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The
HEAD takes the PLUNGE!

A startling incident from this week's screamingly funny, long complete school yarn
introducing the cheery Chums of St. Frank's.

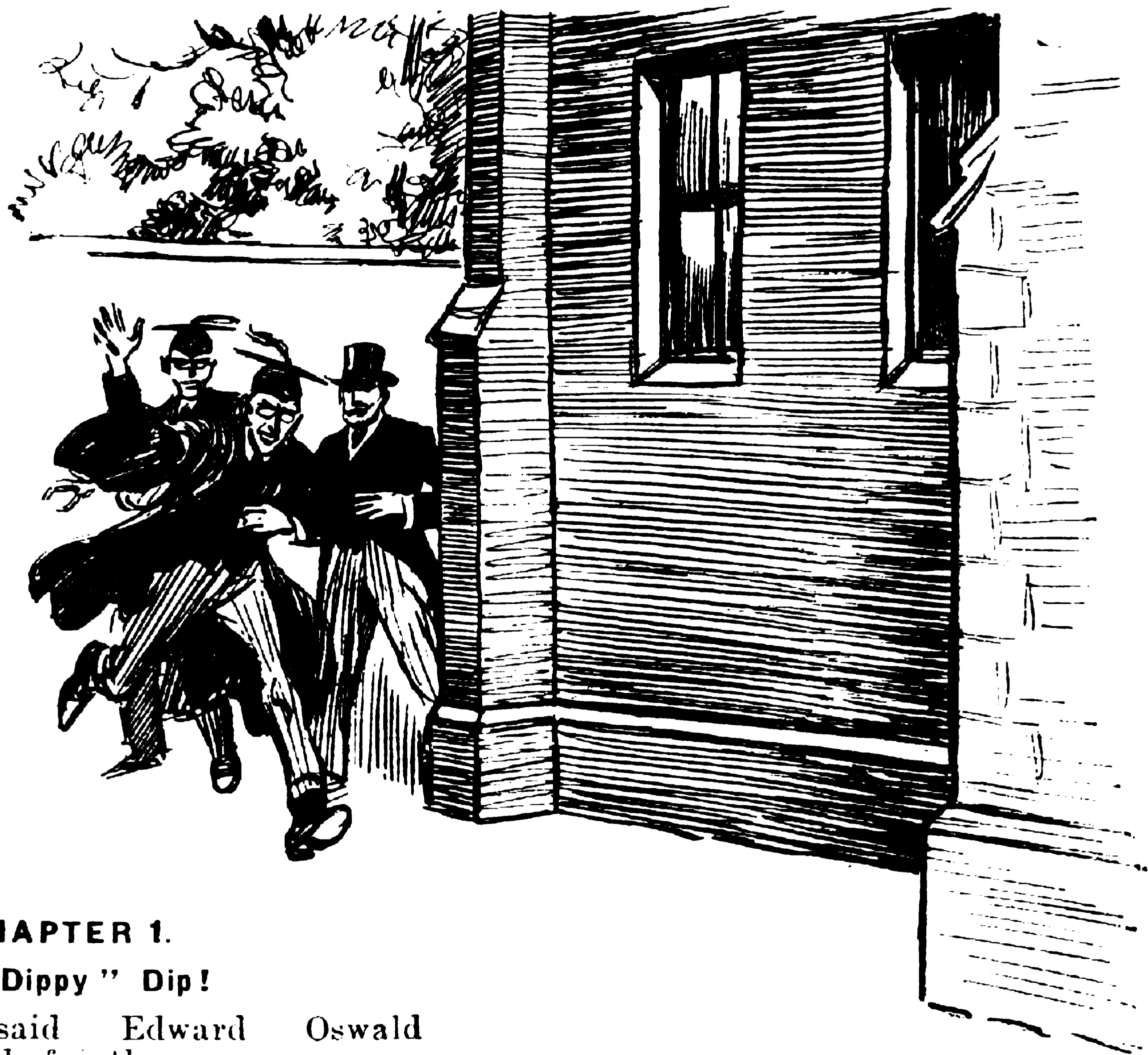
New Series No. 73.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

June 13th, 1931.

Headmaster Of Famous School Makes Mud Pies!

HANDS OFF THE



CHAPTER 1.

A "Dippy" Dip!

"LOOK!" said Edward Oswald Handforth faintly.
"Where?"

That question from Church and McClure was unnecessary. Their famous leader was staring across the Triangle at Big Arch, and there was a look of mingled wonder and amusement in his eyes. Handforth & Co. were sunning themselves on the Ancient House steps, and they were almost the first to be out of doors on this bright June morning. St. Frank's was only just awakening to the activities of a new day.

"My only sainted aunt!" murmured Church.

"He's at it again!" breathed McClure.

The object of their comments was the headmaster. This dignified gentleman had just appeared from Big Arch, and he was now walking sedately into the Triangle itself. But it was extremely difficult for Dr. Inigo Seattlebury to maintain his dignity in his present attire. Draped over his tall, well-set-up figure was a lavender-coloured bath robe; on his feet were bath slippers; on his head a mortar-board. This latter was so utterly incongruous, considering the rest of the

Head's attire, that his whole appearance was comic.

Not that Dr. Seattlebury seemed in the slightest degree aware that he was infradig. Biggleswade, of the Sixth, coming out of East Arch, reading the school magazine, nearly walked into the Head before he noticed him. Biggleswade glanced up, his jaw sagged, and the magazine fluttered to the ground.

"Good-morning, Biggy!" said the Head graciously.

"Goo-good-morning, sir!" stammered the prefect, in a strangled voice.

"Charming morning!" commented the Head.

"Oh, rather, sir!"

"Very charming indeed," added the Head, passing on.

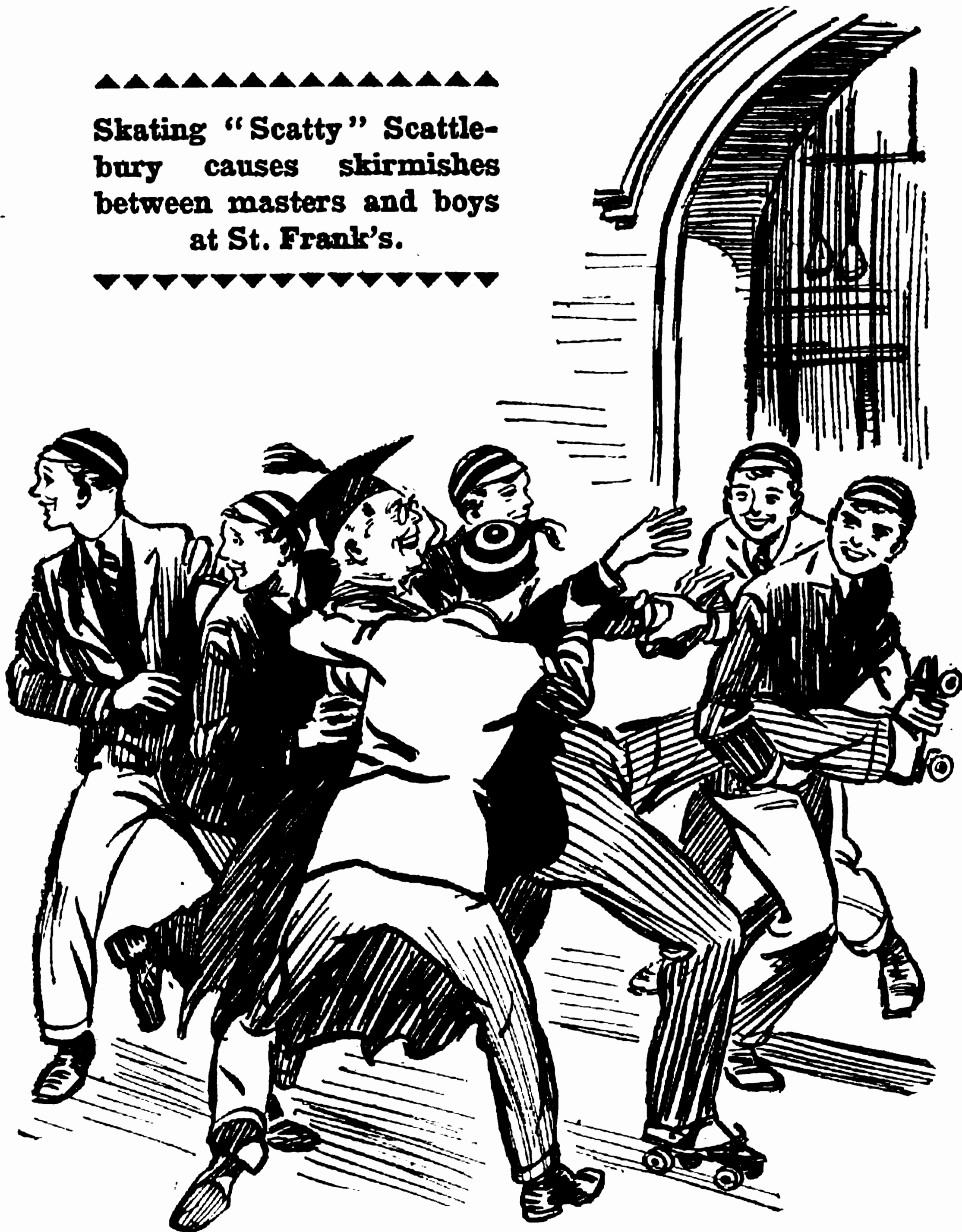
Biggleswade stood stock still. He stared hard. He closed his eyes and opened them again, just to make sure that he was not seeing things. A second later he jumped.

For the headmaster, having reached the fountain pool, calmly proceeded to divest

Sidesplitting Extra-long Complete St. Frank's Yarn!

HEAD! By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

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Skating "Scatty" Scattle-
bury causes skirmishes
between masters and boys
at St. Frank's.
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He seemed quite unconscious of the fact that all sorts of eyes were now turned in his direction. There was Biggleswade; there were Handforth and Church and McClure; there were Corcoran and Boots and Christine in the Modern House doorway; Grayson and Shaw and Drake, of the Fifth—to mention only a few.

An awed hush had descended upon the scene.

The headmaster's actions were so extraordinary that nobody even thought of laughing or speaking. All they could do was to stand and stare. The Head was either unconscious or indifferent of the onlookers. And his next action was so singular that a sort of sighing gasp passed round the Triangle, from House to House.

himself of the lavender bath robe. He stood revealed in a neat bathing costume, a pretty thing of red and blue stripes.

Biggleswade took a deep breath.

"I'm not awake yet!" he breathed feebly. "Funny thing! I can distinctly remember getting up, too!"

He watched fascinatedly as the Head neatly folded his bath robe and placed it on the ground. Then he took off his slippers and placed them on top of the folded robe. His motor-board he did not trouble to remove.

Dr. Scattlebury placed one foot into the wide fountain pool, testing the water. He nodded solemnly, and stepped in altogether. The pool was of quite respectable size, and the water was clear, crystal, and inviting. It was about two feet deep.

The Head, having entered, now proceeded to sit down. He boisterously splashed the water over his shoulders and over his face. In fact, with businesslike energy, he proceeded to bathe.

And still nobody spoke; nobody laughed. The onlookers were altogether too startled.

A jarring note came upon the scene, so to speak, when Mr. Horace Pycraft, the unpopular master of the Fourth Form, emerged noisily from the East House.

Mr. Pycraft paused on the top step, and as he did so he happened to spot the figure in the fountain pool. He jumped almost a foot into the air.

"Good gracious!" he ejaculated. "What—what is that?"

"Only the Head, sir," explained Sinclair of the Sixth. "Just taking his morning dip, sir."

Mr. Pycraft glared.

"I shall be glad, Sinclair, if you will refrain from making such absurd jokes," he said coldly.

And having, as he thought, squashed Guy Sinclair, the Form-master strode across the Triangle to make a closer investigation. He was staggered to find, a moment later, that Sinclair had not been joking at all—that the figure in the fountain pool was, indeed, that of Dr. Inigo Scattlebury.

"Ah, good-morning, Mr. Pycraft," said the Head, glancing up as he recognised the Form-master. "The water is excellent this morning. A trifle cool, but most refreshing."

Mr. Pycraft tried to speak, but his vocal chords had apparently gone on strike. All he could do was to stand there, gazing stupidly at the Head, who continued to splash about in the pool with vigorous enthusiasm.

Dr. Scattlebury stood up, shook himself, then did one or two brisk movements of Swedish drill, after which he reached for his bath robe and slipped it on.

With perfect solemnity he donned his slippers, and walked off across the Triangle—back to Big Arch, on his way to his own house.

And so, solemnly, the Head vanished from sight. As he did so, a long sigh seemed to pass round the school buildings, and fellows found their voices. Mr. Pycraft, with a little yelp of triumph, dashed back into the East House.

"Well, the Head's given us one or two little surprises, but this beats the giddy band!" said Handforth, taking a deep breath. "Ye gods and little fishes! Bathing in the fountain pool! Did you ever see anything like it, you chaps?"

"Never!" said two or three Removites.

"Yet, dear old fellows, there is much to be said for the scheme," observed Vivian Travers. "It wouldn't surprise me in the least to find that the Head has set a fashion. On these hot summer days a bathe in the fountain pool appeals strongly to me."

"Oh, don't be an ass, Travers!" said Nipper. "We can't all bathe in the pool, can we? And what's wrong with the swimming baths? Poor old Scatty! He must have been extra absent-minded this morning!"

"By George! I'll bet you've got it!" said Handforth excitedly. "That's it! The Head was really on his way to the swimming baths, but he's so jolly absent-minded that as soon as he spotted the water in the fountain pool he dived in!"

"That's probably the explanation," said Nipper. "All the same, it's a bit of a facer. What the dickens will the Head do next?"

MR. PYCRAFT, bursting into Mr. Goole's study, came to a halt and stood gasping like a freshly-landed fish. Mr. Barnaby Goole, the Housemaster of the East House, eyed him in amazement.

"Are you ill, Mr. Pycraft?" he asked, with concern.

"The Head!" gasped Mr. Pycraft.

"Indeed! There is something wrong with your head?" asked Mr. Goole. "I am not surprised. In fact, I have long suspected it——"

"The headmaster!" almost shouted Mr. Pycraft. "Bathing, Mr. Goole—bathing in the fountain pool!"

"Nonsense!" said Mr. Goole sharply.

"But I tell you——"

"Are you mad, sir?" asked the Housemaster, pointing to his window. "I can see the fountain pool quite distinctly. There are a few boys in sight——"

"He's gone now," interrupted Mr. Pycraft, trying hard to control himself. "But I tell you, sir, in all solemnity, that the headmaster was bathing in the fountain pool not three minutes ago!"

Mr. Pycraft proceeded to go into details. Mr. Goole changed his views; he was compelled to believe this extraordinary story. And he became grave and troubled.

"Once before, Mr. Pycraft, we telegraphed to Sir John Brent, the chairman of the governors," he said. "Yesterday we wrote him a letter, in conjunction with Mr. Pagett of the Fifth Form. I am glad we did so. It is high time that something was done about Dr. Scattlebury."

Before Mr. Pycraft could make any comment, the door opened again and in came Mr. William Pagett, of the Fifth.

"Gentlemen—gentlemen!" he exclaimed breathlessly. "Have you heard the appalling news?"

"Good heavens! What is the matter now?" asked Mr. Goole, startled.

"The headmaster has been seen bathing in the pool!"

"Upon my word, Mr. Pagett, I wish you wouldn't come dashing in here so alarmingly!" said the Housemaster. "Your news is stale, sir. Mr. Pycraft has already informed me. I thought something dreadful had happened!"

"Don't you call it dreadful for the headmaster of this great school to bathe in the fountain pool?" asked Mr. Pagett. "I think we should send a telegram to Sir John Brent."

"Let us wait until the morning is further advanced," said Mr. Goole. "We sent that letter early yesterday morning, and we expressed it, too. Sir John should have received it last night. I was half-expecting a letter this morning, but——"

"Wait—wait!" ejaculated Mr. Pycraft, who was at the window. "I believe—Yes! Sir John is here now! His car has just driven up to the door of this House!"

The three masters exchanged glances. They were responsible for the coming of Sir John Brent. They had attempted to get some of the other St. Frank's masters to sign that letter, but the other masters had had no sympathy with the project.

A minute later Sir John himself was ushered into Mr. Goole's study, and it was felt, by the three masters, that he could not have arrived at a better moment.

CHAPTER 2.

The Vigilance Committee!

SIR JOHN BRENT might not have come so readily had it not been for the fact that he already knew one or two strange things about the new headmaster. It was only a few days ago that Sir John had arrived at St. Frank's to find the entire school away—taken to see the Derby by Dr. Scattlebury. The Head had justified himself over that remarkable affair, and Sir John had gone back to London charmed by the Head's personality, and satisfied that everything was all right.

"My dear Sir John, I am glad you have come!" said Mr. Goole, as he shook hands with his visitor. "You know Mr. Pagett and Mr. Pycraft, don't you?"

"You are the three gentlemen who sent me that most remarkable letter, are you not?" said Sir John. "I came at the earliest possible moment—realising that no time should be lost."

"And you were right, sir!" said Mr. Pycraft. "Not fifteen minutes ago the headmaster was actually bathing in the fountain pool!"

"Good heavens!"

"I don't wonder that you are startled, Sir John," said Mr. Goole. "A man who can so far forget his dignity, his position, as to bathe in the fountain pool is not—er—responsible for his actions. Looking at it in the kindest light, we can assume that Dr. Scattlebury was on his way to the swimming baths, and that he entered the pool in an abstracted moment."

"That is possible, of course," said Mr. Pagett dubiously. "The headmaster is subject to these extraordinary fits of absent-mindedness. At times, indeed, he is quite irresponsible. The whole position is becoming acute. The school is laughing at the headmaster—and that sort of thing can only lead to disaster."

"I cannot really think that the headmaster was on his way to the swimming baths," said Mr. Pycraft, shaking his head. "Would he appear in public wearing a bath robe and a mortar-board were he in a normal condition of mind? There are many other things, Sir John. Only yesterday Dr. Scattlebury startled the Senior Day Room in the Ancient House by walking in on all fours!"

"All fours!" ejaculated Sir John, aghast.

"On all fours, sir!" said Mr. Pycraft firmly. "When the amazed seniors ventured to question him, he explained that it was a new exercise he had invented. He recommended it as an excellent cure for stiffness of the joints."

"Upon my soul!"

"Something must really be done!" said Mr. Goole. "Ordinarily, we respect Dr. Scattlebury—we like him. He is, indeed, a most likable man. He is a brilliant scholar, and very popular with the boys. In his most irresponsible moods he is always charming and ostensibly sane, yet we feel that something ought to be done."

Sir John listened with growing incredulity. The masters were compelled to admit that the Head was rational; they could only say that he was apt to do unexpected and unusual things. In fact, when Sir John examined the evidence he found it difficult to credit.

"Frankly, gentlemen, I hardly know what to say," he said, at length. "Dr. Scattlebury's record is unimpeachable. He was given his present appointment because of his brilliance, and because of his great understanding of boys. We thought that we could not appoint a better man for the headmastership of St. Frank's."

Mr. Goole coughed.

"Our hope, Sir John, is that you will remain at the school for a day or two," he said. "Thus you will be on the spot;

you will catch the headmaster—er—red-handed, so to speak.”

“I understand what you mean, Mr. Goole, but I do not quite like the phrase,” said Sir John, frowning. “In fact, I am reluctant to take any action whatever. The whole business has a most unpleasant savour.”

“But for the good of the school, Sir John—”

“For the good of the school, I will remain,” interrupted the chairman of the governors. “I will observe the Head closely, and if I find indication of the eccentricities you allege, I shall take immediate action. I think we had better leave it at that, gentlemen.”

When he arrived at the Head's house he was welcomed warmly. Dr. Scattlebury was his own dignified, charming self. It was not even necessary for Sir John to hint that he desired to remain at the school for a day or two; the Head cordially invited him to make the house his own.

Sir John Brent was soon under the spell of this learned, scholarly man, whose personality was singularly magnetic.

Mentally reviewing the statements of the three masters, Sir John was compelled to confess that their tales of the Head's eccentricities were mainly second-hand. In a great school like St. Frank's—as Sir John well knew—it is so easy to set rumours going. He found Dr. Scattlebury so eminently rational, and so enthusiastic about his work, that he conceived an even greater dislike for his present task. He was beginning to feel like a spy.

THAT evening there was an informal Form meeting of the Remove in the Junior Common-room. Nipper, the captain, had called the fellows together to discuss a matter of paramount importance—the first big cricket match of the season. On the following afternoon the St. Frank's Junior XI was going over to the River House School to give battle to Hal Brewster and his merry men.

“We ought to bring it off,” Nipper was saying. “We've put in some keen practice lately, and with hot players like Hussi Kahn, Jerry Dodd, and Gresham, we're on velvet.”

“You haven't forgotten me, I suppose?” asked Handforth coldly.

“Of course not, old man; you're in the team.”

“You didn't mention my name just now—as one of the hot merchants.”

“You're an uncertain quantity, Handy,” replied Nipper gently. “You

may go in and score a century—or you may score a duck.”

“What rot! I'm going to score a century to-morrow,” said Handforth confidently. “Those silly River House bowlers will never get me out!”

“If you go out to bat in your present frame of mind, you'll score a duck as sure as anything,” replied Nipper. “Over confidence is fatal—just as it is fatal to under-estimate the strength and skill of the other side.”

At this point the meeting was rudely interrupted by the arrival of Alf Brent. He came bursting in, and his face was flushed and excited.

“I say, you chaps!” he exclaimed breathlessly. “I've got something important to tell you!”

“Leave it until later,” replied Nipper. “Nothing is more important than cricket.”

“But it is—honest Injun!” urged Brent. “My pater collared me after tea, and we've been having a long jaw.”

“Good gad!” said Archie Glenthorne sympathetically. “How utterly frightful! I mean to say, these paters! It's a frightful habit of theirs to grab a chappie and to take him for a walk. Having got him alone, the old boy proceeds to give him a hefty lecture. And when a chappie's pater happens to be the chairman of the school governors—”

“Rats!” interrupted Brent. “My pater hasn't been lecturing me!”

