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# EVERY BOY HIS OWN MASTER!



By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

*BANG! CRACK! SIZZ! The Boys of St. Frank's make the sparks fly in this stunning long complete Fifth of November yarn!*

## CHAPTER 1.

### THE SCHOOL ON ITS HONOUR.

**H**AL BREWSTER, of the River House School, free-wheeled serenely through the gateway of St. Frank's, and then practically fell off his bicycle.

"Great Scott!" he ejaculated. "What's this—a riot?"

He stared across the historic old Triangle in amazement. Morning lessons were due to commence within twenty minutes, and Brewster had naturally expected to see a certain number of fellows in the open, particularly as it was such a bright November morning.

But the Triangle was literally packed.

It seemed to the astounded Brewster that the entire school was out there. And the entire school was talking at once. Overflow meetings appeared to spread into the East Square and the West Square. And the air was filled with the incessant throbbing of excited voices.

"I say, somebody!" called Brewster, as he wheeled his bicycle forward. "What's wrong here? What's all the excitement about? Has the Head granted a whole holiday, or—"

"Hallo, Brewster!" said the cheery voice

of Willy Handforth of the Third. "Just come to make peace?"

"Peace?" said Hal. "What do you mean?"

"I thought you and the Remove fellows were at loggerheads?" asked Willy. "When my major was captain, didn't he organise a free fight on your footer ground, or something? Of course, you mustn't blame him—"

"That's over and done with," interrupted Brewster. "Now that Dick Hamilton is junior skipper again, things are 'as you were.' But what's all this?" he added curiously. "What's the general idea?"

"Oh, this excitement?" asked Willy, looking round at the crowds. "I suppose we've got to make allowances for the poor chaps. You know what most of them are. They soon get bowled over if there's something unusual in the wind. I'm having a dickens of a job with the Third, I can tell you."

"Is that anything fresh?" asked Brewster sarcastically. "And isn't it the general impression that the Third has the dickens of a job with you? It's just the way you look at it, my lad. But, for the third time, I'm asking you what all this excitement is about."

"Oh!" said Willy. "You don't know, then?"



"Know what?"

"About the honour system?"

"The which?" asked Brewster, staring.

"Gather round, friend, and I will impart the great news," said Willy solemnly. "Know, then, that from last night onwards the great and historic pile of St. Frank's has been on its honour to do the right thing. We're all trusted to be good little boys and to obey our kind masters."

Brewster grinned.

"In that case, I'm sorry for the kind masters," he said promptly. "I'm especially sorry for the kind master of the Third!"

"Who, old Suncliffe?" asked Willy. "My dear chap, Sunny is going to have the time of his life. He's been a bit despondent this term, and we've come to the conclusion that it must be because the cricket season's over. So this honour business has come just in time to buck him up."

"You silly young ass——"

"Poor old Sunny doesn't know what to do with himself during the evenings," explained Willy. "He occasionally has a look at the evening paper, but he doesn't dash for it with the same ferocity as he used to. Besides, he can't hold an inquest on every county championship match now——"

"We're not talking about cricket!" snapped Brewster. "I'm asking you a civil question, and all you can do is to talk rubbish! What's all this rot about honour? What's the idea of kidding me that you're trusted to do the right thing?"

Willy turned to Chubby Heath, who had joined him.

"He must think he's come to Borstal!" he said sadly. "To hear him talk, you might think that St. Frank's can't be trusted out of a master's sight!"

"I think we ought to bump him!" said Chubby Heath thoughtfully.

"Good idea!" agreed Willy. "Fetch the crowd!"

Hal Brewster gave the fags a glare and pushed on further. He encountered Dick Hamilton and Reggie Pitt and Archie Glenthorpe, all talking earnestly and seriously. A little further on the mighty Edward Oswald Handforth was holding forth loudly and at length. The fact that nobody was listening to him made no difference to his eloquence.

"Heard the news, Hal?" asked Dick Hamilton, as Brewster came up.

"I've heard a silly yarn!" said Brewster gruffly, as he shook hands. "Those Third Form kids have been stuffing me up with some yarn that St. Frank's has been put on its honour! That you're all going to be trusted!"

"Very funny!" said Reggie Pitt coldly. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"What's the idea of that sarcastic laugh?" asked Brewster.

"Nothing, only you seem to take it for granted that the Head must be mad to trust the school," replied Reggie. "As a matter of fact, what you heard was strictly true."

"True?" gasped Brewster.

"Absolutely!" said Archie Glenthorpe.

"But—but——"

"It's a frightfully frightful shock, laddie, but there it is," went on Archie. "The whole dashed school is on its dashed honour! Absolutely no rules or conditions, or any of those restriction things. I mean to say, we're positively our own masters. Somewhat frightfully disconcerting, I mean to say!"

The River House boy was staring blankly.

"Look here, you chaps!" he complained. "Be sports, you know. Is this just a yarn, or is it really true?"

"We don't blame you for being sceptical, old man," replied Dick Hamilton. "But, although it seems incredible, it happens to be strictly true."

"Every one of you is his own master?"

"In a way, yes."

"And the rules and regulations are abolished?"

"Well, no," replied Dick. "The rules and regulations stand just as they are. Nothing has been altered. Not a thing—not the tiniest trifle."

"Then what the dickens——"

"Except for the fact that the whole school has been placed on its honour to behave in an honourable way," went on Dick. "In other words, the fellows can ignore any rule they please, and they won't stand the slightest risk of punishment."

Brewster was amazed.

"Ignore any order you please?" he ejaculated. "Do you mean to say that you can ignore the bell for morning school?" he added tartly.

"Yes, if we want to."

"And escape without any punishment?" gasped Hal.

"Naturally."

"And you can break bounds with impunity?"

"Of course."

"At any hour of the day-or night?" yelled Brewster.

"Absolutely, old lad!" nodded Archie. "Absolutely any hour of the good old day, or any hour of the jolly old night! I mean, there it is! A dashed rummy sort of business, and dashed disturbing to a fellow of peace like me. But you know what these masters are. Always springing something fresh on a chappie!"

Brewster caught his breath.

"I don't believe a word of it!" he said gruffly. "I never heard of such rot!"

"But it's true—honest Injun!"

"Then your headmaster is mad!" retorted Brewster.

"In that case, the governors are mad, too, because they sanctioned it," smiled Dick Hamilton. "My dear chap, we've had Sir John Brent on the platform this morning, and he's the chairman of the governors. And Professor Hudson——"

"Who's he?"

"One of the big men from Hayle



University, in America," said Dick. "He's the man who suggested the honour system in the first place. And he has persuaded the Head to give it a trial at St. Frank's."

"I thought there was something rummy about it!" said Brewster tartly. "An American, eh? So this is one of those new-fangled Yankee ideas, is it? It's a pity these branks can't test their theories on their own schools!"

"Or yours, for example?" grinned Dick Hamilton. "I don't think you would grumble much, Hal. Personally, I think we're going to have a bit of a struggle, but we've got to come out on top. The professor had a very special reason for choosing a school like St. Frank's."

"But—but it seems so rummy!" ejaculated Brewster, still half-suspicious.

"Well, you see, St. Frank's is one of the greatest Public schools in England—a national institution, in a way of speaking," went on Dick. "It's a school with ancient traditions—a school that has always been rather keen on its honourable record, too. Professor Hudson is against the imposition of restricting rules and regulations, and he maintains that St. Frank's will be better off without them."

"And, naturally, St. Frank's agrees with him," put in Reggie, grinning.

"The professor has a positive conviction that a school with such an honourable record as St. Frank's will benefit tremendously," continued Dick. "Plenty of fellows would break rules just as a matter of course, and risk getting swished, and think nothing of it. But if these same fellows are placed on their honour not to break the rules—well, they won't break them."

Hal Brewster shook his head.

"Don't you believe it," he said. "That's only a dream!"

"In other words, we're not honourable?"

"I'm not saying anything about that," grinned Hal. "But if you fellows can miss morning lessons without any punishment—well, you're going to miss morning lessons! And if you can go to the pictures in the evening, and roll home at about eleven o'clock, you're going to forget all about being on your honour! I'm not questioning your integrity, you know. But human nature is human nature. And the most noticeable feature about human nature is the weakness of the flesh."

Reggie Pitt patted Hal on the back.

"We have here, my sons, the complete philosopher," he said proudly. "Too seldom does he place himself on exhibition—"

"You fathead!" snorted Brewster, turning red.

"Sorry!" chuckled Reggie. "As a matter of fact, I agree with everything you said. You're right, my son! The flesh is weak! And that's the snag we're going to be up against during this business. Plenty of the chaps—the quite decent ones, I mean—won't have time to think about honour, or what

the school expects of them. They'll just know that they're safe from any punishment, and they'll go ahead and have a good time."

"By Jove!" said Brewster. "I wish we could have some excitement like this at the River House! We never get anything fresh there."

"You needn't be jealous!" said Dick Hamilton grimly. "Unless I'm greatly mistaken, we poor chaps are going to have the very dickens of a time!"

## CHAPTER 2.

STRAIGHT FROM THE  
SHOULDER.



EDWARD OSWALD HAND-  
FORTH came hustling up.

"Oh, so you're here, are you?" he said, glaring at Brewster.

"I just popped in to speak to Dick about the football—"

"A fat lot of time we shall have for football!" interrupted Handforth indignantly. "By what I can see, we shall have our work cut out to keep the Form in order! Three-quarters of the chaps have gone dotty!"

"You've just been making a speech, haven't you?" asked Reggie.

"Yes!"

"Well, then, that accounts for it."

"Accounts for what?" frowned Handforth.

"It explains why they've gone dotty!" said Pitt blandly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Edward Oswald was pleased to ignore the chaff.

"I've got no time to waste on nonsense!" he said curtly. "The honour of the Remove is at stake. Do you hear me? At stake! And it's up to me to guide it in the way it should go."

"Poor chap!" sighed Brewster. "He thinks he's still captain!"

"We excuse him, of course," said Reggie. "He has these little delusions at times, Hal. By the end of next term he might begin to realise that his term of office as skipper was a mere dream."

"I always thought it was a nightmare," said Brewster.

"That's right—go on!" said Handforth bitterly. "Talk about Horatius messing about while the bridge was burning!" he glared. "You're worse! You're messing about while the fate of St. Frank's hangs by a thread!"

"Yes, it's serious!" agreed Reggie Pitt solemnly. "Just as bad as Nero fiddling while he was flooding Rome!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm surprised at you!" roared Handforth. "Do you realise that the chaps are all going off their rockers? They're talking about missing lessons, and breaking bounds, and all sorts of idiotic things! Aren't we level-



headed? Isn't it up to us to save the Remove from destruction?"

Dick Hamilton was impressed by Handforth's earnestness.

"Seriously, old man, you're quite right," he agreed. "I'm afraid the majority of the fellows have lost their heads. It's only to be expected, when you come to think of it. The whole thing has been so sudden."

But Handforth was grim.

"That's no excuse!" he retorted curtly. "They're Removites, aren't they? Well, they ought to have more sense! I've talked to them until I'm blue in the face! Unless we do something pretty quickly, there'll be a black mark against us on the very first morning of the experiment."

"By jingo, he's right!" said Pitt, nodding.

"In spite of your rough-and-ready ways, Handy, you've got plenty of sound common sense," said Dick Hamilton quietly. "We don't want that black mark against us—although, to be quite frank, I hardly see how we can avoid it."

"You can't see?" repeated Handforth, staring.

"Not exactly."

"And you call yourself a captain!"

"Look here——"

"Hand over the captaincy to me, and I'll soon show you what to do!" interrupted Edward Oswald fiercely. "But you're the skipper, so I won't say a word! I wouldn't dream of butting in. If you can't see an obvious thing, you're blind! That's all I can say!"

"Well, that's one consolation," remarked Pitt.

"But, mark you, if I was captain, I'd show you!" went on Handforth, with a snort. "I wouldn't stand here, gassing with a fat-headed River House chap!"

"Here, I say!" protested Brewster.

"I wouldn't waste my time on idle chatter!" roared Handforth. "If I was the skipper, I'd go round, and I'd punch every head within sight! I'd knock some sense into these brainless idiots! But as I'm not captain, I won't interfere—I won't say a word!"

"Good man!" said Pitt. "Silence is golden!"

"It's the wrong policy, Handy!" remarked Dick, shaking his head. "That's the policy that made you mess up the captaincy when you had it. Ram-headedness was never any good. These fellows need persuasion—not

"I agree!" said Handforth, examining his fist. "I'd persuade 'em!"

"Well, don't persuade them that way," advised Dick. "Remember that I'm the captain, and that it's up to me to use my own methods—even though you don't quite approve of them. If you want to help, though, you can buzz round, and tell the chaps I'm going to make a speech."

"Only let them get here fairly whole," put in Reggie. "Dick's speech won't be much

good if he simply addresses a strewn collection of wrecks!"

"Speech!" repeated Handforth scoffingly. "What on earth's the good of a speech? You might just as well talk to yourself! I tell you it's force they need—and plenty of it!"

But he went off, and the commotion in the Triangle increased somewhat as he settled down to work. Fullwood and De Valerie and a few of the other level-headed Removites were also collecting the Form together. They took no notice of the Third or the Fourth or the others. They were only interested in the Remove. And they were really worried—for most members of the Remove were behaving in a decidedly frivolous manner.

"Well, I'd better be off," said Hal Brewster reluctantly. "I'd love to stay here and see what happens when the bell rings for morning school—but unless I get a move on I shall be late for my own bell. And at the River House we *do* have punishments!"

"So-long, Hal!" said Dick, nodding. "Have pity on us, won't you?"

"Pity!" retorted Hal. "My hat! I wish I had your luck!"

He went off, and by this time the Removites were crowding round. After all, a Form meeting was a Form meeting—and when the captain gave the order it had to be obeyed. Those fellows who were reluctant to comply, were soon persuaded by Handforth's special methods.

"Now, you chaps, I've just got five minutes!" said Dick Hamilton, as he leapt upon the granite balustrade at the foot of the Ancient House steps. "Don't think I'm going to preach to you, or any rot like that—but I think we all ought to understand we're on our honour!"

"Hear, hear!"

"We shan't forget it, you ass!"

"The Head is trusting us to do the right thing," went on Dick earnestly. "He is giving Professor Hudson's theory a practical test. And if St. Frank's fails in the experiment, it'll be a pretty bad day for the old school! We shall confess to the world that we can't be trusted!"

"I thought you weren't going to preach!"

"Dry up, Hamilton!"

"Chuck it!"

"I'll dry up when I've finished!" shouted Dick. "I want to remind you that the school rules and regulations have got to be obeyed more strictly than we ever obeyed them under the old system. I want you to realise——"

"Rats! There aren't any rules now!"

"Of course not!"

"Or any regulations, either!"

"They've all been abolished, you chump!"

"Hold on!" roared Dick grimly. "Who said that?"

"I did!" retorted Hubbard, of the Ancient House.



"Then you'd better not preach that rot among the other chaps!" said the Form captain angrily. "Not a single rule has been abolished, you dangerous lunatic! Why the dickens can't you understand the thing clearly, instead of jumping to such idiotic conclusions? Every school rule and regulation stands."

"But the Head said——"

"Every rule stands, I tell you!" shouted Dick Hamilton. "But instead of them being enforced in the usual way, we have been placed on our honour to stick to them. If we miss lessons, we shan't get punished—if we break bounds, we shan't get punished. But we all know the rules, don't we? We all know the right thing to do! And as we're on our honour, it's absolutely up to us to do the right thing every time!"

"Hear, hear!" shouted Fullwood.

"We've got to prove to this American professor that we can be trusted!" went on Hamilton intently. "We've got to show him that a British school can adopt the Honour System, and make a success of it. Why, if we lose our heads, and ignore the rules altogether, we shall be everlastingly disgraced!"

"Rats! We're going to have a good time!"

"Blow the silly old rules!"

"Hear, hear!"

And the bulk of the Removites did their utmost to shout their captain down.



CHAPTER 3.

THE FIRST RESULT!

DICK HAMILTON, however, was not the kind of fellow to be easily silenced. He glared at the excited juniors, and raised his hand to restore order.

"Are you going to let me finish?" he asked curtly.

If Handforth had made that request, the audience would have ridiculed him. There were several who ridiculed Dick Hamilton, but only in a half-hearted way. Somehow, Dick possessed a certain magnetism which compelled his listeners to pay attention, even though they were reluctant to do so. Dick had a compelling personality, and his success as captain was easy to understand.

"Thanks!" he said, when something like silence reigned. "I don't blame you for being a bit noisy. We're only human, after all, and

this sudden change has bowled us over a bit. But why shouldn't we consider the matter quietly and sensibly?"

"There's nothing to consider!" growled Owen major. "We're our own masters, and we can do as we like. The Head said so himself!"

"The Head intimated that we could do as we liked—but what about the question of honour?" demanded Dick. "Under the old system, a fellow could break bounds, or commit any other little breach, and pay the piper. Many a fellow has deliberately broken a rule, and has cheerfully accepted a hundred lines, or a swishing. He has known that such a nominal punishment would square things up. Is that clear?"

"Of course it's clear."

"But what's the argument about?"

"There's no argument," said Dick quietly.

"As I've just said, under the old system a fellow could break a rule, take his punishment, and feel satisfied. But that sort of thing can't be done now! I'm trying to point out how important it is for you to realise the position."

"Why can't it be done now?" demanded somebody.

"Because we can break the rules with impunity!" retorted Dick. "We can ignore any old order we like, and escape

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scot-free!"

"Hear, hear!"

"That's the stuff to give 'em!"

"You've put it in a nutshell, Hamilton, old man!"

"Yes, but wait a minute!" said Dick. "We can break these rules and get off scot-free, but what about squaring things? How shall we feel if we snap our fingers at authority? Until to-day we could feel that an account was paid after we'd done an impot, or had a caning. But we're on our honour to stick to the rules, don't forget! And every one we break, we shall break at the risk of dishonouring our own names, and the school's name!"

"Good man!" said Pitt. "You've put it neatly!"

"Hear, hear!" said Fullwood.

"It may be neat, but it's not strong enough!" roared Handforth aggressively. "If any of you idiots defy the rules you'll be unable to square yourselves! A broken rule means dishonour!"

"Rats!"

"We can't be bothered with such trifles!"

"Of course not!"

"Don't make such a fuss over nothing, Hamilton!" sang out Hubbard. "I dare say you're right when it comes to a big thing,



but there'll be nothing dishonourable in missing calling-over, or walking in late for lessons. I'm out for sport, anyhow!"

"Same here!"

"You can dry up, Hamilton!"

A flood of excitement had swept through the crowd again—occasioned, probably, by the clanging of the School House bell. The juniors failed to realise that Dick's warning was justified. They held the view that Hubbard had expressed—that it would only be dishonourable to commit a really serious offence. Such trifles as breaking bounds, or missing lessons, or ignoring calling-over, were not to be considered.

Besides, what ripping sport to defy the school bell!

It was something they had never dared to do before. But now, owing to the new system, they could just please themselves. And why should they worry their heads over lessons on such a fine morning as this, when the sun was shining with a brilliance more like that of September than November?

And thus, the first result of the new system became apparent.

Hardly anybody obeyed the summons to attend morning school! And the excitement was general. It was not merely confined to the Remove. Similar events had been occurring in the Third, in the Fourth, and in the Fifth. Everybody was affected by the knowledge of freedom. The sudden realisation that they were their own masters temporarily robbed them of their balance. Their sense of the fitness of things had become dulled by the prevailing intoxication.

Perhaps the most successful junior leader was the redoubtable Willy Handforth. Everybody had predicted that the Third would run amok—that not a single fag would go within a hundred yards of their class-room. But the fact remained that the Third trooped in as usual, with only a handful of absentees.

True, many members of the Third were locking battered and bruised, and there was a general air of sullen reluctance. But Willy Handforth, at the head of his men, was comparatively happy. A black eye, a puffy lip, a thick left ear, and a general appearance of mutilation had no effect upon his spirits. He had been having a hot time of it, but his indomitable determination had won—or nearly won. A few of the more aggressive fags had defied him—by getting out of his reach, and remaining there.

"Never mind!" he confided to Chubby. "I've got them all taped! About eight of the beggars! I'll teach 'em to defy my orders! By jingo! By dinner-time they'll wish they'd never been born!"

A happy smile came over his battered face.

"Dinner-time!" he repeated dreamily. "Got it!"

"Got what?" asked Chubby.

"The idea!" said Willy. "Chubby, my old Dutch, the Third will turn up for afternoon lessons—solid!"

Mr. Suncliffe, the Form-master, was very astonished as his boys went to their places in

the usual way, and prepared for work. Some of the other masters had informed Mr. Suncliffe that he would have a morning off. But Mr. Suncliffe was not disappointed at being compelled to work—he felt, indeed, a sensation of pride. And he discreetly avoided any reference to the black eyes and thick ears which obtruded themselves upon his notice.

In the Fourth Form, the great Boots had failed. The Fourth was even worse than the Remove. In spite of John Busterfield Boots' strict instructions, it had decided to take full advantage of the new conditions, and was having the morning off. Only about half a dozen Fourth Formers turned up in the class-room. And Mr. Pycraft, the irascible custodian of the Form, made himself so thoroughly unpleasant that even this handful nearly walked out.

Browne, the skipper of the Fifth, was much more successful. True, the Fifth was a senior Form, and had rather strict ideas on the subject of honour. But quite a few of the Fifth Formers were keen upon celebrating their new independence by "chucking" morning school.

However, William Napoleon Browne gathered these recalcitrants together, and Browne was a wonderful talker. By the time he had finished, his audience was so exhausted that it had no further desire to oppose him. The prospect of peacefully sitting in the Form-room was quite alluring, and they crawled there with what remaining strength they possessed.

The Sixth, of course, was naturally orderly. The Sixth wouldn't dream of taking advantage of the Honour System—at least, not where lessons were concerned. It was up to them to set a dignified example to the younger boys.

Without question, most of the excitement was confined to the junior school.

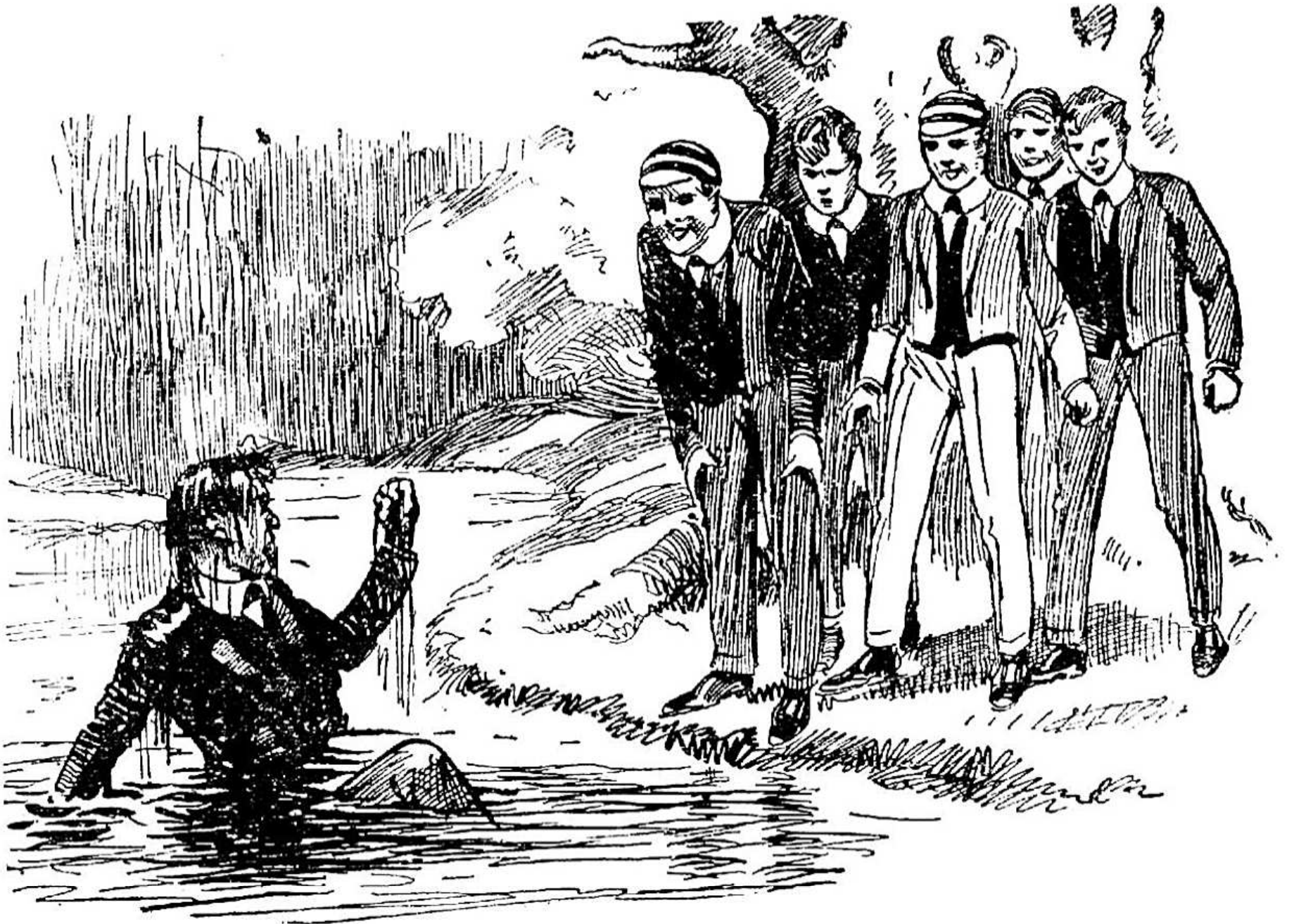
The Triangle was still crowded with fellows after the school bell had clanged out its last note. Ordinarily, if a fellow found himself out of doors at that fatal moment, he would have sped like a rabbit to his Form-room, breathlessly praying that he would be able to sneak in unnoticed.

But now—what a difference!

Juniors were sauntering about with their hands in their pockets. Outwardly, they were revelling in their freedom. But, inwardly, they were full of qualms. This was the test! Would they be rounded up, and hustled to work? Somehow, it seemed rather incredible that they could defy the bell with impunity.

But the minutes passed, and there were no prefects hurrying round—no masters shouting out their angry orders. Quite the contrary. Morrow, of the Sixth, hurried from the School House, and took no notice of the absentees. And when the Head himself walked round—amid a general gasp of apprehension—the delinquents knew that they were safe. For the Head merely frowned upon them with unmistakable severity, but he gave no orders, and offered no comment. He was sticking to his announcement that the boys





Handforth sat up in the icy water and glared at the Removites grinning on the bank. "And if you come back and interrupt our game again, we'll think of some other way to cool you off!" Hubbard informed him cheerfully.

could please themselves, and that no punishment would result from the ignoring of a rule.

"There you are!" said Hubbard gleefully, as the Head vanished through West Arch. "What do you think of that, my lads? He didn't say a word! Imagine the horrible result if we had been out here at this hour yesterday!"

"Swishings all round!" said Doyle.

"Lines and gatings!" grinned Canham. "We're safe now!"

"I say, let's get up a football match!" suggested Owen major excitedly. "Let's challenge the Fourth to a game, and have some fun!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Good idea!"

And a whole crowd of juniors deserted the Triangle, and went off to Little Side, to indulge in some real liberty.



#### CHAPTER 4.

##### THE HEAD IS DUBIOUS!

HE Remove Form-room looked forlorn.

Altogether, there were about fifteen juniors present. Seven of these were

considerably knocked about—for they had

been literally hammered into submission by Handforth. One by one, he had smashed them until they had promised to behave.

But Handforth could hardly divide himself into twenty or thirty different sections, and so the majority of the fellows had escaped his energetic attentions. He had threatened to reduce the whole Form to pulp if it dishonoured the school by missing lessons. But then the final bell had gone, and, in order to keep true to his own precepts, he had been obliged to go to the class-room. He couldn't very well continue his private war, for this would make him almost as bad as the delinquents.

Mr. Crowell came in anxiously, but he faltered in his stride as he observed the tiny sprinkling of fellows. He had expected a number of absentees, but nothing so bad as this.

"Hamilton!" he rapped out. "Where are the boys?"

"They don't seem to have turned up, sir!" replied Dick.

"So I can see!" retorted Mr. Crowell. "But where are they? You are the captain, are you not? How is it that you have allowed——"

"Chuck it, sir!" broke in Handforth indignantly. "It's not fair to scalp Hamilton!"

"What did you say, Handforth?" demanded Mr. Crowell icily.

"It's not fair to scalp Hamilton, sir!"



"Good gracious! What good is it to give you an opportunity of correcting yourself, Handforth?" said Mr. Crowell hopelessly. "How many times have I told you that civilised people do not indulge in scalping?"

Handforth looked surprised.

"But I'm civilised, sir," he replied. "And I've scalped lots of chaps this morning. And if you'll give me permission, I'll buzz out and bring the rest of the chaps in."

"You will remain in your seat, Handforth, and be good enough to hold your tongue," barked Mr. Crowell. "It is not my business to make any comment upon these new ideas, but while you are in my class-room, I shall insist upon having control."

"I expect the chaps will recover their sense of proportion by this afternoon, sir," said Dick Hamilton earnestly. "They're honourable enough, in the main, but they're too excited to think properly."

"The whole thing is utterly beyond my comprehension!" said Mr. Crowell bitterly. "If you choose to walk out of the room, I can do nothing to stop you! Where is my authority?"

"That's all right, sir—we shall be just the same as ever," declared Reggie Pitt. "In fact, you can count on the Form backing you up more strongly than ever before. It's only a question of getting settled down."

Mr. Crowell grunted. He felt that he had said too much already, for it was not his place to make any comment upon the Head's doings to his boys. But Mr. Crowell, like most of the other masters, strongly disapproved of the Honour System. They felt—and with some justification—that every atom of authority was being taken out of their hands. They had no particular faith in the boys realising their responsibility as Professor Hudson fondly hoped would be the case.

"I shall make a mental note of every boy present," declared Mr. Crowell, eyeing the skeleton Form. "That, I imagine, will not be very difficult! I am not going to congratulate you upon your sense of duty, because you have merely done the least that could be expected. As for the rest, I am disappointed and grieved. I thought my boys had more respect for the school, and for me."

"They haven't given themselves time to think, sir," urged Dick.

"A ready excuse, Hamilton, but I am not so willing to condone them," growled Mr. Crowell. "Not that I expected anything else. Heaven only knows how we shall be able to maintain any discipline at all!"

He felt it safer to make no further comment, for he was liable to say too much. He ordered the boys to take out their books, and to get to work—and inwardly hoped that the Head would soon realise the folly of his experiment.

There was one fact which not only surprised Mr. Crowell, but Dick Hamilton and Pitt and Handforth as well. The boys present included such level-headed juniors as De Valerie, Glenthorne, Tregellis-West, Jack Grey, Russell, and Singleton. But Bernard

Forrest had attended lessons also—and he had brought his cronies of Study A, Gulliver and Bell, with him.

And yet these three were real cads—just the type of fellow who would naturally take advantage of the new order, since they had utterly no conception of honour, or all that the word stood for. Their presence was rather gratifying under the circumstances.

But Forrest was cunning, and Dick Hamilton suspected that he had some ulterior reason for this show of duty. And Dick was right.

"There's no sense in missing lessons, or defying any rules of that sort," murmured Forrest, as he and his chums settled down to work. "Our best policy is to give a good impression. We'll take advantage of the new freedom this evening, when we can walk out just as we like, and come back at any old hour we like! And no questions asked!"

"Why shouldn't we cut lessons, too?" muttered Bell.

"Because we want to make old Crowell believe that we're to be trusted—that's why," replied Forrest. "If we comply with all the ordinary rules, we shan't be bothered with any supervision at bed-time. I am playing for safety, my sons."

"I suppose you're right," admitted Gulliver.

Mr. Crowell looked up.

"Stop this talking at once!" he commanded. "Just because you are your own masters—a ridiculous anomaly in any school!—I will not have this talking during lessons! Silence, at once!"

He expected an immediate show of insolence from Forrest, but none came.

"Sorry, sir!" said Bernard. "We forgot, sir."

"That is all right, Forrest, but remember in future," said Mr. Crowell.

Dick Hamilton pursed his lips.

"Something fishy about this," he told himself. "I shall have to keep my eye on those beggars. They want old Crowell to look upon them as models of honour; but I know them a bit better than that!"

The door opened, and the headmaster strode in, followed by Professor Grant Hudson, the school's distinguished guest. Everybody at once rose to their feet and stood at attention.

"Dear me!" murmured the Head, rather aghast.

Mr. Crowell turned to him stiffly.

"You did not advise me, sir, that you were to honour me by this visit!" he said, striving, unsuccessfully, to hide his annoyance.

"No, Mr. Crowell, I am making an informal visit to the class-rooms," explained Dr. Stafford. "Boys, you may be seated. Upon my word! A handful, professor—a mere handful!"

Professor Hudson nodded.

"It is distressing, Dr. Stafford, but I venture to predict that these class-rooms will have a very different appearance to-morrow," he said. "I urge you not to be too hasty in your judgment."



The American professor was a straight, upright gentleman with iron-grey hair and a clean-shaven face. He was an American of obviously good breeding—a man of high ideals and absolute integrity. He, too, shared some of the headmaster's anxiety.

"The other boys, I presume, Mr. Crowell, have failed to attend?" asked the Head. "You have taken no steps to collect them?"

Mr. Crowell stiffened.

"I was not aware, sir, that it was within my province to go round persuading the boys to follow me into the class-room," he replied icily. "However, if you wish it, I have no alternative—"

"No, no, Mr. Crowell," interrupted the Head hastily. "Certainly not! The boys should have sufficient common sense to attend without any compulsion. They know their duty, and they know my wishes. It is just as well that we should let this test follow its logical course."

They went out, and closed the door.

"I feared as much, professor," said the Head, in great perturbation. "Good heavens! Not one-third of the class at work! The rest—where? Playing in the fields—probably breaking bounds and committing all sorts of minor offences. I confess that I am intensely worried."

"Then let me point out that this was only to be expected," said the professor quickly. "It will take a day, at least, for the boys to recover their sense of proportion.

During the first few hours, it is only natural that they will be rather out of hand. But I am convinced that my theory is right—that the school will prove itself capable of discharging this trust honourably."

Dr. Stafford shook his head.

"We shall see," he said. "I hope you are right, professor. For the sake of St. Frank's good name, I earnestly hope you are right."

They entered the Fourth Form class-room, and the Head compressed his lips grimly. This was worse than the Remove! Mr. Pycraft was presiding over a mere dozen. Dr. Stafford had very little to say, but Mr. Pycraft was full of woes.

"It is distressing, sir," he complained. "I have done everything within my power. I went out personally, and ordered the boys to follow me, but they retorted that they have your permission to do as they like. Under those circumstances, I naturally succumb."

"Have no fear, Mr. Pycraft," replied the Head. "The boys are indeed their own masters—that is the whole object of this ex-

periment. But we must give them time. We cannot expect too much on the first morning."

He escaped, for he felt guilty of having placed his under-masters in a very unenviable position. If the boys acted rightly, the masters would not be affected. But when they started off by ignoring the rules wholesale, the result was likely to be serious.

"This is far worse than I had even feared, professor," said Dr. Stafford, when they got out into the corridor again. "What am I to say to these gentlemen when they complain to me? I am beginning to regret—"

"Wait!" interrupted the professor quietly. "Do me the honour of giving my theories a thorough testing before you pass judgment. As I originally declared, a full month will be necessary to make the experiment thorough."

"A month!" ejaculated the Head. "Upon my soul, professor, if we are to form any conclusions from this morning, the whole school will be disorganised and disbanded long before a month has elapsed."

The professor laughed.

"Within a week the school will be running normally," he declared. "You shake your head, sir—but remember my words!"

"If we last a week, I will," replied the Head dryly. "I am filled with apprehension. Here," he added, as he paused before the

door of the Third Form class-room, "we shall doubtless find Mr. Suncliffe sitting in solitary state."

They went in, and the Head started. At first sight, the Third was absolutely normal. All the boys were at work, and Mr. Suncliffe was busily chalking things on the blackboard.

"Good gracious!" ejaculated the Head, staring.

CHAPTER 5.

HANDFORTH TAKES FRENCH LEAVE.

THE Third arose like one man, as Willy Handforth gave a signal.

"Good-morning, sir!" said the Third, in one

voice.

"Er—good-morning, boys!" said the Head, rather confused. "I am delighted, Mr. Sun-

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cliffe!" he added, with great relief. "I am quite delighted!"

Mr. Suncliffe, whose mind was full of figures, looked mildly astonished.

"Indeed, sir?" he said.

"Your Form appears to be almost intact," went on the Head.

"And why not, sir?" asked Mr. Suncliffe, with a sudden frown. "I believe there are six or seven absentees, and I offer my sincere apologies for this state of affairs. Perhaps the boys will be thoroughly ashamed of themselves during the morning, and will put in an appearance later."

The Head hardly knew what to say. The very Form of which he had expected the worst was almost intact—and Mr. Suncliffe was apologising for it! But neither the Head nor Mr. Suncliffe realised that Willy Handforth was solely responsible for the Form's astonishing sense of duty. Willy's influence in the Third was uncanny, and his rule was absolute. The fact that a few fags had defied him was, in his opinion, an everlasting disgrace, and he was resolved that they should pay dearly for their defiance.

The Head managed to escape somehow, and his expression was rather different after he had found the Fifth and Sixth intact to a man.

"It is not so bad as I had feared," he admitted. "I am particularly astonished at the Third Form boys. They have gone up greatly in my estimation. Splendid! I expected the seniors to have a full appreciation of their duties—but the Third, no. I am gratified!"

"The other Forms will soon toe the line," declared Professor Hudson, smiling. "Just give them time, my dear sir, and you will be astonished. You have placed these boys on their honour, and they will not fail."

"But they *have* failed!"

"Not through any lack of honour," put in the professor. "Mere thoughtlessness, Dr. Stafford—the natural result of excitement. When they have begun to think, when they have realised what is expected of them, they will justify my faith in them."

"But the fags!" murmured the Head. "Really, it is quite astounding. The Fourth Form and the Remove have greatly disappointed me. I hope you are right in your prediction that normal conditions will soon return. You must realise that we are very helpless now. With all punishments abolished, we are simply in the hands of the boys. It rests entirely with them to uphold the dignity of the school—and to do so simply and purely through their sense of honour."

"A severe test, I will grant," admitted Professor Hudson. "But I would never have suggested it if I had not had a conviction that it would be absolutely successful."

And while they were walking out of the School House, Handforth was growing very restless in the Remove class-room. More than once he had stood up, and on two distinct occasions he had walked towards the door, only to go back to his desk. When he

had stood up still again, Mr. Crowell thought it time to intervene.

"I am well aware, Handforth, that you are at liberty to neglect lessons if you wish," he said tartly. "But while you are in this room, I must insist upon your remaining still. Your constant bobbing about is most discouraging!"

"Bobbing about, sir?" repeated Handforth, with a start.

"Yes, bobbing about!"

"I'm thinking, sir," explained Handforth.

"Then you will oblige me by thinking without the accompaniment of these continuous acts of restlessness," said Mr. Crowell. "Lessons are quite farcical enough without you making them ludicrous."

"Farcical, sir?" repeated Handforth. "But we're working, aren't we?"

"The other boys, I believe, are applying themselves as far as the circumstances will permit," agreed Mr. Crowell. "But I am not so sure about your own work, Handforth. You have been dodging up and down for the last ten minutes. What is the subject of our present lesson?"

"Geography, sir!" said Handforth promptly.

"Good heavens!" gasped Mr. Crowell. "You know well enough that we are taking history!"

"Oh, well, there's not much difference, sir!" said Handforth airily. "The fact is, I'm worrying about those other fellows."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Crowell coldly. "I am grateful, Handforth, that you should shoulder my trials in this way. But you will please remember that you are in this room for the purpose of working. I can do all the worrying necessary, without any assistance from you."

"I'll tell you what, sir," said Handforth. "I'll go and fetch 'em!"

"You will sit down, and devote yourself to history!" retorted Mr. Crowell. "So that is why you have been so uneasy? You want to go out and bring the Form here, do you? I much regret, Handforth, that I have not much faith in your capabilities."

"I'll persuade them, sir," said Handforth eagerly, as he unconsciously tightened his knuckles. "It's all a matter of tact——"

"He's right, sir," interrupted Hamilton. "I was thinking very much the same thing myself. I wish you'd let me go out and give the chaps a good talking to."

"I am not sure that I want them here," said Mr. Crowell coldly. "The boys are on their honour, and if they choose to be dishonourable, and slight me in this outrageous fashion, they may do so. I only hope that they will ultimately appreciate their guilt."

"Oh, but that's all rot, sir!" protested Handforth warmly. "I—I mean—— They won't appreciate anything, sir, unless somebody put it to them straight from the shoulder. Look here, let me go, sir! I'll round 'em all up, and bring 'em back. Is that all right, sir?"



He moved towards the door.

"Handforth, I have already told you——" began Mr. Crowell.

"Then it's a go, sir?" asked Handforth briskly. "Good!"

"Upon my word! I didn't——"

"That's all right, sir—trust me!" said Handforth briskly, as he opened the door. "Now that I've got your permission, I feel satisfied. I shan't be more than five minutes."

"Handforth!" thundered Mr. Crowell.

"Thank me when I come back, sir," said Edward Oswald, as he hurried out.

He closed the door, and Mr. Crowell gasped.

"Is it possible that the boy deliberately defied me—or did he honestly believe that I gave him permission?" he asked, in wonder.

"I can scarcely credit—— There is no need for this exhibition of inane grinning!" he added sharply. "Attend to your work at once!"

In the meantime, Handforth, fully under the impression that he had received permission, hurried out into the Triangle. He rolled his sleeves up as he went, and he looked round with a hungry, searching expression.

"I'll show 'em!" he muttered fiercely.

The Triangle was empty, but the sound of distant shouts served as a good guide, and he hurried off to Little Side. He paused, aghast, as he saw what was happening. Handforth's sense of duty was very strict, and it enraged him to see these fellows setting the rules and regulations at defiance, and ignoring the appeal to their sense of honour.

"By George!" he muttered fiercely.

A football match was in progress—a match between the Fourth and the Remove. Under no circumstances could it be called a serious effort, particularly as there were twenty-odd players in each team.

The whole field was crowded with fellows, and they were shouting and laughing and monkeying about in a spirit of reckless abandon. It was a rag, pure and simple, although one fellow was acting as a referee, and there were two goalkeepers aside.

"What's all this?" roared Handforth, as he rushed in among the players.

"Come on, Handy!" yelled Hubbard breathlessly. "Just the man we want!"

"We're two goals down against these giddy Fourth-Formers!" grinned Duncan. "Come on—join in——"

"Wait a minute!" interrupted Handforth curtly. "You're coming with me—every one of you! And the first chap who attempts to defy my orders will wake up and find himself in the middle of Christmas!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A yell of derision went up.

"Clear off, Handy—we're busy!"

"Remember your honour!" thundered Handforth sternly. "The Remove has got to set an example to the whole school! And here you are, acting the giddy ox like this! What do you call this game, anyhow?"

"We're trying twenty-two a side!" chuckled one of the juniors. "I say, you keep goal

for us, Handy, and we'll defy these Fourth-Formers to score!"

"That's it!" shouted somebody else. "We'll have one goalie, and let them have two! And we'll still win!"

"Rather! Handy's the chap!"

"Rot!" shouted Armstrong, of the Fourth. "Handy couldn't prevent us from scoring on his own! If we have two goalies, you've got to have two!"

Handforth snorted.

"What!" he snapped. "Do you think I couldn't keep you fatheads out?"

"No, you couldn't!" retorted Armstrong.

"All right—we'll see!" shouted Handforth excitedly. "You can play fifty men if you like—and I'll prevent you from getting any goals! Come on, blow you!"

He ripped off his jacket, and prepared for the fray. Considering that he had come out to drag the Removites into the class-room, he wasn't making much of a success of it.



## CHAPTER 6.

NOT VERY SUCCESSFUL!

O it, O'Grady!"

"Shoot!"

O'Grady of the Modern House took a long shot; Handforth met the

leather with his fist and contemptuously sent it back into play.

"Rats!" he sneered. "Didn't I tell you that you can't score?"

"Then what do you call this?" grinned Armstrong.

Crash!

He sent in a shot that nearly went through the back of the net.

"Goal!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly ass, you were off-side!" roared Handforth. "I didn't even try to save it! Besides, the referee had blown his whistle——"

"That doesn't make any difference," said Armstrong. "There's no off-side in this game, and we only take notice of the referee when we want to. That was a goal, my lad, and it counts!"

"Oh, does it?" retorted Handforth. "All right, Timothy Armstrong, if you'll come over here I'll show you what it's like to turn a back somersault! If you think you can make your own rules, I'll——"

"Don't be an ass!" interrupted Armstrong. "It's only a rag game, and it's up to you to save the ball whenever it comes near you. Come on, let's start again!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Better than mouldy old lessons!"

Handforth gave a violent start.

"Here, I've forgotten something!" he roared, aghast. "I came out here to haul you fellows into the class-room!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"



"And you're playing, Handy!"

"I'm not!" gasped Handforth. "At least, I didn't mean to! Only—only these blithering Fourth-Formers goaded me into it! Now, then—I'm not going to have any more of this rot! Are you coming to the class-room quietly, or shall I drag you there?"

"We'll let you drag us, old man!" said Goodwin, grinning.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Better chuck it up, Handy, old son!" said Armstrong. "If you've come out here to coax these Remove chaps indoors, you've bitten off a big order!"

"Coax them!" repeated Handforth. "Yes—with my fist!"

"Don't be so optimistic," said Armstrong, shaking his head. "They're not going to be ordered about by you—besides, we're going to finish this game. So the sooner you clear off the field, the better. Are you going to clear off peacefully and meekly, or shall we duck you in the river first?"

"If you duck me in the river, these Remove chaps will wipe you up!" retorted Handforth curtly. "And, if it comes to that, try and duck me! Now then, you Remove chaps! Are you ready? Follow me! March!"

The Removites failed to march.

"I think we'll help these Fourth-Formers to duck you!" said Hubbard, grinning.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good idea!"

This base insubordination of his own Form fellows took Handforth by surprise. With his usual assurance he had taken it for granted that the Removites would back him up without question.

"We don't want to argue," he said grimly. "I've ordered you to come with me to the class-room. Time's going on, and Mr. Crowell's in a stew. I shan't ask you again. I've asked you too many times already. Now, then, are you coming?"

"You're not asking us, are you?" grinned Owen major. "And I don't see any reason why we should reply. Let's get on with the game. Buzz off, Handy—you're a nuisance. If you don't want to play, go back to your lessons!"

"I told you I wasn't going to argue!" roared Handforth. "Take that, Charles Owen!"

Owen major went over with a crash, and carried two or three other juniors with him. Handforth was getting dangerous. Unfortunately, he was entirely single-handed, for all the juniors were against him. They hadn't the slightest intention of going indoors for lessons. Why should they? They were under no compulsion now, and they were too excited to think of the headmaster's trust.

"Look here, Handforth, we've had just about enough of this!" said Armstrong curtly. "You're spoiling the game, and you're making an ass of yourself. Clear off while you're safe—our patience won't last much longer, you know."

"Mine's gone!" retorted Handforth darkly. "I'm fed up with the whole crowd of you! I told Mr. Crowell I'd bring you back, and there's an end of it. I'll give you one minute to form up in a line!"

The Removites gave a roar, and decided to adopt the suggestion that the Fourth-Formers had put forward. Handforth was trying his old games. He seemed to think he was in a position of command, and he evidently expected the fellows to obey him without question.

It did not take them long to disabuse him of this impression.

"Come on—the poor chap's too hot!" sang out Hubbard. "He needs cooling a bit! Grab him! One—two—three!"

Before Handforth could make any attempt to defend himself half the Remove bowled him over. He was spread-eagled on the turf, and he was lifted up by eager hands, and borne swiftly up the playing-fields towards the river. His mind was in a state of bewildered chaos.

If the Fourth had done this he might have understood it. But his own Form fellows were about to duck him—with the Fourth looking on. Although Handforth had definitely asked for trouble, he was filled with astonishment at finding it. He was never able to learn that aggressive methods only beget aggressive methods.

"You—you traitors!" he panted, as he was carried along. "Lemme go! Haven't you got any sense of decency? You ought to show these Fourth-Formers how to respect the Head's wishes, instead of mauling me about! If you chuck me in the river, I'll never speak to any of you again!"

"That's done it!" shouted Owen major. "In with him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

They reached the river bank, and wasted no further time. They were so excited that they gave no thought to any possible ill-effects. It was November, and the river was cold. They only knew that they would receive no punishment for whatever they did, and this knowledge rendered them reckless.

Handforth went in with a terrific splash. The water was shallow here, so shallow, in fact, that when he sat up in the mud, his head was above the surface. The Removites were shouting with laughter on the bank.

"Now we can finish our game!" grinned Dick Goodwin.

"And if Handforth comes back, we'll think of something else to cool him off," added Hubbard. "The giddy cheek! Calmly thinking he can order us about just as he likes! It's likely we're going to obey him, when we don't even have to obey the ordinary school rules!"

Every atom of fight was knocked out of the unfortunate Edward Oswald. He dragged himself out of the river, and made his way back to the School House without even attempting to get his revenge. He would





Zurrrrrrrh! "Hi! Look out, you fathead!" Dick Hamilton stopped just in time—the rocket shot past his nose, narrowly missing demolishing that organ of physiognomy. "You dangerous lunatics!" he roared. "You'll kill somebody before you've finished!"

leave that until afterwards! Ordinary common sense told him that his first duty was to get into dry clothing.

But he went and reported to Mr. Crowell first. And the Form-master was by no means surprised when the door opened, and Handforth stood there, looking very much like a drowned rat.

"Ah, Handforth!" he said, peering over the tops of his glasses. "My congratulations! You will observe the large number of boys you have succeeded in persuading——"

"They—they wouldn't come, sir!" gasped Handforth.

"Very remiss of them!" said Mr. Crowell sarcastically. "I presume you are aware of the fact, Handforth, that I gave you no permission to leave this room? What have you been doing? You are wet through! Go upstairs at once, and change your clothes!"

"Yes, sir!" said Handforth meekly.

He closed the door, and Dick Hamilton rose to his feet.

"Shall I have a shot, sir?" he asked quietly.

"Not if it will result in the same disastrous fashion as Handforth's effort!" retorted Mr. Crowell dubiously. "I am really afraid, Hamilton, that the boys are beyond all sense of propriety. This unfortunate edict has caused them to lose their heads."

"Still, we can't go on like this, sir," replied Dick firmly. "And unless we take the idiots

in hand at once, they'll grow worse. I'd like to go and talk to them, sir, if you don't mind. I'll be back in a few minutes."

Mr. Crowell shrugged his shoulders.

"Do as you please," he said wearily. "Strictly speaking, I suppose I ought to be thankful that you should ask for permission. Hamilton. Has not the Head ordained that you are at liberty to go out when you please, and to come back as the fit takes you?"

He spoke rather bitterly, and Dick could sympathise with him. For, unless the Form strictly adhered to the ordinary rules of the school, Mr. Crowell's powers were nil. And this present defiance was enough to distress any master. The skipper went out with a grim expression on his face.

"Hallo! What on earth's the matter with you, Handforth?" he asked, as he came upon Edward Oswald in the lobby. "Why don't you go and get those wet things off?"

"I'm just going!" said Handforth, with a dazed look in his eyes. "I say, I've just heard that the Third is practically intact—all of 'em at work, you know! The Third!"

"That's enough to make the Remove ashamed!" said Dick curtly. "Thanks for the information, Handy. What did the chaps do to you—chuck you in the river?"

"Yes, the rotters!" snapped Handforth. "I ordered them to follow me, and this is the result!"

"Well, I'm going to have a try," said Dick



Hamilton. "You get out of those wet things quickly, old son, or you'll be down with influenza before to-morrow. It's not summertime, remember."

"I'm going to make a dash for it now," replied Handforth. "But you're mad to go out there. If I couldn't bring any of the fatheads back, what chance have you got? Be sensible, for goodness' sake!"

And he went off, marvelling that Hamilton could be such an idiot as to kid himself that he could succeed where he—Handforth—had failed. The thing was ridiculous, on the face of it!"



## CHAPTER 7.

### DICK HAMILTON'S WAY!

THOUGHT as much!"

The Remove captain stood against the ropes of the football field, and looked grimly on while the revellers continued their nonsensical performance. Most of them were only doing it out of bravado—just to celebrate their independence. Perhaps the game had started with a certain amount of enthusiasm, but now it was only being carried on because nobody liked to admit that it was silly.

In fact, the truants were discovering that the time was liable to hang on their hands. There wasn't half so much fun in staying away from lessons as they had originally imagined. The fact that the rest of the school was at work acted rather as a damper to their enthusiasm.

So, when Dick Hamilton strode on to the field, he had little or no difficulty in stopping the game. But his arrival incensed them. They weren't going to stand any preaching! Not likely! They had had enough trouble with Handforth, and they weren't going to stand any rot from Hamilton, even though he was their skipper!

"You can clear off, Hamilton!"

"You needn't think you can order us in, because we're not going!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Don't be so ready to take things for granted," retorted Dick Hamilton quietly. "I haven't come here to order anybody—or to preach, either. But if you're willing to listen to me for two minutes, I'd like to say a few words. It's entirely up to you—I don't want to force myself on you if I'm not wanted."

"You're going to lecture us, I suppose?" sneered Hubbard.

"Well, look here—are you going to let me speak for two minutes?" demanded Dick. "Give me a hearing, and I'll be satisfied. Afterwards, you can do just as you please. I'm not going to ask anybody to do anything—but I've got an idea that you've misunderstood the position."

"Oh, go ahead—but cut it short!"

There was something about Dick Hamilton's attitude which made it almost impos-

sible to refuse him. The fellows were feeling uncomfortable, too. They had had a sensation of guilt, more or less, ever since they ignored the school bell. But they were too obstinate to admit that they had acted foolishly.

"Well, I haven't got much to say," exclaimed Dick. "Of course, you are at liberty to do exactly as you please—that's understood. But what is the Head going to think of you?"

"What do we care what he thinks?"

"I rather believe you do care," retorted Dick. "Dr. Stafford has given us the chance to be our own masters—to feel that we're capable of being trusted. The whole affair's an experiment; but what's going to happen to it if you keep up this rot? It'll fail with a flop, and we shall go back to the old restrictions. That's as certain as the sun is shining."

"That's all the more reason to make hay now!" said Owen major.

"Hear, hear!"

"We don't want your preaching, Hamilton!"

"I'm not preaching—I'm only telling you that the Head has put us all in a position of trust," said Dick. "And the Remove and the Fourth are failing him. And what about Professor Hudson? Do you want to show an American that we're incapable of being trusted?"

"There's no harm in a bit of sport!" grumbled somebody.

"We're on our honour to respect all the rules," said the captain grimly. "If any of you have got any real sense of honour, you'll go to the class-room at once, and show Mr. Crowell that you're made of the right stuff. It's a nice state of affairs when the Third sets us an example!"

"The Third?"

"Yes—practically the whole Form is at work in the class-room," said Dick contemptuously. "Fags, mind you! And you fellows, who try to ruin this experiment in the first hour, are in the Remove! