinary position of Edgar Fenton, the skipper of St. Frank's. And, what's more, his uncle is a thorough "bad egg"!

as daylight that you are worrying about the weather."

Fenton's face cleared.

"Then your perspicacity must be missing on one cylinder this morning," he chuckled. "I wasn't thinking about the weather at all."

"Oh, cheese it!" protested Morrow. "I come along from the West House, and I find

"Was I looking like an Indian image?" said Fenton in surprise. "The fact is, I had a letter this morning from an uncle of mine —"

"Ah, these uncles!" sighed Morrow, shaking his head.

"The awkward part of it is, I don't know him," said Fenton.

"Don't know him?"



you gazing out into the murky distance with a contemplative frown on your mighty brow. To-day is a half-holiday, and we have a match on against Bannington Grammar School. Isn't it perfectly obvious that you are worried about the match?"

The school captain grinned more widely than ever.

"You're miles off the mark, old fellow," he said. "I've given up the match long ago. By this afternoon there'll be a regular fog, and I shall be jolly surprised if those Grammarians even take the trouble to come over."

"Then if you weren't worrying about the match, what do you mean by standing here looking like an Indian image?" demanded Morrow indignantly.

"Never seen him in my life."

"And he's your uncle?" asked Morrow politely.

"Yes."

"Well, of course, every family has its own idiosyncrasies," said Morrow, shrugging his shoulders. "I'm not going to say that I'm on very intimate terms with my two uncles, but at least I know them."

"You're lucky," growled Fenton. "You've only got two uncles."

"How many have you got, then?"

"Thousands!" said Fenton feelingly. "At least, I sometimes think so. I'm always hearing about new ones. This letter, for example, is from Uncle Robert. Well, as far as I know, I've never set eyes on Uncle Robert."

"That's awkward," admitted Morrow.

"And he's coming down to St. Frank's—this afternoon," said Fenton.

"That's still more awkward," nodded Morrow.

Another figure appeared out of the mist and resolved itself into the lanky shape of William Napoleon Browne. The skipper of the Fifth Form gazed closely at the two prefects as he entered the doorway.

"What is the problem, brothers?" he asked gravely. "If you are in any difficulties, do not hesitate to confide in me. I venture to suggest that——"

"If it's all the same to you, Browne, we can do without your suggestions," said Fenton cheerfully. "And there's no problem at all."

"Oh, none!" agreed Morrow. "You've only got an uncle coming down to St. Frank's this afternoon whom you've never seen—and don't know from Adam!"

William Napoleon Browne brightened up.

"This, of course, is a matter of singular importance, brothers," he said. "Uncles are a queer, tricky tribe. It is necessary that all uncles should be treated with very special consideration. One never knows how much—or how little—an uncle may spring."

"You silly ass——"

"I have vivid recollections of one uncle in particular," proceeded Browne smoothly. "He came to St. Frank's, and I spent the better part of a day showing him round. And, brothers, you may believe it or you may not believe it, but when he departed he caused me to totter on my heels by presenting me with a tip of one shilling."

"I don't wonder you tottered," grinned Morrow.

"On the other hand," said Browne, "another uncle popped down for a mere five minutes, dashed to the Head, had about two words with me, and slapped a fiver into my protesting hand. Such uncles, however, are few and far between."

"When you've finished discussing these mercenary matters, perhaps you'll allow me to join in the conversation?" asked Fenton politely. "As I was saying to Morrow, I've never even heard of my Uncle Robert. He's one of the Shropshire Chesters."

"He sounds important," remarked Morrow.

"There are scores of them dotted about Shropshire," nodded Fenton. "But I don't seem to have heard of Robert Chester before. Chester, you see, is my mother's maiden name. Uncle Robert must be one of her brothers."

"A wonderful piece of deduction, brother," murmured Browne approvingly.

The school skipper frowned.

"I'm trying to picture Uncle Robert, but I'm hanged if I can remember him," he said. "The trouble is, I've hardly ever visited Shropshire. That county is littered with my relatives, but I don't suppose I should know them even if I found myself surrounded by crowds of them. There's Uncle George, of

course—Uncle George often comes to London, and I know him pretty well. There's Uncle Joseph, too. And Uncle Howard——"

"Your mother's family must be a pretty large one," remarked Morrow, grinning.

"Large!" echoed Fenton. "I've never even taken the trouble to count them up! I've got aunts and uncles by the dozen! And now this Uncle Robert is coming down by the afternoon train, and he has asked me to meet him."

"A good sign," said Browne promptly. "An excellent sign, brother."

"What's more, he wants me to have a motor-car at the station to meet him," said Fenton.

"Not so good," murmured Browne. "Motor-cars, even of the archaic type hireable in this district, are expensive luxuries. Without doubt, Brother Fenton, this is a nasty snag!"

Edgar Fenton smiled.

"Well, there's an excuse for the old boy," he said. "He hints that his rheumatism is bad, and I suppose he's afraid of the walk."

"Uncles with rheumatism are tricky customers," said Browne gravely. "Indeed, in nine cases out of ten the so-called rheumatism is actually gout. And a gouty uncle is more or less a menace to the whole community. Let me advise you, Brother Fenton, to be very diplomatic with this relative. One false move on your part, and Uncle Robert will padlock his pockets and hermetically seal his wallet."

Fenton did not seem to be worried over this possibility; indeed, he stated quite candidly that he was in no way interested in Uncle Robert's financial status. In brief, he didn't care whether Uncle Robert tipped him or not. Fenton, it seemed, was above that sort of thing.

A CROWD of juniors came along at that moment, so Fenton and his companions moved off. The juniors were Travers and Potts, of Study H; and Fullwood and Russell and De Valerie, and one or two more.

"It's getting worse," said Fullwood, as he glanced out of doors.

"No footer this afternoon, dear old fellows," said Travers, shaking his head.

"I say, you chaps!" said an eager voice.

Teddy Long, of Study B, dodged out of the cloak-room. Teddy was looking very excited and flushed.

"If it's all the same to you, you can keep it to yourself, Long," said Fullwood curtly.

"Eh? Keep what to myself?"

"What you're dying to tell us!" snapped Fullwood. "We know your game, you little rotter! More tittle-tattle, eh?"

"It's not tittle-tattle!" protested Teddy Long. "I was in the cloak-room, getting my cap, and I happened to hear Fenton talking with Morrow and Browne——"

"In other words, you deliberately listened, eh?" murmured Travers.

"I couldn't help listening!" said Teddy.

"And—and I daren't come out of the cloak-

room because I owe Fenton fifty lines, and I've—I've forgotten to do them."

"Your memory was always rotten," said De Valerie.

"And I heard Fenton telling the other chaps that an uncle of his is coming to St. Frank's by the afternoon train," continued Teddy excitedly. "Uncle Robert—from Shropshire."

"Wonderful!" said Jimmy Potts. "And what's it got to do with us?"

"But that's not all!" continued Teddy. "It seems that Fenton has never met his uncle before! Doesn't know him from Adam!"

Cecil De Valerie grinned.

"I can see possibilities," he said. "So Fenton's uncle is coming by the afternoon train—and Fenton has never seen the old boy! H'm! What a ripping opportunity for a jape."

"That's—that's just what I was thinking!" said Teddy eagerly. "I rather think you fellows ought to give me five bob—or half a quid—for suggesting the wheeze."

"You can go and eat coke!" said De Valerie. "Of course, it would be rather difficult to wangle——"

"It's not going to be wangled at all!" said a stern voice.

Edward Oswald Handforth, of Study D in the Remove, strode forward and joined the others. Church and McClure, his inseparable chums, were with him, and Nipper, the cheery Junior skipper, was also present.

"Handy's right!" said Nipper briefly.

"Of course I'm right!" snorted Handforth, glaring at De Valerie.

"Well, isn't it a good chance?" asked De Valerie defensively. "There's an uncle coming to see him, and Fenton doesn't even know him! What a chance for a good jape——"

"It wouldn't be a good jape!" broke in Handforth sternly. "It would be a rotten jape."

"Dangerous, too," murmured Travers. "Fenton, we must remember, is the captain of the school."

"And one of the best!" said Nipper. "Somehow, I don't think it would be quite playing the game to spoof old Fenton. He's too honest—too good-natured—too thoroughly decent. It wouldn't be the thing, you fellows."

"Well, perhaps you're right," admitted De Valerie. "I hadn't thought of it like that."

"Then it's time you did think of it!" said Handforth coldly. "We don't mind japing

a junior—or even a Fifth-Former. If it comes to that, we'll jape heaps of the Sixth-Formers, too. But not Fenton!"

"Hear, hear!" said some of the others.

"Fenton is one of the best chaps breathing," continued Handforth enthusiastically. "And if his uncle is coming to see him, it's our duty to give the uncle a hearty welcome. Any relative of Fenton's must necessarily be made of the right stuff."

"Yes, rather!"

"Good old Fenton!"

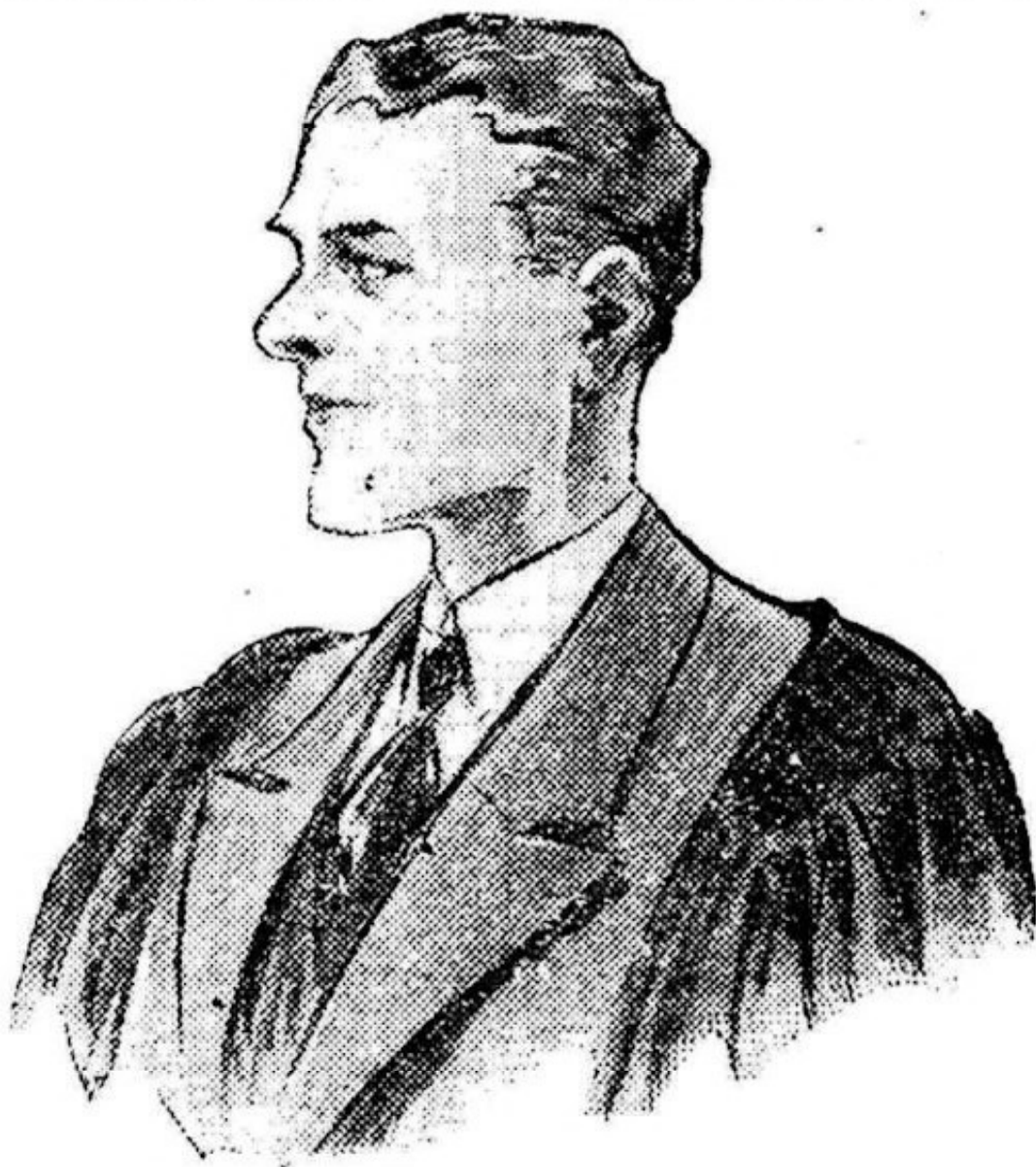
If the school captain could have heard these remarks he would have flushed with pleasure. Without question, Edgar Fenton

was the most popular skipper St. Frank's had ever had. He was level-headed, just, and a thoroughly decent sportsman. He was keen on games, he was strong when strength was necessary.

"What we've got to do is to get up a huge reception!" said Handforth briskly. "I suggest a band. We can easily organise a band if we only go to work in the right way. We'll have the band at the station, and we'll meet Fenton's uncle——"

"Just a minute!" interrupted Nipper gently. "It seems to me, Handy, that the wheeze wouldn't work. Fenton would probably think that we were japing his uncle, after all. And there's not the slightest

WHO'S WHO AT ST. FRANK'S.



MR. BEVERLEY STOKES.

The Housemaster of the West House. Cheery and good-natured, and very popular with the school. Familiarly known as "Barry" Stokes.

doubt that the uncle would have the same opinion."

"Why, you silly ass!" said Handforth. "I'm going to give Fenton's uncle an address of welcome!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why submit him to any such ordeal?" asked Nipper sweetly. "No, Handy, old man. We respect Fenton—and the best way for us to show our respect is to take no notice of his uncle. We should only embarrass him if we organised a special reception."

"Oh, well, perhaps you're right," said Handforth slowly. "Not that I see how he could misunderstand my address of welcome," he added stubbornly. "I think perhaps I'd better go to the station alone——"

"No!" interrupted Nipper. "We'll decide here and now to forget Teddy Long's eaves-dropping."

"Here, I say——" began Teddy.

"We'll forget that Fenton's uncle is coming to the school this afternoon," continued Nipper grimly. "Is that understood, you fellows? There's to be no japing—no rotting."

It was understood.

CHAPTER 2.

Fenton's Uncle!

THE train from London steamed into Bellton Station, and smoothly came to a standstill. Doors opened and one or two passengers alighted. Fenton, standing near the exit, eyed the alighting passengers with interest.

There were four of them altogether—a stout old lady with a big portmanteau, a Moor View schoolgirl, the Vicar of Bellton, and a stranger. The stranger was a smallish man who limped—grey-haired, bent-shouldered and jerky in his movements.

"Ye gods!" murmured Fenton.

This latter gentleman was, without doubt, his Uncle Robert. None of the others, by any stretch of the imagination, could possibly fit the bill. Edgar Fenton, bracing himself, moved along the platform.

The grey-haired little gentleman was looking up and down over the tops of his glasses, and he glared at Fenton as the latter halted in front of him.

"Pardon me, sir, but are you Mr. Robert Chester?" asked Fenton politely.

"Yes, I am!" barked the newcomer. "What about it? I distinctly asked my nephew to meet this train, and there is not a sign of him! Not a sign!" he added testily. "By gad! I'll give the young scamp a dressing down when I see him!"

"There's no need to do that, sir," said Fenton. "I'm your nephew."

Uncle Robert started, adjusted his glasses, and stared hard at Fenton.

"You!" he said suspiciously. "Nonsense! My nephew is a schoolboy. Fenton is his name——"

"Yes, sir. I'm Fenton," said the St. Frank's skipper. "Edgar Fenton."

"But you are not a schoolboy!" exclaimed Uncle Robert, looking up at Fenton's impressive height. "Your mother distinctly told me that you were a boy belonging to St. Francis College."

Fenton began to feel uncomfortable—particularly as the Moor View girl who had alighted from the train was about to pass. She happened to be Mary Summers, and Fenton was well acquainted with her.

"I am very sorry if you are disappointed, Uncle Robert," he said, "but I am your nephew—and I happen to be a schoolboy, too."

"Ridiculous!" barked Uncle Robert testily. "Perfectly outrageous! A young fellow of your size and age should be out in the world. What do you mean, young man, by wasting your time here?"

Mary Summers was passing and she pretended, very considerably, to be oblivious of Uncle Robert's rasping voice. Fenton gave her a glance and raised his cap; she, in return, flashed him a smile. Fenton was grateful for it.

"I am amazed," continued Uncle Robert, with a suspicious glance at the slim, graceful form of Mary. "I had expected to see a young schoolboy, and instead I behold a youth who is virtually a man. You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Edgar, for remaining at school at your age."

"I am sorry, sir——"

"And this girl?" went on Uncle Robert, peering down the platform. "Who is she? You appear to be on friendly terms with her."

"Only an acquaintance, sir," said Fenton uncomfortably. "One of the girls from the Moor View School. I don't know her particularly well, but it's considered polite at St. Frank's for a fellow to raise his cap when a lady passes."

Uncle Robert frowned.

"If you are attempting to be sarcastic, young man, I must warn you to be careful!" he said acidly. "I am not prepared to stand any nonsense from you or anybody else."

"Very good, uncle," said Fenton.

He was disappointed. At the very least he had expected his uncle to give him a warm greeting, but there seemed to be no warm side to Uncle Robert's nature. He was obviously a carping, critical, gouty old man. Fenton was quite prepared to believe that the rheumatism story was a myth.

"Well, which is the way out of this ridiculous little station?" said Uncle Robert, looking up and down. "A hole, Edgar! A veritable hole! I am beginning to regret this visit of mine."

Fenton was regretting it, too, but he did not mention his own views.

"This is the way out, sir," he said quietly, as he reached for his uncle's bag.

"Thank you, but I am quite capable of carrying my own property!" said Uncle

Robert tartly. "You have a car waiting?"

"Yes, uncle."

"H'm! I suppose I must thank you for the favour," said Uncle Robert grudgingly. "My—er—rheumatism is sometimes troublesome, and in this foggy weather it is worse than ever."

He looked about him with displeasure. The vista was not particularly extensive, since the mist had settled down, making the station buildings look indistinct and ghostly. It was only just possible to see the opposite platform.

As they walked down the platform Fenton glanced curiously at his cantankerous uncle. Mr. Robert Chester was nearly a head shorter than his nephew; he was severely dressed in black, with a long, old-fashioned overcoat. His grey hair was long and untidy, jutting out in bunches from beneath his bowler hat. His face was yellowish and sallow, with many lines—as though he had spent years in the tropics.

"An atrocious district!" said Uncle Robert, with a grunt. "Fog, fog, and nothing else but fog! I am astonished, Edgar, that your mother should have sent you to a school in such a neighbourhood."

Fenton bristled.

"There's no better neighbourhood in the whole South of England, sir," he said protestingly. "As for this mist, there's nothing much in it—it's only seasonable. I'll guarantee that other parts of the country are suffering from choking fogs."

Uncle Robert merely snorted, and they passed out through the barrier and found themselves in the station yard. Fenton had hired quite an excellent motor-car—a limousine. It was old-fashioned, but it was sound. As Fenton had half-suspected, however, it did not meet with his uncle's approval.

"Is this the—er—car?" he demanded, pointing his stick accusingly at the vehicle.

"Yes, uncle."

"Huh! As I anticipated!" said Uncle Robert sourly. "A ramshackle, decrepit wreck of a car. It is a pity, Edgar, you could not obtain a more up-to-date conveyance!"

"Really, sir——"

"But there, I expect I must be thankful for small mercies!" continued Uncle Robert. "At the same time, I must register a black mark against you, Edgar. Yes, boy a black mark. Well, how do you open these confounded doors?"

He wrenched at one of them, and Fenton became more and more fed-up. Yet he dared not ask his uncle how long he intended staying—for that would savour of a hint. Fenton was hoping that Uncle Robert would go back to London by the next train, but, somehow, he had a feeling that no such luck would be his.

In feeling thus Fenton was perfectly correct!

UNCLE ROBERT bunched himself into a corner of the car, and he seemed to withdraw into his own shell. At all events, he hardly spoke a word during the short ride to St. Frank's. Fenton, for his part, did not feel inclined to open up any line of conversation. He had a feeling that if he did so he would be in the wrong.

"Well?" snapped Uncle Robert, at last. "Have you lost your tongue, Edgar?"

"No, sir," growled Fenton.

"Then why are you so silent?" demanded the visitor. "Have you nothing to tell me? What of your studies? What of your sports and games? I am your uncle, and it is only natural that I should be interested in these matters."

"Perhaps we'd better wait until we get indoors, sir," said Fenton. "We're just driving into the Triangle now, and there's hardly any time."

Uncle Robert grunted, and he peered inquisitively out of the window as the car drove through the gateway in the mist. It was just possible to see the school buildings looming up out of the pall of whiteness.

"Huh!" said Uncle Robert, frowning. "I came here to see the school, and all I can see is fog! Nothing but fog! I might have known it! I am wasting my time!"

Fenton rather thought that his uncle had come to St. Frank's to see how his nephew was getting on; but the school skipper did



not mention this aspect of the matter. He was becoming more and more fed up with this cantankerous old grumbler. He was aware, too, of a mild sensation of astonishment; for his other uncles had generally been genial and friendly.

The car came to a halt near the Ancient House steps, and Fenton prepared to open the door.

"Mind what you're doing!" shouted Uncle Robert suddenly. "Good heavens! Confound you, boy! Mind my foot! Do you want to cripple me?"

"Sorry, uncle!" ejaculated Fenton, startled. "I didn't know that I had touched your foot."

"You haven't touched it—but all boys are clumsy!" said Uncle Robert testily. "I believe in being on the safe side."

Fenton breathed hard, but made no comment. He got out of the car, and his uncle followed. Fenton was by no means gratified when he noticed that a large group of juniors stood in the Ancient House doorway.

"Shall I tell the car driver to stay here, sir?" he asked, looking at his uncle.

"Stay here? What for?"

"Well, sir, I——"

"You want to get rid of me, eh?" barked Uncle Robert. "You want me to go back by the next train, I take it? Certainly not, Edgar! You can pay this man, and tell him to go. I shall not be leaving St. Frank's to-day."

Fenton's jaw sagged.

"But—but—— Oh, very well, uncle," he said, swallowing hard. "Only you didn't say anything about stopping overnight——"

"I am not in the habit of telling my business to schoolboys!" interrupted Uncle Robert testily.

Fenton bit his lips, and paid the chauffeur. In the meantime, his uncle took a survey of his surroundings, and he gave the crowd of juniors an unfriendly glare.

"Welcome to St. Frank's, sir!" said Handforth, as he caught Uncle Robert's eye.

"Hear, hear!" chorused the others.

Uncle Robert adjusted his glasses and peered at the group.

"Rank impertinence!" he said angrily, waving his stick at the juniors. "Go away! How dare you stand round me, staring in this fashion? Edgar! Who are these boys? What are they doing here?"

"They belong here, sir," said Fenton. "They board in this House."

"Oh, indeed!" said Uncle Robert unpleasantly. "They board here, do they? Well, have they nothing better to do than stand round in the doorway, staring inquisitively at every visitor who happens to arrive?"

"They're Remove fellows, sir," explained Fenton. "They don't mean any harm; they're quite good men, really."

"Men?" said Uncle Robert. "What do you mean—'men'? They are merely small boys!"

The "small boys" changed their expressions. Within a second not a smile remained.

"Oh, it's nothing, uncle," said Fenton. "Just a term we use at St. Frank's. It's general in all public schools, if it comes to that. All the fellows—even the fags—are referred to as 'men'."

"Then it is an absurd fashion!" said Uncle Robert sourly. "In your own case, perhaps, there is some justification, for you are nearly a man, Edgar. At least, you are big enough to be a man. Over eighteen, eh? And you still remain in this school, wasting your time. When I get back to Shropshire I shall have a very serious talk with your mother and father."

Fenton swallowed hard, but said nothing.

"Well, what are we standing here for?" went on Uncle Robert, looking round.

"Are you going to keep me out in this atrocious fog for the rest of the afternoon? I am very sorry I came to this benighted place. I should have known better! This is what comes of taking notice of my sister—your mother. She led me to believe that I should find a school-boy; and instead I find a young man far too old to be at school. It is high time you were out in the world, Edgar. Where is your ambition? Where is your initiative? Have you no desire to get on in the world?"

"I'm captain of the school, sir," said Fenton defensively.

"Captain of fiddlesticks!" snapped Uncle Robert. "Well, well! We're not going to stand here for the rest of the afternoon, are we? Where is your room? I suppose you have a room to yourself?"

"Yes, uncle," said Fenton thickly. "This way, if you don't mind."

He led the way indoors, past the dumb-founded juniors. Seldom had Edgar Fenton felt so humiliated. Uncle Robert was proving to be a very difficult customer!

CHAPTER 3.

Suspicious!

"WELL, I'm jiggered!" said Handforth blankly.

"A bit of a coughdrop, dear old fellows," murmured Vivian Travers, shaking his head. "I'm feeling rather sorry for Fenton. Uncle Robert appears to be an unpleasant sort of merchant."

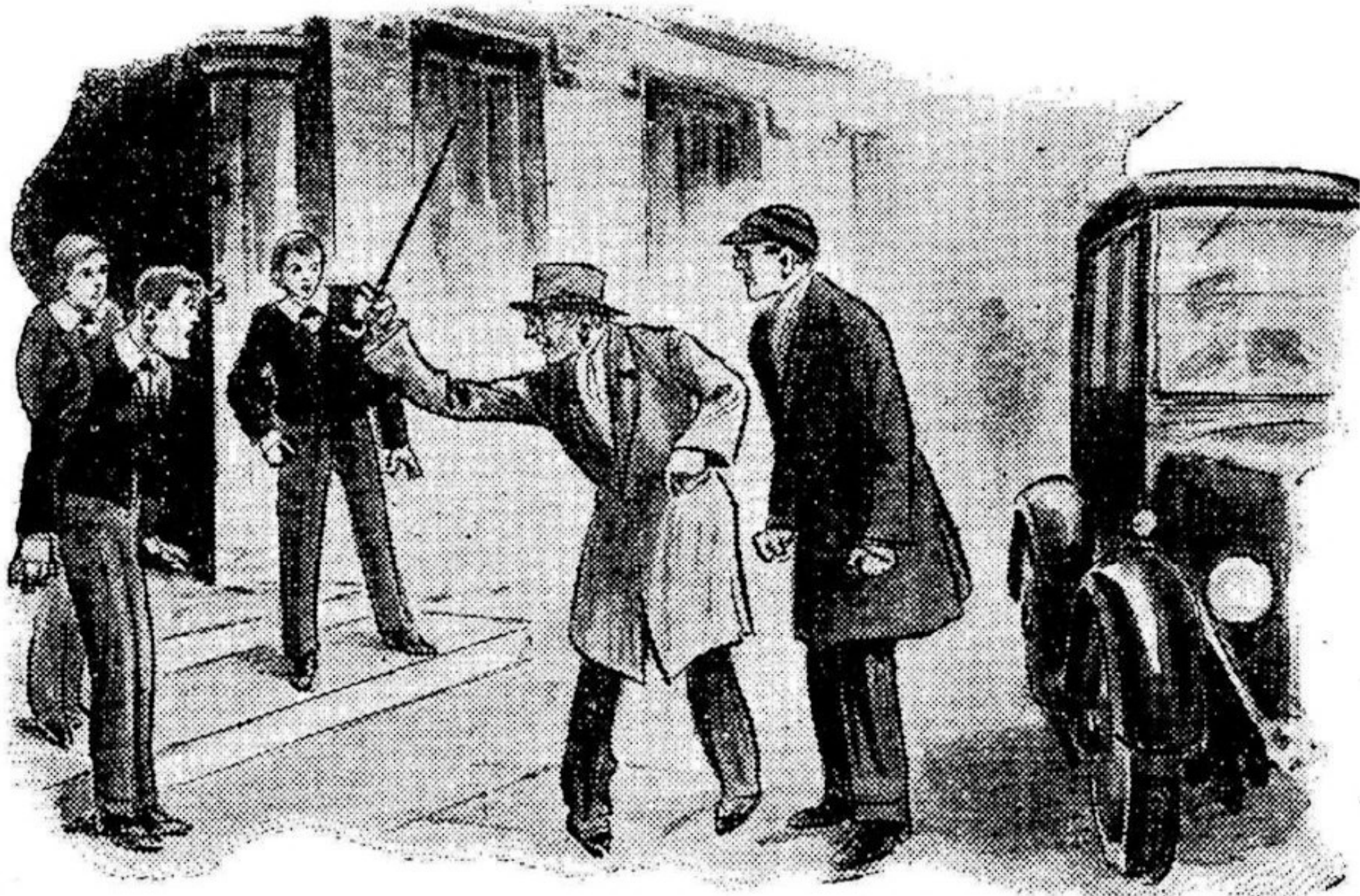
"Poor old Fenton!" said Nipper. "He's in for a rough time, by the look of things."

Nobody thought of laughing. If some of the other seniors had been in Fenton's position the Junior School would probably have cackled enormously, but somehow Fenton was different. Fenton was such a thorough good sort that none of the juniors thought of being amused.

Fenton himself was very upset, but, nevertheless, he was already making excuses for Uncle Robert. It was apparent that the grouchy old chap didn't know the ropes of a big public school. And perhaps his gout was troubling him.

At the same time, the St. Frank's skipper was quite anxious to get rid of his uncle. Uncle Robert's assertion that he was not leaving St. Frank's to-day had given Fenton a bit of a jolt. It was very unusual for visitors to remain at the school overnight; and Fenton felt, too, that he would never be able to stand two days of Uncle Robert. Two days? An uncomfortable thought was creeping into Fenton's mind now; perhaps Uncle Robert intended staying even longer than two days.

"I think perhaps I'd better take you straight to the Housemaster, uncle," said Fenton, as they paused at the corner of the Sixth Form passage. "It's the usual thing for guests to——"



"Welcome to St. Frank's, sir!" said Edward Oswald Handforth cheerily. Fenton's uncle eyed Handy balefully. "Rank impertinence!" he said angrily, waving his stick.

"No, no!" said Uncle Robert hastily. "Nothing of the sort! I do not wish to see the Housemaster—yet. Take me to your own room, Edgar. The Housemaster can wait."

Fenton looked at his uncle curiously.

"It's just a question of the formalities, sir," he said. "The Housemaster might be offended——"

"I cannot help the gentleman's troubles!" barked Uncle Robert testily. "I have already told you, Edgar, that I do not wish to meet him yet. How dare you bandy words with me? Take me to your own room! Do you hear me, sir? At once! Are you presuming to argue with your uncle?"

There were one or two fags hovering about in the alcove at the end of the Sixth-Form passage, and Fenton did not care to pursue the subject within their hearing. He led the way straight to his own study, and opened the door.

"Here you are, uncle," he said, standing aside. "This is my study."

Uncle Robert strode in, and he gazed inquisitively round him.

"Far too comfortable!" he declared, at once. "When I was at school I did not have such luxuries. No, Edgar. I entirely disapprove of this apartment."

"I'm sorry, uncle," said Fenton. "The school provides me with this study——"

"I shall have something to say about it when I see your headmaster," interrupted

Uncle Robert sourly. "And these—these youths? Who are they?" he went on, fixing his gaze upon two other Sixth-Formers who were in the study. "What are they doing here?"

"They're friends of mine, sir," said Fenton. "Morrow, of the West House, and Wilson of this House."

Uncle Robert nodded curtly to them.

"Upon my soul, they're as big as you, Edgar!" he said. "You are all old enough to be earning your own living! Disgraceful! Scandalous! I wonder that you have the audacity to remain at St. Frank's in the guise of schoolboys! The very idea of it is farcical!"

Morrow and Wilson, who had thought it rather a good idea to be on hand to give Fenton's uncle a welcome, were at a loss for words. They had hardly expected a greeting of this nature.

As for Fenton, he was feeling the position acutely. Not only was his uncle making himself thoroughly unpleasant to all in general, but he was becoming positively insulting.

Morrow and Wilson very sensibly made no remarks. They edged towards the door, however, feeling that this was no place for them.

"One moment!" said Uncle Robert. "There is no necessity for you young men to go."

"We thought you would rather like to be alone with your nephew, sir," said Morrow lamely.

"I have no desire to be alone with Edgar!" replied Uncle Robert tartly. "You two youths, I understand, are also in the Sixth Form?"

"Yes, sir," said Wilson.

"How old are you?"

"Really, sir——"

"How old?" roared Uncle Robert.

"Eighteen, sir," said Wilson, startled.

"Eighteen!" repeated Uncle Robert, with a sniff. "At your age, young man, I had been earning my living for over three years!"

"Look here, uncle, I don't see why you should talk like this to my friends!" said Fenton heatedly.

For the past minute or two Fenton had been getting angrier and angrier, and now his good-nature had been overshadowed by his exasperation. His face was flushed and his eyes were burning.

"Good gracious!" said Uncle Robert, twirling round and staring at him. "Are you talking to me, Edgar?"

"Yes, uncle, I am!" replied Fenton. "You can say what you like to me, and I don't suppose it's my place to answer back, but you've no right to talk to these fellows in this fashion. I'm awfully sorry, Morrow——"

"Don't mention it!" said Morrow uncomfortably. "We'll go. Come on, Wilson."

"Yes, rather!" said Wilson.

"Halt!" roared Uncle Robert furiously. "How dare you defy me? As for you, Edgar, I shall register another black mark against your name——"

"I can't help it, uncle!" said Fenton grimly. "You can register as many black marks as you like. But I think it's a bit thick for you to come here and throw your weight about——"

"Silence!" thundered Uncle Robert, bringing his fist down on the table with a crash.

It seemed to Morrow and Wilson that Uncle Robert's wig slipped a trifle. It may have been an illusion, but as his fist struck the table he unconsciously jerked his head. Undoubtedly his grey hair seemed to quiver and then slide slightly over towards his left ear. In fact, there was very little doubt that he was wearing a wig.

All doubt was removed a second later when he put his hand up and set the wig into position again. There was nothing much in the incident, perhaps, for quite a few elderly men are in the habit of wearing wigs.

Yet Morrow, at least, found himself looking at Uncle Robert with a vague light of suspicion in his eyes.

MR. ROBERT CHESTER seemed momentarily agitated.

He took a hasty glance at himself in the mirror, and then, apparently satisfied that his appearance was normal, he turned back towards his nephew.

"I shall want a bed-room!" he said bluntly.

"A bed-room!" repeated Morrow and Wilson in one voice.

"Yes, a bed-room!" said Uncle Robert sourly. "A bed-room, in case you may not be aware of the fact, is an apartment where one sleeps. However, I was addressing my nephew, so your comments are not required."

"You'll have to see the Housemaster about a bed-room, uncle," said Fenton gruffly. "Visitors do occasionally stay at St. Frank's overnight, and I dare say Mr. Lee will be able to find quarters for you."

"Overnight?" repeated Uncle Robert shortly. "Oh, indeed! So you are hoping that you will get rid of me to-morrow, eh?"

This was exactly what Fenton *had* been hoping; but somehow he did not think it wise to make any such statement.

"Well, uncle——" he began.

"If you imagine that I intend leaving St. Frank's so soon, then I must disillusion you," said Uncle Robert, with a peculiar kind of satisfaction. "No, Edgar. I am not going away from St. Frank's to-morrow—or the next day—or even the day after that. I shall still be at St. Frank's next week—and, indeed, during the following week."

"Have you come to stay for the term, sir?" asked Fenton, unable to disguise his consternation.

"Yes, I have!" replied Uncle Robert triumphantly.

"For the term?" gasped Morrow.

"For good!" said Uncle Robert fiercely. "There! What do you think of that?"

Neither Fenton nor his friends felt like telling Uncle Robert what they thought of it; but he could easily guess what they thought from the expressions on their faces. Fenton himself was looking utterly alarmed, and Morrow and Wilson were more or less stupefied.

"Look here, uncle, you must be joking," said Fenton at length.

"I am not joking!" interrupted Uncle Robert. "I am not in the habit of joking. If it comes to that, Edgar, I do not approve of joking. Life is a serious matter, and there is no time for ridiculous levity. When I say that I have come to St. Frank's to stay I mean it literally."

"But—but it can't be done, uncle!" protested Fenton. "I mean, a visitor is a visitor. The school is hospitable enough, and if you like to stay two or three days I dare say it can be arranged."

"You would like to get rid of me at once, eh?" thundered Uncle Robert, thumping the table again. "Oh, yes! I can quite understand that you are very alarmed at the idea of having your uncle under the same roof for good! It doesn't suit you, Edgar, eh? I am very sorry—but it suits me."

Morrow gave Wilson a quick, meaning glance. This time there had been no doubt about it; Uncle Robert's wig had moved so conspicuously that it had nearly fallen off. He put it straight very rapidly, but in that

second Morrow had not failed to observe that Uncle Robert possessed an excellent head of his own hair underneath.

This was a very surprising discovery!

Elderly gentlemen do not usually wear wigs unless their own hair is scanty or entirely absent. Why should Uncle Robert be wearing a grey wig when his own hair was plentiful—and, furthermore, of an excellent chestnut hue?

There was something very fishy about this.

Morrow decided to take a hand in the game. He moved briskly towards the door and laid his fingers upon the knob.

"Shan't be long, Fenton," he said carelessly. "I'm just going to fetch Mr. Lee."

"Eh?" said Fenton. "What for?"

"Oh, I think that your uncle should meet our Housemaster as soon as possible," replied Morrow. "It's one of the formalities that must be—"

"Wait!" broke in Uncle Robert hastily. "I—I do not wish to see your Housemaster just yet."

"Don't you?" said Morrow coolly. "I am sorry, sir, but I'm going to bring him."

"You—you young rascal!" shouted Uncle Robert. "How dare you? Come back! I forbid you to leave this apartment!"

Morrow grinned, more certain of himself than ever.

"Can you tell me, sir, why you are so frightened of meeting the Housemaster?" he asked sweetly. "Is there some reason why you want to avoid meeting him?"

"Look here, Morrow—" began Fenton.

"Sorry, old man, but we're not quite so blind as you are!" said Morrow grimly. "This—this gentleman is no more your uncle than I am!"

"What!" gasped Fenton.

"Of course he's not!" said Wilson quickly. "Your real uncle wouldn't grumble at everything as he's been grumbling. He wouldn't talk about staying here for the rest of the term. He'd know jolly well that it would be impossible. Besides, your real uncle probably has his own business to attend to—or his own family circle, anyhow. The very idea of a

visitor staying here for the whole term is ridiculous!"

Uncle Robert quivered with rage.

"Are—are you going to allow this, Edgar?" he demanded, twirling upon his nephew. "Are you going to permit me to be insulted—"

"Rats!" cut in Morrow, grinning. "I laid a little trap for you, sir, and you fell into it. As soon as you heard that I was going for the Housemaster, you got scared. And if you don't mind, we'll take this!"

With a sudden grab, Morrow seized

Uncle Robert's wig and dragged it off. It came away very easily, revealing a neatly cut head of brown hair—slightly ruffled, but in no way unrepresentable. There was, in fact, no reason why Uncle Robert should wear a wig. His own hair was plentiful.

"Well, I'm hanged!" said Fenton breathlessly.

A slow grin appeared on Uncle Robert's features, and he shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, well, have your own way!" he said coolly, and in quite a new tone of voice. "I meant to carry it on a bit further, but you've twigged me!"

And for several seconds there was a dead silence in the study.

The *TERROR* Of The **FROZEN NORTH!**



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Featuring Ferrers Locke
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The **POPULAR**

**THIS
WEEK!**

CHAPTER 4. Another Shock!

THEN Edgar Fenton found his voice.

"Spoofed!" he said breathlessly.

"By Jove! He's not my Uncle Robert at all!"

"We suspected something when we saw his wig moving," said Morrow, nodding. "I rather think we had better grab him, and give him a face wash. I don't believe he's a man at all. In fact, I shouldn't be at all surprised to find that he's one of those cheeky juniors."

"Here, what's the idea? Who are you? What's your name?" asked Fenton, looking at his supposed uncle.

"My name is Chester—Robert Chester," replied the visitor.

"Rot!" said Fenton gruffly. "Robert Chester is the name of my uncle."

"Well, my name is Robert Chester," said the other. "I'll admit I've played a practical joke on you, but that's my privilege. An uncle can do that sort of thing with his nephew."

"Isn't it about time you dropped all this pretence?" asked Fenton grimly. "Why, now that I come to look at you without your wig, I can see that you're only a youngster. I've got to admit, though, that it was a jolly good make-up."

"At my old school I was celebrated for being the best amateur actor for miles," pointed out the other coolly.

"Come on—let's clear some of his make-up off, and see what he really looks like!" said Wilson briskly. "Grab him, Morrow! And, by Jingo, we're going to make the young beggar smart for this!"

"I should think so!" said Morrow heatedly. "The nerve of it! Coming here and spoofing old Fenton—the captain of the school! And we're prefects, too! I never heard of such nerve!"

"A bit steep, isn't it?" chuckled the visitor.

He was seized and hustled across the study. Then Morrow pushed a duster into a jug of water and applied the duster to the stranger's face. In a very short time the make-up was removed.

"Here, steady!" gasped the new arrival. "No need to be so confoundedly rough. The game's up, and I know it. And you needn't think I'm afraid of you, because I'm not."

He stood dabbing his face with his handkerchief, and he was revealed as a youngster of about fifteen. His features were sharp and keen; his eyes were dark, and set well back in his head. Altogether, he looked a very quick-witted, capable sort of junior.

"That's better!" said Fenton, recovering his usual composure. "Well, thank goodness you're not my uncle! If I had had an ounce of brains I should have seen that you were a fraud."

"But that's just the point," said the other, "I'm not a fraud."

"Any more of this nonsense from you, my lad, and I'll fetch out my cane!" said Fenton grimly. "Where do you belong to, anyhow?"

"I belong to St. Frank's."

"Why, you—you—"

"It's a fact," said the other coolly. "I'm a new fellow—in the Remove. If you don't believe me, go and ask your Housemaster. He knows all about it. It's all fixed up. I'm booked for the Remove, and I'm going to board in the Ancient House."

"The dickens you are!" said Fenton. "Well, my son, you're in the Ancient House now, and I happen to be the head prefect of the Ancient House. You've begun well!"

"Just what I thought," said the new junior.

"And I'm going to begin well, too!" added Fenton. "You've had the nerve to play a practical joke on your head prefect, and you knew exactly what you were doing, too. All right! I shall know what I'm doing when I give you a tanning."

"Good man!" said Morrow heartily. "That's the stuff, Fenton! Give the young beggar a lesson straight away. There's nothing like starting right."

Although the seniors were relieved to find that this visitor was only a spoofer, they could not overlook the fact that he had had the extraordinary temerity to jape the school captain. It was an unheard-of thing. No new boy had ever come to St. Frank's asking for trouble more openly.

"Just a minute!" said the Remove's latest acquisition. "Just a minute, Edgar, my lad."

"I'm Fenton to you," said the school captain darkly. "No more of that silly rot—"

"But isn't it usual for an uncle to address his nephew by his Christian name?" asked the visitor coolly. "I don't suppose you'll care a lot for it, old man, but I *do* happen to be your uncle."

"Don't be an idiot!" snapped Fenton angrily.

"My dear chap, why don't you think?" said the other. "My name is Robert Chester. In other words, when I told you that I was your Uncle Robert I meant it. I *am* your Uncle Robert."

But Edgar Fenton only became angrier, and Morrow and Wilson reached for their canes. This new fellow's cheek was beyond all endurance!

"**T**HREE?" said Morrow, as he suggestively swished his cane.

"Three on each hand!" said Fenton firmly.

The new boy backed away.

"Cheese it!" he said hastily. "Have you no more respect for your uncle—"

"Drop all that nonsense about your being my uncle!" shouted Fenton, now thoroughly exasperated. "You—you confounded young sweep! You've admitted that you're a new fellow for the Remove, and I want to know your name. Don't forget that I'm your head prefect, and have a perfect right to make these inquiries."

"My name is Robert Chester," said the new boy coolly. "Hang it all, why can't you believe the truth when I trot it out? I'm your uncle, Fenton. How many more times do you want telling?"

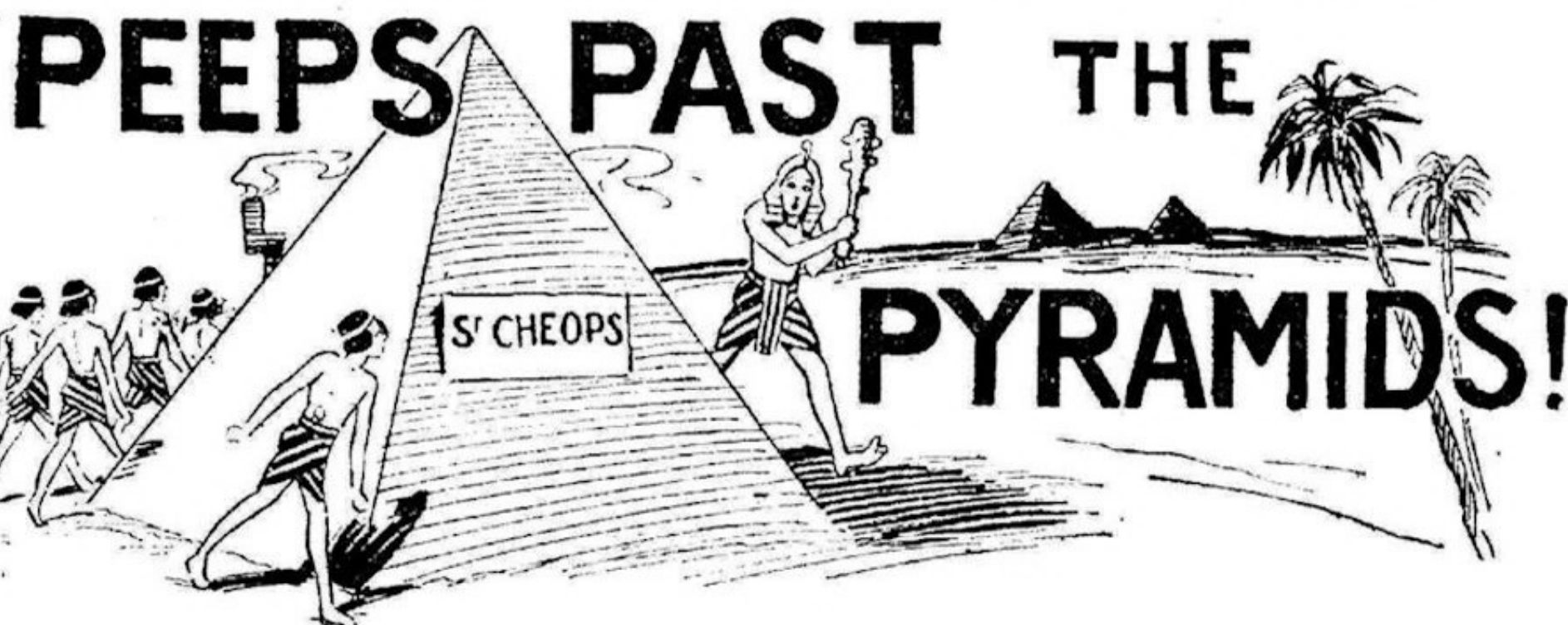
"It's impossible!" said Fenton angrily. "I'm about three years older than you—"

"That doesn't matter," said Uncle Robert. "It's easy enough. Surely you know the facts about your own family? My mother— No, that's wrong," he added, with a grin. "You're getting me confused. Your mother is my eldest sister. See?"

"But—but—but—"

(Continued on page 14.)

There's a Laugh in Every Line of this Screamingly-Funny Feature!



AND lo! Dr. Potiphar, master of the Fourth Form at St. Cheops, appeared before his assembled class, making his entrance through a trapdoor in the floor of the classroom.

Being fragmentary records of School Days in the time of the Ancient Egyptians as collected by

VIVIAN TRAVERS,
of the St. Frank's Remove

Lest anyone think this strange, let it be stated that the plan of the room was that of an inverted pyramid. The boys sat in tiers—yea, and sometimes in tears—one above the other in ever-widening squares, and the master's table stood at the apex, which in this case was the base. Also know that part of the floor lifted up and formed the entrance, and that when the trap was closed it was used as a blackboard.

And Dr. Potiphar spake thus:

"Boys, I will set thee a sum."

And he did so, this being the sum he set:

"Draw ye an imaginary line from the Euphrates to the Red Sea. Along this line travels one, Archimedes, a Greek slave, whom we will call 'A,' together with one ass carrying merchandise. In the other direction travels Bethsheepshead the Berber, whom we will call 'B,' accompanied by two dromedaries, both beasts bearing big bunches of bananas. Therefore, if 'A' and his ass have one day's journey start, at what point will he be able to purchase or purloin a banana from 'B' and his dromedaries, wireless not yet having been invented?"

And the boys spake one with another, and said—softly:

"It is a hard sum he hath set us—blow him!"

But there was one boy who was versed in necromancy, and, drawing mystic symbols with his stylus upon a piece of papyrus which he drew from his pouch, and which was not without blemish, he arrived at the answer to this hard sum in two jiffies.

"What wilt thou give me for the answer to this sum?" asked the boy who was versed

in necromancy of the boy who sat on the next block of stone.

"I will give thee even a thikkeer if thou givest me it not," said the other, whose father was the thikkeer dispenser of the village.

"The twain would meet at Akabah, by the first lamp-post on the right-hand side coming from," replied the son of the sorcerer, with fear in his heart.

"Thou has well spoken. Let thy eers be free from thickness—pro tem," answered his neighbour, for he spake Latin fluently.

And the thikkeer threatener passed the information round the class, even to the topmost boy in the corner of the uttermost square of the school-room.

And the boys communed one with the other, and said, "Oo-Rail! We have solved this hard sum. Now for old Potty!" for thus disrespectfully did they call their master, taking care, however, that he heard them not.

THEN did Dr. Potiphar awake from a snooze and lift up his eyes to the class. "Any of ye who have finished the sum I set thee," he spake, "hold up thy mitts!" And every one of the boys raised each his hand.

"My venerable Aunt Saphira!" quoth the master. "I am indeed mightily pleased. Ye have done better than well. Line ye up, my lads, and shew me thine answers."

So the boys lined them up; tier upon tier lined they up joyfully, and produced their answers to the master. And Dr. Potiphar took the tablet of the first boy, and, adjusting his calipers, tested the answer.

"Thou canst return to thy place," said the master. "Next boy."

And the next boy, and the next, and one and all did they produce their tablets for

(Continued on page 44.)

The Worst Boy in The School!

(Continued from page 12.)

"Your mother is the eldest, and I'm the youngest," proceeded Uncle Robert. "And there are fourteen of us in the family. That's clear enough, isn't it?"

"The kid's talking rubbish!" said Wilson, staring.

But Edgar Fenton had a startled expression on his face. His eyes had opened wider, and he was now breathing rapidly.

"By Jove," he ejaculated, "I—I believe he's right, you fellows."

"Right!" gurgled Morrow.

"Yes, it's true!" said Fenton hoarsely. "My mother *has* got thirteen brothers and sisters. Didn't I tell you that they're dotted about all over Shropshire? And now that I come to think of it, I can remember having heard rumours about my having an uncle younger than myself. But, great Scott, I never dreamed that he would come to St. Frank's!"

"And yet, here I am!" said Uncle Robert. "Awkward, isn't it?"

Fenton stared dazedly at his youthful uncle. It was ridiculous—incredible! But Fenton knew—now—that it was true.

The thing was fantastic. He, the captain of the school, was saddled with an uncle in the Remove! It was a disaster of the first dimension.

"Don't forget, Edgar, that I shall expect a certain amount of respect from my nephew!" said Uncle Robert, in his former tone. "All uncles must be treated with deference."

"You—you— Oh, well, what's the use?" said Fenton, shrugging his shoulders. "You're here, and I suppose I shall have to put up with you. But what the dickens do you mean by coming here in disguise?"

"Oh, that was just a jape," grinned Uncle Robert. "I knew that you were a bit confused about your uncles, and I thought it was worth risking. Thanks awfully, Edgar, old man, for coming to the station and meeting me with that motor-car."

"It was like your nerve!" said Fenton hotly.

"The Remove will scream when I tell the chaps about it!" went on Robert Chester, nodding. "You see, I thought I would make a bit of a splash when I arrived at St. Frank's. A new fellow generally has a bad time of it for the first week or two, but if he does something noteworthy as soon as he arrives he is accepted as one of the crowd at once."

Fenton took a deep breath.

"Look here, young 'un!" he said earnestly, "I don't think that it's necessary for the school to know that you are my uncle."

"No; it's not necessary," agreed Uncle Robert. "At the same time, our relationship might be useful—to me. So, if it's all the same to you, old man, I shan't keep it a secret."

"It's not all the same to me!" growled Fenton. "I'm the school captain, and I don't want everybody laughing at me."

"But why should they laugh?" asked Uncle Robert calmly. "There's nothing funny in the situation, is there?"

"No—it is tragic!" said Fenton. "At the same time, the school will probably grin. I can trust these fellows to keep it dark. Your name is Robert Chester, and you're a new fellow in the Remove. That ought to be good enough for the juniors."

"But it's not good enough for me," said Uncle Robert. "Oh, no, Edgar! I've come to St. Frank's with an advantage—the advantage of having a nephew who is captain of the school. And, whether you like it or not, I'm going to reap the benefit."

There was something rather unpleasant in Uncle Robert's tone, and Fenton looked at him closely. In an instinctive sort of way, he was already beginning to dislike this precocious youngster. There was something about Uncle Robert that struck a false note. He seemed to be too knowing—too sophisticated.

"Well, cheerio!" said Uncle Robert, with a nod. "I'll be getting along, if you don't mind. I dare say the Housemaster will want to speak to me. But before I see him I shall have to change into Etons. I might see you later, Edgar."

And the three prefects were so startled that they did nothing to prevent his going.

"**G**REAT Scott!" said Fenton huskily. He sat down with a jolt, and looked blankly before him.

"But are you sure of this?" asked Morrow incredulously. "It's—it's too ridiculous, Fenton! That kid can't really be your uncle!"

"He is!" groaned Fenton.

"But it's all topsy-turvy!" put in Wilson. "Uncles are necessarily older than nephews."

"There are exceptions to every rule!" said Fenton. "This is one of them, worse luck! Now I come to think of it, there's no doubt on the point. That—that kid is my uncle. My Uncle Robert! And he's here—in the Remove—in the same House as myself! It isn't merely tragic—it's disastrous!"

"What are you going to do about it?" asked Morrow.

"Do?" repeated Fenton, looking up. "What can I do? His people can send him to this school if they choose, can't they? Just because he's my uncle I can't bar him from St. Frank's. No; I shall have to put up with him. But, by Jove, I don't see why I should put up with his nerve!"

"No fear!" said Wilson. "Now that he's at St. Frank's, your relationship doesn't matter a toss. He's a junior, and if he starts any nonsense it's your plain duty to give him a tanning. I think you ought to have swiped him, to start with. There's something about him I don't like."

"With all respect to you, Fenton, old man, I agree," said Morrow. "Somehow I don't trust that kid. He looks—well, he looks—I hardly know how to say it. But I'm hanged if he looks straight."

"That's my impression, too," said Fenton quietly.

It was an uncomfortable thought. Edgar Fenton was no prig; he was no saint, either. He had his faults the same as other people. But at St. Frank's he had the reputation of being as straight as a die—and he was as straight as a die, too. Good old Fenton was one of the best—one of the most honest fellows under the sun. He couldn't do a crooked action. It wasn't in his nature. And it worried him to think that this uncle of his—three years younger than himself—might prove to be a young rotter.

However, it was early to judge yet. There was nothing wrong about Uncle Robert's first adventure at the school; it was only a high-spirited practical joke. Even Fenton found it possible to smile over the affair.

It was getting close to tea-time now, and after Morrow had gone off to the West House, Fenton and Wilson strolled along to the Senior Day-room. They found Biggleswade and Conroy, of the Sixth, chatting with Browne and Stevens near the fireplace.

"Ah, Brother Fenton, this is surprising news to hear," said Browne gratefully. "And how, may I ask, is Uncle Robert?"

"You've heard, then?" said Fenton.

"Alas, yes!" sighed Browne. "I am all against this publicity. If I had an uncle three years younger than myself I should take immediate steps to have him quietly but firmly annihilated. Such an uncle is apt to be irksome."

"But it's not really true, is it, Fenton?" asked Biggleswade mildly.

"Yes," growled Fenton. "I suppose the whole school's talking of it!"

"More or less," said Biggleswade, with a grin. "It seems that your uncle met a few seniors in the passage, and it only took him about five seconds to explain the true position. The young beggar is as keen as mustard on taking advantage of the relationship. He's your uncle, and he's letting everybody know it."

"I can well understand your feelings, brother," said Browne sympathetically. "I can well understand, too, your puzzled condition earlier in the day. I venture to suggest that the shock was a cruel one when you learned the facts."

Before Fenton could answer, Chambers and Phillips, of the West House Fifth, looked in. They were grinning from ear to ear.

"Hallo, Fenton!" said Chambers. "How's your Uncle Robert?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Fifth-Formers seemed to think that there was something very funny in the query, particularly as Fenton turned very red.

"You must forgive these brainless specimens," said Browne apologetically. "As all the school knows, Brother Chambers is suffering from the disadvantage of having the brain of an earwig."

"You silly ass—" began Chambers, losing his grin.

"Not," said Browne stoutly, "that I wish to insult any member of the earwig tribe. I do not hesitate to state that the average earwig is quite brainy in comparison with Brother Chambers. But, of course, there are earwigs and earwigs—"

"Rats!" broke in Chambers. "You can be funny if you like, Browne, but everybody is grinning at Fenton's uncle. My only hat! Fancy having an uncle three years younger than yourself! What a joke!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Reynolds and Mills, of the Modern House Sixth, had arrived, and they were laughing uproariously.

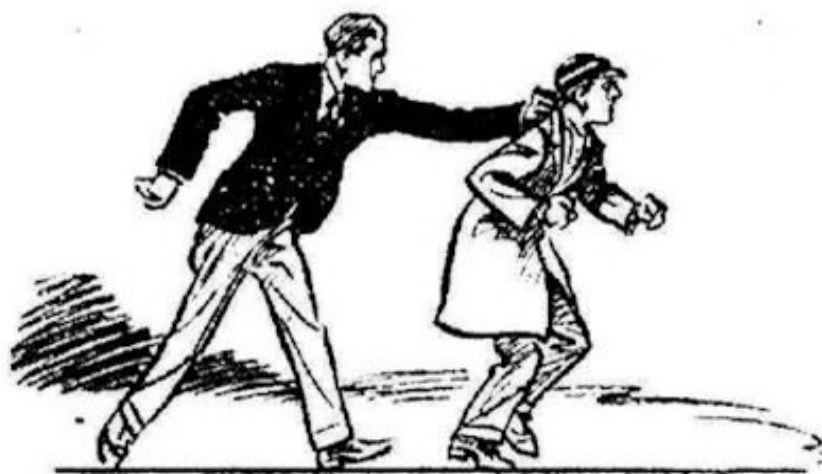
"Has your Uncle Robert given you a tip yet, Fenton?" asked Mills politely.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Senior Day-room echoed with the laughter of the Fifth-Formers and Sixth-Formers. In fact, practically everybody except Edgar Fenton looked upon the situation in a decidedly frivolous way.

CHAPTER 5.

Uncle Robert Fails to Impress!



"HERE he is!" said Handforth briskly.

A crowd of Removites were waiting in the lobby of the Ancient house. The Remove, of course, had heard the news, and at first the Remove had treated the story with incredulity. But after it

had been verified by several seniors, there could be no longer any doubt regarding its authenticity.

Fenton, of the Sixth, had an uncle three years younger than himself!

What was more to the point, that same uncle was now a member of the Remove! And he had opened up his career at St. Frank's by working off a daring jape against his nephew.

The Remove was interested; they wanted to meet this audacious new boy. Thus all the leading lights of the Remove were gathered in the lobby, waiting for Uncle Robert to put in an appearance.

Handforth and a number of others would have grabbed the new fellow long before this,

but unfortunately he had been closeted with the Housemaster for a full half-hour. Previous to that he had been upstairs changing. This was the first chance the Remove had had to greet the new boy.

There was something very self-possessed about him when he finally put in an appearance. He was neatly attired in Etons, his hair was well-brushed, and it was very clear at the first glance that he was possessed of any amount of cool nerve. He did not turn a hair as he heard the various shouts that greeted his appearance.

"Glad to welcome you into the Remove," said Nipper heartily, as he strode forward and took the new boy's hand. "Your name's Chester, I think?"

"You think correctly," said Uncle Robert, nodding.

"Robert Chester, eh?"

"Marvellous!" said Uncle Robert. "Considering that I'm the chief subject of conversation in the school—and have been for the past hour—you must be a pretty keen sort of fellow."

Nipper smiled, but he did not quite like the new fellow's tone.

"Well, it's just as well to be sure of these things," he said. "My name is Hamilton—more commonly known as Nipper—and I'm the captain of the Remove. I understand that you are in the same Form?"

"Mr. Lee has indicated that I'm just about suited to the Remove," said Uncle Robert calmly. "And he has been gracious enough to put me into Study I, with three fellows named Fullwood, Russell and Waldo. Fullwood, Russell and Waldo—forward! Let's have a look at you! I want to see the fellows I'm destined to dig with."

Ralph Leslie Fullwood and Clive Russell, feeling rather self-conscious, singled themselves out. Stanley Waldo, as it happened, was away from St. Frank's for a week or two. He had gone abroad with his father, Rupert Waldo, the famous Peril Expert, having received special permission from Dr. Nicholls, the headmaster of St. Frank's, to prolong his Christmas vacation.

"Being a new chap, you probably don't understand the ropes," said Fullwood, as he shook hands. "but your tone is a bit too cheeky, my son. I'm not at all sure that Russell and Waldo and I will have you in our study. At least, not unless you consent to behave yourself."

Chester grinned.

"But think of the honour!" he said. "You mustn't forget that I am Uncle Robert."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I am the uncle of the school captain!" went on the new boy. "Surely that's a big distinction? I dare say I shall be able to wangle all sorts of privileges——"

"Thanks all the same, but we don't need any of those wanglings," interrupted Russell gruffly. "And the sooner you can forget that you are Fenton's uncle the better!"

"Hear, hear!" said Nipper. "From this minute onwards, Chester, you are just a Remove chap. Fenton is the captain of the school, and the fact that you are his uncle doesn't matter a toss."

"Well, it matters to me," said Uncle Robert. "And you can bet your boots that I'm going to take full advantage of my position. What's the good of having a nephew who is a prefect unless you make use of him?"

"Hear, hear!"

"Good old Uncle Robert!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Many of the Remove fellows roared with laughter, and they pressed round Uncle Robert, making a big fuss of him. Nipper and Handforth and Fullwood and a few of the others were not pleasantly impressed, however. Uncle Robert was altogether too full of self-importance; and the frank manner in which he stated that he meant to take advantage of his relationship was not to his credit.

Handforth—blunt Handy who always spoke his mind—barged forward and seized Uncle Robert by the shoulder.

"Just a minute, my lad!" he said grimly. "I don't like your manners! I'm Handforth—of Study D."

"Oh?" said Uncle Robert. "Are you anybody in particular?"

"I'm Handforth! Isn't that enough?"

"To me it means nothing!" said Uncle Robert.

"You silly ass!" yelled Handforth. "Do you mean to say you haven't heard of me?"

"Never."

"Well, you're hearing of me now!" roared Handforth. "I'm the most important chap in the Remove——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But I thought that this chap—Hamilton—was captain?" asked the new boy in surprise.

"So he is!" frowned Handforth. "But being captain is nothing much—it's only a nominal position. And I want to tell you something. You may be Fenton's uncle, but if you take any mean advantage of the relationship I'll punch you on the nose! Is that clear? We don't stand that sort of thing in the Remove!"

"No?"

"No!" said Handforth. "This chap, for example—Somerton—happens to be a duke."

"Really?" said Uncle Robert, eyeing the youthful duke with interest. "You don't say so."

"I do say so!" insisted Handforth. "And there's another fellow here—Tregellis-West. He's a baronet. And over in the West House they've got a real live lord. But they never use their titles at St. Frank's. Here's Jimmy Potts, for example. Officially his real name is Sir James Potts, but nobody ever calls him anything else but Jimmy—or just plain Potts. And it'll be the same with you, my son! You may be Fenton's uncle, but in the Remove you're a Removite, and if you

try to take advantage of old Fenton there will be trouble."

"Good old Handy!" said Fullwood. "Fenton's one of the best, and we all respect him."

So Uncle Robert had had the facts put to him quite plainly, and he could not pretend that he did not understand. Nevertheless, from that minute onwards he was known throughout St. Frank's as "Uncle Robert." In a word, his relationship to Fenton *did* count.

NIPPER went along with the new fellow to Study I. Fullwood and Russell had already gone there for tea, and preparations were in progress when

Uncle Robert arrived with his escort.

"Thought I'd bring the new chap along," said Nipper, as he stood in the doorway. "This is your study, Chester."

Uncle Robert looked round the cosy apartment with a critical eye.

"Not so bad—and, on the other hand, not too good," he remarked at length. "Are they strict here?"

"What do you mean—strict?"

"Do the prefects come nosing round—or the masters?"

"Not unless they have reason to suspect that something's going on against the rules."

"What does that mean—exactly?" asked Uncle Robert. "Are they down on smoking?"

"Heavily!" said Fullwood, with a glare.

"You don't smoke, do you, Chester?"

"No," replied Uncle Robert. "I've been taught that smoking stunts the growth, so like a good little boy I have never developed the pernicious habit."

"Then you're sensible," said Fullwood.

"If you did smoke I was going to tell you not to indulge in the pastime in this study——"



Uncle Robert touched a knob which was concealed in the doorway and then waited. The door opened silently and a man appeared. "Who is it?" he asked cautiously.

"That's all right," said Uncle Robert. "Well, Hamilton, thanks for bringing me here. Don't let me keep you."

"You're not keeping me," said Nipper. "I'm going, anyway."

He was beginning to take a dislike to Fenton's uncle; he didn't quite know why, but somehow this new junior grated on him. There was something about Uncle Robert that did not ring true.

"Tea, eh?" said the new fellow, after Nipper had gone. "This is pretty good, you know. They didn't supply us with tea at my other school."

"They don't supply us with tea here," said Russell bluntly. "We provide it ourselves."

Uncle Robert elevated his eyebrows.

"You don't say so!" he ejaculated.

"Don't they give you any tea in this hole?"

"It isn't a hole!" retorted Fullwood.

"This school, then?"

"You can have tea in Hall if you like, but most of the fellows prefer to have it in their own studies," said Fullwood. "Of course, we have to pay for our own stuff."

"Why pay for it when it's provided free?"

"Well, it's a matter of choice," replied Fullwood. "The general rule is for the members of a study to contribute and pay the exes. Up till now Russell and Waldo and I have shared it equally, but as you're with us——"

"Don't count me in!" interrupted Uncle Robert. "If I can get a free tea I don't see why I should pay anything."

The other two juniors stared at him.

"But, hang it, it only comes to a few bob a week," said Fullwood.

"I shouldn't be at all surprised," agreed Uncle Robert. "At the same time, I am not going to be a mug. How do you get to this free-lunch counter, anyway?"

"It's too late now," said Fullwood. "But as you're a new chap, and don't know the ropes, you're welcome to stay here if you like—and we shan't expect you to pay your whack. You can be our guest for to-day."

"Good enough!" said Uncle Robert briskly.

His study-mates were not favourably impressed. It really seemed that Fenton's youthful uncle was mean, and a mean fellow was never popular in the Remove. It was hardly possible that Uncle Robert was short of money. His reason for deciding to take tea in Hall was undoubtedly because he was naturally mean. The eagerness with which he had accepted the invitation practically proved it. So long as he had to pay nothing he was quite content to remain in Study I.

By the time the meal was over Fullwood and Russell had formed the impression that Robert Chester was a decidedly tricky customer. He was very knowing—very sophisticated.

However, with the rank and file of the juniors he had made a good impression. He had japed the school captain, and he had arrived at St. Frank's with a bang. The unthinking fellows accepted him as a good sportsman. And the very fact that he was Fenton's uncle gave him a novel standing.

After tea he pushed his chair back and left the study without even thanking Fullwood and Russell for the feed. Not that they required any thanks. At the same time, they felt that the new fellow might at least have made some sort of acknowledgment.

Uncle Robert went straight to the cloak-room, got his overcoat and can, and prepared to sally out. The main door was closed, and Nipper and Handforth and one or two other fellows were standing in the lobby, chatting.

"Going out?" asked Nipper, as Uncle Robert approached.

"Do you think I put my overcoat on for fun?" retorted the new boy.

"I was only going to warn you that it'll be locking-up within half an hour," said Nipper gruffly. "And if you're late for locking-up, you'll probably get lines."

"I'm only going out into the yard for a breath of fresh air," said Uncle Robert.

"The yard?" repeated Handforth. "I suppose you mean the Triangle?"

"Is that what you call it? The Triangle, then," said Uncle Robert. "No, you needn't trouble to come with me—I can find my way about, thanks."

"We weren't coming," said Nipper. "It's rather too misty for us. It's not the kind of evening for strolling about in the Triangle, Chester."

Uncle Robert did not even reply. He opened the door, took a look at the murk in the Triangle, and then walked down the steps. He vanished into the gloom.

UNCLE ROBERT managed to get his bearings after he had walked a few yards. The sea mist was still enveloping the whole countryside, and buildings and trees and hedges loomed up mysteriously.

In spite of Uncle Robert's assertion that he was not going out, he walked straight to the main gates, passed out into the lane, and set off briskly towards the village. And he had not taken a hundred paces before he pulled a packet of cigarettes out of his pocket and lit up.

"No need to tell those fools everything," he muttered complacently.

After a sharp walk he arrived at the village, and he went into one of the shops to make a purchase.

"Pretty quiet down here," he remarked to the man behind the counter.

"Yes, it generally is at this time of year," replied the shopkeeper. "You're new to St. Frank's, aren't you, young gent?"

"Only arrived to-day."

"I thought so," said the shopkeeper. "Well, I hope you'll like the school."

"Oh, it seems all right," replied Uncle Robert. "What's the village like? Anything doing here?"

"Not much," smiled the man. "We're pretty slow in Bellton."

"Nobody ever comes here, eh?"

"Well, I wouldn't say that," replied the shopkeeper. "As it happens, there's a new resident come into the district only this week."

"What do you mean—somebody taken a house or something?" asked the new junior casually.

"Up at Moat Hollow," said the man, nodding. "A queer old place, too. Used to be a private school at one time—then it stood empty for months on end. Still, they say that Mr. Clegg has settled down in Bellton for good."

"I'm sorry, but I am not interested in Mr. Clegg," said Uncle Robert, with a yawn. "Moat Hollow, eh? It sounds a pretty queer sort of name."

"It's the big house at the end of the village—just over the bridge," replied the man behind the counter. "There's a high wall all the way round—a mysterious sort of place. Lots of the villagers are half

(Continued on page 20.)

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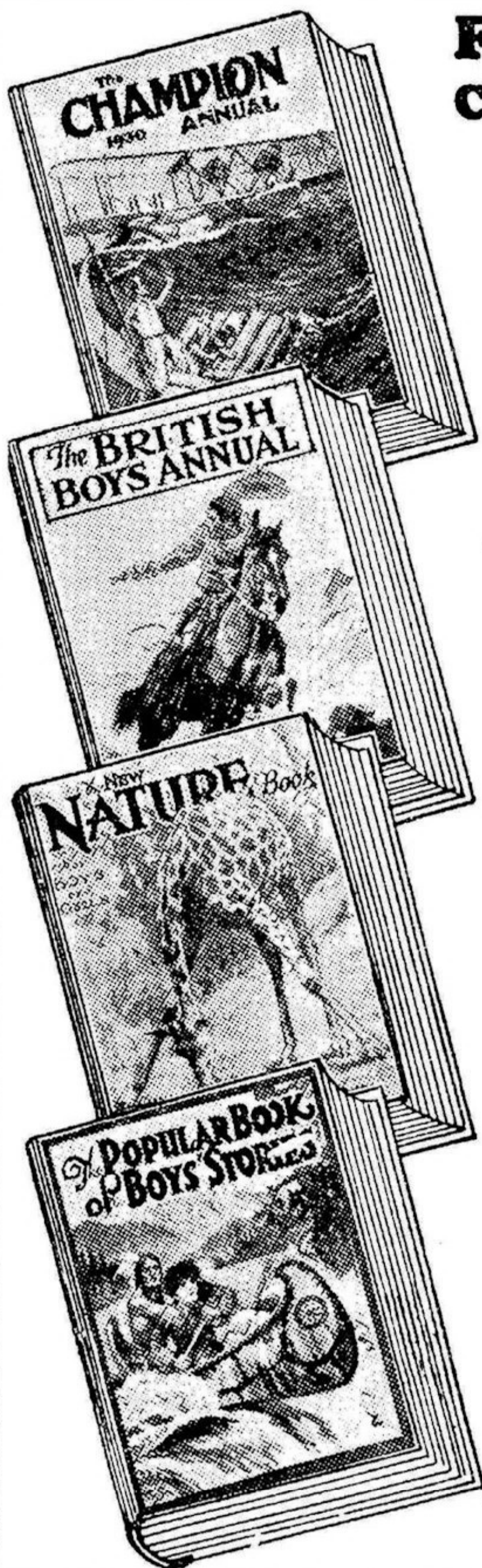
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The Worst Boy in the School!

(Continued from page 18.)

afraid to go past it on these winter nights. They think it's haunted."

"What rot!"

"We're glad that Mr. Clegg has come here," said the man. "With Moat Hollow inhabited again, those silly stories will probably die down."

Uncle Robert nodded, turned up the collar of his overcoat, and left the shop.

"Well, that was pretty easy," he murmured, as he walked back along the High Street. "The fellow hadn't the faintest idea that I was pumping him, and yet I got the information I needed. At the end of the village—over the bridge. Good!"

After he had crossed the bridge it wasn't long before Moat Hollow loomed up in front of him. Uncle Robert walked past the main gateway, and then he had a look at the high walls, and took general stock of the quaint old place.

"Well, I think that'll do," he told himself, with satisfaction.

He tramped back up the lane towards St. Frank's. And he was rather taken by surprise when he suddenly met Nipper and Tregellis-West. They loomed out of the mist before he was aware of their proximity.

"Hallo!" said Nipper, peering at the new junior.

"Hallo!" said Uncle Robert, mimicking him.

"I thought you told me that you weren't going out of gates?"

"Did I?"

"Yes, you did," replied Nipper curtly. "And I heard you tell Fullwood that you didn't smoke."

Uncle Robert inspected his glowing cigarette.

"I've changed my mind," he said coolly.

"In other words, you were lying!" said Nipper. "My only hat! You lied to Fullwood, and you lied to me! Well, it's none of my business—"

"I'm glad you realise it," said Uncle Robert, with a nasty note in his voice.

"But you'll probably get into trouble for missing call-over, dear old boy," put in Tregellis-West.

"Then we shall all be in trouble together."

"No, we shan't," said Nipper. "Tregellis-West and I have a pass."

Uncle Robert made no reply, but pushed on abruptly. It seemed to be a habit of his.

"Interfering blighters!" he muttered, with a frown.

He thought he was going to get into the Ancient House without any questions being asked, but after he had crossed the Triangle, and was about to mount the Ancient House steps, he ran into Wilson, of the Sixth.

"Hallo!" said Wilson. "Have you just come in?"

"Yes," replied Uncle Robert. "What about it?"

"I suppose you know you're late for call-over?"

"Am I?" said the new boy. "Sorry. I don't know the ropes yet. I'd no idea of the time."

"All right, then—you can cut indoors, and I'll explain to your Form-master," said Wilson.

He walked on, and Uncle Robert entered the Ancient House. Edward Oswald Handforth was standing just inside the lobby, and there was a very severe expression on his face.

"Just a minute, my lad!" said the leader of Study D. "Did I hear you telling Wilson just now that you were late for calling-over because you didn't know the ropes?"

"Is it anything to do with you?" said Uncle Robert sourly.

"Yes, it is!" retorted Handforth. "Nipper distinctly told you that calling-over would be in half an hour before you went out. So what the dickens do you mean by telling lies to Wilson?"

Uncle Robert brushed past and walked into the cloak-room. Handforth stood staring after him, his face red with wrath.

"Hi!" he bellowed. "I was speaking to you, Chester!"

Uncle Robert reappeared, minus his overcoat and cap. He strolled across the lobby and vanished into the Remove passage. And Handforth was so astonished that he did not even run after the new fellow and punch his nose!



CHAPTER 6.

After Lights Out!

"**H**E'S no good!" said Handforth sternly.

He and a number of other fellows were standing round the fire in the junior Common-room. It was nearly bedtime, and they were waiting for the bell to ring.

"Well, give him a chance!" said De Valerie. "He hasn't been here long enough for us to judge him."

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. In which Houses do the Fourth-Formers board?
2. Who are the occupants of Study J in the Ancient House?
3. When is Willy Handforth's birthday?
4. Does anybody share a study with William Napoleon Browne?
5. What is the title of No. 537 (Old Series) of the Old Paper?
6. Who is the West House Junior leader?
7. Who displaced Timothy Armstrong as the leader of the East House juniors?
8. Are the Fifth and Sixth-Form studies numbered or lettered?
9. How many Fourth-Form studies are there in the Modern House?
10. Who is the boss of the Third-Form?
11. Is Molly Stapleton dark or fair?
12. Who is the tallest fellow in the Remove?

ANSWERS TO LAST WEEK'S QUESTIONS:

1. William Freeman, Eric Dallas and Arthur Steele. 2. The Chapel is situated on the left-hand side of the Triangle as you go in the main gateway, between the high outer wall and the West House. 3. Lessons, lectures, chemistry, etc.—not for boarding. 4. The Third-Formers board about equally in all four Houses. 5. Sixth-Formers have a study each. 6. The Removites board equally in the Ancient House and the West House. 7. George Holland. 8. Dick Goodwin. 9. November 11th. 10. Two girls of about sixteen, named Ethel Winter and Chrissie Brandon. 11. St. Jim's. 12. The "Silent Two" was a pedal-propelled "motor-car" which Willy Handforth constructed.

NOTE.—Question 10.—"Who is the head prefect of the Ancient House?"—was inadvertently omitted from August 24th Questionnaire, although the answer—"Edgar Fenton"—was correctly given the following week.

"Plenty long enough!" replied Handforth. "He's a liar—and you can always reckon that if a fellow is a liar he's unreliable in every other sort of way."

"You'd better go easy, Handy!" said Church. "Don't forget that the chap is Fenton's uncle."

"Rot!" said Handforth. "I don't care if he's Fenton's grandfather! All I can say is that I'm jolly sorry for Fenton! Poor chap! Fancy being in the same family as this bounder!"

Nipper, who was quietly listening, made no comment, but he entirely agreed with Edward Oswald's point of view. For he, too, had discovered that Uncle Robert was a fellow who did not mind paltering with the truth. His lies, so far, had been of very small importance, but they certainly gave an indication of the new fellow's character. Nipper felt that he would never be able to trust Uncle Robert.

Clang-clang!

"Well, there goes the bell!" said McClure, yawning. "I'm ready for it, too."

The Remove trooped up to bed, and not many of the juniors said anything to Chester when he appeared in the dormitory passage with Fullwood and Russell. One or two fellows thought they were being witty by asking Uncle Robert how his nephew was, and a few laughs were raised; but a feeling was growing in the Remove that this new chap was not altogether sound. However, the fact that he was Fenton's uncle gave him a certain amount of popularity.

He said scarcely a word whilst he was undressing, and Fullwood and Russell did not trouble about him. They chatted as usual, talking mainly about football. Uncle Robert did not appear to be at all interested in the great game.

"A moody sort of beggar!" decided Fullwood, to himself, as Uncle Robert climbed into bed and snuggled down.

The new fellow did not even say "Good-night," and so Fullwood and Russell practically ignored him. The door opened, and in looked Biggleswade, of the Sixth.

"In bed?" asked Biggy genially. "Good lads!"

"Good-night, Biggy!" said Fullwood.

"Good-night!" replied the prefect.

Russell exchanged a similar adieu, but Uncle Robert did not even raise his head from the pillow. The little bed-room became plunged in darkness, and the door closed. Uncle Robert sat up in bed.

"Does this mean that we're not going to be disturbed again?" he asked coolly.

"Yes, of course," said Fullwood. "Hang it, Chester, you might have said 'Good night' to Biggleswade!"

"Why should I?" said the new fellow. "I don't believe in being too servile to prefects."

"Oh, well, you can do as you like, of course," said Fullwood.

"That's very kind of you," replied Uncle Robert. "Well, I think I'll slip a few things on, and pop out."



Edgar Fenton seized his uncle by the scruff of the neck and then proceeded to ply his cane enthusiastically and forcibly.
Swish ! Swish ! Swish ! Uncle Robert deserved a lesson and he was getting it !

"Pop out?" repeated the others, in one voice.

"Yes," said Uncle Robert, as he started dressing. "I feel like taking a walk."

"On a night like this?" ejaculated Russell. "Your silly ass, it's foggier than ever!"

"I love fog!"

"You won't love the swishing you'll get if you're collared!" remarked Fullwood.

"Don't be such an idiot, Chester! You're a new chap, but you can't do as you like at St. Frank's. They're jolly hot on men who break bounds. It's a serious crime here."

"Not when you're an uncle of the head prefect!" chuckled Chester. "That's where I've got the drop on you fellows. If a prefect spots me I'll just have a word with my dear little nephew, and everything will be all right."

"If that's what you're thinking, then it's quite clear that you don't know Fenton!" said Fullwood, with a grin. "Why, you hopeless ass, Fenton won't care twopence whether you're his uncle or whether you're a prince of Siam! Regulations at St. Frank's are regulations, and personalities don't count. Take my advice and stay in bed."

Uncle Robert didn't take Fullwood's advice. He continued dressing, and Fullwood was more than astonished. It was indeed a novelty for a new junior to think of breaking bounds on his very first night in the school.

But this new boy fondly believed that he could take advantage of his relationship to the school captain. It was rather a contemptible belief, and it was an accurate sidelight on Uncle Robert's character.

"JUST a minute!" said Fullwood grimly.

He had not believed that the new boy was really going to break bounds; he had an idea that Uncle Robert was just bluffing. Now that this remarkable newcomer had crossed over to the door, and even then was preparing to depart, however, there could be no doubting that he was in earnest.

"Speaking to me?" asked Uncle Robert, in a low voice.

"Yes, I am," said Ralph Leslie Fullwood. "Look here, Chester, you'd better not go."

"Oh!"

"You'll get into a most frightful row if you're spotted," continued Fullwood. "Mind you, I'm telling you this for your own benefit—so don't misunderstand me. If you're fool enough to break bounds, you can jolly well do it—and be hanged to you!"

"Thanks!"



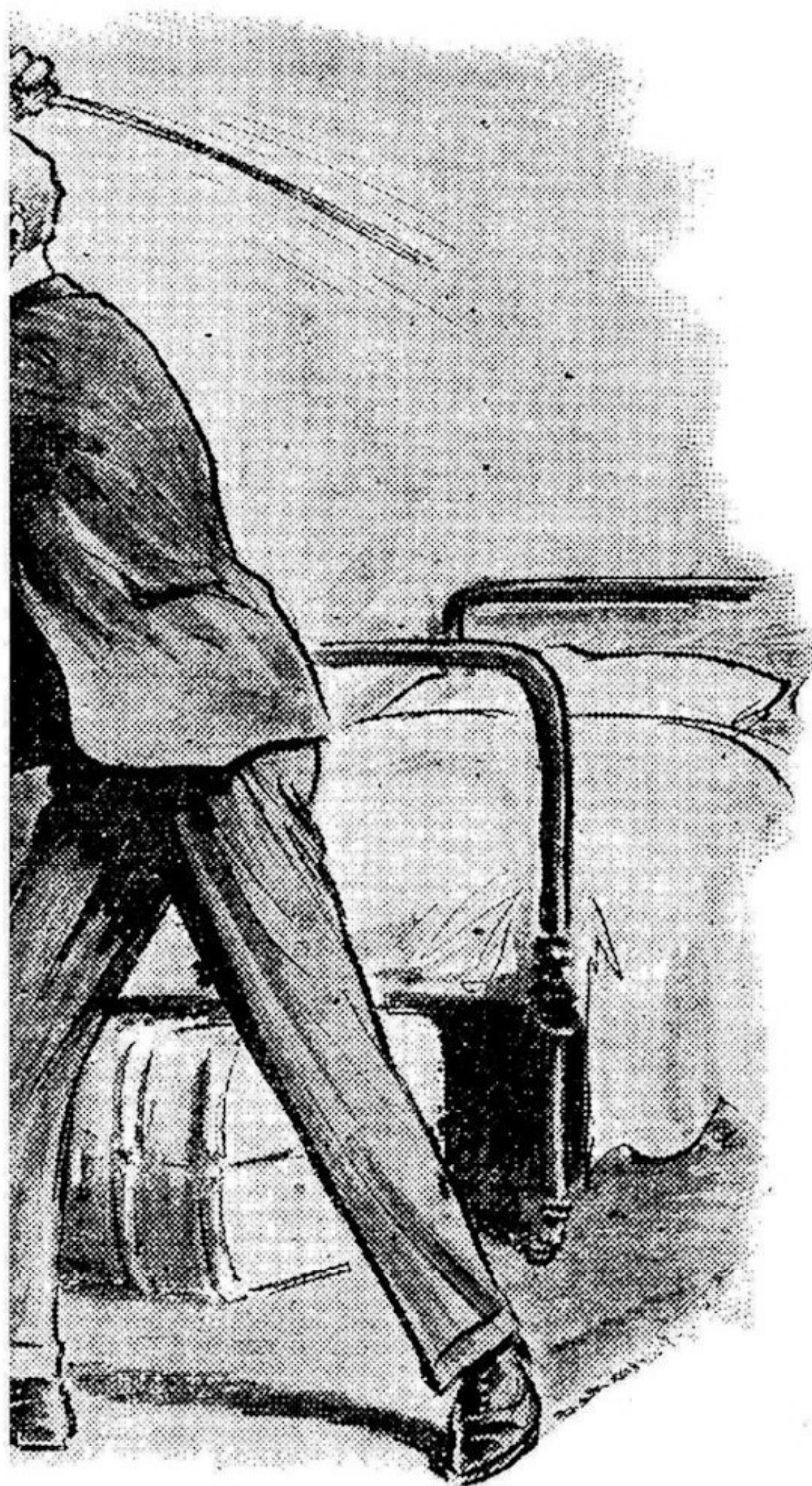
Edgar Fenton seized his uncle by the scruff of the neck.
Swish! Swish! Uncle Robert!

"But as you don't know the ropes, perhaps I'd better give you the straight tip," continued Fullwood. "At some schools they may be pretty lax on the regulations, but at St. Frank's they're as keen as mustard. Any fellow who breaks bounds is not only certain of a flogging, but he's liable to expulsion."

"Is this supposed to frighten me?" asked Uncle Robert amusedly.

"I don't know about frightening you, but I hope you'll take it as a warning," said Fullwood.

"Thanks, all the same, but you can keep your advice to yourself," said the new boy.



needed to ply his cane enthusiastically and forebly. son and he was getting it!

"Go to sleep, like a good little lad, and don't interfere in other people's business."

He passed out, and closed the door. Fullwood snorted with anger, and Russell took a deep breath.

"The fellow must be mad!" he said.

"Mad!" echoed Fullwood. "I don't know about being mad—but I'm going to punch his head to-morrow!"

"Where on earth can he be going?" said Russell, in wonder. "Why does he want to go out to-night—in this fog? There's something fishy about it, Fully."

"The fellow is a rotter!" said Fullwood gruffly. "That's the long and the short of it—he's a wrong 'un!"

"But he can't have any idea of gambling, or anything like that," said the Canadian junior. "Hang it, he doesn't know anybody in this district yet. He hasn't had a chance! In my opinion it's just bravado—just a sort of move to show that he isn't afraid of the authorities. He's Fenton's uncle, and he means to throw his weight about. I'll bet he'll be back within a quarter of an hour."

"Rats to him!" said Fullwood, with a grunt.

In the meantime, Uncle Robert was creeping along the corridor very cautiously. He knew his bearings, for he had made a careful survey of the upper passages and the staircase during the evening.

There was something very businesslike in everything that Uncle Robert did. He was "breaking bounds" deliberately, and, knowing that it would be difficult to conceal the fact from the two juniors who shared his dormitory, he had not hesitated to tell them boldly.

He could have waited until Fullwood and Russell were asleep; but there was always the chance that one of them would awaken and find the empty bed. On the whole, it was better to go off telling them that he was rather keen on night strolling.

Uncle Robert was thinking of the future; and, according to his plans, there would be many such nights as this. So it was just as well that Fullwood and Russell should know of his habits at the very beginning.

UNCLE ROBERT crept along the corridor on his way to the stairs. It was his intention to get down to his study and make his exit that way. Already he was congratulating himself on the easiness of it all. Unfortunately for him, he was just

a little too premature.

By now he had passed the bath-room, and so he did not see the door of that room open. On the threshold stood Fenton, of the Sixth. The school captain gave a start of surprise as he saw that figure creeping along the corridor. Then he frowned heavily when he recognised his uncle. A grim look came into his face. He waited until the other had disappeared down the stairs, and then followed cautiously.

He saw Uncle Robert reach his study in the Remove passage; saw him enter, and a few moments later heard the window being opened cautiously. Hesitating only briefly, Fenton himself strode into the study and

went to the window. He was just in time to see the junior disappearing into the fog. Quickly, quietly, he opened the window and followed. He meant to catch his scamp of an uncle redhanded!

By now Chester had crossed the foggy West Square, had passed through West Arch, and, having crossed the Triangle, was on the point of climbing over the school wall.

"Chester!" came a grim voice out of the darkness. "You young rascal! Stop!"

Uncle Robert gave a gasp of startled surprise as he felt his leg seized in a firm grip. He found himself pulled down from the wall, to be confronted by the stern features of Fenton.

"What's the idea of this?" went on the school captain harshly. "Breaking bounds, eh, you young sweep!"

Uncle Robert realised that the game was up. His surprise quickly vanished, to be replaced by a calm insolence.

"That's not the way to address your uncle!" he said. "And I can go for a stroll if I like, can't I?"

For a moment Fenton became speechless with anger. Then, very deliberately:

"Oh, you're going for a stroll, are you?" said Fenton, his voice becoming deadly. "All right, my lad! You will go for a stroll—but it'll be to my bed-room! Come along!"

"Here, confound you! Take your hand off my collar!"

Fenton's grip became tighter.

"There's got to be an understanding between you and me!" he said. "And there's no time like the present! So if you don't mind, we'll go along to my bed-room and have a heart-to-heart talk!"

And, continuing to hold Uncle Robert by the scruff of the neck, Edgar Fenton propelled him back into the school buildings and along to his own bed-room in the Sixth Form quarters.

CHAPTER 7.

Straight From the Shoulder!

"**N**OW!" said Fenton crisply.

They were both standing in the bed-room, and Uncle Robert was looking defiant and flushed. His nephew, for the first time, appeared to be enjoying himself. There were no other prefects present now—no onlookers of any kind. Uncle and nephew were alone.

"Give an account of yourself!" said Fenton. "Come along, Chester! How is it that I found you breaking bounds?"

"What's the idea of calling me 'Chester,' as though I were a stranger?" demanded the new boy, with a truculent air.

"Never mind that now. Answer my question."

"I was going for a stroll, if you want to know," said Uncle Robert.

"Oh! You were going for a stroll?"

"Yes."

"After lights-out?"

"Yes."

"On a foggy night?"

"Yes."

"It's just as well that we should get this quite clear," said Fenton, his voice becoming more stern than ever. "I suppose you realise, don't you, that you're a silly young imbecile?"

"I don't see that it is your business——"

"Not my business!" echoed Fenton. "I'm the head prefect of this House."

"Yes, but——"

"If I had found any other junior in your position I should have had no alternative but to report him to my Housemaster," continued Fenton.

"But my being your uncle makes me fairly safe, eh?" said the new boy, with a knowing grin.

"No, confound you!" retorted Fenton angrily. "The fact that you are my uncle makes no difference at all. But you happen to be a new kid—and that's why I'm going to be lenient with you. I should be just the same with any other new fellow. I shall give you a swishing and send you back to bed. But if ever you break bounds again and I get to know about it there'll be a different sequel."

Uncle Robert shrugged his shoulders.

"It's jolly easy to talk," he said in a sneering voice, "but you can't fool me like that, Edgar——"

"Don't call me 'Edgar,' you young sweep!"

"It's your name, isn't it?"

"Yes, it's my name—but it's not for you to use," replied the St. Frank's skipper. "My name is Fenton."

"And I'm your Uncle Robert," said the junior sweetly. "And I'd better tell you that it isn't dignified for a nephew to address his uncle——"

"That's enough!" snapped Fenton. "This uncle and nephew business is finished. Understand? It's finished! It was a bit of a joke at first, but it's over now. We might as well have a thorough understanding at the commencement, Chester."

"Oh, go ahead!" said Uncle Robert resignedly. "I suppose it's going to be a lecture now? Great Scott! A nephew lecturing his uncle! What is the world coming to?"

"You're quite wrong about a nephew

(Continued on page 26.)

The POPULAR
Every Tuesday 2d



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 certainly 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.

HO FANG WONG (London). This Chinese lad—at least, he says he's Chinese, but actually I have a suspicion he is pulling my leg—tells me that he's coming to St. Frank's next term. Indeed! What has St. Frank's done to deserve this? Ho says he can speak French, Siamese, Japanese and Chinese. Ho, is that so? (Excuse the pun.) So can I. Vous goee and chopee chop suey, Ho!

E. SEWELL (Enfield). I'm very surprised to hear that your cousin thinks I fight too much. What's given her that impression? I think she must have got mixed up with some other chap. Why, everybody knows that I'm all for peace and quietude. So you think Willy is a better boy than I? Why, you chump, I've a good mind to give you a black eye, a swollen nose and enlarged ears.

ARTHUR ALDRIDGE (Tottenham). This complimentary lad thinks I'm like a bullock, and says that my hair reminds him of a horse's mane. Thanks very much for the bouquets. Of course, I'm as strong as a bullock, and I expect you're only jealous because I got such a remarkable mop of hair. Arthur wants me to tell him what clubs he should use for playing golf. Golf clubs, of course.

LESLIE BARBER (Salop) wants me to give him a few hints on scrapping. Actions speak louder than words, Leslie, and I suggest you come along to St. Frank's and I'll give you some personal tuition. Don't forget to bring a suit of armour with you. You'll need it when I get going.

A. OLIVER (Wellington, New Zealand) asks if I collect coins. How the dickens can I when that young ass, Willy, is always pestering me for five bobs?

GEORGE KEATRY (London). You're an insulting chump, and my answer to you is—rats, rats, and then more rats!

J. BOWLING (Nelson). The best detec-

tive at St. Franks is—Nelson Lee. There's another fellow who runs him a close second. His initials are E. O. H.

A. GRAY (Bristol) asks if my Austin Seven can do more than six miles per hour. Six! Just you come along to St. Frank's, my lad. I'll tie you to my car and then make you run behind it. You'll soon know if it can do more than six miles an hour then.

K. RALPH "POPGUN" (Barrow-in-Furness) would like to know who Vasco de Gama was. Never heard of him. Perhaps he invented vaseline, old man. And, look here, "Popgun," what's the idea of calling me a blundering fathead. I only wish I was behind you with a popgun!

BOOMERANG BANGS (Wellington, New Zealand) wonders why on earth my hair always sticks out a mile. Well, it's my hair to do what I like with, isn't it?

OLIVE SPRAGG (Birmingham) suggests that I should train my hair so that it falls into waves. Sorry, Olive, but I have no desire to look like the Atlantic Ocean, and I'm sure I don't want Churchy or Mac, who are baa sailors, to be seasick by looking at me.

RANULPH L. ANTROBUS (Wellington, Somerset). Here's the answers to your questions: (1) If an apple a day keeps the doctor away, what will seven apples and two helpings of apple-pudding do? —I shouldn't like to say. (2) If Mr. Pycraft is an ass, what are you?—I'm unable to discuss this matter because I refuse to be compared with old Pycraft. (3) Who is the best goalie and cricketer in the Remove? —Don't ask silly questions. Much as I like booting Gore-Pearce, I cannot kick him 1,000,000 times as you suggest. I have other things to do between now and when I reach the age of ninety-nine, thank you!

EDWARD OSWALD.

The Worst Boy in the School!

(Continued from page 24.)

lecturing his uncle," retorted Fenton. "This little scene now being enacted in the head prefect's bed-room is a talk between the aforesaid head prefect and a cheeky junior. The sooner you get that into your thick head the better. I'm Fenton of the Sixth, and you're Chester of the Remove. From this minute onwards that's going to be our relationship."

Uncle Robert scowled. He did not quite like Fenton's stern, authoritative tone; and there was something about Fenton, too, that stifled some of his effrontery.

"Oh, we won't argue!" he said, becoming sulky and sullen. "I quite understand that you don't like having a junior uncle in the same school as yourself, but facts are facts, and you can't get over them. You can call me by my surname as much as you like, but I shall still be your uncle."

"Now, look here, kid," said the school captain earnestly. "Don't you think we've had about enough of this nonsense?"

"Quite enough."

"Let's see if we can't get along together," continued Fenton in his kindly way. "You're new to this school, and I'd like to give you a helping hand."

"You don't say so!"

"It'll be pretty hard, though, if you keep up this tone," continued Fenton. "I'd like to know why on earth you took it into your head to break bounds to-night? Where were you going, anyway?"

"I told you."

"You told me that you were going out for a stroll, but I'm not quite a fool," said Fenton. "Nobody in his right senses goes out for a stroll on a dark, foggy night."

"We all have different tastes," said Uncle Robert.

"Does this mean that you're not going to tell me the truth?"

"I've already told you the truth!" said the new junior truculently. "Confound it, why can't you be satisfied? And as soon as you have finished amusing yourself I'll go. I'm rather keen on that stroll. I like fogs."

Fenton gave it up.

"So you're telling me—you, a junior—that you still intend to go for that stroll?" he said, with ominous calmness. "You're telling your head prefect that you have every intention of defying the school regulations?"

"If you like to put it that way—yes."

"Then it's no good talking to you any longer," said Fenton resignedly. "You're coming back to your bed-room—now! And if I have any more of your impertinence I'll swish you on the spot."

Edgar Fenton had an abundant supply of good-nature, but his patience was exhausted at last. Talking obviously was useless. It was the time for action!

UNCLE ROBERT shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, can I go?" he asked, with a yawn.

"You can go when I tell you—and not before!"

Fenton spoke sharply. Matters had reached a point when his exasperation was acute. This remarkable uncle of his was getting on his nerves. He stared in astonishment when he saw that his companion was walking towards the door. He watched wonderingly as Uncle Robert placed his hand on the knob and turned it.

"Hold on!" said Fenton sharply.

Uncle Robert took absolutely no notice; he opened the door and prepared to walk out. It was clearly a habit of his to ignore people when it pleased him to do so. But it was rather a risky proceeding to ignore the school captain. In two strides Fenton was across the room, and he seized his uncle by the scruff of the neck as the latter was about to disappear.

"Come here, confound you!" said Fenton hotly.

He pulled the junior into the room and closed the door again. Uncle Robert looked flustered and dishevelled, and his eyes were gleaming dangerously.

"Didn't I tell you to stay here until I gave you permission to go?" demanded Fenton wrathfully. "By Jove! Do you think you can defy me—just because you're my uncle? Haven't I told you that that game won't work?"

"I didn't mean to say anything," replied Uncle Robert thickly, "but now I will. Let me tell you straight out that I came to this school with a full understanding of my advantages."

"Advantages?" said Fenton. "What advantages?"

"Well, first and foremost, I'm your uncle—"

"That doesn't count at all," said the head prefect.

"Yes, it does!" said Uncle Robert, becoming cooler. "You're my nephew, and you're the school captain. While I'm at St. Frank's I'm going to do just as I like. I don't care a snap for the school rules and regulations. If I do anything to transgress them there's not much chance of my being spotted by a master, and if a prefect comes along I shall tell him to refer me to you."

"And do you think they'll take any notice of you?" asked Fenton contemptuously. "My poor kid! If you're bowled out by Wilson or Conroy major, or one of the others, you'll be dealt with on the spot. There'll be no question of referring you to me. In fact, the cheekier you are the more chance there'll be of your getting an extra hard swishing. The fact that you are my uncle won't help you in the least."

"Won't it?" retorted Uncle Robert. "We'll see about that! Don't forget that

you've got your prestige to think about. You won't want the school to talk of my misdeeds, will you? It might reflect upon your own reputation. For example, you won't tell anybody that you collared me breaking bounds to-night. Far better to keep it dark, eh?"

Fenton took a firm grip on his uncle's collar, and he swung the junior round.

"That's just about enough from you!" he said curtly. "I don't know how I've had enough patience to stand you all this time! And now, young man, you're going to get a taste of something unpleasant!"

He reached for a cane, and Uncle Robert's eyes gleamed evilly.

"Better go easy!" he panted, as he attempted to get away. "If you touch me with that cane——"

Swish!

"Hi!" roared Uncle Robert. "You silly fool! Look out——"

Swish—swish—swish!

Edgar Fenton plied the cane enthusiastically, and he plied it with force, too. Uncle Robert writhed and twisted and squirmed, but he could not escape that chastisement. He deserved it—he deserved more.

"Now, my son," panted Fenton at last, "perhaps you will realise that I am in earnest! Now then, come along with me!"

"You—you——"

"You'd better leave it unsaid!" put in Fenton. "I might get hold of that cane again."

He hustled his uncle to the door, and a moment later they were going along the corridor. Fenton did not stop until he reached Uncle Robert's bed-room. With one hand he flung the door open, and with the other he heaved the junior inside.

"There's your bed—get into it!" he said curtly. "And if I have any more cheek from you, Chester, I'll give you the hiding of your life. What you've just had is only a taster."

Uncle Robert said nothing. He reeled into the room and sat down heavily on his bed. He was breathing hard, but he made no reply.

"Hallo!" said Fullwood sleepily, as he sat up in bed. "What's the rumpus? Is that you, Fenton?"

"It's all right—you can go to sleep again," said Fenton gruffly. "Sorry I disturbed you, young 'un. Good-night!"

And Fenton, without another glance at his uncle, retired, and closed the door. He felt that he had acted in the only possible way in the circumstances. Uncle Robert was too big for his boots, and firm treatment at the very outset was the only course.

Not that this firm treatment had had any real effect.

CHAPTER 8.

A Vindictive Spirit!

CLIVE RUSSELL, sitting up in bed, peered across the room in the gloom.

"What's up?" he asked, in bewilderment. "What's been happening?"

"Nothing much," said Fullwood. "Fenton's just brought his uncle in here—by the scruff of the neck."

"It's the last time he'll do it, though!" said Uncle Robert, his voice vibrating with passion. "He won't have another chance."

"I suppose you were collared as you tried to sneak out?" asked Fullwood.

"You can suppose what you like!"

"Thanks—I will!" said Fullwood dryly. "My son, this sort of game doesn't pay. When I first came to St. Frank's I was a reckless sort of beggar, and I thought it was great fun to break bounds and defy the school regulations. But I've learned better sense. There's no real satisfaction in acting the giddy ox."

"When I want a sermon from you I'll ask you to preach!" snapped Uncle Robert. "I'll have my own back on Fenton for this! He's my nephew, and I'll make him suffer."

"Well, you needn't be so vindictive about it," put in Russell coldly. "What has

Fenton done, anyway?"

"His duty, of course," said Fullwood.

"Exactly," agreed Russell. "Fenton is the head prefect of this House, and if he hadn't brought you back to bed, Chester, he would have failed in his duty. Fenton's a good sort, but he's pretty strict. And that's all to his credit."

"He's my nephew, and I'm going to make him pay for what he's done to-night!" said Uncle Robert fiercely. "He's got a good name in the school, hasn't he?"

Fullwood's expression hardened.

"Look here, Chester," he said grimly, "I don't like your tone. If you're thinking of harming Fenton, you'll have the whole Remove against you, and the sooner you get that fact into your thick head, the better. We all know Fenton—we know that he's a thorough sportsman—and if you do anything to harm him, we'll slaughter you!"

"Like a shot!" agreed Russell promptly.

They both turned over, then, and went to sleep. They were fed-up with Uncle Robert; they disliked him intensely, and they were very sorry that he had been placed in their study.

He was exactly the opposite to Edgar Fenton. Fenton was open and honest—as straight as a die. Uncle Robert was secretive, and he had every appearance of being crooked. Fullwood and Russell were rather concerned for Fenton's future. Saddled with an uncle like this in the school, he would have rather a bad time of it. But, after all, it was not their business, and Fenton was



probably quite capable enough to look after his own good name.

So, within five minutes, Fullwood and Russell were asleep again. Uncle Robert waited until he heard them breathing evenly, then he rose from his bed, crept to the door, and slightly opened it. He stood there, listening.

Not a sound came from the corridor. There was no light gleaming, and it seemed to him that the Ancient House had finally gone to sleep.

Treading carefully, he slipped through the doorway and pulled the door gently to after him. Then he crept along to the stairs and made his way down them.

OUTSIDE it was decidedly foggy. Eleven o'clock was booming out from the old clock tower as Uncle Robert stole silently out of the window of Study I, in the Remove passage. It was easy to get out of the study window and to slip across the dark, deserted West Square.

Having located West Arch, Uncle Robert then crept across the Triangle and reached the school wall. It did not take him long to jump up and climb over.

"Good! Done it this time!" he muttered triumphantly, as he found himself in the lane.

There was nothing haphazard about Uncle Robert's movements, for he set off down the lane at a brisk walk. He was not merely out for a stroll. And yet, what could this new boy expect to do on his very first night at St. Frank's? There was something mysterious about this mission of his—something rather remarkable. In fact, there was not the slightest doubt that it had been carefully planned in advance.

The mist was thicker down by the village, and Uncle Robert found himself walking blindly onward. It was not until he beheld a brick wall looming up close to him that he checked, and then, upon closer investigation, he found that the brick wall was a part of the bridge which crossed the River Stowe.

"I've come too far!" he muttered.

He turned back on his tracks, and, keeping close to the side of the road, he soon arrived at the high, menacing wall of Moat Hollow. Uncle Robert seemed to be very interested in this old house. He had already given it an inspection by daylight; so now he was more or less familiar with the ground. Nevertheless, it was some little time before he found his exact bearings.

The mist was very thick here—very foggy, but at last, after stumbling once or twice over unsuspected clumps of damp grass, he arrived at a small door set in the back wall of the grounds. At the rear of him stretched Bellon Woods, dark, mysterious, and silent.

He had come right round the outer wall of the grounds, and now he knew that he need not have taken all this trouble. For there was a little footpath leading through the trees which joined the lane higher up.

He tried the door, but it was locked. The wall was so high that it was practically impossible to scale it—at least, without a ladder. The place was almost like a prison.

"Well, we shan't be long now," murmured the new boy.

He produced an electric torch from his pocket, and he flashed it on. Then, making a careful examination of the door, he at last found a tiny knob on one of the posts, low down, and so made that it resembled an imperfection of the wood. It was, in fact, a cunningly concealed bell-push.

Uncle Robert pressed it, and waited. Nothing happened for two or three minutes. Then he fancied he heard faint footsteps, and this was followed by the sound of a bolt being drawn back. The door opened silently in front of him, and a face peered out at him.

"Who is it?" came a soft voice.

"All right, Mr. Clegg—only me!" said Uncle Robert.

"Come in, Bob!" said the voice.

Uncle Robert entered, and the door was closed and bolted again. This affair was becoming more and more mysterious. But Uncle Robert himself did not seem to be impressed.

"Hang it, Clegg, what's the reason for all this idiotic mystery?" he asked impatiently. "You told me that you would have a special kind of bell-push—although it took me a deuce of a time to find it—but what's the idea? Your place isn't an anarchists' nest!"

"Never you mind, Bob—never you mind!" said the other. "This secrecy is necessary. We couldn't get along without it. And the less we talk out here the better. Wait until we get indoors."

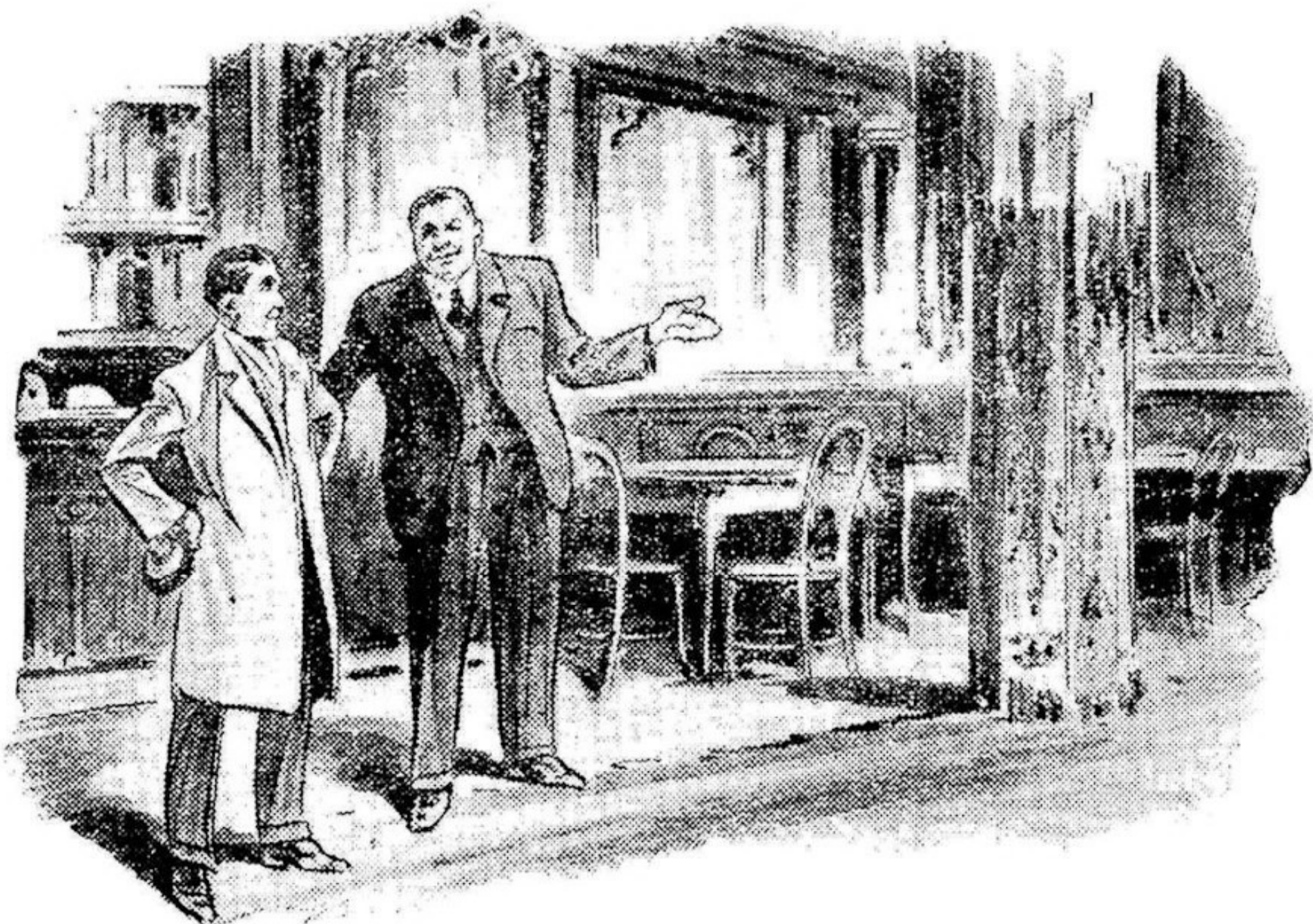
They walked through the deserted garden—which was more or less a wilderness—and at length they reached the back door of the house itself. Uncle Robert's companion led the way in, and the door was soon closed. The new fellow in the Remove found himself in a passage, with a dim light some little distance down. He looked at his companion, and saw an elderly man, rather stoutish in appearance, with a red, good-natured face. This, in short, was Mr. Simon Clegg, the new tenant of Moat Hollow.

It was rather difficult to judge his station in life. He was well dressed, and he was smoking a big cigar. In a vague sort of way, he suggested the showman of sorts—there was a theatrical air about him.

"Well, Bob, my lad, I'm glad to see you again," said Mr. Clegg, as he patted Uncle Robert on the back. "How is everything going? How do you like this new school of yours?"

"We don't need to talk here, do we?" asked Uncle Robert bluntly.

"Well, no," said the other. "What's the matter with you? A bit peevish, aren't you?"



Proudly Mr. Clegg showed the artistically decorated cellar of Moat Hollow to his young visitor. "So this is to be the night club, is it?" said Uncle Robert enthusiastically.

Uncle Robert did not reply, and Mr. Clegg, with a grin, led the way down the dimly lit passage.

CHAPTER 9.

The Secret of Moat Hollow!

MR. SIMON CLEGG entered a large, comfortable apartment, where a big fire was blazing in the old-fashioned grate. The room was furnished cosily, and a lamp was standing in the middle of the table, shedding a warm, comfortable glow round it.

"I expected you nearly an hour ago," said Mr. Clegg, as he sat down. "You said that you would be here at half-past ten."

"So I should have been—if everything had gone right," replied Uncle Robert, as he, too, sat down. "But I was spotted, and detained."

Mr. Clegg removed the cigar from his mouth, and looked alarmed.

"By hokey!" he ejaculated. "Does this mean that you are going to have some trouble—later?"

"Of course it doesn't" said the junior. "You needn't get the wind up, Clegg. Everything's going to be all right."

"You were always confident, weren't you, Bob?" asked Mr. Clegg. "But it's easy enough to be confident when you haven't any responsibility on your shoulders. I've had too many failures in my time to count my

chickens before they are hatched. And as far as this particular affair is concerned, the more secrecy we can have, the better."

"Don't you think it would be a good idea for you to provide me with a key to that back door?"

"It won't be necessary," said Mr. Clegg. "When we get things going properly, there'll be a doorkeeper on duty all the time. And I'm going to have a little sliding panel made—a kind of spyhole—so that there won't be any mistakes."

"Oh, well, you can do as you like," said Uncle Robert. "It's not my business—and I'll leave you to attend to your own end of the job. How are things going here?"

"Pretty well," said Mr. Clegg. "Would you like to have a look at the den of iniquity?"

"That's what I've come for."

Mr. Clegg rose to his feet, and placed a hand on Uncle Robert's shoulder.

"Look here, Bob, my lad, if you and I are to get on well together, you'll have to alter your tone," he said. "We made a certain arrangement—as soon as I heard that you were coming to St. Frank's—and I would like you to remember that I'm the boss of the show. Unless you can take orders from me in a good spirit, we shan't get along."

"Perhaps I'm a bit peeved to-night," said Uncle Robert, influenced by his companion's touch. "All right, Mr. Clegg. We shall get along together smoothly enough."

"That's better!" said the new tenant of Moat Hollow. "And do you think you'll be able to provide me with any—customers?"

"I don't think anything about it—I'm certain," replied Uncle Robert. "Of course, I haven't had time to look round yet, but there are bound to be heaps of fellows who will be ready enough to spend their money."

"You think they have the money to spend?"

"Pots of it!" said Uncle Robert, with a grin. "Why, I've already found out that there are lots of titled fellows in the school. Millionaires' sons, and other chaps who have quids and quids to spend. You can leave the customers to me, Mr. Clegg. I'll bring them here."

"Good lad!" said Mr. Clegg cheerfully.

He led the way out of the room, and once more they turned into the dimly lit passage. This time they went right to the end; then Mr. Clegg paused, and waved a hand towards the blank wall.

"How's that?" he asked, with the air of one who is exhibiting a piece of his handiwork.

"How's what?" asked Uncle Robert. "I can't see anything."

"Have another look."

"Is this a joke?" asked the junior, as he peered forward, and then turned his gaze upon Mr. Clegg. "There's nothing here but a blank wall."

The man chuckled, reached out a hand, and touched something. Instantly the blank wall slid noiselessly open, revealing a flight of carpeted steps which led downwards.

"Well, I'm hanged!" said Uncle Robert, staring.

"I didn't tour round the halls as an illusionist for nothing," said Mr. Clegg complacently. "I had five years at that game, Bob. Experience is a great teacher."

"Well, you certainly learned your business all right," said Uncle Robert. "I hadn't the faintest idea that there was a door here. But what's the idea of all this secrecy business?"

"It's all in the game, young 'un—all in the game!" said Mr. Clegg, with another chuckle. "The more mysterious the better. Go ahead! Let's hear what you think of the wicked crime cellar."

Uncle Robert went down the stairs, his feet making no sound on the soft carpet. And when he reached the cellar itself, which was brilliantly illuminated, he looked round him in wonder and in admiration.

Certainly nobody would have believed that it had once been a cold, cheerless cellar. Yet this house was very suitable for Mr. Clegg's purpose—whatever it happened to be. There was the one huge cellar, extending beneath the whole ground floor plan. Here and there pillars rose, but they were now hardly recognisable as pillars. For they were artistically draped with gaily-coloured silks and imitation tapestries. All the walls, too, were hung with bright draperies. The entire floor was covered with a new, smoothly-polished parqueting. It was, indeed, a dance floor.

The centre portion of this astonishing cellar was clear, but round the walls there were neat little tables dotted about. And over on one side there was a splendidly equipped refreshment bar—of gleaming mahogany, with rows of bottles in the rear, with glass sandwich cases on the counter, and with show-cases filled with chocolates. On the other side of the cellar there was a kind of raised platform, and on this platform there were music-stands, chairs, and the entire impedimenta of a drummer.

"Well?" asked Mr. Clegg contentedly.

"Why, it's wonderful!" said Uncle Robert, when he could find his breath.

COMING NEXT WEEK! ~~~~~



"I thought you would like it."

"It must have cost you a pretty penny, Mr. Clegg!" said the junior, staring.

"Practically everything I had!" said the man, becoming serious. "That's why I'm a bit anxious. I want to get my money back, you know. If the game goes all right it'll be a paying proposition. I shall have my money returned within the first two or three months. Not that I think there's any real risk. This place is going to be run on the right lines."

Fenton's uncle performed one or two dance steps on that smooth floor. Then he came to a halt again.

"I don't know how you managed it, Mr. Clegg!" he said at length.

"Well, it's taken a bit of time," said Mr.

Clegg complacently. "I've been here for two or three weeks, remember."

"And now you're ready for the opening ceremony, eh?" said the junior in an eager voice. "By Jove! A regular night club!"

Mr. Simon Clegg nodded.

"Exactly!" he agreed. "The first night club to be opened in a dull, quiet country village like Bellton!"

UNCLE ROBERT walked round inspecting the band enclosure, the bar and everything else connected with the extraordinary night club.

"How about getting away quickly?"

"THE SPORTS OF ST. FRANK'S."

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Poor old Fenton! As captain of the school it's bad enough to know that he has an uncle in the Junior School, but when that uncle is a thorough young rotter—

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

"Easy enough," said Mr. Clegg, with a chuckle. "You see, there's only one normal entrance and exit—and that is by means of the stairs. But in case of a sudden alarm, there are two secret doors which I can open in a flash. They lead into another cellar."

"What's the good of that?"

"Every good," replied Mr. Clegg. "Before I entered into possession of this place I found out that there was a kind of tunnel leading from these cellars to a spot somewhere near the river. It was used a long time ago, when a man named Smith was in occupation."

"And is this tunnel fit to be used?"

"It wasn't—but it is now," said the night club proprietor. "I had it all cleaned out and prepared. If this place contained fifty

people, and there was a sudden warning, they could all be in the tunnel within thirty seconds. And when they emerged they would be half a mile away from the Moat Hollow grounds."

"That's a jolly cute idea," said Uncle Robert, grinning.

"I don't suppose we shall ever have to use it, because there'll be no reason for an alarm," said Mr. Clegg. "But there's nothing like being on the safe side. Quite apart from that, it adds to the—well, glamour of the place to have all these preparations made. I know what I'm doing, young 'un. You can leave this to me."

"How about the village people?" asked the new St. Frank's fellow. "Do they suspect anything?"

"Suspect!" echoed Mr. Clegg. "By hokey, no! They look upon me as very genial, harmless sort of retired merchant."

"You don't say so!" grinned Uncle Robert.

"But I do say so," continued Mr. Clegg. "I'm doing most of my business locally—that is to say, all orders for my ordinary household. Everything connected with the night club is naturally being dealt with in other quarters. I have taken the pains to get myself on good terms with everybody in general. I have contributed to the local charities, and I have made a practice of tipping people very liberally. Oh, yes, Bob! I'm quite popular in Bellton."

"With the police, too, eh?"

"Police-constable Sparrow, of Bellton, regards me as a kind of millionaire," chuckled Mr. Clegg. "I have tipped him several times, and I have even asked him to keep a special eye on this property."

"What!"

"There's nothing like it!" said Mr. Clegg enthusiastically. "Incidentally, Sparrow has got about as much brain as his namesake, the homely little bird."

"All the same, isn't it a bit risky?"

"Not in the least," said Mr. Clegg. "We're not ready to start business just yet, but when we are I will guarantee that every single avenue of danger is closed. I'm an old hand at the game, Bob, and I'm not to be caught napping."

"How did you get all this stuff in here?" asked Uncle Robert, looking round.

"It came quite openly."

"Without anybody wondering?"

"Why should they wonder?" said Mr. Clegg. "Most of it came with my usual furniture—in pantechicons. Surely carpets and chairs and things can be delivered without arousing comment?"

"But what about the workmen?" asked the junior. "What about this floor—and the bar—and everything else?"

"There have been a good many men at work here for a week or two," replied Mr. Clegg. "They all came from London; and they are quite friendly with me, and I paid them well. They were ostensibly engaged upon interior decorations."

"And the band?"

"The band is engaged, and it consists of five instrumentalists," said Mr. Clegg coolly. "They are all members of the profession. Out of work music-hall artists—fellows who have been 'out' for weeks and months on end. They have secured good lodgings, and they will come here late at night and be secretly admitted. Bellton will know nothing about them."

"But they're thoroughly good chaps?"

"Oh, yes!" said Mr. Clegg. "They are thoroughly good chaps. And what is more to the point, they are thoroughly good musicians. I am paying them a decent wage, and they understand that as long as this game lasts they will be in work. So it is in their own interests for them to keep mum."

Uncle Robert walked about, and he was full of admiration for everything.

"A night club in Bellton!" he grinned at length. "It's unheard of! A night club in a tin-pot little village like this! You're taking a big risk, Mr. Clegg, you know!"

"One would imagine so at first sight, but personally I don't think there'll be any risk at all," replied Mr. Clegg. "You see, this village is unusually situated. It is a very quiet little spot, and that, in a way, is all to our advantage. Then we have St. Frank's School within five minutes' walk, and another big school—the River House—hardly any further off in another direction. Both of these schools contain any amount of young fellows who have money to spend, and who have high spirits to get rid of."

"But you're not going to depend upon these schools for your customers?"

"Oh, no!" said Mr. Clegg. "There is Caistowe within easy distance, to say nothing of a large number of well-to-do local residents. On the outskirts of Bellton, and, in fact, in all directions, there are farmers. The majority of them are comfortably off, and if they want to amuse themselves late in the evening they can only turn to the wireless. I suggest that I shall provide them with much better amusement. The very novelty of a night club will appeal to the young people—to the farmers' sons and daughters. You can take it from me, Bob, that I considered all the pros and cons before I invested my money in this undertaking."

"Well, I must say you've made some jolly good preparations."

"And now everything will depend upon the opening night," said Mr. Clegg, becoming serious. "I am counting on you, Bob, and I hope you won't let me down."

"I'll do my best," said Uncle Robert earnestly.

"That's all I expect you to do," said Mr. Clegg, nodding. "When you were at your former school I did you a very good turn. I don't want to remind you of this, but the fact remains that I saved you from expulsion. Even as it was, you were removed from your school. It was all done very quietly, and there was no scandal—"

"It's turned out a good thing for both of us, so don't rake it up again," grunted Fenton's youthful uncle. "I'd much rather be at St. Frank's—particularly as you're so near by, Mr. Clegg. And I have a feeling that we're going to make a big success of things. When do you propose to open up the club?"

"Next week."

"That's fine!" said Uncle Robert. "It'll give me time to sort out the probables, and to give them a sounding."

It was evident that some lively times were ahead for Uncle Robert—and for St. Frank's!

"I'M puzzled," said Uncle Robert, after a pause.

"Puzzled?" repeated Mr. Simon Clegg. "What about?"

"Well, what's the reason for all this secrecy?"

"I should think the reason would be self-evident," said Mr. Clegg dryly.

"You mean that if you ran the place openly the police would promptly close it?"

"Not so much that," said Mr. Clegg, frowning. "I'll admit that I may possibly do a few things that the police would object to, but, according to my own lights, I regard myself as an honest man. I'm going to open this place because I want to make money, and there won't be much chance of making money unless I do the whole thing on the strict Q.T. If I opened this place so that the whole district knew about it, I should go bankrupt."

"I shouldn't be at all surprised," nodded Uncle Robert.

"To begin with, I could only charge a couple of bob admission," said Mr. Clegg thoughtfully. "And that would mean that it would be less exclusive, and the moneyed people would not come. But by making it a night club—a sort of secret institution—I shall charge ten shillings a head, just for admission."

"Ten bob!" whistled Uncle Robert. "Isn't that a bit steep?"

"The steeper the better," said Mr. Clegg knowingly. "Then, of course, there will be extra charges—refreshments, a special fee for the dance floor, and so on. If you know anything about night clubs, Bob, you'll know that people have to pay even for the privilege of breathing."

"What mugs!" said Fenton's uncle.

"You're quite right—they're mugs!" said Mr. Clegg. "And I'm after the mugs. If they've got money to throw about, I see no reason why I shouldn't get hold of some of it. And I don't call it dishonest, either. I shall give them value—in a certain measure."

"Well, I must say the place looks first-class," admitted Uncle Robert.

"Again," said Mr. Clegg, as he lit a fresh cigar, "there's the question of the schools. If this place was run openly, it would be immediately placed out of bounds, and none of the boys would dare to come near it. As

It is, every member of the club will be sworn to secrecy, and, for his own sake, he will keep quiet about it. Don't you understand, Bob? The more secrecy we can have, the more certainty of success. And this secrecy has the additional advantage of making the mugs believe that they are getting full value for their money."

The new fellow in the Remove was about to make a remark when he pulled himself up. He had suddenly noticed a figure on the carpeted stairs. He was surprised. For the figure was that of a girl—a slim, graceful girl of about sixteen. She was quietly dressed, and her shingled hair was dark brown. And Uncle Robert noticed that she was decidedly pretty; pretty in a dainty, sweet way.

Mr. Clegg saw his young companion staring, and he turned his head.

"Oh, Olive," he said. "I thought you had gone to bed, my girl."

"Some men have come, father," she replied, in a low, sad voice.

"The musicians," nodded Mr. Clegg. "Thanks, girlie!"

Uncle Robert looked questioningly at his host.

"My daughter," explained Mr. Clegg, not without pride.

"But—but I thought——" began the junior.

"I should have said, my stepdaughter," corrected Mr. Clegg. "No, my wife isn't here; she's touring. An actress, you know, and she'll be touring for several months yet. We thought it better that Olive should be with me. She's too young to go on the boards yet. But one day she'll be a star!" he added confidently.

The girl seemed to hesitate, and then she came running down the carpeted stairs.

"Dad!" she said breathlessly. "Oh, I do wish you wouldn't go on with all this!"

Mr. Clegg frowned, and Uncle Robert looked interestedly at the girl. He was waiting to be introduced, but she had taken no notice of him. She was looking appealingly at her stepfather.

"Come, come, girlie!" said Mr. Clegg soothingly. "You're not going to go off the deep end again, are you?"

"Mother warned you, dad," she said, clutching at his arm. "She asked you not to go ahead with all this. Oh, why do you do it? There'll only be trouble with—with the police!"

Uncle Robert felt uncomfortable, and Mr. Clegg patted the girl on her slim shoulder.

"There, lass, you mustn't be foolish," he said. "I know what I'm doing."

"I don't like it," said the girl, her voice very quiet and very earnest. "It isn't too late even now, dad——"

"Nonsense!" said the ex-showman, his voice becoming gruff and impatient. "Go upstairs, Olive! Let's have no more of this silly nonsense. I have put a lot of capital into this venture, and I don't intend to drop it."

"But couldn't you open the place somewhere else—and couldn't you do it in the

right way?" she pleaded. "It isn't fair to me, dad. People will think strange things——"

"You are the only one who thinks strange things," he interrupted curtly. "Now, you had better go."

"It's wicked—wicked!" she cried, suddenly bursting out. "You are deliberately planning to drag some of these schoolboys into disgrace! You don't care what happens to them—so long as you get their money! You're going to incite them to break the school rules, and to get themselves into trouble——"

"Go upstairs!" commanded her stepfather harshly.

"It's wrong!" she panted. "Oh, I wish mother had taken me with her, instead of leaving me in this place!"

And, with her cheeks very pale, the girl turned and mounted the stairs.

CHAPTER 10.

The Appeal

MR. SIMON CLEGG grunted.

"Don't take any notice, Bob," he said. "She's highly strung, that girl. She'll be all right after we've opened—after she's grown accustomed to it."

"You might have introduced me," said Uncle Robert.

"By hokey, boy, how could I?" said Mr. Clegg. "Besides, I don't think she likes you. At least, she gave you a pretty hard look."

"Yes, I noticed that, too."

"She knows that you're my agent, as it were," continued Mr. Clegg, "and, no doubt, she looks upon you as a wrong 'un. Olive's all right, but she's got some very old-fashioned ideas. I've tried to knock sense into her, but it's a hard task. The trouble is, she's only lately left a high-class boarding school, and they must have put some queer ideas into her head."

If Mr. Simon Clegg had had a right sense of perspective, he would have seen that his stepdaughter possessed honest ideas—sound ideas. It was he who had a warped sense of proportion.

Uncle Robert was not particularly interested.

"Didn't she say that some men had arrived?" he asked.

"By hokey, yes!" said Mr. Clegg. "I'd forgotten! Confound the girl! Always worrying me with her silly notions and fears! Stay here, Bob; I'll bring the gang down."

Mr. Clegg hurried away, and the schoolboy paced up and down over the soft carpet, his chin sunk down on his chest. He was thinking deeply.

He was pondering over the arrangement that he had made with Mr. Clegg. It was quite an old arrangement—one that had been first mooted some months ago, while Uncle Robert had still been at his former school. Mr. Clegg had often spoken to him of open-

ing a night club near a great Public school, and at the time the boy had believed that it was only a sort of daydream.

But now Mr. Clegg had made it a reality.

Moat Hollow was just the place for his purpose—and it was not only situated near St. Frank's, but there was the River House School, too. And Bannington was not so far off.

Uncle Robert was Mr. Clegg's official agent at St. Frank's, as it were. It was his task to get in touch with those juniors and seniors who had plenty of money, and who had a fancy for taking risks. Before he could ponder further over the matter, he was disturbed by voices, and when he looked round he saw Mr. Clegg leading the way down the carpeted stairs. And behind him there were several men, and they were carrying various instrument-cases.

"Come along, boys," said Mr. Clegg briskly. "You don't know my young friend, Bob, do you? He is a schoolboy from St. Frank's, and he's all right. Bob, meet the gang."

And presently the "gang" took their positions on the raised platform, and they started operations. There were five men altogether—youngish fellows, on the whole, and cheery mortals. At the moment it was obvious that they were out of practice, but there could be no doubting that they had the makings of a good band.

UNCLE ROBERT took Mr. Clegg aside.

"What about the sounds?" he asked.

"The sounds, Bob?"

"Yes," said the junior. "It's very still to-night, Mr. Clegg, and if anybody happens to be passing Moat Hollow he might hear this music. And then, perhaps, there'll be a lot of talk——"

"You can set your mind at rest on that score," chuckled Mr. Clegg. "Don't forget that this cellar is deep down. I've tested it thoroughly. It doesn't matter how still the night is, no sounds can get out. At least, they can't get as far as the high wall which surrounds the grounds."

"Yes, but if a door is opened——"

"Nothing!" interrupted Mr. Clegg. "I'm putting the story round that I'm a very keen radio enthusiast. I've already told people that I sometimes sit up until two and three o'clock in the morning, tuning in the American stations and listening to the dance music."

"That's not a bad wheeze," said Uncle Robert admiringly. "What's the time?" he added.

"Well past midnight," said Mr. Clegg. "There's no reason why you should remain, Bob. You can get along home, if you like. And if you want to see me at any time, just come along. You can come openly in the daytime, of course—although, perhaps, it might be as well not to," he added, with

a thoughtful frown. "Perhaps it would be wiser if we pretended to be strangers."

"That's what I was thinking."

"Very well, then," said Mr. Clegg. "If you want to see me, you can always come after dark, as you have to-night. But don't forget that we shall open next week."

"That's certain?"

"Absolutely certain," said Mr. Clegg.

"Right! You can rely on me to bring along as many fellows as I can," promised Uncle Robert.

"I'm sure of it," nodded the old showman. "Well, good-night, Bob. You know the way out, don't you?"

"I think so," said the junior. "Oh, and by the way, Mr. Clegg, I get twenty-five per cent commission on all customers I introduce, don't I?"

"It's a very liberal percentage," said Mr. Clegg. "Yes, that's our arrangement. For example, if you introduce ten St. Frank's boys next Wednesday, you'll get fifty shillings odd. If things go right, I can keep you well supplied with pocket-money throughout the term."

Uncle Robert's eyes gleamed greedily.

"Right you are, Mr. Clegg!" he said. "I'm willing to make a bet with you that I'll have at least ten fellows here on your opening night."

A minute later he shook hands, and then passed up the stairs, and went along the passage to the rear door of the old house.

Just before he reached the outer door he felt a slight touch on his arm, and when he turned, he found the slim figure of Olive Clegg near him.

"Great Scott!" he muttered, startled.

"I want to speak to you for a minute!" said the girl, in a low voice.

Uncle Robert recovered his composure.

"All right, go ahead!" he said. "But what's the idea of this mysterious business? You gave me quite a turn."

It was very dim in the passage, and he could only see the outline of her figure. Yet he felt that her eyes were fixed searchingly upon him.

"You are the boy who is going to help my father, aren't you?" she asked tensely.

"Well, I don't quite know what you mean——"

"Yes, you do!" she insisted. "You're going to induce the St. Frank's boys to break bounds—you're going to get them to come to this place. And yet you know, all the time, that it is in defiance of the school regulations."

"Oh, hang it!" protested the junior. "What on earth does it matter?"

"It matters everything!" said the girl, her voice contemptuous and scornful. "Have you no sense of decency? Do you think it's honourable of you to put such temptation into the way of your school-fellows?"

"But your father's night club is going to be a perfectly respectable affair!" protested Uncle Robert.

"I'm not talking about my father's night club!" said the girl quietly. "I'm trying to show you that it is a caddish thing for you to tempt your school-fellows to break bounds after lights-out. Oh, you know it's wrong—you know it's very wrong!"

"You seem to know a lot about Public school life," said Uncle Robert wonderingly.

"Didn't my father tell you that I have only just come away from a big boarding school?" asked the girl. "And a girls' school is very much the same as a boys' school. What's going to happen to these boys if they are discovered? Most of them will probably be expelled—they will be disgraced. And all for the sake of a visit to this—this horrid place! It isn't worth it! And, but for you, they wouldn't come at all. Oh, you ought to be ashamed of yourself!"

There was such a world of anger and scorn in the girl's voice that Uncle Robert had the grace to feel himself turning hot.

A HAND came out of the gloom and touched Uncle Robert on the arm. He felt the girl's slim fingers tightening on his sleeve.

"Please!" she said earnestly. "You'll promise me that you won't do this?"

"Yes, but hang it all——"

"I don't know why it is, but I have a feeling that there will be a big lot of trouble if the St. Frank's boys are brought to this—this night club!" went on Olive. "It will mean trouble for them—trouble for you—and trouble for my father. And then, what about me?"

"I don't see that you've got anything to grumble at," grunted Uncle Robert.

"I was told that I was coming into the country to enjoy myself until my mother finished her tour," said the girl bitterly. "And now that I am here I find that—— Oh, but what's the good of talking? I can't do anything—I'm helpless. But you, at least, can forget all about this night club. Won't you, please, promise me? Don't say anything to any of the other boys—don't let them know that such a place as this exists."

The new boy in the Remove hesitated. He felt uncomfortable, but he was not thinking of this girl's honesty; he was not thinking of her splendid motives. His only thoughts were concerned with that commission which Mr. Simon Clegg had promised to give him.

"That's all very well," he said gruffly. "If the chaps like to come here, it'll be their own doing——"

"It'll be your doing!" she broke in.

"How?" he demanded. "I shan't force them to come here; I shan't drag them. Haven't they got any wills of their own?"

"Oh, you are deliberately misunderstanding me," said the girl angrily. "If they don't know that this night club exists, they won't want to come. There'll be no temptation. But if you go about the school deliberately setting out to induce them——"

"I'm not going to do anything of the sort!" interrupted Uncle Robert. "They

won't need any inducing, if it comes to that. My part will simply be to tell them about the night club. If they like to come, all well and good. If they like to stay away—well, they can stay!"

And, after his usual fashion, he turned on his heel and walked away. The girl stood there for a moment, biting her lip. She could hardly believe that this schoolboy had been so rude—so ill-mannered. Then, with a sigh, she turned and went upstairs.

Uncle Robert found himself outside in the foggy night. He shivered, pulled his overcoat more tightly about him, and picked his way across the wilderness-garden until he reached that little rear door. He let himself out and plunged through the wood until he reached Bellton Lane.

Now that he was outside, his recent experience seemed rather unreal. It seemed impossible that there could be such a comfortable, brilliant place as that converted cellar so near at hand. A night club! A place of music and gaiety! Here, on the outskirts of Bellton!

Uncle Robert was grinning as he walked back to St. Frank's.

"By Jove!" he muttered. "At one time I was nearly on the point of giving way to that silly girl's talk! This thing means a lot of money for me, and I'm not going to give it up! No fear!"

He had definitely decided the point.

"Besides, I'm Fenton's uncle," he continued gloatingly. "I've got a pull in this school! Fenton is a good fellow—with a fine name. I'm as safe as houses here. He's the school captain, and the most popular fellow in the Sixth. If anything happens to me, I shall be safe, because my precious nephew won't dare to take any action."

He chuckled over the thought.

"If I'm involved in a scandal, Fenton's name will suffer, too," he said contentedly. "And that means that there'll be no scandal, whatever happens."

Uncle Robert was feeling very contented with himself when he reached St. Frank's. He climbed over the school wall and crept towards the West Square. Within five minutes he was inside the Ancient House and back in his own dormitory, snuggling down into bed.

He had proved how easy it was to get in and out. There was nothing in it—it was as simple as A B C.

It really seemed that St. Frank's was in for some novel kind of excitement in the very near future!

(This new series of yarns is the real "goods," isn't it, chums? A night club near St. Frank's; popular Edgar Fenton saddled with a young scamp of an uncle in the Remove—there's going to be plenty of excitement at the famous old school soon. "The 'Sports' of St. Frank's!" is the title of next week's corking yarn. Order your copy now, chums!)

GOSSIP ABOUT ST. FRANK'S

Things Heard and Seen By
EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

FRED MURLY, of Brixton, tells me that he has been reading the Old Paper for ten years, and he'd like to know when the first number appeared. I have given this information before, but as so many readers are always asking the question I'd better repeat it. No. 1 was published on June 12th, 1915, although the first St. Frank's story did not appear until over two years later.

A BELGIAN reader—Louis Van Luyck, of Oude Gard, near Antwerp—sends me a long and most interesting letter, telling me of his likes and dislikes in regard to the St. Frank's stories. I am always particularly interested in letters from foreign readers—not because I like them better than letters from home readers, but because it clearly proves that we are all very much alike, whether we're English or Scotch or Belgian or French or German or Italian or Chinese. No matter what race or colour we are, we all seem to like thrills. Louis is particularly keen upon detective yarns, and he wants me to go back to the old type of story, when Nelson Lee was very much to the fore.

HERE'S another reader who wants more thrills and more detective work—Leslie A. W. Bowden, of Ide, near Exeter. He says that he can't forget the fact that Nelson Lee is really a great detective, and he hints that it's a pity for Lee to waste his talents at St. Frank's. Nelson Lee himself has had something of the same idea. I fancy, although he doesn't boast much about his talents. I was having a word with him the other day, and it struck me that Nelson Lee is getting a bit discontented. He didn't grumble or complain about St. Frank's, but I believe he's chafing a bit. Perhaps that recent affair of the Fu Chang Tong affected him. It gave him a taste of the old detective game, and having, as it were, smelt blood, he's straining at the leash to be up and doing. Nelson Lee is a very active man, and I fancy he considers that his schoolmastering is rather tame. He wants

to be in real harness again; and something seems to tell me that very soon he will actually be in harness again.

OUR photograph this week is of Wilfred Ponsford, and it will be remembered that Mr. Ponsford is the enthusiastic reader who gave us, through these columns, a most effective and inexpensive way of binding the Old Paper into volumes. Mr. Ponsford has asked me for two titles, and here they are: Nos. 164 and 165 New Series—"Archie's Lancashire Lass" and "The Kidnapped Schoolboys."

ONCE or twice lately I have hinted that that old scallywag, Professor Cyrus Zingrave, leader of that dreaded criminal organisation known as the League of the Green Triangle, is preparing for more dirty work. Nelson Lee has had a suspicion of it for some little time, but in this instance I happen to know something that even Nelson Lee doesn't know. The League of the Green Triangle is preparing to let itself lose once more, and it won't be long before there's quite a big sensation. Exactly how I got my inside information is neither here nor there. And I can add that Nelson Lee and the Frank's fellows will have their hands pretty full in the New Year.

Incidentally this information should interest John Richard Milner, of Woodthorpe, who wrote telling me that he considered it was about time we had something startlingly new in the way of stories. I think I shall be able to satisfy my chum's needs very shortly!

OUR READERS' PORTRAIT GALLERY



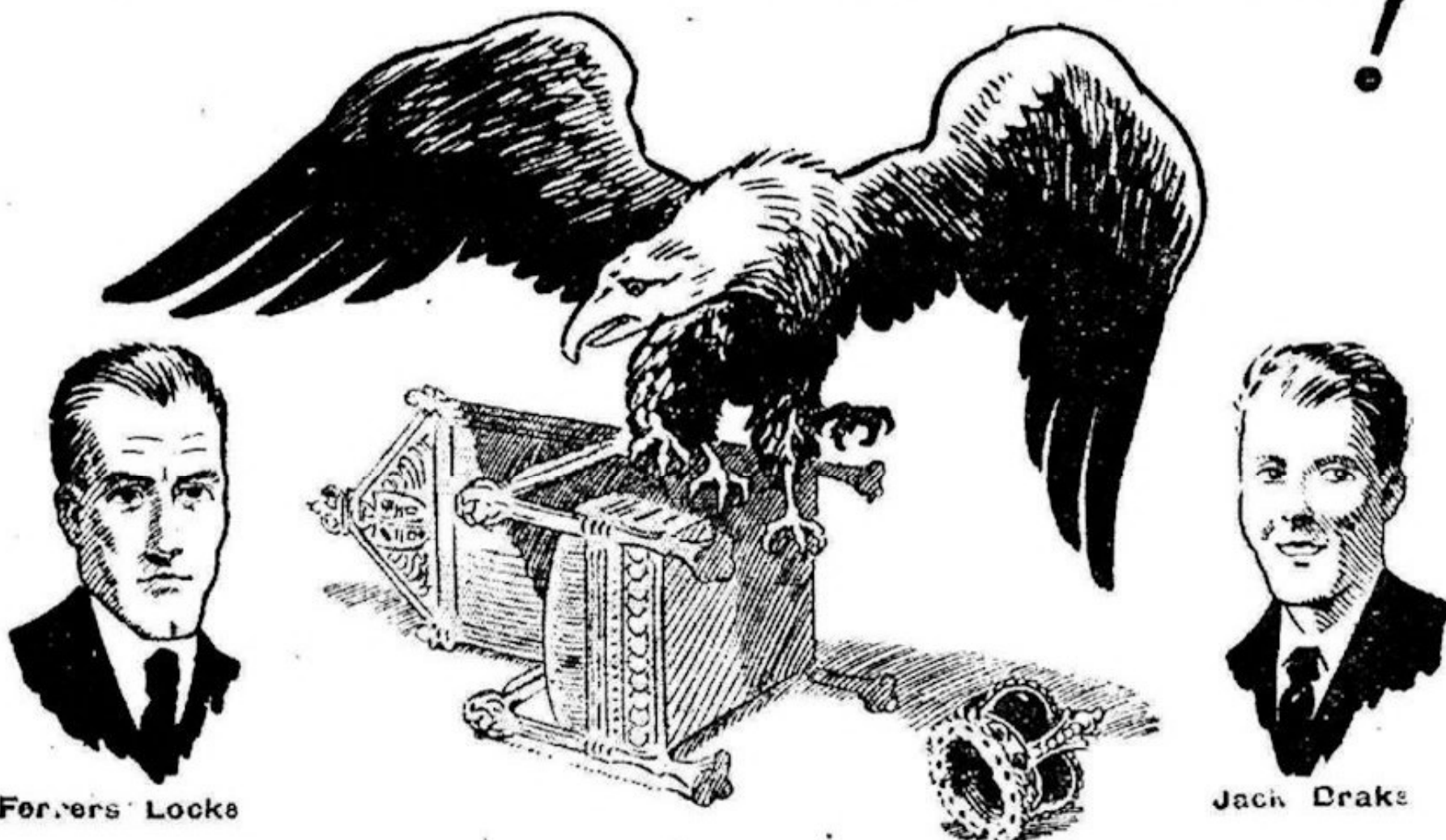
WILFRED PONSFORD

MMARGARET MITCHELL, of Linwood, New Zealand, asks me if Rugby is ever played at St. Frank's. Well, there was some talk of introducing it, but it came to nothing. In Rugger—at Public Schools—the smaller boys seldom get a chance on the field. The big, brawny ones carry everything before them. But in Soccer even the smallest chaps have an almost equal chance with the big ones.

EDWY SEARLES BROOKS.

MORE STUNNING CHAPTERS OF OUR FULL-O'-THRILLS SERIAL!

The FOUR-LEGGED EAGLE!



Ferners Locke

Jack Drake

Locke Decides!

MORINA followed, but by the door he paused to pick up a dagger from the top of the dressing-chest. He followed Locke out of the room and along the passage to Queen Zita's boudoir. The maid was close behind, her eyes wide with fear and anger.

Locke ushered the general into the room and waved his hand mockingly.

"The queen!" he said.

Morina bowed. He said something in the Abronian tongue, but suddenly the relief on his face faded out. He stared as if he were in a trance, then, galvanised into activity, he leapt forward and seized the false queen's wrist and grabbed the ring from her finger.

"My ring!" he said fiercely.

"Exactly!" said Locke. "She had to put the wedding-ring over it to keep it in position."

"Zis is not ze queen!" roared Morina. "Where is she? You—"

Frantic with temper, he reviled the impostor in the Abronian dialect. What he said was only understood by the maid and the false queen, but it must have been scorching. The impostor fairly wilted beneath the lash of his tongue. He thrust his pallid face close to hers, and she sat down on the nearest chair and covered her face with her hands.

Then Morina paused for breath. Locke stood beside the general.

"This is the second time she has imper-

sonated Queen Zita," said Locke. "Do you know who she really is?"

"Yes!" snapped Morina. "It ees Heloise Mossman."

"Mossman?" exclaimed Locke. "The wife of Isaac Mossman?"

"The same," said Morina. "But, ze queen—"

Locke did not answer. With a sudden lunge he swept Morina out of the way as he bounded clear across the apartment. Morina turned, amazed and puzzled, to find Locke standing there gripping the wrist of Queen Zita's maid, in whose hand was a gleaming dagger which she now held within an inch of the impostor's heart.

"Two wrongs do not make a right!" said Locke sternly.

"But I keel her!" cried the maid shrilly.

"There is a better way," said Locke.

"I'll 'phone for the police," said the hotel detective.

"You'll do nothing of the sort!" retorted Locke. "Her Majesty, Queen Zita, expressly forbade bringing the police into this case."

"But hang it all," blustered the 'tec, "when royalty have been kidnapped—"

"You will please do as I tell you," said Locke crisply. "And do it better than you watched this impostor just now. If I had not dashed back here she would have got away, yet I told you to watch her."

Jack could not help chuckling at the sight of the hotel 'tec's embarrassment.

King Ferdinand Kidnapped!

—o—

Famous Detective on Trail.

—o—

See Full Story!

"I smelt the gas," he said, by way of excuse. "I suspected more foul play."

"I knew there was more foul play," said Locke grimly.

"You knew?"

"I knew," agreed Locke. "The ring she wore was not hers, and not the Queen's. It was a man's ring. She could only have got it from Morina. Therefore, I knew there was something wrong in Morina's room."

"But, ze queen——" Morina began impatiently.

"Jack and I will set about rescuing her at once," said Locke. "The motive is obvious. King Ferdinand is still obstinate, and will not sign the papers Prince Carlos wants him to sign, so they have kidnapped the queen as well, and will force the king to sign by threatening all sorts of things against the queen. You understand?"

Morina paced the room in agitation.

"If I were only younger," he growled menacingly.

"You can still help," said Locke. "If this disappearance of the queen gets known here the news might spread to Abronia with disastrous results. I suggest that since Madame Mossman has been so successful at impersonating the queen you should force her to remain here to go on impersonating her Majesty until Jack and I bring her Majesty back. What do you say?"

"Ver' good idea," said Morina, nodding his head. "Eet shall be done."

Locke released the maid's wrist. She stowed the dagger away, the light of understanding in her eyes. Locke spoke to her.

"You understand? The impostor is more valuable alive than dead."

"Yes, m'sieur," said the maid. "And she not escape—not from me!"

"I feel sure of that," said Locke. Then he turned to the hotel 'tee. "And you will help them all you can. You must not reveal a thing of what was happened to anyone, least of all to the police. You won't lose by it."

"Very good, sir," said the 'tee, rather abashed. "I'm mum. And I won't let you down like I did just now. I promise you that, sir."

"Good enough," said Locke grimly.

"And now we'll get on the trail again. There's no more to be done here. Come along, Jack."

They left the hotel as abruptly as they had arrived, and went back to Baker Street.

"But," protested Jack, "you said you'd get on the trail."

"Tired out men aren't much use against the brains of Carlos," said Locke. "We both need sleep."

Striking a Bargain!

IT was comparatively early the next morning when Locke and Drake found themselves among the evil-smelling wharves of the Thames riverside. The sun had not risen high enough to disperse the dank mists and gloom between the high walls of the warehouses. Few people were about, and most of them were wending their way homeward after a night of doubtful activities.

Both Locke and Drake excited no comment nor curiosity. They were dressed as riverside loungers. Their clothes were dirty and tattered; their faces looked as if they had been neither washed nor shaved for days. With hands thrust deeply in their trousers pockets, they shuffled along the muddy pavements, their ragged caps pulled low down over their watchful eyes.

Cautiously they approached the house where Prince Carlos and his aristocratic conspirators had taken King Ferdinand, and where, in all probability, Queen Zita had been taken also. The detective and his assistant did not talk for fear of being overheard. They both knew that in the river side district the most deserted street had eyes and ears that ordinary people did not suspect.

There was always the chance that Carlos had bolted again, because Locke had been forced to reveal the fact that he had escaped from the river and had followed them to that dingy house. But the mere fact that Carlos had kidnapped the queen showed that he was getting desperate. That argued he had nowhere else ready to go to. He had been safe enough in the house in Lambeth until Locke had upset his plans there. He had had, apparently, two alternative hiding-places. One was at Mossman's house up

HOW THE STORY STARTED.

FERRERS LOCKE, the world-famous London detective, and his boy assistant,

JACK DRAKE, are travelling on the Underground when they witness the murder of a foreigner. Following investigations, they discover that the deed was committed by the

GRAND SEIGNER, or Count, of Perilla, working on the instructions of **PRINCE CARLOS OF ABRONIA**. Carlos' ambition is to become king of Abronia, and already he has kidnapped the reigning monarch, King Ferdinand, and brought him over to England. The murdered man was an emissary of Queen Zita of Abronia, who has followed to rescue her husband; hence the man's removal. The queen asks Locke to help her restore King Ferdinand to his country. The detective discovers that Carlos is plotting to kidnap Queen Zita, and he and Jack immediately dash to the hotel where she is staying. They are too late. They see somebody who poses as the queen, but Locke realises that she is an impostor. He then goes along to the room of General Morina, who is one of Queen Zita's faithful compatriots. The room is full of gas, and the general is lying on the bed unconscious. Locke revives him, and then takes him along to see the bogus queen.

(Now read on.)



Looking at those two down-and-out figures which crouched in the shadow of that doorway, no one would have guessed them to be Ferrers Locke, detective, and his assistant, Jack Drake.

river, and the other was the slum house in the docks area.

Locke's swift movements had surprised Carlos at Mossman's house, and forced him to bolt yet again to the Isle of Dogs, and it was very doubtful indeed that he had a third lair. He would try to force the king to sign quickly, by kidnapping the queen—which he had done—and for the rest, he would rely on Queen Zita's horror of the police and publicity to save him from Locke's attentions.

All the time, that secrecy helped Prince Carlos. If the truth became known in Abronia that their king was being held a prisoner it would cause a civil war. Carlos knew that Locke and General Morina would not dare risk publicity, so there was a chance that he would remain for a day or two in that slum house, and try to force the king to sign by threatening all sorts of things against the queen.

Locke argued all that out, and was now setting out to prove his own arguments. But seeing that he could not call in the police, he was badly handicapped. Could he and Jack rescue the king and queen of Abronia from Carlos and his satellites without calling in outside help? That was the chief worry of all.

A little way ahead of Locke and Jack a man came out of a low doorway and shuffled off up the road. Locke halted, fished in the pockets of his ragged garments and brought out a battered cigarette end. He retreated into the shelter of a nearby doorway to light it, while Jack stood waiting.

"See the place that chap came out of?" queried Locke. "That's Fireman Pete's

place. Every crook in London goes there—almost."

"And where is Carlos' show?" queried Jack.

"Just round the corner, in the next street," said Locke. "See? That loafer is just turning the corner."

Locke got his cigarette alight, and walked on. Jack followed him, imitating all his movements. They shuffled along and yet they covered the distance between Fireman Pete's and the corner in a surprisingly short space of time, and as they turned the corner they saw the loafer mounting the cracked steps of a dingy house.

"That," said Locke, "is where Carlos hangs out. Let's sit on this step and go to sleep."

They sank down and crouched into the corner, letting their heads sink on their chests as if they had been out all night, and were sleeping the sleep of the homeless night wanderers. But their alert eyes missed nothing that happened in the vicinity.

After a time the loafer from Fireman Pete's came out of the dingy house opposite, and with him was a tall, military-looking man, muffled up to the eyes. It was Major Patens! They came past Locke and Jack, went round the corner, along the street, and dived into Fireman Pete's "thieves' kitchen." Locke and Jack followed cautiously, and themselves shuffled into Fireman Pete's place as if they were accustomed to going there every day of the week.

The room they first entered was badly lighted, and reeked of stale spirits and tobacco smoke. There were not many men there. But the chief reason for the existence

of the place was not apparent in that room. Locke knew that at the back of the building were rooms where only wanted criminals entered. There they could hide from the law in comparative safety, and should the police try to raid the place they had secret means of getting away quickly. Fireman Pete could lay his hands on desperate, unscrupulous characters at a minute's notice—which explained, to an extent, the nature of Major Patens' errand.

"But which is Fireman Pete?" asked Jack.

"He isn't here," said Locke. "He's in some other room striking a bargain with the major. Keep your eyes skinned."

They sat down at a table, and the barman brought them drinks, which they did not drink and had no intention of drinking. They sprawled in their chairs and apparently dropped off to sleep. Locke snored loudly until the barman threw a dish-cloth at him and threatened to send him out on his neck if he wasn't quiet.

And after they had sat there about half an hour Major Patens came out of the door behind the bar, and with him came Fireman Pete. Patens' military figure seemed to fill the place. He didn't say a word. He just strode round from behind the bar, crossed the room, brushed past Locke and went out. Fireman Pete was grinning with delight, and scratching the palm of one hand.

Locke rose from his chair drunkenly and staggered to the bar. Pete, bald, corpulent, dirty, was still grinning.

"All right?" asked the barman.

"What ho!" grinned Pete. "Money to burn they have. But I wouldn't like to upset the dagoes! Nasty, knife-throwing lot they are. I wouldn't trust 'em too far!"

Then Locke lent on the bar and upset a glass.

"Hallo, Pete!" he cried.

Fireman Pete stared at him.

"Who the dickens are you?"

"Gimme drink," said Locke.

"I'll give you a thick ear!" snarled Pete. "I don't know you. 'Op it!"

The barman chuckled and walked away. And Locke's face suddenly changed. The inane, drunken expression faded away like magic, and the face that Pete stared at was the grim face of Ferrers Locke, the famous detective. Fireman Pete had seen it more than once, and he was not the sort of man to forget very easily.

"Mister Locke!" he gasped, his fat cheeks gone pale beneath the grime. "But I haven't done nothing—honest——"

"I'm not after you, Pete," said Locke. "I want you to help me. You had a visitor just now."

Fireman Pete waved his fat hands in a gesture of denial.

"I don't know anything about him," he declared. "And I'm not going to double-cross those dagoes—not even for you. They're dangerous men, they are."

"I know that," Locke assured him. "But there's no need for you to worry yourself. I just want to know what he wanted."

"I'm not telling," said Pete fiercely.

Locke's eyes glinted with determination.

"Pete," he said crisply, "you know I'm a man of my word. There are things I could tell about you that would mean a spell in Dartmoor for you. In days gone by, Pete, I've let you down lightly, and you know it."

"I'm not denying it, mister," said Pete. "I do owe you a thing or two."

"Then here's a chance for you to repay me," said Locke.

Pete hesitated, stroking his unshaven chin. Then he jerked his head towards the door behind the bar.

"Come inside," he said furtively.

Locke and Jack went round behind the bar and through the door into a sort of parlour which was untidy and dusty.

"There isn't much to tell," Pete said. "They want me to send a couple o' tough 'uns round in half an hour—fellows who'll do just what they're told and ask no questions."

"And that's all you know?" queried Locke, studying Pete.

"Strike me Sam, that's all I know!" said Pete, and Locke believed him.

"Do you conduct the toughs round there?" asked Locke. "What's the arrangement?"

"I send 'em round," explained Pete, "and they're to say, 'From Pete,' that's all."

"I see. Then we'll be off!" said Locke.

Pete's eyes bulged with fear as he realised the significance of the detective's words.

"Where are you going?" he cried.

"Round there!" replied Locke. "We'll be the two toughs!"

"But if they find out they'll smash me—ruin me! That big dago said he'd do for me if I let them down!"

"Listen," said Locke. "They need never know. I think, when they do find out, that they'll be too busy to worry about you. But, whatever happens, Pete, I promise you my protection. Will that do?"

"All right," grunted Pete ungraciously. "Suppose it'll have to do. I can't stop you going round."

"Trust me," said Locke. "You're mixed up in a bigger case than you think, but I'll see that you don't get hurt. So-long, Pete."

The detective and his assistant left Pete to sink down in a ramshackle easy chair and think over things while they went out, across the dirty bar, and out into the dingy street. Boldly, Jack and Locke shuffled up the street and round the corner. Locke eyed every door as if he were not quite sure where he was, and where the house was. His face, apparently dirty, lit up with satisfaction when he came opposite the house where the aristocratic conspirators had taken up their residence. He led the way up the steps and knocked at the door.

Major Patens answered the summons. He was used, apparently, as the principal spokesman on account of his splendid English.

"What do you want?" he inquired curtly.

"Morning, gov'nor!" said Jack, touching his ragged cap.

Locke pretended to cuff him.

"Be quiet, idiot!" he said in a loud voice. "Want to land us in the soup? You know what Pete said?" Then he turned to the major. "From Pete, we are, gov'nor. Just that—from Pete."

The suspicion in Major Patens' eyes faded out, and he motioned them inside.

"We're expecting you," he said. "Come in."

They entered. The door closed, and Jack felt like a mouse when the trap shuts. Patens took them into the first room they came to, and Prince Carlos stood there, smoking a cigarette. Patens spoke at length in the Abronian dialect, and Locke wondered if he and Jack had been recognised. He knew that if recognition came, with it would also come a fight to the death.

Carlos addressed them in English.

"You understand—you do—as you are told—asking no questions and saying no word afterwards. Is it not?"

"Trust us, gov'nor," said Locke. "But what about the dough?"

"Dough?" queried Prince Carlos, and even Patens looked puzzled.

"The money, then."

"Ten pounds each, but we do not pay until the work is done."

Jack glanced swiftly at Locke as if protesting. Locke scowled at Carlos.

"No monkey tricks!" he warned.

"You will get your money all right, if that is meant," said Carlos sharply. "I am not in the habit of cheating my hirelings."

"You'd better not try it neither," growled Locke, acting his part splendidly.

Carlos ignored the threat.

"Upstairs you will find a man and a woman. What passes there is not your concern, but when I order you to seize the woman, you will do so, and drag her out of the room. You understand?"

"Is that all?" asked Jack gruffly.

"That is all," said Carlos.

"Ten quid easily earned," remarked Locke.

"But I thought we'd have to bash somebody," put in Jack, looking disappointed.

"This way," said Carlos, taking them upstairs.

They were ushered into an upper room, where King Ferdinand sat at a dirty table. Beside him sat Queen Zita. Behind the king and queen stood the Duke of Silene and the Grand Seigneur of Perilla.

Prince Carlos placed a legal-looking document on the table and laid a fountain-pen beside it. He talked, at great length, in the Abronian tongue. At intervals the queen spoke, sharply, as if letting Carlos know exactly what she thought, but he took no notice of her.

King Ferdinand of Abronia sat there wearily, one elbow on the table, his chin cupped in his hand. He looked ill and worried; his face was white and thin, his eyes lacked lustre, and he was unkempt and dishevelled. He stared straight before him with unseeing eyes, and hardly seemed to hear or care what Carlos was saying.

Locke took in the situation rapidly and easily. His surmise had been accurate. Prince Carlos was forcing the king to sign away his private fortune by threatening violence to the queen. Once that signed will was in the hands of Carlos, the life of Ferdinand would not be worth much.

But there seemed no way out. Locke studied the room, and the men in it. The room was an ordinary room such as would be found in any slum house. The paper on the walls was peeling, and great stains of damp were on the ceiling. The linoleum on the floor was in tatters and mouldy. The window was whole as it happened, but it offered no way of escape.

So far as Locke was concerned there was only one way out of that room—the door. But even then it meant fighting, and he and Jack would be hopelessly outnumbered. Carlos and his fellow-conspirators were all armed. They carried revolvers, and like all the men of Abronia, they knew the uses of stilettos and daggers.

(Another exciting instalment of this thrilling serial will appear in next Wednesday's issue, chums—don't miss it!)

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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.*

Bright and Breezy!

AMONG my postbag this week was a cheery letter from Ross D. Chamberlin, a staunch League-ite hailing from Erdington, which is a suburb of Birmingham. Ross is the editor of a magazine known as the "Erdington Amateur," of which he has sent me some specimen copies. Looking through them, I now realise that I have another rival in the world of editors! I was pleasantly surprised when I perused the contents, and, quite candidly, Ross—who is only eighteen years of age—is to be congratulated upon his efforts.

The "Erdington Amateur" is one of the best and brightest and neatest magazines of its type I have come across. It contains a breezy editorial chat written by the great man himself, and articles on interesting and varied subjects.

Then there's a "Page of Piffle," which is conducted by Arthur F. Evans. Arthur, incidentally, is one of the two assistant editors, and, judging from his excellent feature, I should imagine that he must be something of a humorist. This magazine even goes in for advertisements, which shows the thorough and up-to-date lines on which it is run.

The price is one penny, with the word "minimum" very brightly placed in brackets after the price. You see, Ross, like the enterprising editor he is, is keen to purchase

a new printing machine which will make the mag. look even better than ever, and so he is not averse to receiving more than one penny from subscribers who feel thus disposed.

My chum has asked me to announce that he will be pleased to hear from any readers who are interested; they should write to him at 36, Grange Road, Erdington, Birmingham.

THIS WEEK'S WINNING LETTER

DEAR CHIEF OFFICER,—Many thanks for my membership badge and certificate, which I received this morning. I think the design of the certificate is excellent, and the badge is unique.

I only started reading the NELSON LEE LIBRARY a few weeks ago, and consequently I felt a little "newish." Now that I have joined the League I consider myself a full-blown reader.

I have been on the look-out for St. Frank's League badges in this district, but have not seen any so far. You had better get in a stock of medals because I am going to wake 'em up round here!

Needless to say, my badge is already on my coat, and Shepherd's Bush will soon be alive with red, white and blue button-holes.

I will write again soon, and meanwhile—the best of luck to your wonderful organisation!

Yours sincerely,

(Signed) LESLIE C. PAGE, S.F.L. No. 10,250.
(For this interesting letter Leslie C. Page, of Shepherd's Bush, London, has been awarded a useful penknife.)

"Extrasplash!"

HERE'S a paragraph which will appeal to those of you who are thinking about joining a correspondence club. The "Extrasplash" club is on the look-out for new members, and the secretary, Cyril Tagg, of 72, Hill Street, Swadlincote, near Burton-on-Trent, will be only too pleased to supply full particulars

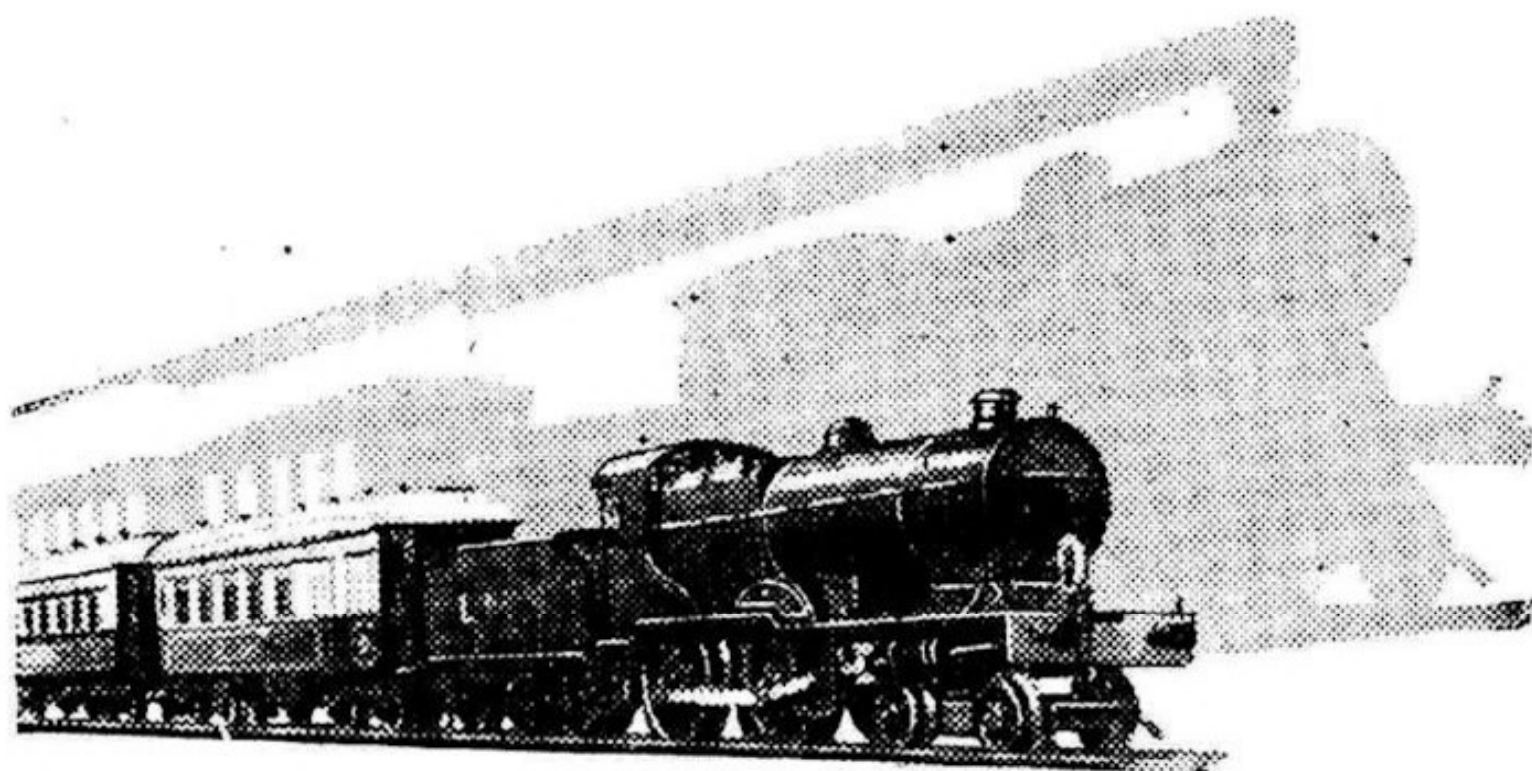
to anybody who writes to him.

"S. O. S."

WILL so-and-so go at once to so-and-so——" All of us who are wireless fans are familiar with those words. This week I have received an "S. O. S." from W. S. Hawken, of 17, St. Austell Street, Truro, Cornwall. He has asked me to announce through the NELSON LEE LIBRARY that he is desirous of hearing from Bill Brewer, who lives somewhere in London, and whose address he has unfortunately lost. So if Bill is reading this paragraph I trust he will do the necessary.

THE CHIEF OFFICER.

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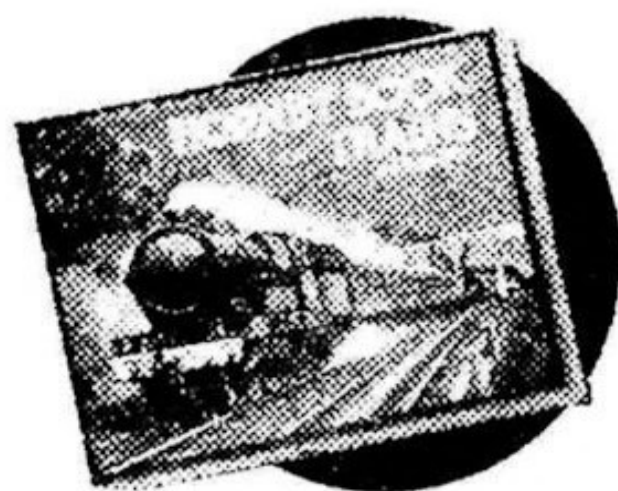
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Conrad H. Benson, 84, Longfellow Street, East London, South Africa, wants correspondents in Holland and France.

Douglas Frew, Dawson Street, Teneriffe, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia, wants correspondents anywhere.

Sidney Cox, 98, Crossin, King's Road, Kirton, wants to hear from stamp collectors.

Stanley E. G. Jones, 2, Thornhill, Spring Gardens, Teignmouth, S. Devon, wants copies of the N.L.L., new series; also to hear from readers in Scotland.

R. P. M. Russell, 150b, Union Street, Blackfriars, London, S.E.1, offers cigarette cards for copies of the N.L.L., old series.

Duncan Toombe, 312, Blackhorn Avenue, Toronto, 9, Ontario, Canada, collects stamps and wants correspondents anywhere.

J. Garinotte, 49, Greenford Avenue, Hanwell, London, W.7, offers N.L.L., new series.

Miss Louise Sheppard, 58, Endwell Road, Barking, London, S.E.4, wants correspondents anywhere, especially in Brighton.

Fred Humphreys, 12, Dearden Street, Hulme, Manchester, wants N.L.L., new series, 1-50; also old series.

Harry Jodan, 14, Highfield Road, Warrington, wants correspondents interested in football and card work.

C. Nicholls, 112, Selwin Street, Hillstown, Bolsover, N. Chatterfield, would like to hear from a reader asking for hints on dog training.

Harry Parker, 122, Waller Road, Ryker, Newcastle-on-Tyne, wants to hear from readers in the United States.

Harold W. Stoll, 167, Rockingham Road,

Kettering, wants N.L.L. Nos. 96-102 and 1-11, new series.

Miss Dorothy Rado, 54, Sardinia Road, Zehlendorf, Berlin, wants girl correspondents in China, Japan, Rhodesia, Egypt, Panama, France and U.S.A.; ages 13-20.

Miss Edith Fisher, 264, Lakeview Street, St. Kilda, N. 2, Melbourne, Australia, wants girl correspondents; ages 14-15.

Thomas Black, 54, Lindsay Street, Perth, Western Australia, wants correspondents interested in Test cricket.

Ian L. Baille, Tom Street, Yarraville, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with readers anywhere.

Walter F. Smith, 94, Cliswell, Perthshire, wants a correspondent in Australia; also issues of the N.L.L. containing the "Corner of Handforth" series.

Miss Edith Wilkinson, 8, Weicham Road, Catford, London, S.E.6, wants girl correspondents who are keen on drawing.

T. R. Gosson, 145, High Street, Eriecy Hill, Staffs., wants correspondents anywhere.

Anthony Lodge, 11, Oak Terrace, Hornchurch Road, Romford, Essex, collects bar numbers of the N.L.L.

B. Brit-Pop, 20, Plaistow Park Road, Plaistow, London, E.12, wants ladies for his correspondence club.

L. Benzaun, 30, Chatham Place, Brighton, wants to hear from philatelists in Japan, China, America, Australia, etc.

Sidney Smith, 2, Cascardish Hall, Billyard Avenue, Elizabeth Bay, N.S.W., Australia, wants correspondents anywhere. Would like to act as secretary to a club.

W. Redhead, 23, Trafalgar Road, Dalston, London, E.8, wants N.L.L., old series, Nos. 352, 353, also 555-560.

C. Aldred, 37, Bickleyke Avenue, Longsight, Manchester, wants correspondents overseas.

W. S. Hackon, 17, St. Ascel Street, Truro, Cornwall, is interested in elevation, and would like to correspond with readers who are similarly inclined.

"PEEPS PAST THE PYRAMIDS"

(Continued from page 13.)

inspection to Dr. Potshar. And behold! the answers were all similar—and wrong.

Then Dr. Potshar grew grim, and his brow became much more so, for he smelled ye ratt, yea; he sniffed several ratts; the room reeked mightily of ratts.

And he spoke thus:

"The answers that thou hast produced bear a verisimilitude one with the other. Even all are alike—and wrong." And he pushed back the sleeve of his robe, and the Form trembled in its sandals. Then, taking each boy in turn, he smote him with rods. And his arm ached.

"I say naught that thou hast all the same

answer," he roared with the voice of a lion, "but that it should be wrong, telleth me that it hath been naughtily copied each from each. Thou hast all assumed that Archimede started from the Euphrates, whereas it was Bethsheepshead who did sally forth from that direction. The place of the barium lagging was therefore even Damascus. Archimedes having a day's journey handicap allowance from the Red Sea."

And he commanded that they should all write the answer "Damascus" five hundred times before the sun sank. And behold! Five times one hundred was the answer written by the Form.

But the son of the sorcerer was the first to slip away, for he greatly feared the vengeance of the thikkeer giver, and said unto himself, "Safety First."