“No?” exclaimed Archie, in surprise. “Then he must be a dashed unusual sort of pater.”

“He's been doing something worse—he's been questioning me about the Head!” said Brent indignantly. “And there's something else I've got to tell you, too. We've got three snakes in our midst! Snakes in the grass!”

“By George!” said Handforth wrathfully. “Has my minor been at it again? I knew that he kept one snake as a pet, but—”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“You silly chump, I wasn't speaking literally!” said Alf Brent. “I don't mean real snakes!”

Handforth coloured.

“Then why the dickens don't you say what you mean?” he demanded.

“Pycraft, Pagett, and Goole!” said Alf.

Nipper gave him a patient look.

“If you'll be good enough to explain what you mean, Brent, old man, we shall all be awfully obliged,” he said gently. “But this is a cricket meeting, and it's no place for the trotting out of riddles.”



Dr. Scattlebury's feet shot from under him, and he sat down with a thud.

Alf looked round the Common-room, and he was satisfied. All these fellows could be trusted. A contingent of the Fourth was present, since the Fourth would be represented in the Junior XI.

"It's about the Head," said Alf bluntly. "We're all of the same opinion about the Head, aren't we?"

"Good old Scatty!" said Buster Boots, grinning.

"He's been as right as ninepence since this morning," remarked Reggie Pitt, "although that bathe of his in the fountain pool was rather near the limit. One or two stunts like that and he'll be taken away to a quiet, restful home."

"Well, he's too good to lose," said Brent. "The Head's a sport, and we want him here."

"Yes, rather!"

"Hear, hear!"

"And there's a plot afoot to have him removed," said Alf bitterly. "You can imagine my feelings, you chaps. It's my own pater who is playing the part of a spy!"

"What!"

"It's a fact," said Brent gruffly. "Not that I blame him. Pycraft and Pagett and Goole are at the bottom of it."

"But how do you know?"

"Because my pater questioned me pretty closely about the Head," replied Brent. "He pumped me, in fact. Asked me how the Head had been acting—how the Junior School liked him—if he had been doing rummy things, and other questions of the same sort."

"You didn't give the Head away, did you?" asked Nipper.

"Not likely! What do you take me for?" replied Alf. "The Head's a sport, and we don't want to lose him. We've been having high jinks ever since Dr. Scattlebury came; there's never any telling what he'll do next. And that makes life pretty exciting."

"You bet it does!" grinned Lionel Corcoran, the Fourth skipper. "But I can't quite see where Pagett and Pycraft and Goole come in."

The juniors soon understood. It appeared that Sir John had rather incautiously told his son about that letter which

he had received from Messrs Goole, Pagett, and Pycraft; he had also told Alf about the meeting in Mr. Goole's study.

The juniors were soon sharing Alf Brent's indignation.

"I thought your pater was a better man, Brent!" said Handforth accusingly.

"It's not his fault!" retorted Alf quickly. "He came down to inquire what the letter meant; and those three rotters have persuaded him to stop."

Nipper grinned.

"You mustn't be too hard on your pater, old man," he said. "We've got to look at this thing in the right light. We don't want to lose the Head, but nothing can alter the fact that he's a bit—irresponsible. Considering the rummy things he has done, those masters were more or less justified in writing to Sir John. And Sir John is justified in keeping his eye on the Head. Still, it's awkward."

"What can we do?" asked Brent.

"We shall have to put our heads together and think of something," replied Nipper. "The Head's just what the doctor ordered, and we want him at St. Frank's. But if your pater catches him climbing the school flagstaff under the impression that he is Mickey Mouse, he'll be promptly requested to turn in his resignation."

The meeting considered the problem.

"Sir John is watching the Head, so it seems to me that we ought to watch Sir John," remarked Travers, after a while. "What about forming a sort of vigilance committee? Two or three of us can always be on duty, and if anything rummy happens we can take action on the spur of the moment—anything to get the Head out of his predicaments, and to distract Sir John's attention."

"That sounds sensible," agreed Nipper. "But it'll want some doing, you know."

"We can do it," said Reggie Pitt. "The Remove can do anything."

"And so can the Fourth!" said Corcoran promptly.

PERHAPS Sir John Brent's personality had a sobering effect upon Dr. Scattlebury; at all events the Head was his quiet, earnest self throughout the day and during dinner. Sir John was more charmed than ever. In every word, in every gesture, his host was the kindly, cultured man of learning—as Sir John had always believed him to be.

There was not a shred of evidence to support those fantastic stories.

When he retired that night, Sir John felt uncomfortable; he felt mean. Dr. Inigo Scattlebury irresponsible and lacking in a proper sense of dignity? Pshaw!

Absurd! The more Sir John thought of it, the more preposterous it seemed.

The next morning, at breakfast, the Head was every bit as solicitous for his guest's comfort, and deeply concerned by the fact that, owing to the call of his duties, he would be compelled to leave Sir John alone for some hours during the morning.

Breakfast over, Sir John sought an excuse for going for a walk in the bright summer sunshine. His objective was the East House, and there was a grim light in his eyes.

He wanted to have a word or two with Mr. Barnaby Goole.

CHAPTER 3.

The Head Becomes Unbalanced!

"**A**H!" said Sir John.

He paused, and almost crouched. He was not unlike a fox when it sights its prey. His intention was to seek out Mr. Goole, and to tell Mr. Goole what he thought of him. But he had unexpectedly spotted Mr. Horace Pycraft and Mr. William Pagett, who were engaged in earnest and low-voiced conference in the shadows of Big Arch.

Sir John strode towards them with a deepening frown upon his face. Mr. Goole, being a Housemaster, was the most responsible man of the three; but Mr. Pycraft and Mr. Pagett would do to practise on.

"Good-morning, gentlemen!" said Sir John, as he strode into the cool shade of the arch.

"Good-morning, Sir John!" chorused the two Form-masters.

"I am glad of this early opportunity of having a word with you," continued Sir John. "I have to tell you at once that your suspicions are quite groundless."

"Suspicious?" repeated Mr. Pagett. "My dear sir, they are more than suspicions——"

"Not merely groundless, but ridiculous," went on Sir John coldly. "I have felt my position keenly, and I am not a little ashamed of myself. As far as I am concerned, gentlemen, this matter is completely closed."

Mr. Pycraft began to get excited.

"What did I say, Mr. Pagett?" he asked. "Didn't I tell you that Dr. Scattlebury would get Sir John under his influence?"

"Nonsense!" said Sir John Brent. "Dr. Scattlebury is a great scholar—a splendid man—and he has a far greater sense of

his responsibilities than you gentlemen have of yours."

"Sir John!" protested Mr. Pagett.

"I am speaking strongly because I feel strongly," went on the great man. "I have found the headmaster to be a gentleman of singular intelligence and charm. The rumours you have heard about him are obviously false. I shall be very glad if you will not refer to the matter again."

"But—but this is most unfair!" spluttered Mr. Pycraft huskily. "I tell you I saw Dr. Scattlebury myself—with my own eyes—bathing in the fountain pool!"

"I cannot credit it, Mr. Pycraft," said Sir John shortly.

"Are you suggesting, sir, that I invented the story?" demanded Mr. Pycraft hotly. "Ask any of the boys! Scores of them saw Dr. Scattlebury yesterday morning."

Sir John pursed his lips. He thought of the quiet, dignified gentleman he had just left; and he thought of that same quiet, dignified gentleman sitting in the fountain pool. He could not reconcile one with the other.

"No, gentlemen," he said firmly. "I am sorry, but I cannot believe these things. You must have been mistaken, Mr. Pycraft. I shall go to Mr. Goole now, and I shall tell him that I am leaving St. Frank's to-day thoroughly satisfied that all is well."

Sir John Brent walked on with the comfortable feeling that he had squashed two tittle-tattling Form-masters. He reserved the greater part of his censure for Mr. Goole, since Mr. Goole deserved it more than the other two.

"Well!" breathed Mr. Pycraft faintly.

"Most unjust—most unjust!" said Mr. Pagett, with indignation.

But there was no doubt about it—they were both squashed.

CHUBBY HEATH and Juicy Lemon, of the Third, watched Willy Handforth with envious eyes. The three fags were sitting on the Ancient House steps, and Willy was in the act of fixing a gleaming pair of brand-new roller-skates to his shoes.

"Good old Aunt Sophie!" he was saying.

"It's not even my birthday—and yet she sends me these spanking skates!"

"Lucky bargee!" said Chubby. "They're gorgeous!"

"Wish I had a pair half as good," said Juicy Lemon sadly.

Willy stood up, the skates fixed.

"Better go easy!" advised Chubby.

"I'm not sure that roller-skating is allowed in the Triangle. If a prefect spots you——"

"Rats!" interrupted Willy. "If any prefect drops on me for skating out here I'll jolly soon squash him!"

"Oh, draw it mild!"

"So I will!" said Willy. "I had a word with old Wilkey five minutes ago, and he gave me permission to skate in the Triangle as much as I like."

And Willy, with a grim, sailed off. He did so confidently. It wasn't the first time he had been on roller-skates—and he was an expert on ice-skates, anyhow. He sped smoothly down one of the paved paths, watched more enviously than ever by Chubby and Juicy.

Roller-skating wasn't child's play in the Triangle. Most of the ground was gravel-covered, but there were paved paths cutting across from House to House, some striking diagonally across the open space, meeting at the fountain, in the centre. Willy soared along these paths, passing from one to another with remarkable skill.

The Head was so interested that he stood and watched.

He had come unexpectedly upon the scene, and he smiled with quiet amusement as he saw the fag sailing round. Then a change came over Dr. Scattlebury. His quiet amusement altered to boisterous applause. He chuckled and even grinned. His eyes twinkled with the keenest merri-ment.

"Well done, young man—well done!" he said heartily. "Splendid! I am sure I don't know how you keep your balance so perfectly."

Willy, who heard the voice, swung round and approached the Head, doffing his cap.

"Sorry, sir! Didn't know you were here, sir!" he said apologetically.

"My dear boy, I'm very glad I came," said the headmaster. "You have treated me to a fine exhibition of roller-skating. I'm quite envious of you. How long did it take you to learn?"

"Oh, not long, sir," said Willy. "Roller-skating is easy enough. You could do it if you wanted to."

"That's just it," laughed the Head. "I do want to!"

His eyes dancing with fun, he dived a hand into his pocket and produced five shillings.

"How's that for a bribe?" he asked gleefully.

Willy stared.

"I—I don't understand, sir."

"Here's five shillings if you'll lend me your skates for a while," said the Head. "I simply must have a go. I can't resist the temptation! Off with 'em!"

"Oh, rather, sir!" said Willy, controlling himself with difficulty. "I—I thought you were only joking, sir!"

He didn't like taking the five shillings, but the Head pressed the money on him. A minute later Willy had removed the skates, and Dr. Scattlebury calmly sat down in the middle of the path and proceeded to affix the skates to his own feet.

In some extraordinary way, a number of juniors had appeared—as though from nowhere. They were standing about, at a respectful distance, watching. They knew, of course, that the Head was "off" again; and there was likely to be some fun!

"I say, this is awkward, you know," said Church. "If Sir John Brent spots the Head waltzing round the Triangle on roller-skates, there'll be ructions!"

"We shall have to keep Sir John away if he shows himself," said Handforth. "By George! I've been wondering if my minor is at the bottom of this. It's quite likely he egged the Head on!"

"Rats!" grinned McClure. "The Head doesn't need much egging—when he's in one of his carefree moods!"

"Look!" breathed Church.

Dr. Scattlebury was just getting to his feet, and the audience, which was growing rapidly larger, watched with bated breath.

"No, don't help me, my boy!" he chuckled, as Willy tried to steady him. "I'm not such a duffer at this game as you think!"

Willy, thinking of Sir John, glanced round anxiously.

"Don't you think we'd better go somewhere quiet, sir?" he suggested. "Lots of chaps are looking on."

"Let them look," chuckled the Head. "Who cares? Do I? Certainly not!"

"No, sir, of course not, sir."

"Why should I care?" went on the Head. "Roller-skating is an eminently healthy pastime. It is good exercise, and it serves well to teach a boy the correct poise. Apart from all that, I want to see how I can skate round these paths."

"They're a bit tricky, sir," said Willy.

"Nonsense!" laughed Dr. Scattlebury. "If you can do it, so can I! Now, stand clear! Let me have plenty of room. Splendid! We're off!"

He set off, and the juniors stood back, grinning widely. The Head careered along like an expert for a few yards—and then came a cropper. Suddenly his feet shot from under him, and he sat down on the gravel with a thud.

Nipper & Co. ran up, full of concern. But the Head had come to no harm, and he was on his feet in an instant, laughing

boisterously. For once, an upset had not banished his irresponsible mood. In no wise disconcerted by the disaster, Dr. Scattlebury sailed away again, and this time he zoomed along in fine style.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A subdued chuckle arose from many quarters. There was something very comical in the appearance of this ordinarily sedate headmaster flying along on roller-skates with his gown floating in the breeze.

Dr. Scattlebury's idea was to emulate the manoeuvres he had seen Willy excelling; but, somehow, as he neared West Arch, he found that he couldn't swing round as he desired. Whizzing along at full speed, he hurtled straight for West Arch. He tried to swerve, but there was no time. The only thing for it, therefore, was to continue straight on into West Square.

The Head sailed through the arch with a whirring roar.

As luck would have it, Mr. Pagett and Mr. Pycraft were at that moment strolling through in the direction of the Triangle. They were both exceedingly worried about Sir John Brent—they were wondering what Sir John was saying to Mr. Goole. It seemed to them, in fact, that their little "plot" had badly missed fire.

"If we could only show Sir John where he is wrong, the whole position would be different," Mr. Pycraft was saying. "Unfortunately, the Head is now behaving rationally—and we both know, Mr. Pagett, that the Head can be a most charming man."

"He is cunning!" growled Mr. Pagett. "He knows that Sir John is here, and he is being very careful about his movements and—— Good gracious! What on earth——"

"Look out!" yelled Mr. Pycraft, leaping sideways.

They were just about to enter the arch, and at that second a figure came flying towards them at full speed. They could not dodge in time, and the next second there was a tremendous collision.

Mr. Pagett went flying one way, Mr. Pycraft reeled another, and the Head sat down with considerable violence on the gravel.

"Really, gentlemen, you should be more careful," said Dr. Scattlebury, as he sat up with a pained look on his face. "If I have hurt you, I'm sorry; but, at the same time, I must remark that you deserve to be hurt."

The two Form-masters, scrambling up, were too startled to think of their bruises. They could only stare at the figure on the ground. And the same thought leapt



Mr. Pycraft was scandalised to see Dr. Scattlebury making mud pies. "Come along and join us!" invited the Head genially.

into their minds at the same second. Dr. Scattlebury was in one of his irresponsible moods!

"Good heavens!" panted Mr. Pagett. "Is—is it you, sir? May I ask what you are doing, sir?"

"Can't you see?" replied the Head, picking himself up. "I'm roller-skating."

"Really, Dr. Scattlebury——" began Mr. Pycraft, in a shocked voice.

"Accidents will happen, of course," interrupted the Head, his manner becoming genial again. "Awfully sorry, my dear fellows, for bumping into you like that. If you care to watch, I will show you how to skate round these paved paths. It is really great fun."

"Pull yourself together, Dr. Scattlebury!" said Mr. Pycraft earnestly. "Good heavens, sir! What will the boys think?"

"The boys?" said the Head. "What does it matter what they think? Roller-skating is corking fun, Mr. Pycraft! Quite corking! I should advise you to take it up. Now, watch!"

Dr. Scattlebury sailed off again, and Mr. Pagett and Mr. Pycraft, with one horrified glance after him, dashed away to find Sir John Brent.

CHAPTER 4.

Poor Old Pycraft!

MR. BARNABY GOOLE was looking hot, flustered, and uncomfortable.

Sir John Brent, on the other side of the desk, had just concluded a somewhat heated monologue, during the course of which he had pointed out to Mr. Goole the evils of taking notice of rumours and tittle-tattle.

The unfortunate Mr. Goole hadn't heard such plain speaking for years. He was in an unenviable position, for the man opposite him was the chairman of the Board of Governors, and Mr. Goole wasn't able to reply as he would have liked.

"I can only say, Sir John, that you are quite mistaken," he said nervously. "It is not my habit to listen to rumours. Dr. Scattlebury is subject to sudden fits of irresponsibility, and I——"

"I regret, Mr. Goole, that you should have made yourself a party to this—this unfortunate—er—conspiracy," interrupted Sir John coldly. "What your motive is I cannot imagine. Why you should desire to discredit the headmaster is a mystery to me. I am convinced that Dr. Scattlebury is entirely suited——"

The door burst open, and Mr. Pycraft dashed in with Mr. Pagett at his heels. Mr. Goole leapt to his feet.

"Gentlemen!" he ejaculated angrily.

"Sir John!" gasped Mr. Pycraft. "Quick! The headmaster, sir!"

"What on earth——" began Sir John.

"Skating, sir—in the Triangle!"

"Are you mad, Mr. Pycraft?" asked Sir John in amazement. "What do you mean? How can the headmaster be skating in the Triangle? Kindly remember that the month is June."

"Roller-skating, Sir John!" gasped Mr. Pycraft.

"Oh, I see! But——"

"He is in one of his irresponsible spells!" put in Mr. Pagett eagerly. "If you will come now, sir, you will soon be convinced that our complaints are fully justified. Forgive us, Mr. Goole, for entering so rudely, but there is not a moment to be lost."

Mr. Goole nodded, quickly grasping the situation.

"Please do not apologise, Mr. Pagett," he said. "I quite understand. Sir John, I

urge you to hasten! It may be some time before another opportunity arises——"

"But—but this sounds so absolutely ridiculous!" broke in Sir John, turning from one master to the other. "Dr. Scattlebury—roller-skating in the Triangle! Upon my soul, I cannot credit it!"

"Come with us, sir—and you'll soon credit it," said Mr. Pycraft viciously. "Seeing is believing."

"**N**OW'S our chance!" murmured Nipper.

"Eh? What the——"

"Pagett and Pieface have gone to fetch Sir John!" said Nipper crisply. "Isn't it as clear as daylight? In a couple of minutes they'll be back—and if Sir John spots the Head like this it'll be all up!"

"By George, you're right!" said Handforth. "But what the dickens can we do?"

Nipper soon showed him what could be done. This was no time for long-winded discussion. Action was required.



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Nipper and Travers adroitly collared the Head as he was executing a neat movement with one foot in the air. They pulled him up short, and he beamed upon them affably.

"My dear boys, you needn't worry," he said. "I'm getting the hang of—"

"We thought it would be a good idea, sir, to go into the gymnasium," said Nipper cheerfully. "There's a lovely floor in there—and it's a big open space. We were hoping, sir, that you'd show us some examples of figure skating."

"Please do, sir!" urged Travers. "We're most frightfully keen on learning!"

The Head beamed.

"Well, of course, if you put it like that, why not?" he asked gaily. "Certainly! Come along, then! Of course, I'm not sure that— Eh? Oh, I see!"

The juniors were fairly lugging him towards the gym. He could not have stopped himself, even if he had tried. The roller-skates on his feet made it an easy task for the Removites. Within a minute the Head was well inside the gym, and a crowd of other juniors had entered, too. Somebody thoughtfully closed the door.

"I'll tell you what!" panted Handforth, his eyes gleaming. "By George, I've got an idea!"

"Forget it, old man," said Church, in alarm. "You'll only mess things up!"

"Fathead!" said Handforth coldly. "This idea of mine is a stunner!"

He pushed his way through the crowd, and he deftly removed the mortar-board from Dr. Scattlebury's head.

"You don't need this, sir," said Handforth briskly. "And I think your gown is in your way, too. Far better have it off, sir."

"I think perhaps you are right," agreed the Head, allowing Handforth to take the gown. "Splendid! Now, let me see. Figure skating, you say? I'll do my best, but I can't promise anything sensational."

The juniors gathered all round the walls of the gymnasium, eager to watch. They didn't care what kind of a performance the Head gave; they had got him into the gym, safely out of the way, and that was all that mattered for the moment.

Handforth, full of his great idea, dashed to a locker, and Church and McClure were startled to see that he had fished out a pair of rusty old roller-skates. Nobody quite knew to whom they belonged—they had been there for months—but that didn't matter.

Handforth strapped them on quickly.

"Handy," breathed Church, "what the dickens are you doing?"

"Don't ask questions—help me with this gown!" hissed Edward Oswald. "I'm going out!"

He clapped the mortar-board on his head, and his chums assisted him into the gown. A moment later Handforth was sailing across the Triangle to the accompaniment of a few shrill squeaks from the rusty wheels of the old skates. He could not have emerged at a better moment; for Sir John Brent, with

Mr. Pycraft, Mr. Pagett and Mr. Goole in close attendance, had just hurried out of the East House doorway.

"Now, sir!" panted Mr. Pycraft, pointing. "You see?"

Mr. Pycraft could be forgiven for his mistake. That figure in the mortar-board and gown was on the other side of the Triangle. It was only natural that Mr. Pycraft should assume that this figure was the one that he had so recently seen at close quarters.

Sir John Brent stared, and he caught his breath in sharply.

"Amazing!" he murmured, inwardly horrified. "Good heavens! This is indeed a shock!"

He pulled himself together. It was his plain duty to remonstrate with Dr. Scattlebury, and to put an end to this absurdity. Yet, even as Sir John hurried forward, a doubt crept into his mind. That figure in the mortar-board and gown did not look quite right somehow.

Sir John was half-way across the Triangle when the figure turned, and it came sailing towards him, the gown flying. Sir John halted in his tracks, and a startled ejaculation escaped him. For in that second he could see that this figure was not Dr. Inigo Scattlebury, but a mere junior!

"Boy!" thundered Sir John, with mingled anger and relief.

Handforth pulled himself up short, and he hastily dragged the mortar-board from his head.

"I say, sir! Awfully sorry, sir!" he said, with well-assumed agitation. "I—I didn't know—"

"What are you doing, young man?" demanded Sir John in a ferocious voice.

"Doing, sir? Roller-skating, sir."

"I know that!" roared Sir John. "But this gown—this mortar-board! How dare you appear in public—"

"Why, there's nothing wrong in that, is there, sir?" asked Handforth in a surprised tone. "I'm only rehearsing!"

"Only what?"

"Rehearsing, sir," explained Handforth. "No disrespect intended to anybody, sir! You see, I borrowed this mortar-board and gown—"

"All right—all right! That will do!" broke in Sir John hastily. "You needn't explain any further. I can quite understand that you intended no harm, my boy. I am sorry for misunderstanding."

He turned on his heel, and he found himself facing Mr. Barnaby Goole, Mr. William Pagett, and Mr. Horace Pycraft. All three of them were looking startled beyond measure. They were gazing past Sir John—they were gazing at the retreating figure of Edward Oswald Handforth.

"I am astounded!" said Sir John Brent, his voice charged with fury. "Good heavens! What was your idea, gentlemen, in bringing me out here—to make a fool of me?"

Mr. Pagett and Mr. Pycraft were fighting for breath; Mr. Goole was looking at them fiercely.

"There has been some trickery!" panted Mr. Pycraft. "You don't understand, Sir John!"

"I understand that you have made a preposterous blunder!" thundered Sir John.

"No, no!" said Mr. Pycraft hoarsely. "Dr. Scattlebury was out here on roller-skates! You saw him, Mr. Pagett, didn't you?"

"Of course I did!" said the Fifth Form master. "Dr. Scattlebury actually ran into us and knocked us over!"

"I can only say, gentlemen, that your eyesight must be failing!" snapped Sir John. "Merely because a foolish boy skates round the Triangle, wearing a mortar-board and gown, you mistake him for the headmaster!"

"But, Sir John——"

"I am sorry, but I have seen enough!" broke in Sir John angrily. "In future, gentlemen, I hope you will be more careful!"

He turned on his heel and strode off, fuming.

HANDFORTH arrived back in the gymnasium at a crucial moment.

The headmaster, in attempting to execute a particularly tricky stunt on his skates, had come a bad cropper. He had sat down with great violence—and the shock had had the effect of bringing him to himself.

Nipper and Travers and Pitt, and the others, spotted the difference in a second. Dr. Scattlebury sat on the floor, a bewildered look in his eyes; all his boisterous geniality had gone.

"Quick—the skates!" whispered Willy Handforth. "Lend a hand, you chaps!"

Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon were the nearest; they dashed forward with Willy, and in a moment the three fags had removed the skates from Dr. Scattlebury's feet. Other fellows helped the Head into an upright position. Handforth, appearing at the same moment, proffered the mortar-board and gown.

"What—er—does all this mean?" asked the Head, flustered and puzzled. "I cannot quite remember——"

"That's all right, sir," said Nipper soothingly. "It was awfully good of you to give us the demonstration, sir."

"Thanks very much, sir!" chorused the other juniors, taking their cue.

"Oh, of course—of course!" said the Head hastily. "Don't mention it, boys. I'm only too—er—pleased."

He quickly donned his gown and mortar-board, and then, with all his old dignity, he strode out. He was only too glad to escape. He could just vaguely remember the events of the past few minutes, and he knew that he must have been doing something which he should not have been doing.

Privately, the Head was worried about himself. More than once, lately, he had

suddenly "come to himself" like this. He had always tried hard to remember—and had always failed. He hoped now, as he had hoped before, that he had not committed any serious indiscretion. Fortunately, the boys appeared to treat him with all their usual respect.

Agitated and flushed, he walked out of the gymnasium—and Mr. Pycraft and Mr. Pagett, on the other side of the Triangle, fairly goggled at him.

"The headmaster himself!" breathed Mr. Pagett faintly. "Then—then we were right all the time, Mr. Pycraft!"

"Of course we were right!" snapped the Fourth Form master.

"I was beginning to think that we had really made a mistake," murmured Mr. Pagett. "But even now I cannot understand——"

"The boys are responsible for this!" said Mr. Pycraft savagely. "They've been helping the headmaster—and now it's too late! There's no earthly sense in fetching Sir John Brent now. The opportunity has gone."

CHAPTER 5.

Shadowing the Head!

"**A**H, Mr. Pycraft!" said Dr. Scattlebury graciously. "A nice morning, Mr. Pagett!"

The two Form-masters agreed, in strained voices, that it was a nice morning.

"Is something wrong, gentlemen?" asked the Head, looking at them closely. "You appear to be agitated."

"There is nothing wrong with us, sir," replied Mr. Pycraft, with an emphasis on the "us." "As a matter of fact, Mr. Pagett and I were wondering if you were feeling quite well."

"I?" smiled the Head. "Why, of course! Thank you, Mr. Pycraft, I am very well, indeed."

"I hope you enjoyed your skating exercise, sir," said Mr. Pycraft sourly.

"My skating exercise?" repeated Dr. Scattlebury in astonishment. "Will you kindly explain what you mean?"

"I think Mr. Pycraft was attempting to make a joke, sir," said Mr. Pagett hastily. "I am sure he intended no offence."

The Fifth Form master fairly dragged Mr. Pycraft away, and the Head, looking puzzled, walked on.

"Look here, Mr. Pagett——" began Mr. Pycraft.

"Allow me to say, Mr. Pycraft, that you are an absolute idiot!" said Mr. Pagett ferociously.

"Well, really——"

"You know as well as I do that the headmaster, after these periods of irresponsibility, remembers nothing!" snapped the master of the Fifth. "You'll only get yourself into trouble if you let your temper get the better of you like that. Unhappily, we

have failed this time. But another opportunity will arise, and then we must be ready."

"And meanwhile Sir John Brent regards us as a pair of arrant fools!" said Mr. Pycraft bitterly.

"Yes, it is a pity—but it cannot be helped," said Mr. Pagett. "We know, however, that we are in the right. We have only to bide our time."

"Yes, that is true," admitted Mr. Pycraft. "I am sorry, Mr. Pagett, that I acted so rashly. But the whole affair is most unsatisfactory."

They walked off to join Mr. Goole, and to solicit his sympathy. Not that they got any. Mr. Goole was beginning to have grave suspicions on his own account.

It was these two masters who had told him that the Head had been bathing in the pool—but he hadn't seen the incident. It was these two masters who had told him that the Head was roller-skating round the Triangle; but, again, he had seen nothing of it.

So Mr. Goole could hardly be blamed for his suspicions.

"**Y**ES, it was a narrow shave," said Nipper thoughtfully. "Old Scatty was nearly collared that time."

"He would have been if it hadn't been for my idea," said Handforth with satisfaction. "But when Sir John spotted me in that mortar-board and gown, he nearly had a fit. You should have heard the way he went for Pagett and Pycraft!"

"Yes, it was a good wheeze of yours, Handy," said Nipper approvingly. "You practically saved the situation. And it shows us that we shall have to be jolly careful. This Vigilance Committee of ours is a necessity—if we are to keep Old Scatty in the fold."

"We've got to!" said Reggie Pitt. "Old Scatty is too good to lose!"

There was no time for any further discussion then, for the bell was ringing. And later on in the morning the boys had other important matters to attend to. There was the big match against the River House School that afternoon. Nipper's hands were full.

Others, however, remained on the alert; but there was nothing for them to do. Dr. Scattlebury, throughout the morning, was irreproachable in his conduct. He was the ideal headmaster—quiet, dignified and rational.

"I think he's all right for the day now," said Travers, after morning lessons. "In any case, we shall be too busy to give him any attention this afternoon."

"The Eleven will be too busy—but there are others," said Nipper. "That's the snag, my sons. You never know when the Head is 'going off.' He'll have to be watched all the time."

"How can we watch him if we're going over to the River House?" asked Tommy Watson.

"He's going over, too."

"Oh!"

"I heard it from Fenton," said Nipper. "It seems that Dr. Hogge, the headmaster of the River House, has invited Old Scatty over for the afternoon. So I'm hoping that we'll be able to keep him under our eye."

"I say, that's a pretty big honour for the Junior Eleven, isn't it?" asked Handforth. "I mean, the Head going over especially to see the game!"

Nipper grinned.

"I don't think he's going over especially for that, Handy," he said gently. "It's merely a social engagement. The Head hasn't been over to the River House yet, and it's just a coincidence that he should go this afternoon—when we're having our match there. Still, it comes handy for us."

SIR JOHN BRENT was feeling more ashamed of himself than ever by lunch-time. He hated this business of "spying." He wondered why he had ever consented to undertake any such task. For Dr. Scattlebury was so obviously master of himself. Sir John had lost all faith in the stories that had been told to him. The very idea that the Head could be "irresponsible" was fantastically absurd.

"So you are going over to the River House School this afternoon?" asked Sir John towards the end of lunch.

"Yes. I am afraid it is an engagement I cannot very well get out of," replied Dr. Scattlebury, with regret. "Dr. Hogge was very pressing, and I had already accepted the invitation before you arrived."

"Don't worry about me," laughed Sir John. "I've promised to call on Mr. and Mrs. Wilkes this afternoon—and, later, I may run over to the River House to have a look at the match."

"The match?" repeated the Head. "I'm afraid it is only a Junior affair."

"My son is playing in it," said Sir John dryly.

"Oh, I see! That's different," said Dr. Scattlebury, with a chuckle.

He made his excuses soon after lunch was finished; he had promised Dr. Hogge that he would be over fairly early in the afternoon.

"Let my chauffeur drive you over in the limousine," suggested Sir John.

"Thank you all the same, but I would much prefer to walk," replied the Head. "It is really a delightful walk across the meadows. Sir John. I'm afraid I don't get enough exercise; so please don't tempt me with your car."

They laughed, and soon afterwards Dr. Inigo Scattlebury started off.

Meanwhile, the Junior cricketers were ready. They were walking across the fields, too. The River House School was only about ten minutes away by this short cut.

Resplendent in spotless white flannels, armed with cricket-bags, the Removites and the Fourth-Formers set out. They had hardly started before a couple of members of the

"Vigilance Committee" breathlessly arrived. They were Skeets Rossiter—otherwise, the young Viscount Bellton—and Guy Pepys, of the Remove.

"You fellers are just in time, I guess," said Skeets crisply. "The Head's not more than two hundred yards away, and he's walking to the River House, too."

"Good egg!" said Nipper. "We'll get him to go along with us, and we'll be able to keep a watch on him."

"He's only in the next meadow," said Pepys.

The cricketers wasted no time. This was an excellent opportunity. They did not think there was much chance of the Head going off into another of his "spells" to-day, but it was just as well to be on the safe side. One could never tell with Dr. Scattlebury. Sometimes he would go for two or three days and nothing unusual would happen; then he would have three or four "spells" between breakfast and tea-time.

"Good-afternoon, sir!" chorused the Junior cricketers, as they caught up with the Head.

"Ah! Good-afternoon, boys!" said the Head, turning. "Off to the River House School, I presume? Splendid! I wish you success in the match."

"Thanks very much, sir," said Nipper. "Are you going this way, too?"

"Why, yes."

"Will you think it an awful cheek, sir, if we walk with you?"

"On the contrary, I shall be most delighted with your company," beamed Dr. Scattlebury.

They found him most charming and kindly. He talked to them of cricket, and was profoundly interested in the subject. They soon found, in fact, that it was quite unnecessary for them to keep their eye on him. This afternoon the Head was every bit himself.

It was very peaceful and picturesque walking along the towing-path beside the placid river. It was a perfect summer's afternoon, with only a slight breeze to relieve the heat. The constant humming and droning of insects filled the air. It was a lazy, dreamy sort of day; the ideal weather for cricket.

Passing round a clump of leafy willows, the party came within sight of four or five small village children. They were sitting on the river bank, busily engaged in the delightful pastime of making mud pies.

"Pies" of all shapes and sizes were reposing on the bank; there was a competition in progress as to which child could make the biggest and most ornamental pie. Their hands were smothered, and so were their faces and clothing. The children were having a high old time.

The headmaster hardly gave them a glance; but that glance was significant. None of the boys saw it. Dr. Scattlebury's eyes gleamed with sudden eagerness, and then, in a flash, he looked almost cunning. Quite deliberately he brought the subject back to cricket, and passed on as though he had never seen the children at all.

Twenty yards farther on he suddenly halted with a little exclamation of annoyance.

"Upon my word!" he said, with a frown. "I believe I have forgotten something!"

"That's all right, sir," said Nipper. "One of us will run back."

"No, no!" interrupted the Head. "Thank you all the same, but it is something which I must attend to personally. You go on, boys—I'll see you later, when you are playing your match."

He smiled benevolently upon them, nodded, and commenced walking back towards the school. And even Nipper, who was on the alert for any change in the Head's demeanour, was unsuspecting.

"He's all right, you chaps," said the Junior skipper. "Well, we can put on a bit of speed now. Perhaps it's just as well that the Head isn't with us. We can be more free and easy. Come on! Hal Brewster and his crowd will be waiting for us."

"Waiting for us under the absurd impression that they're going to give us a licking this afternoon," grinned Travers. "But we'll soon show them where they're wrong."

"Rather!" agreed Handforth eagerly. "It doesn't matter who wins the toss. If we go in to bat first, we'll put up a gigantic score which the River House chaps can never hope to beat; and if they go in first, we'll get 'em all out for about fifty!"

"Oh, that's the programme, is it?" laughed Nipper. "All right—let's see if we can keep to it. I hate to be pessimistic, but, somehow, I don't think it will pan out quite so nicely. I hope it doesn't, anyhow."

"You hope it doesn't?" asked Handforth, staring.

"Of course," said Nipper. "We want a game of cricket this afternoon—not a one-sided walk-over."

CHAPTER 6.

Willy & Co. Butt In!

MUD pies!

Dr. Inigo Scattlebury, fascinated, stood watching the village children as they continued their innocent pleasure.

There were three little boys, whose ages ranged from six to nine, and two little girls of about six. All of them were muddy and happy.

They had given the Head some rather scared looks at first—half-expecting him, perhaps, to order them away—but as he was so benevolent and kindly, and as he made no attempt to interrupt their game, they were reassured.

"Very good!" said Dr. Scattlebury, at length, as he moved nearer. "Very good indeed! But I think, children, that these designs can be improved upon. In fact, I'm sure they can."

"Coo!" murmured the eldest of the gang.

"He ain't going to send us home, is he, Timmy?" whispered one of the little girls.



The craft capsized, and Dr. Scattlebury and the three fags were thrown into the river.

"Send you home?" repeated the Head, as he sat down on the grass near by. "Good gracious, no! Why should I send you home? Come, come! Let's all be merry together, eh? You don't mind if I help you in the making of these mud castles?"

"They ain't mud castles, mister," said Timmy, with scorn. "They're pies!"

"Oh, yes, of course," chuckled the Head. "How foolish of me! I ought to have known that they were pies! And very good pies, too! But don't you think they are rather—er—crude?"

The children, not understanding the meaning of the word "crude," thought it better, on the whole, to maintain a stolid silence.

"Mud pies, in order to be successful, must be made with imagination," continued the Head happily. "Come along! Let's begin."

And Dr. Scattlebury, with immense enthusiasm, entered into the spirit of the game. The children, after the first few minutes, overcame their awe and lent willing, if dirty, hands.

SEVERAL things were happening at once just then.

For example, Mr. Horace Pycraft was well on the Head's track. And Willy Handforth was making an interesting experiment on the river, assisted, more or less successfully, by Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon.

Mr. Pycraft was very much like a desperate man.

He knew perfectly well that Sir John Brent regarded him as an interfering busybody—and Sir John was the Chairman of the Board of Governors. The very man, in fact, to please. Mr. Goole and Mr. Pagett were in the same plight, of course, but Mr. Pycraft was thinking only of himself. His one aim, this afternoon, was to justify himself in Sir John's eyes. It had become a matter of paramount importance. He did not want Sir John to leave the school under the impression that he—Horace Pycraft—was unfitted for the position he held in the great school.

So Mr. Pycraft was keeping a close eye on Dr. Inigo Scattlebury.

His disappointment was considerable when he saw the Head join forces with the Junior cricketers. Mr. Pycraft dropped further into the background, and even thought of abandoning the project altogether.

However, while thinking of it, he continued walking on, keeping discreetly in the rear. He was glad that he had done so, some minutes later. For, to his consternation, he beheld the headmaster wandering back along the towing-path—alone. Hastily, Mr. Pycraft dodged behind some handy bushes, hoping that the Head would pass him unnoticed. Perhaps it was Mr. Pycraft's guilty conscience at work, for there was really no need for him to dodge behind the bushes at all. He had as much right on the towing-path as anybody else.

Curiously enough, the Head did not pass at all. Mr. Pycraft began to wonder. He recovered his sense of proportion, too, and presently he emerged, feeling somewhat shamefaced. He looked about him. The start he gave was such a violent one that his glasses were nearly jerked from his nose.

"Good heavens!" gurgled Mr. Pycraft.

He had been hoping that the Head would do something eccentric this afternoon, but never for a moment had Mr. Pycraft dreamed of finding Dr. Scattlebury in such a mess as this.

For there was the Head, squatting amongst a lot of village children, busily making mud pies!

Fearing that his eyesight was at fault, Mr. Pycraft moved nearer. His heart was thudding against his ribs. He was hoping that he would escape notice, but he was disappointed. For suddenly the headmaster glanced up, and spotted him.

"Ah! Is that you, Mr. Pycraft?" sang out Dr. Scattlebury.

"Good—good afternoon, sir!" gasped the Fourth Form master.

"Don't stand there, man!" laughed the Head. "Come along and join us! We are having great fun."

"I—er—can quite believe it, sir," said Mr. Pycraft, striving to control himself. "Really, sir, you are extraordinarily muddy."

He had come quite close now, and he was startled to see that the Head was in a truly shocking condition. His hands were smothered with mud, his clothing was daubed from head to foot; there were smears all over his face. But he seemed perfectly happy, and he grinned gleefully at Mr. Pycraft.

"A little mud, my dear fellow, does one no harm," he said. "Why do you not come and join us?"

"Heaven forbid! I—I mean, with pleasure, sir," ejaculated Mr. Pycraft hastily. "Thank you very much! But—but I happen to be in a great hurry. Otherwise, I should be delighted. Yes, indeed! Quite delighted, sir!"

"I have always envied the children, Mr. Pycraft," said the Head, with another

chuckle. "And to-day, when I saw these youngsters so busily engaged in their task, I could not resist the temptation. And let me assure you that the manufacture of mud pies is not half so easy as it looks."

"I'm—I'm not a bit surprised, sir," said Mr. Pycraft, with a gulp.

"It requires patience and skill," said the Head. "Upon my word, Mr. Pycraft, how about a little competition? You and I, eh? We will start at the same moment, and we will see who can make the most pies in a given time, of, say, ten minutes. Excellent! Off with your coat, my dear fellow."

Mr. Pycraft backed away.

"I—I am delighted, sir!" he replied, realising that it would be better to humour the unfortunate man. "But—but if you can excuse me for a few minutes I shall be obliged. I will return almost at once—after I have attended to a little matter which brooks of no delay. Then we will have our—er—pie-making competition."

"Splendid!" beamed the Head. "But I warn you, Mr. Pycraft, that this delay is a serious matter. I am gaining experience all the time."

Mr. Pycraft mumbled something, turned, and fled. His face was flushed, and his eyes were alight with triumph. It had been significant enough to find the Head making mud pies—but for the Head to suggest a pie-making competition between himself and Mr. Pycraft—well, no further evidence was necessary!

His one object, now, was to get hold of Sir John Brent—and to drag Sir John to this spot. It was impossible for the Head to escape, and that fact gave Mr. Pycraft a world of satisfaction. The Head was muddy—he was in a dreadful condition—and even if Sir John only gave him one look, it would be enough.

Luck was with the Fourth Form master.

For as he dashed across the St. Frank's playing-fields, he espied Sir John Brent in the distance, talking with Mr. Beverley Stokes, the Housemaster of the West House.

But when Mr. Pycraft arrived, Barry Stokes had gone and Sir John was alone. Mr. Pycraft fairly pounced upon him.

"Sir John—Sir John!" he gasped breathlessly.

Sir John turned, and he regarded Mr. Pycraft in wonder.

"This is hardly the sort of afternoon, Mr. Pycraft, for this violent exercise," he said. "Man alive, you are streaming with perspiration! Is anything the matter?"

"Yes, Sir John! Something is the matter—something is very much the matter!" panted Mr. Pycraft, his words coming in short rushes. "The headmaster, sir—"

"Oh, indeed!" interrupted Sir John coldly. "I thought I gave you to understand, Mr. Pycraft, that I did not wish to hear any more about the headmaster?"

"But—but this is different, sir!" exclaimed Mr. Pycraft. "The headmaster is making mud pies!"

"What!"

"I knew you would be shocked, sir. I knew —"

"I am not shocked, Mr. Pycraft," interrupted Sir John. "I am merely amazed that you should talk such nonsense."

"Really, sir——"

"The headmaster making mud pies? Rubbish, sir!" said Sir John shortly. "I don't believe it!"

"I didn't expect you to, Sir John," panted Mr. Pycraft, seizing the great man's arm. "But, at least, you will believe it when you see it with your own eyes. Dr. Scattlebury is sitting on the river bank, surrounded by village children, making mud pies! He is daubed with mud from head to foot, and he is prattling like a child! In all fairness, Sir John, you must come with me and see this thing for yourself."

Sir John hesitated, regarding Mr. Pycraft with incredulous disfavour.

"I cannot credit what you have told me, Mr. Pycraft," he said. "You are very excited, sir. I can only assume that some foolish person has been deceiving you. However, if only to convince you of your own preposterous mistake, I will accompany you."

"It is all I ask," said Mr. Pycraft, his eyes glittering with victory.

BUT something else had been happening during Mr. Pycraft's dash for St. Frank's.

Willy Handforth & Co., busy on the river, had also "discovered" the headmaster. And Willy Handforth, at least, was a fellow of brisk action.

The fags were experimenting with Willy's new outboard motor-boat. At least, it was new in so far as the design was concerned. In that respect it was startlingly, astonishingly new. The craft was practically sensational.

In other respects, it was ancient. The boat itself, for example, was merely an old river rowing-boat. But Willy, by ingenious methods, had completely disguised it. Amidships there was a sort of superstructure—an enclosed cabin made of light matchboarding and painted a brilliant red. In this cabin sat Willy himself, steering the craft with something which looked suspiciously like a pair of old motor-cycle handlebars.

But the real novelty was astern.

For here, hanging outboard, and fixed by a number of sturdy struts, was the rear half of an old motor-bike which Willy had picked up cheap some weeks earlier. In fact, he had practically rescued that motor-bike from the dust-heap, and by dint of much tinkering this latest thing in river craft was the result.

That bike had been frankly a wreck; the front wheel had been buckled, and the front



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forks had been smashed. But Willy had not cared. He had no use for the front wheel or for the front forks either.

The back part of the motor-bike was now successfully converted into an outboard motor. The rear wheel, stripped of its tyre and fitted with paddles, was turning vigorously, the little engine doing its work handsomely. With a maximum amount of chugging and spluttering the motor carried on the good work. The boat was getting up a considerable speed—much to the astonishment of Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon, who had repeatedly prophesied that the whole contraption would either sink at the first attempt, or refuse to operate.

Willy, as usual, was right.

The craft was doing wonders. The rudder connected to those handlebars answered perfectly, and Willy, sitting amidships in a comfortable seat, had all the controls at his finger-tips.

"She's all right, you chaps!" he sang out. "Watch us spin round this bend!"

"Go easy!" urged Chubby. "You'll capsize us!"

"Rats! She's sound enough!" laughed Willy. "And what if we do capsize? We can all swim, can't we? Hold on! I'm going to open her right out!"

"Get ready to swim for it!" yelled Juicy.

The motor made more noise than ever as Willy opened the throttle to its widest extent. The stern paddle raced round, and the craft, gathering speed, shot round the bend with really magnificent effect.

"Cave!" ejaculated Chubby Heath in alarm. "Old Pieface!"

"My only sainted aunt!" said Juicy, scared.

They both stared at the lean, scraggy figure of Mr. Horace Pycraft. Extraordinarily enough, the Fourth Form master did not even glance at the river; he was hurrying along the towing-path, dashing for St. Frank's almost at the double.

"That's funny!" said Chubby, staring. "He's in such a giddy stew that he didn't even look at us, in spite of the row we're making!"

"After somebody's blood, I'll bet!" said Juicy, with conviction.

The next moment they were startled by a gasp from Willy; and when they looked at Willy he was pointing to the river bank. Then they gasped, too. For there sat Dr. Inigo Scattlebury, surrounded by children—making mud pies!

"This, my sons," said Willy crisply, "is where we butt into the picture!"

CHAPTER 7.

Dished Again!

CHUBBY and Juicy stared stupidly—which, according to Willy, was the only way they could stare.

"The Head!" mumbled Chubby at length. "Oh, crumbs!"

"Making mud pies!" breathed Juicy feebly. "Dash it, you chaps, I don't believe it!"

Willy had eased the engine down to a murmur, and was steering the queer craft towards the river bank. The children were now watching him with eager interest, and the headmaster's attention had also been attracted.

"It's got to be quick work, you chaps!" said Willy, who had instantly grasped the situation. "Don't you understand, you fat-heads? The Head's 'gone off' again!"

"Oh, corks!" said Chubby feebly.

"You saw Pieface dashing for the school, didn't you?" went on Willy. "Why was he dashing for the school? To fetch Sir John Brent, of course!"

"Oh, corks!" repeated Chubby, even more feebly.

"You know what those Remove chaps are doing," continued Willy. "They're trying to protect the Head—and here's a chance for us to lend a hand. When old Pieface comes back with Sir John, the Head won't be here—and those kids won't squeal on him either!"

"Oh, corks!" said Chubby.

"Can't you say anything but 'Oh, corks!' you silly parrot?" asked Willy tartly. "Pull yourselves together—both of you! I need action! We're going ashore, and we're going to grab the Head and shove him in this boat by force, if necessary! Are you chaps game?"

"It might mean the sack for us——" began Juicy Lemon.

"You're not game!" interrupted Willy coldly. "All right! You'll either lend me a hand, or I'll smash you both to smithereens later! You can choose!"

He wasted no further time in talk, but steered the boat so that it dug its nose into the bank close to the spot where Dr. Scattlebury was sitting with the village children. In a moment Willy was ashore, and Chubby and Juicy quickly followed him.

"This is splendid, boys!" said the Head genially. "So you have come to join us? Now, if you examine these pies you will observe that——"

"Yes, rather, sir!" said Willy. "But we won't bother about the pies now, if you don't mind. What do you think of my new boat?"

"I must confess," said the Head, "that I do not think much of it. That arrangement at the stern is more like a motor-cycle than a boat."

"That's because it is a part of a motor-bike, sir," explained Willy. "But you come aboard and try her. Be a sport, sir—have a go!"

The Head chuckled.

"Well, if you really insist——" he began. "Really, I don't quite see the necessity—— Upon my soul!"

Willy had seized him, and, taking their cue, Chubby and Juicy followed suit. Dr. Scattlebury was literally bundled aboard the

(Continued on page 24.)

LINE UP HERE FOR A GOOD LAUGH, LADS!



HANDFORTH'S Weekly

No. 8. Vol. 1.

EDITORIAL STAFF.

JUNE 13th, 1931.

HUSH! HUSH!

Don't make a noise—
this is **THE EDITOR**
speaking.

Editor-in-Chief E. O. Handforth
Editor E. O. Handforth
Chief Sub-Editor E. O. Handforth
Literary Editor E. O. Handforth
Art Editor E. O. Handforth
Rest of Staff E. O. Handforth

THE REMOVE

By
BUSTER BOOTS.

GREAT news, you chaps! I've just had a letter asking me—in fact, begging me—to accept the editorship of a prominent London newspaper. The letter says that they have read my wonderful WEEKLY, and can see that I am in a class by myself at editing things. (The writer speaks the truth here.—Ed. N.L.) Will I be kind enough to edit England's most famous paper at £1,000 per week?

By George, this is an honour, isn't it? Of course, it's not to be wondered at. Anybody with a grain of sense can see that there are precious few editors like me in the world. But it's rather unusual for a silly newspaper to spot the fact.

Curiously enough, the managing-director of the newspaper writes almost exactly the same as Travers of the Remove. I showed Travers the letter, and he was quite staggered. The writing is, letter for letter, the same. And, what's more, you'd expect a first-class newspaper to have printed letter-paper, wouldn't you? And yet this letter is written on an ordinary sheet of ruled foolscap paper, just like St. Frank's impot paper.

That's one of the things I'll have altered when I'm editor. And, for another thing, I'll cut out a lot of the dry rot they print now, and I'll fill the paper with Tractett Grim stories and cowboys and bronchos and Red Indians—something with a bit of spice in it. All, of course, written by the most famous author in England. That's me!

So next week, when you pick up this WEEKLY, you'll probably find another fellow is editor. I shall be sitting in the editorial chair of a famous newspaper. So I bid you all "Good-bye." E. O. HANDFORTH.

(P.S.—I've just discovered something about Travers of the Remove, and I've dotted him on the boko. I won't tell you what I've discovered—it was merely a silly joke he has played on another fellow. By the way, I've decided to refuse to become editor of that newspaper.—E. O. H.)

(NOTE.—Handforth has taken this contribution from a Fourth-Former only on condition that I say nothing insulting about the Remove. The idea is that a Remove man can say what he likes about the Fourth, but we mustn't retaliate. So I must be careful.—J. B. B.)

THE Remove are all good fellows. All the rest of the school stand round and admire the Remove. We take off our caps and knock their—I mean, our—nappers on the ground when a Remove man comes by. They deserve it.

The most courageous man in the Remove, in our opinion, is Teddy Long. He has been known to face a wild, savage mouse without flinching—or, at any rate, without much flinching. And when the mouse charged straight at him in its blind anger, he stood still and faced the brute bravely.

They are clever, too. We are told that a certain Remove man not only solved the first quadratic equation in Euclid, but actually reduced the answer to pounds, shillings and pence. It seems hardly possible.

If it wasn't for their faces, I think we could say, with perfect truth, that the Remove would be a good-looking Form.

I strongly disagree with the cheeky fag who called Handforth a champion chump. This does not describe Handforth. Does not even half-describe him.

The Remove never "raise Cain" in the class-room. This is always left to Mr. Crowell. He not only raises it, but brings it down as well.

A Remove man is always well-behaved—or, rather, almost always—or, at least, nearly almost always—or, at any rate, practically nearly almost always. During the night-time, when they are all asleep, it is very, very rare for any misbehaviour to take place.

In conclusion, I say again how much I admire the Remove. I think they ought all to be in some museum. In fact, I not only think that—I go so far as to wish it!

HOW TO DODGE WORK!

An article that will interest every boy who has an "impot" to write.



By
**WILLIAM
NAPOLEON
BROWNE**

THIS is a vital subject, my dear brethren. There isn't a single man at St. Frank's who is not interested in this important matter.

I will show you first of all a sad case of misplaced energy which I saw with my own eyes. Not a week since Brother Fullwood of the Remove bagged an impot for throwing paper darts—this being, apparently, one of the regulation amusements in the Form-room.

Brother Fullwood was told to write out after school the whole of the "Charge of the Light Brigade."

I came upon him while this was being done. I was amazed at his onergy. He had started off well.

"Half a league, half a league, Half a league onwards."

He was, as I watched, in the act of writing "Rode the six hundred" for about the tenth time, and his paper was full of passages such as:

"Theirs not to make reply,
Theirs not to reason why,
Theirs but to do and die."

Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon in front of them,
Volley'd and thundered."

"Brother Fullwood," I said, pained, "it grieves me to see you suffering from softness of the brain. Let me show you how to dodge all that hard work."

And I illustrated my point. I started the poem:
"A league and a half onwards."

That's not nearly so much trouble, and means exactly the same thing. Then I went on:
"Theirs not to make reply,
do. do. to reason why,
do. but to do and die;
Into the valley of death,
Rode the 600."

Cannon to the right, left,
and in front of them,
Volley'd and thundered."
Etc., etc.

Here we have the same result obtained, and with only half the labour.

Next week—if I don't find it too much fag—I will tell you how to dodge work in the Form-room.

(You won't. E. O. H.)

OUR AGONY COLUMNS

WILL THE ROTTER who sneaked my sock in the bedroom this morning kindly darn the hole in the toe before returning same? Thanks!
OWEN MAJOR. Remove.

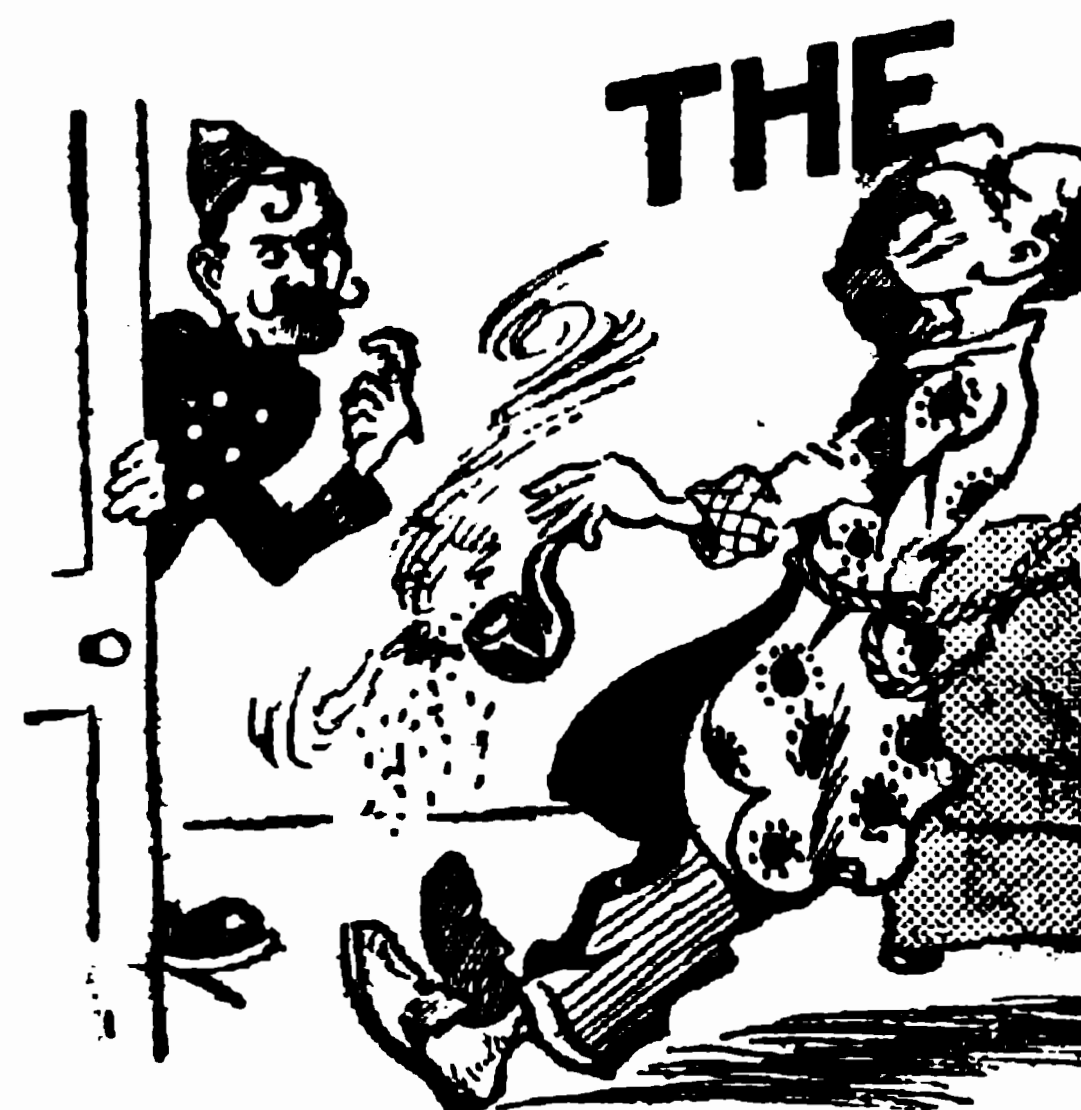
IF WALTER DENNY (Modern House), will have the goodness to call upon W.

ARMSTRONG (East House) at his earliest convenience, the said W. Armstrong will have much pleasure in thrashing Walter Denny within an inch of his life.

MAC.—Come back, dearest, to your devoted Edward Oswald. All shall be forgiven and forgotten if you'll return.

MISS VERA WILKES desires to acknowledge receipt of these anonymous birthday gifts—viz., i.e., to wit; that is, five bunches of flowers, two bunches of parsnips, one bot. scent (lavender), one postcard with picture of two robins and a water-lily, one large box partially full of chocs, and a dog-eared copy of "Green's History."

Long Complete Crime



CHAPTER 1.

At the Yard!

INSPECTOR NOSEWORTHY, a great white chief of Scotland Yard, came into his study in the morning. His optic rested feverishly on Sergeant Snookum, who was his fag, so to speak.

"What-ho! What-ho!" said the Insp., putting his cap on the cap-stand and gloves on the glove-rack. "The good old criminals are breaking out again, and so forth."

"Absolutely!" agreed Sergeant Snookum. "I see by the bally paper, sir, that the Earl of Bond Street house was burgled last night."

"Rifled the plate chest; soaked the butler on the bean with a yard of lead pipe, and kicked the dog in the lumbar tunnel," nodded Noseworthy.

mean to say, it's a bit thick—what? "This problem is too big for us to tackle, laddie," put in the sergeant. "We'd better buzz round and get Sheerluck Holmz, the famous detective."

"A good wheeze, sergeant. Right on the bally target, by Jove! Let's go!"

CHAPTER 2.

Sheerluck Holmz at Home!

"**C**OME in, gentlemen!" called out Sheerluck H., as the inspector and his companion knocked at his door in Queen's Street.

"After you, sergeant," said the inspector, holding open the door politely.

The two policemen beelined in, blushing modestly, and what not.

"You've called to see me about the Broadstairs case. I think," smiled Sheerluck.

The cops gasped at each other.

Thriller by a Silly Ass!

CRIMSON LOBSTER

By
ARCHIE GLENTHORNE

"Wonderful!" stuttered the old inspector. "But you guessed wrong, old dear! We've called about the robbery at the Earl of Bond Street's house."

"Exactly!" smiled Holmz. "That was what I meant. I usually call his house 'Broadstairs.' It's a nickname—you know there are several broad stairs in front of it. Ha, ha! I mean to say—well, what about it?"

"It's been burgled!" shrieked the Snookum laddie.

Holmz fainted.

CHAPTER 3.

The Mystery Solved!

ABSO-BALLY-LUTELY! Fainted clean away.

When they brought him to—a bucket of water did the trick—he jumped up and said:

"Say no more, laddie! I know who burgled the bally bungalow. It was the Crimson Lobster!"

At the mention of this dread name, poor old Noseworthy's features went as white as the driven rose. Sergeant Snookum groaned.

"How do you know?" asked that sportsman.

"This morning I received this bit of unpleasantness," answered Sheerluck, throwing a letter on the table. "After I had read it, I thought for about an hour, and came to the conclusion that it was written by the said Carmine Crustacean—dash him!"

The letter ran:

"Dear old Defective,—It was me what burgled the earl's house. And what's more, I warn you I'm going to the Duke of Hoxton's party to-night, and I'm going to pinch the silver plate and the wineglasses. So put that in your pipe and chew on it!"

"THE CRIMSON LOBSTER."

(Continued in next column.)

CHAPTER 4.

The Duke's Party!

HOW are we to capture this terrible criminal?" whispered the inspector.

"We shall go to the party and arrest him, don't you know," smiled Holmz.

"What-ho! But he'll be disguised."

"Leave that to me!" smiled Holmz.

Twenty-five and a half minutes later, all three arrived at Hoxton House. They edged into the house and mingled with the lads of the village.

"How the deuce can you pick out the Crimson Lobster from all this crowd?" groaned Nosey.

Holmz smiled.

CHAPTER 5.

The Crimson Lobster!

THE great defective pointed a dramatic finger at a sportsman in full bloom who was passing by.

"Arrest that cove!" he boomed. "Allow me to introduce you to the Crimson Lobster!"

The dastardly criminal struggled, but Sergeant Snookum led him off to a spot of solitary confinement and so forth in the deepest dungeon 'neath the castle moat.

Inspector Noseworthy turned to the detec.

"How did you spot him?" he gasped.

"Simple, old dear—simple!" laughed the wonderful one.

"All the other guests are gentlemen. All a cove had to do was to pick out the sportsman who wasn't a gent."

"But how did you know he wasn't one of the nob? He looked like a millionaire."

"He was wearing a white tie with a dinner-jacket," hissed Holmz. "No gentleman would do a thing like that!"

CHAPTER 6.

The Bad Lad's Reward!

THE Crimson Lobster was brought up before the beak and sentenced to seven days for burglary, and ten years for wearing a white tie with a dinner-jacket!

THE END.

READY WIT FROM REGGIE PITT

(That silly lubber Pitt has promised to write a column of rot each week under this title. I'm going to let him—until he says anything about me. Then he gets the sack. E. O. H.)

TOMMY WATSON seems very unlucky at cricket. While fielding in a practice match he stopped a red-hot shot with his nose. And quite right, too. He was fielding at "point."

However, he seemed aggrieved about it, and he changed over to short leg. He then stopped a real beauty with his shin.

He refused to stay at short leg, and changed to long off. This was better. He was, in fact, so long off that he didn't



come on again until the innings was over.

I had to pause here to write a letter to my father. The letter was rather short. So am I, or I shouldn't have written it.

LATEST BULLETIN.—Mr. Crowell was in a critical condition this morning—especially when dealing with my construc.

Last night I woke up with a strange feeling that my watch had gone. Fortunately, it hadn't. But it was going.

That concludes the evening's programme from this station. We are now going over to the Modern House to see the animals feeding. Good-night, everybody!

HANDS OFF THE HEAD!

(Continued from page 20.)

alleged motor-boat, and he was planked into a seat.

"Keep him there, you chaps!" hissed Willy. "Shan't be a tick!"

He turned to the village children, who had been watching the proceedings with wide-open eyes. In fact, they had had more surprises this afternoon than they could ever remember.

"Can you kids hold your tongues?" asked Willy abruptly.

"What do you mean?" asked one of the boys.

"Here's a bob each for you—a whole shilling each!" said Willy, distributing the largesse. "Now, look here. Stay here, and in a few minutes two or three gentlemen will come along. If they ask you any questions, don't answer."

"What are we to say, then, please?" asked Timmy.

"Say nothing—nothing at all!" replied Willy. "Don't be frightened—they can't hurt you. If they ask you about the gentleman who was just helping you to make mud pies, just stare at them. Savvy? Don't answer anything at all. You ought to be able to do that easily enough."

"All right," said Timmy. "We'll do it."

"Good man!" said Willy. "But if you don't do it—if you answer a single question—I shall get to know. And then I'll come along and take this money away from you, because you won't have earned it." Another idea struck him. "And look here," he added, "if I find that you've obeyed orders, and held your tongues, I'll give you another sixpence each."

"Coo!" said Timmy, dazzled by the prospect of so much wealth.

Willy did not wait for any discussion. He turned to the boat, leapt aboard, and opened up the engine. The craft swerved out into the river, swung round the bend, and was soon lost to view.

"JUST beyond these trees, Sir John!" said Mr. Pycraft breathlessly.

Sir John Brent grunted.

"I hope, Mr. Pycraft, that you will justify yourself," he said. "I detest hurrying like this on such a warm afternoon. What you tell me about the headmaster is quite incredible. I shall not believe it until I see—"

"Goo-good gracious!" gasped Mr. Pycraft abruptly. "But this is astounding, sir! Dr. Scattlebury has gone!"

Sir John Brent's brow grew black.

"Gone?" he repeated. "Was Dr. Scattlebury ever here?"

They had turned a bend, and Mr. Pycraft was staring at the group of children who were sitting on the river bank, entirely surrounded by mud pies. It was a shock for Mr. Pycraft. He had left the Head here, hobnobbing with these kids, and now the

Head had apparently vanished into thin air!

"Wait, Sir John—wait!" urged Mr. Pycraft huskily. "These children will be able to tell us what has become of the headmaster! Good heavens, you don't doubt my word, sir?"

Sir John grunted. He was beginning to doubt Mr. Pycraft's sanity, but he did not say so.

The two men approached the children, and they stood looking down upon them curiously. Mr. Pycraft, in fact, was frantic with alarm and excitement.

"Tell me, children, where is the gentleman who was with you a few minutes ago?" he asked eagerly.

"Please, sir, we ain't doing no harm," said Timmy.

"Only making mud pies, sir!" chorused the others defensively.

"Of course—of course," said Mr. Pycraft. "You are at liberty to make as many mud pies as you wish. But what has become of the gentleman who was with you?"

"Gentleman, sir?" asked Timmy innocently. "Which gentleman?"

Timmy was a strategist. He had already told his companions to say nothing—to leave the talking to him. They had a shilling each, with a prospect of another sixpence each to come. This was a time for caution. Timmy managed to look reasonably bewildered.

"Come, come!" said Mr. Pycraft desperately. "You know which gentleman I mean. He was making mud pies with you."

"A gent—making mud pies, sir?" asked Timmy, looking amazed.

"You know perfectly well that he was making mud pies!" shouted Mr. Pycraft, growing purple in the face with alarm and irritation. "You young rascals! Why can't you tell me the truth? Where has that gentleman gone?"

Timmy cleverly evaded the question.

"We ain't trespassing, sir," he piped tearfully.

"I know you're not trespassing!" hooted Mr. Pycraft, fairly dancing. "Did I say you were trespassing?"

"Boo-hoo-hoo!" chorused the other children, breaking into sobs.

Sir John Brent snapped his fingers.

"Really, Mr. Pycraft, this nonsense has gone far enough!" he said sharply. "I see no reason why you should bully and browbeat these harmless children."

"Bully them, sir?" gasped Mr. Pycraft, with a jump. "Browbeat them? Good heavens, you don't think—"

"You have been shouting at them in a most unwarrantable manner," continued Sir John curtly. "It is quite clear to me that they know nothing of any—er—gentleman. They have been harmlessly and innocently amusing themselves."

Mr. Pycraft was shaking with nervousness now.

"Wait, sir—wait!" he urged. "Listen to me, you young scamp!" he continued, turn-

ing ferociously upon Timmy. "Don't dare to evade my questions. Where is the gentleman who was here, making mud pies with you?"

Timmy had no reason to be afraid of Mr. Pycraft.

"Garn!" he retorted, with spirit. "Come off it, sir! You don't suppose a gent would sit here making mud pies with us, do you? Gents don't do that sort of thing."

"But I saw him here—on this very spot!" shrieked Mr. Pycraft.

"Well, he ain't here now, is he, sir?" asked Timmy, looking round. "What sort of gent was he, sir? P'r'aps you was mistook about it, sir?"

"I tell you——" began Mr. Pycraft.

"Come, sir!" interrupted Sir John, seizing the Form-master's arm. "There has been enough of this. I refuse to stay here a moment longer."

He walked away, fairly dragging Mr. Pycraft with him.

"Really, sir, you don't understand!" panted Mr. Pycraft. "These children are deliberately evading my questions——"

"Nonsense!" interrupted Sir John. "Why should they evade your questions? What possible object could they have? No, sir! It is perfectly clear to me that you have been labouring under a delusion. That is the kindest way in which I can look at this extraordinary—er—lapse."

"Lapse?" bleated Mr. Pycraft, horrified.

"In your efforts to prove that Dr. Scattlebury is unfitted for his post, you are resorting to very strange methods, Mr. Pycraft," said Sir John Brent grimly. "I am afraid I shall be compelled to think very seriously over the whole affair—yes, very seriously indeed!"

And with that sinister hint, the chairman of the board of governors strode off, leaving Mr. Horace Pycraft so weak at the knees that he could scarcely stand.

It was really rough luck on Mr. Pycraft, for he had actually seen the headmaster, he had talked with the headmaster, and now the headmaster had mysteriously vanished! And Sir John Brent not only thought that he—Mr. Pycraft—was mad, but he was even hinting at taking action; and what could that mean but a request for Mr. Pycraft's resignation?

Mr. Pycraft's brain was reeling. First the fountain pool, then the roller-skates, now the mud pies! He had seen clearly, and yet there was no other evidence. He even began to wonder if he was suffering from hallucinations.

Taking all in all, it was not Mr. Horace Pycraft's lucky day.

CHAPTER 8.

A Ducking for Four!

WILLY HANDFORTH was feeling pleased with himself.

By his "shock tactics," he had succeeded in getting Dr. Scattlebury away from the danger zone. And Willy was

satisfied that those children would obey orders. Mr. Pycraft was not likely to get much information out of them.

Meanwhile, the novel motor-boat was chugging valiantly along the river towards its destination.

Dr. Scattlebury was sitting in the "cock-pit" with Willy, immensely interested in all he saw. Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon had been obliged to stow themselves elsewhere. Chubby was somewhere astern, half-suffocated by the fumes from the ancient motor-cycle engine. Juicy was perched in the bows, and he had lost all relish for the voyage. He was eyeing Dr. Scattlebury with considerable uneasiness.

"Doesn't go so badly, sir, does she?" asked Willy cheerfully as they swung triumphantly round a bend.

"I must confess," said the Head, "that I am astonished. The boat appears to be making quite good progress."

"My own invention, sir," said Willy proudly. "I call her Miss England V."

"Indeed! Have there been four other models, then?"

"No, sir," explained Willy calmly. "But Kaye Don has been doing pretty well with Miss England II., and I'm giving him a chance to have two or three other models. We don't want any confusion, sir."

"Good gracious, no!" said the Head with a burst of laughter. "Upon my word, that's good! Yet I don't really think, young 'un, that there is much fear of confusing this remarkable craft with Mr. Kaye Don's famous speed boat."

"Well, it's best to be on the safe side, sir," said Willy cheerfully.

The Head was immensely tickled. He was also immensely dirty. His hands were smothered with dried, caked mud—not that he seemed to notice this. He was far too interested in the control of Miss England V. Willy, at the handlebars, seemed to do exactly as he liked. The boat steered well, and she answered readily to the throttle.

"I'll tell you what!" said the Head suddenly. "I'll give you ten shillings if you'll let me take the driving-seat."

"It's yours, sir," said Willy promptly.

He would have relinquished the driving-seat in any case, but he saw no reason why he should refuse the ten shillings. He had already expended five on the Head's behalf, and a further half-crown was mortgaged. If he came out of this affair with half-a-crown profit, so much the better.

Besides, the River House School was already looming into view, and Willy was thinking of the general effect. There were crowds of St. Frank's fellows within sight of the river, and there would probably be some good fun.

"She's easy enough to control, sir," said Willy as he throttled the engine down and got out of the seat. "You just sit here. The steering is——"

"Leave it to me!" interrupted Dr. Scattlebury gleefully.

He got into the seat, grasped the handle-bars and opened the throttle. He was enjoying himself tremendously. The engine spluttered and roared in answer to the Head's controlling hand. The paddle churned feverishly, and the craft surged forward with a surprising burst of speed.

"I say, look out!" exclaimed Juicy, from the bows.

"Mind the curve, sir," said Willy.

"The curve?" repeated the Head, glancing up. "Ah, of course! I don't think we shall have much difficulty in getting round the curve. Upon my word, this boat is positively wonderful!"

The various buildings of the River House School were already in full sight; and the landing-stage for the school was only just round that curve. The playing-fields, too, could be seen, with little groups of white-clothed figures vividly contrasted to the green turf in the sunshine.

It was a fair picture.

Chug-chug-chug!

Miss England V approached the curve valiantly. The St. Frank's and River House cricketers were becoming aware of something unusual from the river, and all eyes were turned in that direction. Motor craft were not usual on the Stowe—and a boat of this particular type was a complete novelty. Fellows were soon running down towards the river bank to make closer investigations.

They could not have arrived at a more interesting moment.

For Miss England V, going at full speed, was not taking the curve at all well. The Head, in fact, was so thrilled by the burst of speed that he completely forgot to steer.

"Easy, sir!" urged Willy. "We shall be in the bank unless you fetch her round!"

"Good gracious, yes!" said the Head, glancing up. "To the left, eh? Splendid!"

He jerked the steering apparatus violently. Perhaps Miss England V was not correctly balanced; perhaps she would only negotiate curves by gentle persuasion. At all events, she fairly took the bit in her teeth now, as it were, and lurched round abruptly.

"Look out!" yelled Juicy in alarm.

Water was surging up over the bows; the boat veered over, and farther over. And then, before Willy could make a grab at the steering bars, the whole craft capsized, lurching over on her starboard beam.

There was a spluttering hiss as the engine went under water. The next second there was nothing but a smother of foam on the surface. Boat and occupants had plunged under.

Willy bobbed up like a cork, and, swimming strongly, he looked about him. He knew there was no occasion for real worry, for he could feel the river bed under his feet. The depth was only four or five feet here, near the bank. Chubby Heath and Juick Lemon came up gasping; and they were followed, a second later, by Dr. Inigo Scattlebury.

"What—what has happened?" gasped the Head in bewilderment.

Willy detected the difference in a flash. This was not the same man. It was not the care-free, irresponsible man who had recently been steering the motor-boat. He was Dr. Scattlebury himself, the dignified headmaster. The sudden ducking had done the trick.

"I say! Awfully sorry, sir!" ejaculated Willy earnestly.

He felt that it was up to him to take the blame. Such a course would be both diplomatic and profitable.

With a few strokes, Willy reached the river bank—the bank opposite the River House School grounds, where crowds of boys were collecting.

Dr. Scattlebury was assisted ashore, and he and the three fags were soon standing on the grass, with water running down in streams from their persons.

That ducking had had one excellent effect. All the mud had been washed from the headmaster, and there was nothing whatever to indicate that he had recently been engaged in the pastime of manufacturing mud pies.

"Good heavens!" said the Head breathlessly. "What—what is the meaning of this? I do not seem to remember——"

He broke off, clearly at a loss.

"You were having a ride in my motor-boat, sir," explained Willy. "She didn't quite take the curve, and something made her capsize. But it's all right, sir—we're all safe."

"I am very glad of that," said Dr. Scattlebury, with a deep breath of relief.

Willy looked at him closely. Apparently the Head remembered nothing of the recent events; he did not know that he, himself, had capsized the craft. He took it for granted that he had been a passenger. Neither did he remember anything of the mud pie incidents.

There were vague impressions in his mind, but he found it difficult to grasp them. He came to the conclusion that he must have accepted a ride in Willy's boat—and he was rather relieved. This time he had not done anything sensationally outrageous!

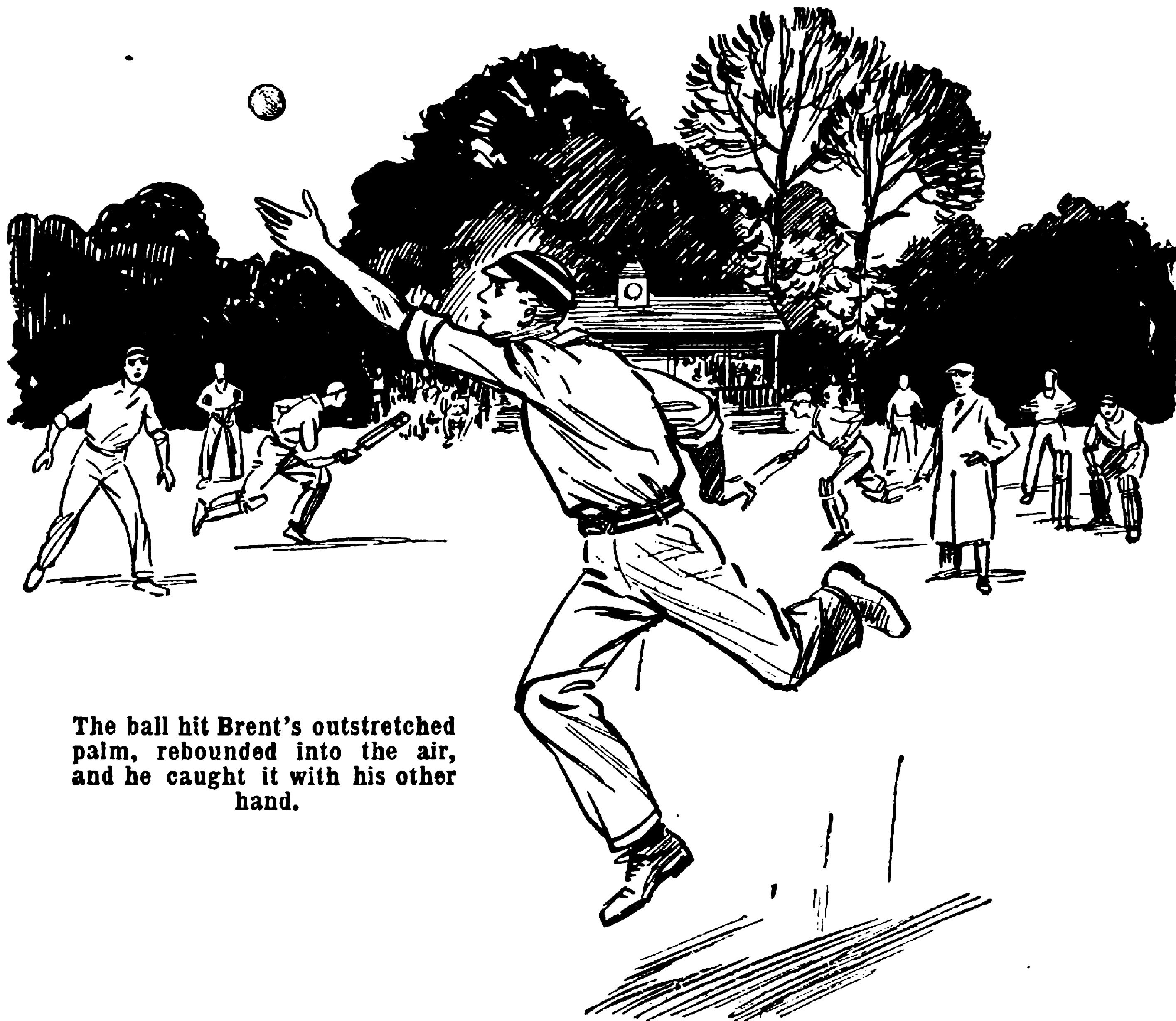
"This—this is a most unfortunate accident," he said hesitatingly. "I am drenched to the skin—and so are you boys. We must do something about it."

"It's all right, sir—some of those River House chaps are bringing a boat over," said Willy, nodding across the river. "We'll have you in the school within a couple of minutes—and I expect Dr. Hogge will give you a temporary change of clothes. It doesn't matter about us. We shan't come to any harm on a warm afternoon like this."

"I am afraid you must have been very careless, my boy," said the Head sternly.

Chubby and Juicy stared, but Willy accepted the rebuke meekly.

"I'm really very sorry, sir," he said in a contrite tone. "I do hope you'll overlook



The ball hit Brent's outstretched palm, rebounded into the air, and he caught it with his other hand.

it, sir! But it wasn't my fault—or the fault of my chums, either."

"I should think it wasn't, sir," said Chubby Heath warmly. "Why, it was you yourself—"

"Perhaps the balance was a bit upset, sir, as we tried to get round the curve," said Willy hastily, as he gave Chubby a hard look. "Anyhow, what does it matter, sir? We capsized, and we had a ducking. But nobody's hurt, and I don't think it was my fault. Accidents will happen, sir."

The Head nodded.

"Perhaps we had better say no more about it," he replied kindly. "The fault was no doubt mine—for being in your boat at all. I expect I was too heavy."

A boat was now approaching—rowed by Hal Brewster and Georgie Glynn, of the River House Fourth.

"Good work!" said Willy briskly, as he grabbed the boat and held it close against the bank. "Decent of you chaps to come across so quickly. Here you are, sir—hop in!"

"What happened?" asked Brewster, staring. "Good-afternoon, sir! We only caught a glimpse of you—"

"Don't bother about asking questions," interrupted Willy. "We want you to get us

over the river as quickly as possible. Dr. Scattlebury needs a change of things."

"Oh, rather!" said Hal Brewster, nodding.

He had observed Willy's quick wink, and he said no more. Brewster, of course, knew all about Dr. Scattlebury's "funny little ways," for the St. Frank's fellows had been giving their River House rivals the tip on that subject.

The boat was quickly rowed across the river, and Dr. Scattlebury was escorted across the playing-fields to the school buildings. Willy was well to the fore.

Dr. Molyneux Hogge, the headmaster of the River House, met the little party outside the door of his own house. He had quickly become aware that something unusual had happened, and now he was full of deep concern.

"It's quite all right, Dr. Hogge—we have come to no harm," said Dr. Scattlebury, smiling. "Merely a little mishap in the river. These boys were kind enough to give me a lift in their boat, and it unfortunately capsized."

Dr. Hogge regarded the fags half-angrily. "I will warrant they were fooling about with the boat," he said sharply. "I am

always warning boys not to change places in rowing-boats! It is a most foolish practice.

I am intensely sorry, sir, that you should have been subjected to this—er—indignity.”

He bustled indoors with his guest, and, escorting him upstairs, led him straight to a bath-room.

“How did it happen?” he asked. “You will find plenty of hot water here, Dr. Scattlebury, and I will bring fresh towels in a moment.”

“I am afraid I am causing you a lot of bother,” said the Head uncomfortably. “Don’t blame those boys, Dr. Hogge. To tell you the truth, I think it was my weight in the boat which caused it to capsize. The less said about the incident, the better—and I hope you will allow it to drop.”

“Yes, of course, if you so wish it,” said Dr. Hogge. “I hope you will accept the hospitality of my wardrobe, Dr. Scattlebury. We are very much of a size, and until you obtain some of your own clothing I shall be most happy to accommodate you.”

“You are very kind,” said Dr. Scattlebury. “Thank you, Dr. Hogge—thank you very much indeed.”

And Dr. Hogge left him—without the slightest knowledge of what had really happened.

CHAPTER 9.

Saints v. River House!

“WE’RE waiting, Willy,” said Nipper gently.

The three fags were surrounded by a crowd of St. Frank’s Removites, all of whom were looking eager and excited.

“And we’re not inclined to wait much longer!” put in Edward Oswald Handforth. “What the dickens have you kids been up to? Out with it!”

“I am innocent!” said Willy, with a sob.

“You silly young ass!” roared his brother.

“Cut the piffle! The Head was walking with us, and then he went back to St. Frank’s. The next we know is that he dived to the bottom of the river with you kids!”

“It was just as well,” said Willy. “He needed a good wash.”

“What do you mean, you young fathead?”

“Mud pie-making is a dirty sort of business, at the best,” explained Willy.

“Mud pie-making!” gasped Handforth.

“Are you telling us, you dotty young chump, that the Head was making mud pies?”

“That’s how we found him,” said Willy, nodding.

“Ha, ha, ha!”

Nipper and the other Removites yelled with laughter as Willy explained the full circumstances. They complimented him highly, too, when they learned how he had rescued the Head from Mr. Pycraft’s clutches.

“You did pretty well,” admitted Handforth grudgingly. “Still, there was no need for you to chuck him in the river like that.”

“My poor ass,” said Willy sympathetically. “Haven’t I told you that the Head himself was steering the boat? He capsized her him-

self—but I thought it good policy on the whole, to let him think that we’d done it.”

“You’re a brainy kid, Willy,” said Nipper approvingly. “Good work! Everything’s turned out all right, as it happens—and there’s not much chance of the Head ‘going off’ again to-day. At least, I hope not. We want to enjoy this cricket match against the River House chaps.”

Willy nodded.

“You can get on with your cricket, but I’ve got other business to attend to,” he said crisply. “There’s my boat to get up from the river—and those village kids to see, too. I promised them another tanner each. And that reminds me. What about the business side of this affair?”

“The which side?” asked Handforth.

“We’ve been doing you Remove chaps a good turn,” explained Willy. “It’s cost me five bob already, and I’m due to whack out another half-crown. The Head offered to give me ten bob, but I couldn’t very well ask him for it after that ducking.”

“You’re not expecting to get any money out of me, I suppose?” asked Handforth, staring.

“Better make it ten bob, Ted,” said Willy, holding out a hand.

“Ten bob be blowed!” roared his major. “You won’t get a penny—”

“Cheese it, Handy!” grinned Nipper. “These fags deserve it—and more, too. Whack out and look big.”

“Why, you silly ass—”

“Half-a-crown will be enough from you,” went on Nipper. “Here’s my half-crown—and there are plenty of other chaps who’ll oblige in the same way. I think we ought to make it a quid altogether. These fags deserve a reward for what they’ve done.”

Willy & Co. grinned happily as the Removites cheerfully whacked out a number of half-crowns.

“Well, it’s good to find that some people appreciate us,” said Willy calmly. “Come on, you chaps! We’ve got to get Miss England V out of the river—and it’ll take us all the afternoon to clean her up and get the engine working again.”

AND then, for the St. Frank’s Junior XI, came the more serious business of cricket.

They were fairly satisfied that Dr. Inigo Scattlebury was safe for the afternoon. He was Dr. Hogge’s guest, and there wasn’t much likelihood that he would have another of his spells yet awhile. It was good to know that Mr. Pycraft had been “dished” again; but the fellows were beginning to realise that this pace was too hot. Sooner or later Dr. Scattlebury would give himself away.

“Well, what about this game?” asked Hal Brewster amiably. “Robinson has just come from indoors, and he says that your precious Head is having a bath. Isn’t there some way in which we can keep him in the bath-room all the afternoon?”

Nipper grinned.

"He'll be all right," he replied. "I think we can trust Dr. Hogge to look after him. Well, come along. Let's be going!"

The St. Frank's Junior XI. was a strong one. It consisted of Nipper (captain), Handforth, Brent, Hussi Khan, Dodd, Gresham, Travers, Boots, Christine, Oldfield, and Pitt.

The River House team was strong, too, containing such stalwarts as Glynn, Ascott, Kingswood, Norton, Hawke, and Riley.

Hal Brewster, much to his satisfaction, won the toss.

"We'll bat first," he said contentedly. "You St. Frank's chaps can get into the field. I'm afraid we shall keep you there all the afternoon. We'll do our fielding in the cool of the evening."

"Rats!" said Handforth. "Wait until our bowlers get busy!"

All thoughts of Dr. Inigo Scattlebury were dismissed, and the game commenced. It was certainly an ideal afternoon for cricket—especially from the point of view of the spectators. The St. Frank's XI., in the field, was not so sure. This was to be a hot, gruelling time for them.

Harry Gresham opened the bowling from the pavilion end, and Hal Brewster himself accepted the first ball of the game. It was an easy one, and Hal sent it soaring away to the boundary for a 4.

"That's the way we're going to treat these St. Frank's chaps," remarked one of the River House spectators.

"Rats!" retorted Handforth, who was fielding near the boundary. "You wait until Gresham settles down!"

It was not exactly a boast. Harry Gresham was the son of the famous "Hat Trick" Gresham, the man who had so often wrought havoc amongst the Australian batsmen in the Test Matches. Harry was a real chip off the old block. He proved it, too, before the end of that first over.

Brewster, having scored a single, was at the other end. Kingswood lashed out at Harry Gresham's fifth ball. But that ball was very different from the others. It looked exactly the same; it came down easily, but it broke with startling trickiness, deceiving Kingswood completely. Kingswood's bat met nothing but thin air, and the next second there was a crash from behind him.

"How's that?"

"Out!"

"Well I'm jiggered!" ejaculated Kingswood, looking at his shattered wicket. "I was going to knock that one for a six!"

"Hard luck!" grinned Boots, the wicket-keeper. "And it's knocked you for a duck!"

Ascott took Kingswood's place, and Gresham nearly had his wicket, too.

Travers was bowling from the other end, and the River House fellows soon discovered that they were up against a stiff proposition. Travers was something of a stylist, and his bowling was remarkably difficult to deal with. He wasn't very dangerous, but it was practically impossible to score off him. When he

really found his length the River House batsmen were thoroughly uncomfortable.

It was in the fourth over that Brewster, in attempting to hit a boundary, caught the ball on the edge of his bat. The ball soared away, and the batsmen were running. But the leather, instead of speeding straight towards the boundary, was shooting skywards.

Alf Brent was running hard, his eyes on the ball. There was a great hush. Nobody really expected that he would make that catch—or, indeed, that he would reach the spot where the ball was falling. The sun was in his eyes, too.

Slap!

The ball hit Brent's outstretched palm, rebounded into the air, and he made a quick grab with his other hand. This time he held the ball securely.

"Oh, well caught!"

"Good old Brent!"

Alf tossed the ball in, grinning, and he flushed happily as he noted that his father was standing just in front of the pavilion. Sir John was clapping, too, and he waved to his son when he saw Alf looking in his direction.

"We're not doing so badly," said Nipper. "Two wickets down already, and only thirty-three runs on the board. We ought to have 'em all out for under the hundred!"

Another disaster befell the River House ten minutes later. Riley, attempting to snatch a cheeky single, was not supported by his partner.

"No, no!" yelled the other batsmen. "Go back, you ass!"

Riley attempted to get back, and it looked easy. He was only four or five feet from the crease. But Jerry Dodd, who had fielded the ball with all his usual brilliance, threw in like a flash. The ball was just wide of the stumps, but Boots' gloved hand intercepted it, and the next second the bails were whipped off.

"How's that?" yelled Buster, turning to the umpire.

"Out!"

Riley's bat had been a clear six inches out of the crease at the crucial second. He went back to the pavilion thoroughly disgusted with himself—and full of admiration for the St. Frank's fielding.

But after that the River House fellows pulled themselves together. Norton joined Ascott, and they settled down grimly. Soon they were scoring steadily. There was nothing spectacular about it, but they were making the runs.

Nipper changed the bowlers occasionally, but it seemed to make no difference. Ascott and Norton, between them, were defying all efforts to get them out. They were making an excellent stand.

A cheer arose when the "50" went up on the board. The score mounted steadily. Boundary hits were few and far between; the scoring was mostly done by singles and twos, and the Saints were kept busy leather-hunting in the hot sunshine.

Mr. Pycraft had arrived by this time—now accompanied by Mr. Pagett and Mr. Goole. They were not paying much attention to the cricket; they were looking for Dr. Scattlebury.

Mr. Goole and Mr. Pagett, at least, believed their colleague's story of that mud pie incident, and their one object in coming to the River House School was to catch the Head "on the hop," so that they would all be vindicated in Sir John Brent's eyes.

Sir John had seen them, and, apparently, he was not too pleased. For he readily agreed to the suggestion of Mr. Marshall, one of the Housemasters, to have a look round some new buildings which had recently been added to the school.

"It is quite a new wing, Sir John," said Mr. Marshall. "I am sure you will be interested. Our school cannot compare, of course, with St. Frank's; but we are very proud of it, and we are making very splendid progress."

Sir John went off, while the three St. Frank's masters remained on the playing-fields, watching the Junior match with unseeing eyes.

"Dr. Scattlebury is here—of that we are certain," said Mr. Pycraft, in a low voice. "I have learned that he had an accident. He was in a boat which capsized. Some of these boys must have taken him away from those village children, and brought him to this place

by water. There has been trickery, gentlemen."

"Well, what can we do?" asked Mr. Pagett sourly.

"Nothing—except wait," put in Mr. Barnaby Goole. "We cannot force our way into Dr. Hogge's house. We must wait out here—and hope for the best."

So they waited—and hoped. But they little dreamed how they were to be rewarded!

CHAPTER 10.

Two Heads Play Nap!

DR. INIGO SCATTLEBURY, attired in a flowing bath-robe, was alone in his host's bed-room. He was standing in front of the wardrobe, trying to make up his mind which suit he would select.

Dr. Hogge had been very kind; he had requested his guest to help himself. The Head hardly liked taking full advantage of such hospitality. Yet he could not very well go downstairs attired in a bathrobe; and it might be some little time before a supply of his own things came along from St. Frank's.

There were several suits in front of him, and one, of grey flannel, attracted his notice. It was nearly a brand-new suit, and he liked it. Yet he hesitated.

He opened the other door of the wardrobe, and a surprised look came into his eyes.



Jokes from readers wanted for this feature! If you know a good rib-tickler, send it along now. A handsome watch will be awarded each week to the sender of the best joke; pocket wallets, penknives, and bumper books are also offered as prizes. Address your jokes to "Smilers," Nelson Lee Library, 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4.

TOO POLITE

Johnny: "That lady gave me sixpence for being polite."

Tommy: "Why, what did you do?"

Johnny: "I stepped on her foot and then apologised."

Tommy: "Good for you; and what did you do then?"

Johnny: "Stepped on it again—but it didn't work."

(V. Wheal, 98, Beckton Road, Canning Town, E.16, has been awarded a handsome Watch.)

A PRECAUTION

Talkative patient: "Have you forgotten, doctor, that ten minutes ago you told me to put out my tongue?"

Doctor: "No; I wanted to write this prescription without being interrupted."

(Miss F. Noble, 153, Osbaldeston Road, Clapton, N.16, has been awarded a book.)

ON THE QUIET

A man who had a passion for shooting, called one morning to his servant:

"There's a rabbit in the garden, Mason. Hand me a gun."

"But, sir, it is five o'clock in the morning; everybody is asleep!"

"No matter! I'll fire on tip-toe!"

(G. Walker, 76, Sutton Passes Crescent, Wollaton Park, Nottingham, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

THE DIFFERENCE

Jimmy: "What's the difference between a gossip and a speed-fiend?"

James: "One gasses on the step, and the other steps on the gas."

(G. Clarke, 46, Beulah Road, Walthamstow, E.17, has been awarded a penknife.)

NOISES ON

Jones: "You're looking seedy to-day, old man. What's the trouble?"

Brown: "I've got noises in the head."

Jones: "Don't worry about that; it must be the band on your hat."

(G. Blinkhorn, 103, Gorsefield Road, Prenton, Birkenhead, has been awarded a penknife.)

"Well!" he ejaculated. "Upon my word!"
A rather remarkable costume had come into view—one which was not usually discovered in a schoolmaster's wardrobe. It was a girl's ballet costume. The upper part was of gleaming orange-coloured silk, and the skirt was one of those fluffy affairs, built up of layer upon layer of some diaphanous material.

Dr. Scattlebury fingered it gingerly.

"Dear me!" he murmured. "How extraordinary!"

He was fascinated. What could this dress be doing in Dr. Hogge's wardrobe? And as the Head further examined it, so a twinkle appeared in his eyes. The twinkle changed to a sparkle of joy.

In that moment Dr. Scattlebury forgot his original object in coming to this wardrobe; he forgot everything. In fact, something "went" in his head. These attacks, or whatever they could be called, were coming much more frequently now. He was liable to have one without warning at any moment.

"Why not?" he chuckled gleefully. "Splendid! A brilliant idea!"

He laughed aloud; he unhooked the ballet costume, and took it out of the wardrobe.

A cough from the doorway caused him to turn, and he was somewhat startled to find Dr. Molyneux Hogge looking at him.

"Ah!" said the Head. "Come in, my dear sir! Do not imagine for one moment that you are intruding."

Dr. Hogge concealed his surprise. He did not see very well how he could be intruding in his own bed-room.

"I was wondering if you were successful in finding a temporary suit, Dr. Scattlebury," he said. "Perhaps I ought to explain that—er—costume you now hold in your hand."

"A pretty thing," said the Head, nodding. "You wear this on special occasions, no doubt?"

Dr. Hogge smiled, although he wasn't particularly struck by the joke.

"I confiscated this dress from one of my senior boys," he said with a touch of annoyance in his voice. "Goodness knows where the young rascal got it from. He was preparing to play a practical joke upon some of his schoolfellows. I don't mind practical joking, as a rule, but I object to boys appearing in such frivolous attire. So I seized the costume, and I placed it in my wardrobe pending inquiries."

Dr. Scattlebury was not at all interested in these explanations.

"A very pretty thing," he commented. "I like the general effect. All this fluffiness is most entrancing."

"Quite so," said Dr. Hogge coldly. "But, really, sir, I do not think we need discuss this absurd costume any longer. Have you selected any particular suit?"

"Ah, yes, of course—the suit," said Dr. Scattlebury, with a sudden gleam in his eyes. "I was thinking of this grey flannel. But I

FISHY

Teacher: "What is a mermaid?"

Tommy: "Half a flapper and half a kipper."

(C. H. Prichard, 24, Aylmer Road, Shepherd's Bush, W.12, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

NOTHING DOING

A man had been knocked down by a small car, and the driver was attempting to placate him.

"Here's ten shillings," he said, "and I'll send you some more if you'll give me your address."

"'Ere! What's the game?" cried the victim. "You can't run over me on the instalment system."

(Miss P. Dobson, Northdene, 91, High View, Wallsend-on-Tyne, has been awarded a book.)

DOUBLE DUTCH

Chinese patient (on telephone): "Please what time you fixee teeth fo' me?"

Dentist: "Two-thirty—all right?"

Chinese patient: "Yes, tooth hurty, me all right, but wha' time you fixee?"

(C. Allum, 82, Dulwich Village, S.E.21, has been awarded a pen-knife.)

PILLS FOR PELLETS

Jimmy: "I want another box of pills, please, like I had yesterday."

Chemist: "Are they doing your mother good, then?"



Jimmy: "No—but they just fit my air-gun."

(Miss Betty Williamson, 12, St. Peter's Grove, W.6, has been awarded a book.)

PUNCTURED

Motorist: "There ought to be a statue of the man who invented motor tyres."

Pedestrian: "Perhaps a bust would be more expressive."

(S. Johnson, 76, Westmead Crescent, Pype Hayes, Birmingham, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

BEEN BEAN

Diner: "Hi, waiter, what's this?"

Waiter: "It's bean soup, sir."

Diner: "I know that, but what is it now?"

(D. Langley, Beacholme, S. Hayling, Hants., has been awarded a penknife.)

THAT GOT HIM GROGGY

The crusty old captain looked down on the newest arrival on board, a lad of fourteen.

"H'm," he said caustically, "I suppose it's the same old story—the fool of the family sent to sea."

"Oh no, captain," replied the boy brightly, "that's all changed since your day."

(W. Scharer, 115, Wigram Road, Forest Lodge, Sydney, Australia, has been awarded a book.)

should hate to impose upon your hospitality—"

"Not at all—not at all," said Dr. Hogge. "By all means take the flannel suit, sir. You are perfectly welcome."

He took the ballet costume, walked across to a cupboard, and hung it within. Then he closed the cupboard door with a decisive snap.

"I shall be waiting for you, Dr. Scattlebury, in the library," he said. "I trust you are feeling no ill effects from your adventure?"

"Not at all," said the other. "Thank you, Dr. Hogge. I will join you very shortly."

Dr. Hogge retired, vaguely wondering what had happened to his guest. In some strange, indefinable way Dr. Scattlebury was different. His amiability, indeed, was most marked. Strangely enough, he seemed to be thoroughly enjoying himself.

Left alone, Dr. Scattlebury hesitated. He took a step or two towards that cupboard, then halted, shaking his head. Perhaps it wouldn't do. Reluctantly he donned the grey flannel suit—omitting, however, to include a shirt in his general attire.

So Dr. Hogge was somewhat scandalised when his guest walked into the library five minutes later wearing a grey flannel suit, but showing the fringe of an undervest and a large expanse of bare neck.

"The tennis shirt was of the wrong size, Dr. Scattlebury?" he inquired politely.

The Head placed a hand to his neck, and laughed.

"Well, well!" he exclaimed, grinning. "How ridiculous! I do declare I have forgotten the shirt altogether!"

His host stared.

"Perhaps it doesn't matter," he said politely. "We can wait here and chat until your own things arrive from St. Frank's."

"A splendid idea," said Dr. Scattlebury, sinking into a chair. "A cigar? Yes, thank you, I think I will. Splendid!"

With the cigar well alight, he sank back into the easy-chair and surveyed Dr. Hogge with genial friendliness. Dr. Hogge was more surprised than ever. He had heard that Dr. Inigo Scattlebury was a most charming man; but he was astonished to find the headmaster of St. Frank's so singularly affable. There was an irresistible quality in his friendliness which Dr. Hogge could not resist. He even overlooked the scandalous incident of the shirt.

"As we are such close neighbours, Dr. Scattlebury, I am hoping that these little visits will be of frequent occurrence," said Dr. Hogge pleasantly. "There is a very friendly spirit between our two schools, and I think it should be fostered."

Dr. Scattlebury made no reply. He was sprawling back in his chair, and the cigar between his fingers was drooping. He yawned prodigiously, and then started, sitting up with an expression of guilt on his face.

"I really beg your pardon, Dr. Hogge!" he said hastily.

"Don't mention it," said Dr. Hogge. "The afternoon is undoubtedly a drowsy one."

The guest dropped his cigar into an ash-tray.

"I am wondering, sir, if you will object if I take a short nap?" he suggested. "Perhaps I am taking an unfair advantage——"

"Not at all," said Dr. Hogge. "Please make yourself thoroughly at home."

"In that case, I will certainly nap," said Dr. Scattlebury, making himself more comfortable. "I must confess that it is my usual afternoon's practice to indulge in an hour's sleep. Is it one of your weaknesses, too, Dr. Hogge?"

"Well, really——"

"Come, come! Confess!" chuckled Dr. Scattlebury. "An afternoon nap is a most excellent institution."

"I do sometimes indulge myself in that way," admitted Dr. Hogge, with a smile.

"Then let us nap together," said the other enthusiastically. "As you say, it is a drowsy afternoon. We shall awaken refreshed, and then we can sally forth to make a tour of the school. I am most anxious to see over your school, Dr. Hogge. But in the meantime we will nap."

He composed himself for sleep, and within a couple of minutes he was snoring gently.

"An extraordinary man," murmured Dr. Hogge, not knowing whether to be amused or annoyed.

In the end, he decided that this idea of a nap was a good one. Dr. Scattlebury was asleep, the study was quiet, and both chairs were extremely comfortable. The window stood wide open, and the drowsy hum of insects floated through into the room. In the far distance sounded the murmur of voices, with an occasional "clack," dim and vague, as one of the cricketers scored a good hit. There was also the gentle, purring hum of a lawn-mover somewhere in the far distance.

It was all very peaceful, all very sleep-provoking.

Inevitably, Dr. Hogge closed his eyes; and just as inevitably he was sleeping peacefully within three minutes. For this was Dr. Hogge's customary hour for taking his afternoon nap.

Suddenly Dr. Scattlebury sat forward, his eyes wide open. It really seemed as though he had been feigning sleep all this time. At all events, he was now very wide awake.

"Dr. Hogge!" he murmured cautiously.

But Dr. Hogge was well away.

Chuckling softly to himself, Dr. Scattlebury tip-toed to the door. He let himself out without a sound, crept upstairs, and went into Dr. Hogge's bed-room.

A moment later he was at the cupboard, and his eyes gleamed roguishly as he gazed upon the fluffy-skirted ballet costume.

"And now," murmured Dr. Scattlebury with glee, "for a little fun!"



Sir John was startled to see the headmaster of St. Frank's coming towards him on all fours.

CHAPTER 11.

Mr. Pycraft Tries Again!

A HUSH had fallen over the River House playing-fields.

It was a tense moment. Ascott and Norton had been dismissed for some little time, and Hawke and Riley had attempted to carry on the good work.

But at this period Harry Gresham had come on to bowl again. With the very first ball of the over, he had shattered Hawke's wicket. Robinson, going in next, had spooned Gresham's next delivery neatly into the hands of cover-point.

Brampton was just going out to the wicket now. The score stood at 67 for six, and the River House fellows were feeling none too happy. They had expected to put up a much better performance than this.

"Go it, Gresham!"

"Make it the hat-trick, old man! Remember your pater!"

Harry Gresham was perfectly cool. He had taken two wickets with two successive balls, and he meant to put all he knew into his third delivery of the over. Brampton, of course, was thoroughly nervous. Any fellow who goes in to bat after his two previous predecessors have been dismissed for a duck is in an uneviable position.

Brampton appeared to be careless; he strolled to the wicket, dabbed the crease with his bat, and went through all the preliminaries with an air of supreme coolness. But he did not deceive anybody. The whole field knew that he was "on edge."

Gresham started to take his walk, and the fieldsmen became tense. Boots, behind the wicket, dropped in readiness, his hands cupped; the slips crouched, their hands outstretched ready. The men in the field rubbed their palms together, licked their fingertips, and waited.

All of which, to Brampton, was most disconcerting.

The atmosphere became more electrical than ever as Harry Gresham ran. Over went his arm, and the leather hissed down towards Brampton who, with set teeth and with perspiration streaming down his face, waited. The ball was dead on the wicket, and Brampton sloshed desperately.

Clack!

Gresham leapt sideways, a clap sounded, and the ball was in his grasp. Brampton had sent it straight back to the bowler.

"Oh, well caught!"

"Good old Gresham!"

"That hat-trick, by jingo!"

"Hurrah!"

The River House fellows cheered as lustily as the Saints. It was a magnificent effort of Gresham's. He had deliberately tempted Brampton into returning the ball to him.

"Seven wickets down!" grinned Handforth. "Why, we've got 'em whacked already! I'll bet we'll beat 'em by about eight wickets."

Commerford was the next man in, and his plight was as bad as Brampton's. Commerford just managed to stone-wall Gresham's next ball, and he kept his end up until the finish of the over.

Pitt was bowling at the other end now, and he was preparing to take his run, bowling to Riley, when he halted abruptly.

The field eased, wondering what had caused Pitt to stop. Pitt was staring across the fields towards the school buildings. Everybody else stared, too. And then a gasp of mingled consternation and amazement went round.

An extraordinary figure was dancing blithely on to the field of play. It had appeared unexpectedly from the hedge, and now it was actually on the cricket field.

"What—what is that extraordinary person doing?" asked Mr. Barnaby Goole, adjusting his glasses. "Good gracious! A girl! A girl in ballet costume! This is scandalous!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The gasps had turned into yells of laughter. Spectators and players alike gazed at the newcomer and roared. There was something indescribably comic about that dancing figure.

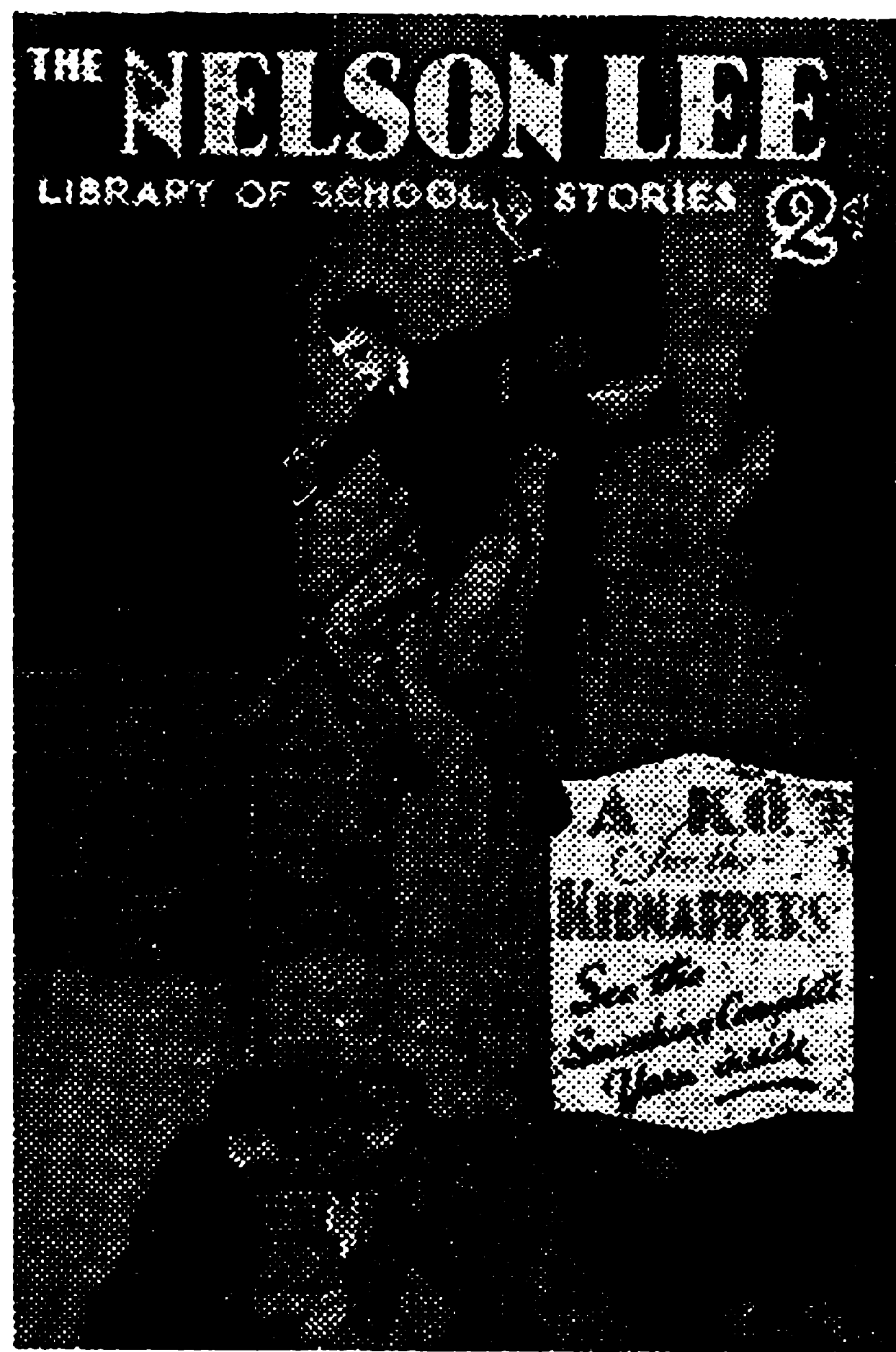
"Good heavens!" panted Mr. Pycraft, suddenly clutching at Mr. Goole's arm. "Don't you see, sir? That is no girl! It—it is Dr. Scattlebury!"

"Wha-a-a-at!" gurgled Mr. Goole.

"Upon my soul, I believe you are right, Mr. Pycraft!" ejaculated Mr. Pagett, horrified. "Dr. Scattlebury himself! This—this is positively ghastly. The headmaster of our school making a fool of himself here, at the River House, in front of all these junior boys!"

Mr. Pycraft's eyes were gleaming with triumph.

COMING NEXT WEDNESDAY!



"What did I tell you!" he asked excitedly. "Where is Sir John Brent? Perhaps he will believe me now. When he sees Dr. Scattlebury in this ridiculous scene he will perhaps be convinced!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The laughter was continuing, more uproariously than ever now. For Dr. Scattlebury, giving a very fair imitation of a ballet dancer, was tripping across the green turf. He looked so utterly incongruous in that costume that the whole field forgot cricket and went off into fresh paroxysms of laughter.

"Ye gods and little fishes!" gurgled Handforth. "It's the Head! What the dickens shall we do, you chaps?"

"Whatever we do, we've got to do it quickly!" said Nipper, running up. "Buck up, St. Frank's! Rally round!"

Outside the pavilion Mr. Goole, Mr. Pycraft and Mr. Pagett were dashing into action. They rushed up to a group of River House seniors who were watching the scene with amused grins.

"Where is Sir John Brent?" panted Mr. Pycraft urgently.

"Haven't the faintest idea, sir," replied one of the seniors. "I say, sir, this is your headmaster, isn't it? He seems to be enjoying himself."

"The poor man is out of his mind!"

"HANDY'S MIDNIGHT CAPTURE!"

By E. S. BROOKS.

It starts with an S.O.S. over the wireless, and leads to a fight with gangsters in a "haunted" house!

Good old Handy is in his element. He's usually a wash-out as a detective, but this time he runs riot and proves his worth when he hands the kidnappers a K.O.

Here's a rousing, full-of-pep story with E. O. Handforth in his most aggressive mood. Fun, fights and thrills throughout.

"The Phantom Foe!"

By John Brearley.

The Night Hawk and the Phantom Foe in battle—whirlwind action and hectic excitement.

"Handforth's Weekly!"

"OUR ROUND TABLE TALK."

ORDER IN ADVANCE!

snapped Mr. Pycraft. "I am amazed, shocked, that such big boys as you should be standing here grinning. Have you no sense of—of decency?"

The seniors lost their smiles, and they looked resentful.

"Hang it, sir, what do you expect us to do—weep?" asked one of them tartly. "If your headmaster doesn't want us to laugh at him, he shouldn't make himself so ridiculous!"

"Why waste time in arguing?" shouted Mr. Pagett. "We want to find Sir John Brent. Can any of you boys tell us where he is?"

"Over in the new wing, I think, sir," said one of the other seniors. "He went there

with Mr. Marshall, not twenty minutes ago."

"The new wing!" shouted Mr. Goole. "Come, gentlemen!"

They rushed off, exasperated by the fact that Sir John Brent was not here at the very moment when he was wanted.

Hardly had the three masters vanished when Nipper and Handforth and Travers and a crowd of other St. Frank's juniors surrounded Dr. Scattlebury.

"How do you like it, boys?" asked the Head gaily. "I am afraid the costume is somewhat small for me, but——"

"That's all right, sir," interrupted Nipper. "The costume's fine. What about coming indoors?"

"Certainly not. I would much prefer to be out here in the glorious sunshine," said the Head. "It is my intention to teach you boys the art of toe dancing. Now if you will watch me——"

But he got no further. The fellows were not inclined to watch. Not only were they anxious to get the unfortunate Dr. Scattlebury out of this predicament, but they wanted to do so before Sir John Brent could arrive on the scene.

"Indoors with him!" said Nipper crisply. "Don't waste time in arguing. Grab him!"

The Head was grabbed. He was hustled along in spite of his protests. He was fairly whirled across the courtyard, and he was sent hurtling indoors. And there, in Dr. Hogge's hall, by a stroke of good fortune, stood Waters, Dr. Scattlebury's own butler. Waters was carrying a suitcase.

"Fresh clothes for the Head?" asked Nipper eagerly. "Good man! We'll take em!"

Waters tried to speak, but there was no time. Dr. Scattlebury, with the flood of juniors round him, was hustled into a nearby room. Waters found himself elbowed aside, and the next moment the hall was empty.

"Well, I never!" exclaimed Waters dazedly.

Inside the room, Dr. Scattlebury was trying to regain his breath.

"What—what is all this?" he asked weakly. "Really, boys, I don't in the least understand——"

"Here are your clothes, sir—from St. Frank's," said Travers. "Don't you think you'd better change?"

"Ah, change?" asked the Head. "Oh, I see! You mean, I had better get into my own clothes? Well, perhaps you are right."

"We'll help you, sir," said Nipper briskly. "Out with that clobber, you chaps! Look alive!"

At that same moment Messrs. Goole, Pagett, and Pycraft had run Sir John Brent to earth. They found him in the new wing, with Mr. Marshall. Both Sir John and Mr. Marshall gazed at the three St. Frank's masters in open astonishment as they came tearing up.

"Is something the matter, gentlemen?" asked Sir John, alarmed.

"There is something very much the matter, sir!" shouted Mr. Pycraft. "The headmaster!"

"What!"

"The headmaster, sir—out on the playing-fields, dressed in a girl's ballet costume!"

"Impossible!" said Mr. Marshall, aghast. "I can never believe that Dr. Hogge—"

"Not Dr. Hogge—but Dr. Scattlebury!" yelled Mr. Pycraft.

"Oh!" said Mr. Marshall, relieved.

"Gentlemen, control yourselves!" roared Sir John Brent. "Are you insane enough to come to me again with such a preposterous story? Do you seriously expect me to believe that Dr. Scattlebury is walking about this school in a girl's ballet costume?"

"If you don't believe us, sir, come and see for yourself!" retorted Mr. Goole angrily. "Upon my soul! I am getting tired of this attitude of yours, sir! Do you think we are lying to you?"

Sir John was rather startled by the House-master's tone.

"Show me, then!" he said, controlling himself with difficulty.

They strode out, and they fairly ran to the playing-fields. Sir John looked about him anxiously—incredulously. There was no Dr. Scattlebury in sight.

"This—this is positively uncanny!" panted Mr. Pycraft hoarsely. "Where is the headmaster?" he went on, grabbing at one of the River House boys. "Do you hear me, sir? The headmaster of St. Frank's! Where is he?"

"Gone indoors, sir," replied the River House boy, pointing.

Off dashed the quartet again—with Sir John now displaying fresh signs of angry impatience. By this time Dr. Scattlebury had donned his own clothing. Perhaps the feel of it restored him to his proper senses; perhaps the excitement had had the desired effect. At all events, he was a changed man by now. He was confused, bewildered—and, indeed, intensely worried. He could only gather vaguely what had been taking place, and the St. Frank's boys made no attempt to tell him.

They had gone off at the double, and Dr. Scattlebury, looking into Dr. Hogge's study, found Dr. Hogge still sleeping. He faintly remembered having been in this room before—and having sat in that big easy-chair, too.

He went across to it, feeling weary and exhausted. He sat down with a grateful sigh.

At the same moment the door burst open, and a flood of masters poured in, headed by Sir John Brent.

CHAPTER 12.

"Scatty" Scuppered!

SIR JOHN BRENT turned purple as his gaze rested upon the quiet, dignified figure of Dr. Inigo Scattlebury. Mr. Goole, Mr. Pagett, and Mr. Pycraft goggled dazedly.

"Really, gentlemen, you startled me!" said Dr. Scattlebury unsteadily.

Dr. Hogge had awakened, and he was on his feet now, bewildered and embarrassed.

"What—what has happened?" he asked, looking from one intruder to another. "May I inquire, gentlemen, why you burst into my study—"

"I owe you my sincere apologies, Dr. Hogge," said Sir John Brent, controlling himself with a great effort. "It was these—these gentlemen who lured me here. They told me a preposterous story—"

"No, no!" shrieked Mr. Pycraft. "It was the truth, Sir John! Dr. Scattlebury was actually on the playing-fields dressed as a ballet girl!"

"Nonsense!" thundered Sir John. "Dr. Scattlebury is here. I think you must all be mad!"

Mr. Goole passed a weary hand over his brow.

"I am beginning to think so, too!" he murmured. "Upon my soul, this—this is most disturbing!"

"A mild word, sir—a very mild word, indeed!" said Dr. Hogge angrily. "Naturally, I accept your apologies, and I shall be obliged if you will immediately retire. It may interest you to know that Dr. Scattlebury has been with me in this room for the past hour."

"You see, gentlemen?" said Sir John, glaring ferociously at the three masters.

"Dr. Hogge is mistaken!" said Mr. Pycraft excitedly.

"Sir!" thundered Sir John.

"I say that Dr. Hogge is mistaken!" shrieked Mr. Pycraft. "How can he be so certain? Was he not sound asleep when we came into this room? How can he be sure of what took place while he was sleeping?"

"Really!" protested Dr. Hogge, drawing himself up to his full height.

Sir John moved to the door, and opened it.

"Come, gentlemen!" he said grimly.

Mr. Goole, Mr. Pycraft, and Mr. Pagett filed out, feeling extremely foolish—and realising, too, that they looked extremely foolish. Their minds were still in a state of considerable bewilderment.

Out in the hall, Sir John faced the three masters with a stern look in his eyes.

"And now, gentlemen, perhaps you will be good enough to explain," he said almost ferociously. "How dare you drag me to Dr. Hogge's study, and involve me in such a scandalous scene—"

"I do not pretend to know what has happened, Sir John!" said Mr. Goole. "But I do know that we saw Dr. Scattlebury on the playing-fields, dressed as we have told you. How he got back into Dr. Hogge's study I cannot imagine."

"This is absolute madness!" protested Sir John, in amazement. "How can you stand there, Mr. Goole, and tell me—"

"Mr. Goole is perfectly right!" said Mr. Pycraft excitedly. "All day we have been

trying to show you that the headmaster is unfit for his post."

"And I am perfectly satisfied that you are wrong!" said the Chairman of the Governors. "I have had enough of this, gentlemen! I absolutely refuse to listen to another word! I am returning to London this evening—immediately! And I shall be obliged if you will refrain from writing me any further absurd letters."

"But, really——" began Mr. Pagett feebly.

"Furthermore," said Sir John, "I shall make it my business to revive this whole matter at the next meeting of the Board of Governors. I have no doubt, gentlemen, that you will hear something to your disadvantage!"

"One moment!" said Mr. Pycraft breathlessly. "I have an idea! Sir John, will you come with us to the playing-fields? Now? It is not much to ask."

"But why? I can see no reason——"

"You will see plenty of reason when we arrive," said Mr. Pycraft.

In spite of Sir John's protests, he fairly grabbed the chairman by the arm and hustled him out of doors. Mr. Goole and Mr. Pagett supported him.

Presently they arrived amongst a group of River House seniors, who were amusedly discussing the recent incident. The cricket match was again proceeding—although a good deal of interest in it had waned. This other matter had caused quite a sensation.

"Hi! You fellows! Come here!" shouted Mr. Pycraft.

The seniors, thus addressed, gazed upon the four men in astonishment. They drew nearer, however, and in reply to Mr. Pycraft's questions they were ready enough with their answers.

"Yes, of course," said one of the seniors. "There's no question about it, is there? Everybody saw Dr. Scattlebury on the playing-fields, dressed as a ballet girl."

"What!" gasped Sir John.

"You see?" yelled Mr. Pycraft excitedly. "Do you think we are all in this conspiracy?"

To cap it all, Mr. Wragg, the House-master of Wragg's House, lent his own support.

"A most undignified and scandalous affair!" he declared. "Never, in the whole course of my experience as a schoolmaster, have I seen anything quite so bad! Dr. Scattlebury cannot possibly receive any respect from his boys after what happened this afternoon!"

Nipper and Handforth and a number of other St. Frank's fellows, who had heard what was going on, were dismayed. They stood in the background, alarmed but unable to interfere. The River House XI was in the field now, so the Removites were free.

"It's no good," said Nipper, shaking his head. "The cat's out of the bag properly now."

"But can't we do anything at all?" demanded Handforth, glaring round. "What's the matter with you chaps? We're

not going to lose the Head like this, are we?"

"He's lost, dear old fellow," said Travers sadly. "Behold! This, I fancy, is the end!"

He pointed, and the other juniors caught in their breath. For at that moment Dr. Scattlebury, the headmaster of St. Frank's, emerged from Dr. Hogge's front door in a most unusual fashion. He was, in fact, coming along on all fours.

Sir John Brent, catching sight of him, nearly jumped a yard into the air.

"Dr. Scattlebury!" he ejaculated, aghast.

He ran up, and the Head beamed upon him affably.

"Quite an amusing recreation!" he declared. "Have you ever tried to walk in this fashion?"

"But—but—— Really, Dr. Scattlebury, I am amazed!" said Sir John, utterly confused. "Come, sir! Pull yourself together. We will return to St. Frank's!"

"Anything you say, my dear fellow," replied Dr. Scattlebury, beaming. He prepared to get down on all fours again. "Shall we return like this, sir? I can assure you it is a most novel way of——"

"We will return in Dr. Hogge's car," interrupted Sir John desperately.

SIR JOHN BRENT was thoroughly satisfied.

Having made one discovery, he naturally made many others. He instituted the most searching inquiries, and he soon learned that all the evidence which Mr. Pycraft had placed before him was genuine. Sir John handsomely apologised to Mr. Pycraft, Mr. Pagett and Mr. Goole for doubting their word.

The next day, Dr. Inigo Scattlebury went away from St. Frank's—not in a mental-home ambulance, but in a private limousine.

Sir John felt it necessary to make a short speech to the school; he regretted the late headmaster's eccentricities, and he explained them by saying that Dr. Scattlebury was a man of genius—of such genius, in fact, that he was practically on the border-line. He had been overworking very much of late, and the strain had told upon him. No doubt, a month or two of quiet rest would completely restore him to normal health.

St. Frank's, on the whole, was sorry. It had had quite a good time during Dr. Scattlebury's brief reign. All the same, it was rather a relief to know that the ordinary routine of the school would now go on uninterruptedly.

But it would be many a long day before St. Frank's forgot "Old Scatty."

THE END.

("Handy's Midnight Capture!" is the title of next week's topnotch school yarn featuring the Chums of St. Frank's. Mystery and adventure; fights and thrills—a winner all the way. Order your copy NOW, chums.)

Our ROUND TABLE TALK

*A breezy chat on topics in general, conducted by the Editor
and Edwy Searles Brooks.*

EDWY SEARLES BROOKS wishes to acknowledge letters from the following readers: Reg. T. Staples (Waltham), Cedric L. Woods* (Brandon), David E. Gammon (Chatham), Albert W. Wilson (Wallasey), Barbara Ives (St. Albans, Jersey), Sidney Gath (Winnipeg), Samuel McIlroy (East Ham), Howard W. Steff (Kettering), Len Hawkins (E.17), Thos Lang (Grays), Eric S. V. Ryland** (Birmingham), "Irish Reader" (E.15), J. Edward Gallimore (W.5), "Anonymous" (Barrow), K. Swain (Bexhill), Stanley Carr (Barnsley), Robert H. C. Gregg (Rustington), Ben Eyton* (Ilford), Edith Wilkinson (S.E.6), G. A. Pickett (Burton-on-Trent), Robt. C. Blythe (N.7), Percy E. Buck (Ipswich), "Tennis"* (Birmingham), Arthur B. Turck* (W.2), Joseph Ralph (Battersea), R. E. Clarry (Toronto), L. W. Trevor (Bolton), A. W. Wilson (Wallasey) (2nd letter), R. Grace (Dukinfield), Ronald Barrington (Leicester), Eric Mitchell (Nottingham), Aubrey Kemp (S.W.6), Jack H. Henry (W.1), Philip Evans (Walsall), Samuel L. Ellison (Dublin), Francis H. Burrows (S.W.17), Chas. A. Webb (Heston), Ernest S. Holman (E. 10), Robt. J. Wareing* (Birmingham), Ron Buxton (West Croydon).

Quite a number of readers have asked if it is possible to obtain the earlier series of St. Frank's stories about Northestria which appeared in the NELSON LEE LIBRARY three or four years ago. Unfortunately all these stories are now out of print.

Albert W. Wilson asks if Handforth is as strong as Nipper, and wonders who would win in a fight. Well, Handforth is undoubtedly the more burly and muscular of the two; but whereas Handy is a slogger, Nipper is an expert boxer. A real scrap between these two would be interesting. If Nipper relaxed his vigilance even for a moment he would probably be knocked out. But on points he could easily box old Handforth to a standstill.

Just to show how ladies "take" to the Old Paper, here is an extract from a letter received from Samuel McIlroy: "The Old Paper is so decent and clean that when my

mother found a copy of it under my pillow one night, she read it herself. Well, imagine my surprise when she gave me the cash for it on the Wednesday, and she has paid for it ever since." That's the stuff to give 'em!

Of course, J. Edward Gallimore, there are some very well-equipped tennis courts at St. Frank's. They are situated on the playing fields, adjacent to Big Side. The reason tennis is not mentioned in the stories is that tennis, as a game, is not one which easily lends itself to interesting description. A great many of the seniors are very keen on tennis, and so are the masters, and the masters' wives. But the juniors prefer cricket every time.

There are several porters at St. Frank's, Robert C. Blythe, and Josh Cuttle rules over them. His lodge is situated just inside the main gates. The School Shop, presided over by Mrs. Hake, lies between the gym and the shrubbery.

The average age of the Remove fellows, Percy E. Buck, is 15. The youngest boy in the Remove is Guy Pepys, who is a bit of a swotter, and who is only just over 14.

Here are the names of the St. Frank's Form captains, Joseph B. Ralph: Sixth, Edgar Fenton; Fifth, Wm. Napoleon Browne; Remove, Dick Hamilton (Nipper); Fourth, Lionel Corcoran; Third, Willy Handforth.

Judging from the hundreds of letters received from enthusiastic readers during the past weeks, the recent revival of the extra long St. Frank's yarns has met with unanimous approval. An extensive programme has been mapped out, and extra special yarns featuring the cheery Chums of St. Frank's are on the way. Here's something to whet your appetites, so to speak, lads. Nipper & Co. under canvas! That's the theme of a sparkling new series of yarns which will be starting shortly. Keep your eyes on "Our Round Table Talk" for further details.

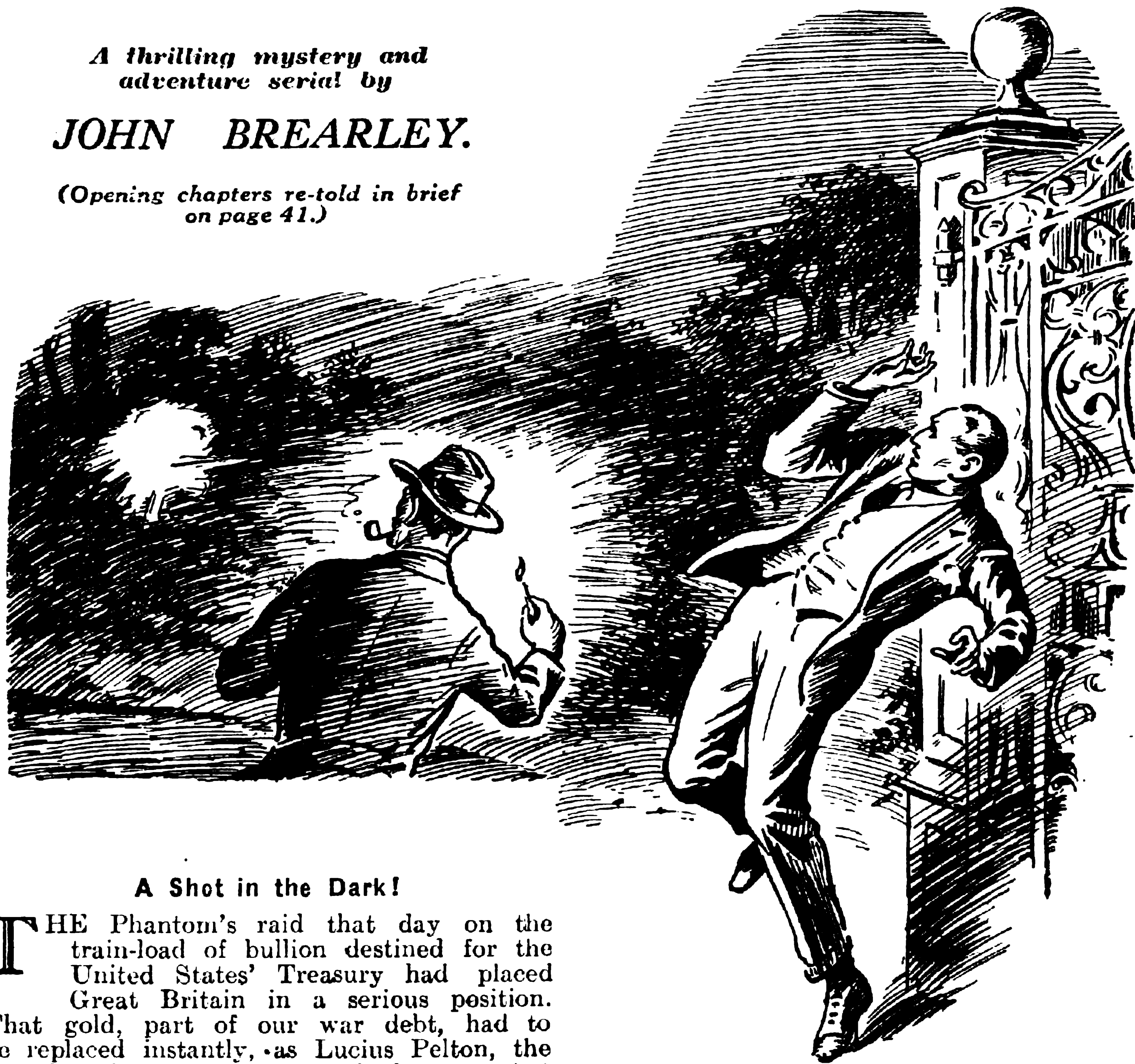
Sensational Attempt to Shoot The Night Hawk !

The PHANTOM FOE!

*A thrilling mystery and
adventure serial by*

JOHN BREARLEY.

*(Opening chapters re-told in brief
on page 41.)*



A Shot in the Dark!

THE Phantom's raid that day on the train-load of bullion destined for the United States' Treasury had placed Great Britain in a serious position. That gold, part of our war debt, had to be replaced instantly, as Lucius Pelton, the British Treasury official, had somewhat acidly pointed out.

Thurston Kyle had evolved a scheme whereby the Phantom might be lured away from the second shipment—although secretly it was a trick to get the mysterious gangster into his own clutches; and on leaving Scotland Yard with Captain Arthurs, the detective had requested a further chat about the scheme at Kyle's own house, where they would be undisturbed.

Now, over their cigars, the two men had drifted into a discussion on the results of Thurston Kyle's interview with the Scotland Yard chiefs and Lucius Pelton; an interview that had been terminated abruptly by the shattering news that the Phantom had that evening released six dangerous maniacs from a Government prison. Those results were few.

"It's sure a tough case!" mused Arthurs after a while; and suddenly he looked at Thurston Kyle with curiously sharp eyes. "Queer guy, that Pelton fellow, Mr. Kyle. Funny, too, that the Phantom should have known all about that gold-train to-day, considering all the secrecy we kept!"

Thurston Kyle caught his companion's drift immediately.

"You mean—Pelton may be in league with the Phantom?" he laughed dryly. "No, I hardly think so. He struck me as merely a pompous type of official, of which there are plenty. Certainly not the sort to become a member of a big and daring gang!"

"H'm!" Arthurs only grunted, and, crushing out his cigar, rose to take his departure. Thurston Kyle left his chair, too, and laid a firm hand on his guest's shoulder.

"Now, everything is quite settled for to-morrow, is it not? You have the details perfectly?"

Arthurs laughed with grim emphasis.

"You bet I have, sir. When that second gold-train leaves Euston to-morrow evenin', believe me, I'll be on it—alone. I'll wear one of those gas-masks we captured from the stiffs outside Belhampton, an' the moment the Yellow Gas comes and dies away, I'll chuck it under a seat and pretend I'm unconscious. I'll sure see who collects the gold after that!" he chuckled. "And when the Phantom grabs those bullion-boxes and opens 'em later—boy, what a big surprise he's going to get!"

The detective's enthusiasm made Thurston Kyle smile.

"Splendid! But I have one request to make, Captain Arthurs."

"Shoot, sir. What is it?"

"That instead of travelling alone on that train, you take a friend of mine with you. Oh, you can trust him to the hilt," went on Kyle, as the other raised his eyebrows. "And he is a big man, the strongest I know. His name is Huggins. I trust you will agree?"

Arthurs nodded, after a moment's hesitation.

"Anythin' you say goes with me, Mr. Kyle. Tell your friend the arrangements. I'll be seeing him."

"Thank you," smiled the scientist. "Another cigar? No! Then I will stroll to the gates with you."

Outside, as they skirted Thurston Kyle's wide lawn, Captain Arthurs looked over the dark expanse of grounds, fringed by darker trees, and grinned appreciatively.

"Some place, Mr. Kyle. Reckon I'd have got lost if you hadn't come out with me."

"Which is why I came, my friend," said Thurston Kyle to himself. At the back of his house lay his own great airship Thunderer, safe in its frame hangar. If Arthurs had got lost by some chance and wandered round there, the position might have proved awkward. Aloud the scientist answered:

"Yes; I like the place. It is quiet out here."

"Too darn quiet!" replied Arthurs vigorously. "Say, Mr. Kyle, now you've joined us against the Phantom, I reckon you'd better have some police protection, in case. I mean—this Phantom's a real smart guy, and——"

"He may pay me a visit, eh?" smiled Thurston Kyle. "Don't worry, my dear fellow. What visitors come here I invite myself. Any others—get hurt. I'm quite safe."

They had reached the gates by this time, and the grim meaning in Kyle's voice was enough for Arthurs, who only shrugged.

By an unlucky chance, he picked that moment to light his pipe for the homeward journey. And as the match flared—crack! From the hedge across the little private road a spiteful red flame spat once; a fierce burning pain lashed Thurston Kyle across the

cheekbone like a whip, sending him reeling against a gatepost. In a flash Arthurs had pocketed his pipe and went charging for the hedge with the bulldog pluck that had earned him his Canadian reputation.

Scrapper's Mysterious News!

HOLDING his furrowed cheek, Thurston Kyle heard him crash through, utter a furious shout and go pounding off among the trees of the gloomy road beyond. A full ten minutes elapsed before he returned, gasping for breath and sweating. His keen face was hard and angry.

"Saw the scut—short, thick-set devil!" he panted. "But I lost him in the trees. Are you hurt much, sir?"

"Merely scratched!" was the cool reply. "You were plucky to chase the man in the dark, captain, although I feared it was hopeless. Well——" He held out his hand.

"But look here, sir; this means the Phantom's on to you, I bet!" snorted Arthurs impatiently. "You must let us protect——"

"No!" Thurston Kyle snapped out the word coldly. "It may be the Phantom's doing, as you say; but I'll protect myself in my own way after this. Thank you again, captain, and—good-night."

Arthurs started to protest once more, but the scientist was adamant. Save that his eyes were like twin points of steel, he seemed almost unperturbed by the murderous shot, and at last the detective left, still shaking his head. Thurston Kyle watched him till his dark figure melted into the night, and then hastened back to his laboratory.

"Gosh! What the—— Guv'nor, you're hurt!" cried Snub, the moment his master entered.

Thurston Kyle held up a reassuring hand.

"Nothing serious—just a graze," he replied, and briefly told the story. "The bullet just nicked me and the assassin ran away. Get me the case from yonder cabinet, Snub, and some hot water. Now"—he went on, as the youngster flew to obey—"did you overhear everything between Captain Arthurs and myself? You will be on the train to-morrow, Scrapper, and—— Hallo, what's on your mind, man?"

Save for a second or two when he had first returned from Scotland Yard, Kyle had not seen Snub or the Scrapper. But now, as he looked at the giant, his keen eyes detected a queer expression on his henchman's rugged face.

"Have you something to tell me?" he asked quietly.

"Quite a lot, sir," answered Scrapper in the same tone. "You remember me tellin' you about a big crook called the Ace—who, so certain people said, 'ad come back to England?"

"Yes, yes. You were going to try and find out more about him. Have you done so, Scrapper?"

And the Scrapper's reply to that eager question made Thurston Kyle gasp. A tense silence reigned.

"You are quite sure of this?" he said at last.

"Certain as death, sir!"

Thurston Kyle nodded, and for some seconds sat deep in thought. When he spoke again his voice was grave.

"This explains a lot, Scrapper. I suspected a spy somewhere from the manner in which the Phantom looted the guarded train to-day, and also from the quick way he discovered I was helping Scotland Yard—as witness that shot just now. This makes a valuable card up our sleeve, I think."

He looked significantly at the huge expugilist.

"Be on that train with Captain Arthurs to-morrow, Scrapper, and watch points. And these are the instructions for the rest of the Kittens. Listen!"

The Scrapper silently listened to every word.

Guardsmen Two!

WHEN at 6.30 next evening the second bullion special glided away from a closed platform at Euston, the Scrapper was aboard en route for Liverpool—or the Phantom Foe!

Like the unfortunate first train, this special consisted of an engine and two coaches, the first stacked with small steel boxes, the second containing Captain Arthurs and the Scrapper. They were the only guards. Both men knew the risk they were running, for the train was an open invitation to the Phantom's attack. But both, as they settled to their pipes, were quiet and cool.

"Clear line now, partner," remarked Arthurs, as the train gathered speed. "Gas-mask handy? Seein' that we can't tell where this Phantom coyote will attack, I guess we'll put 'em on right now!"

Together both men dragged on the hideous masks found amid the ruins of the gangster car that had been so mysteriously wrecked the night of the Belhampton raid. Then they relaxed once more.

"Don't forget, the moment the Yellow Gas comes—if it does come—flop down on the floor!" came Arthurs' muffled voice. "And as soon as it goes away yank your mask off and chuck it beneath the seat. Then keep your eyes open and gun ready!"

The Scrapper only nodded imperturbably.

At full speed the train roared northwards, while the sun sank over quiet fields, and lights began to twinkle. Presently Bedford slid past in the dusk, and the two silent passengers grew more alert than ever. For beyond Bedford lay quiet little Blount Station, where the first train had been looted yesterday. Both men took an involuntary hitch at their masks.

But Blount Station came and went, a mere flicker of lights, and the train still rushed on unharmed. Other and larger towns followed, separated by dark stretches of countryside. Still no attack. When Leicester had been left behind and they were out in the midst of lonely fields again, Arthurs grew restive for the first time.

"Darn it!" he said irritably. "If the blighter's goin' to attack, I wish he'd get it over. Gee, I'm just itching to see him collect those boxes, and——"

"Dry up!" Scrapper suddenly stiffened in his seat with a warning growl, and next instant Arthurs tensed himself, too.

"We're stopping!" he whispered.

Their heads were out of the window in a second, eyes hard and watchful. The thrill of the moment gripped them. Gradually the train was grinding to a halt. And there, away down the line, a bright red light gleamed at them balefully. The signal was up—just as it had been yesterday!

"Why don't the fool driver chance his arm?" growled Scrapper. "He knows we should have a clear line. That signal's a wrong 'un!"

"Because he's got orders to stop if anything looks wrong," whispered back Arthurs coolly. "He and his fireman have got masks like us, and we want the Phantom to—— Look out, man!"

With a last grudging jerk the train stopped dead. And simultaneously with Arthurs' yell of alarm the Phantom's Yellow Gas rolled down. The darkness of the night was stained with its spectral glare; billows of it swirled about Scrapper's head and gushed into the coach as he sagged back.

"Don't forget—take masks off—later!" The choking words seemed to come from somewhere miles away. But the masks were dud. Scrapper knew it in the next horrifying second. The masks captured from the Phantom's own men had been tampered with, or else the protective chemical had worn off. They were no use at all now!

HOW THE STORY BEGAN.

THE NIGHT HAWK, known to the world as Thurston Kyle, scientist, declares war on *THE PHANTOM FOE*, a ruthless criminal, who has commenced a reign of terror, killing, kidnapping, looting. Always he attacks amid a cloud of yellow gas, which stupefies his victims; then disappears, literally into air, for he directs operations from an invisible airship. The Night Hawk discovers this, but in his first clash with the Phantom is defeated. The criminal's latest outrage is to hold up and rob a bullion train. Scotland Yard calls in Kyle, and he promises to assist them to bring the Phantom to book. He outlines a plan to Captain Frank Arthurs, of the Yard, but purposely omits to mention his own part in the scheme—for the Night Hawk intends to play a lone hand when it comes to a final reckoning with the Phantom.

(Now read on.)

Already rasping fumes were burning Scrapper's nostrils and throat; lungs and heart seemed at bursting point. Blindly he tried to fight his way to the further window, only to pitch forward as Arthurs' limp body crumpled across his legs. Stiff as a log, the giant hit a cushioned seat and rolled from there to the floor. A wild hammering pounded inside his brain, and after that blackness swamped down on him like a flood.

The plan to feign unconsciousness and surprise the Phantom's raiders with lead had failed. Both men, driver and fireman, too, lay dead to the world. The Phantom had scored again.

The Trap that Failed!

WHEN Captain Arthurs opened his eyes once more, he was lying on cool grass, a circle of anxious faces bending over him by the light of torches and lanterns. His limbs were stiffly extended, and his throat and mouth were parched.

Slowly he turned his head to look at three other groups kneeling around Scrapper and the train crew. A pad of some strong-smelling liquid was placed beneath his nostrils to clear his head, and his lips moistened with water. He tried to sit up, but failed.

"Keep still, sir!" muttered a friendly voice. "You're all right now."

Arthurs blinked and saw that the speaker wore a police uniform.

"All right, my foot!" he grunted. "I'm Arthurs, Scotland Yard. Who are you?"

"Sergeant Mack, sir, of the county police. I came out as soon as the hold-up was reported, and——"

"See anythin'? Any men?" jerked Arthurs.

"Not a sign, sir!"

"Huh! Got clear away, did they? They grabbed off the gold boxes, of course!"

The answer came quietly and—very surprisingly.

"No, sir!"

"Wha-at?" By a tremendous effort Arthurs sat up, mouth wide open with amazement. "You mean—they left them still in the train? Oh, dash and everlastingly gol-darn it!" he exploded furiously.

Sergeant Mack stared in stolid surprise.

"I don't understand, sir. I thought the bandits had been scared off, or something. Did—did you *want* them to steal the gold-boxes, then?"

"Want 'em to, you chump!" Arthurs spoke with the roughness of a man beside himself with rage and disappointment. "You bet your life I did! I—oh, what's the use? You weren't to know, sergeant. Anythin' else to report?"

"Yes, sir!" The bewildered sergeant fumbled in his uniform pocket and pulled out an envelope. "The bandits certainly went into the bullion coach, sir, 'cause I found this note on one of the boxes."

"Ye gods!" Snatching the envelope, Arthurs tore it open and scanned the contents feverishly by the light of a lantern. When he had finished, a fierce Canadian oath crackled sharply.

"Dear Captain Arthurs,—A very pretty trap! My compliments to yourself and Mr. Thurston Kyle, who designed it. Unfortunately, not wishing to die yet, I refrain from taking *these* boxes. But I shall now depart to collect the *genuine* ones.

"Au-revoir,

"THE PHANTOM FOE."

Arthurs almost tore his hair.

"How long have I been here, sergeant? Answer up, man, for heaven's sake!"

"Over an hour, sir."

"An hour! Oh, help!" groaned the detective. "Is there a telephone handy?" He started up, only to sink back. "No, too late, I reckon. The clever fiend's pinched the stuff by now, I guess!"

"Pinched what stuff, sir?" Sergeant Mack was plainly at his wits' end.

The C.I.D. man glared at him sulphurously.

"The gold, of course!" he snapped. "Did you think those boxes in the train contained the United States bullion, then?"

"Why, y-yes, sir!"

"Well, then, they didn't!" was the curt reply. "The real gold shipment was sent out in an armoured car by a different route an hour after we left London. But"—he glanced



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at the letter dejectedly—"I reckon it won't reach Liverpool now!"

Slowly he crumpled the paper into his pocket.

"Those boxes in the train contained only explosive, sergeant. If the Phantom had taken 'em away, as we hoped, and opened one lid two inches, he and his gang would have been blown to rags. But he's dodged the trap, the cunning devil! And he's licked me again!"

Meanwhile, by devious secondary roads, an armoured car laden with British gold, and guarded by military escort, was racing through the night towards Liverpool, all unconscious of the menace gliding overhead.

But someone else was in the air, too, that night, cautiously following the car. Thurston Kyle, the Night Hawk, under his great silent wings.

This was the part of his plan that he had kept secret from Captain Arthurs. His presence above the car was unknown and unsuspected by anyone—not even the Phantom Foe.

The lone Night Hawk was about to spring his trap now!

The Phantom Attacks!

WITH a smooth, powerful rush and exhilarating zip of tyres, the big armoured car raced towards Liverpool through the night, carrying the real shipment of gold from London to replace that stolen by the Phantom Foe the previous day.

Sixty feet above, Thurston Kyle, the Night Hawk, followed on fast-beating wings. Occasionally, as he flew, he rose higher and looked back along the quiet by-roads through which the car was travelling north. Then, as though satisfied with what he saw, he dived again and resumed his steady pursuit. His own trap was progressing well.

Having suggested the plan of employing a dummy bullion-train to trick the Phantom Foe, while, at the same time, sending the gold secretly by road, Thurston Kyle had laid his own private plans. Beyond requesting, for reasons of his own, that Scrapper Huggins should accompany Captain Frank Arthurs, he had left the official arrangements in the hands of the Yard chiefs and Lucius Pelton of H.M. Treasury. In fact, he had taken no further interest in the train's departure at all. But later, when the armoured car left London with its precious load, he had followed closely, speeding through the air like a wraith.

He was handling to-night's affair himself—in his own way. That decoy train, instead of gold, contained boxes which, if a single lid was raised, would have settled the Phantom, his gang, and invisible airship, of which only Kyle had knowledge, for ever. But the Night Hawk was certain that those boxes would never be opened by the wily crook, because the Phantom knew all about them; and Thurston Kyle knew that he knew!

Thanks to Scrapper Huggins' knowledge of crime and criminals, the Night Hawk had discovered a traitor in high circles; very high

circles indeed. By now the Phantom knew everything about the plan discussed at Scotland Yard. The only thing he did not know was—the Night Hawk.

He would side-step or completely ignore the decoy-train, and waylay the car of gold instead. And then—the grim flyer on high smiled dourly. He would cruise straight into a second and entirely unsuspected trap—the clutches of the swift, relentless, and unknown Night Hawk.

Thurston Kyle, naturally, was not aware yet that his deductions were right and that the Phantom had already dodged the official trap, besides playing a sardonic prank on Captain Arthurs of the Yard. At the moment the armoured car wound through the suburbs of a quiet town in the Buckingham hills, the bullion-train was lying derelict miles away on the main line beyond Leicester, while anxious men were striving to awaken Arthurs and the Scrapper from the effects of the Yellow Gas. And a thousand feet above ground, the Phantom's great airship was even now sliding towards the real attack, with the route of the armoured car taped to a nicety.

Even had Kyle known all this, however, he would only have smiled more grimly. He was prepared, alert and wary as a jungle hunter, ready to swirl aside on his perfect wings the instant the Yellow Gas stained the night sky.

And the Yellow Gas came.

Straight as an arrow, a searchlight of evil hue streaked down from somewhere in darkest space, striking the lonely heath road twenty yards in front of the speeding car. A savage grinding of brakes jarred the silence of the night as the driver checked instantly, desperately bringing his heavy vehicle to a standstill. The crew inside acted with a swiftness born of taut nerves.

The instant the brakes began squealing a roof turret slid open, the slender, vicious muzzle of a light "Archie" gun snapped out, and a small shell went screaming up the path of the broad beam of gas.

Jerking another shell into the breech, the gunner let fly again at the farthest point along the searchlight; hopeless, however, for the tight-lipped Night Hawk saw the missile burst uselessly in empty space. There was no time for a third shot.

Swift as a striking snake, the Yellow Gas shifted, bathed the car in its grim rays, and, squarely on the target now, thickened, and volleyed down in a cloud. Choking out stifled words, the gun-crew tried for another defiant shot, crumpled as they did so into fantastic shapes, and sagged down motionless. The driver coughed once and fell across the wheel, drugged by the virulent anæsthetic.

Silent in the midst of the little open road, the great armoured car lay a prey to the deadly Phantom!

(The Phantom Foe attacks—and so does the Night Hawk—in next Wednesday's enthralling instalment of this magnificent serial. Tell your pals about this full-of-thrills yarn.)

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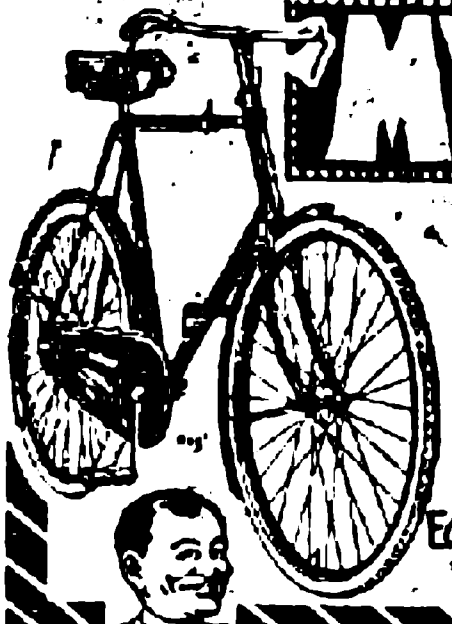
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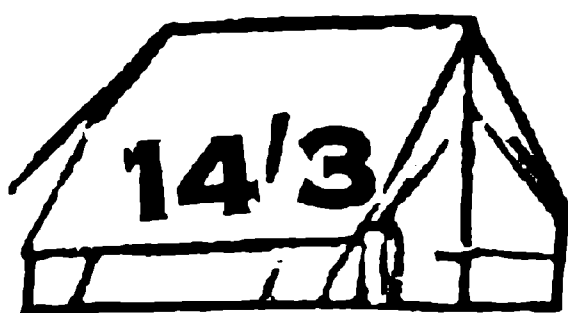
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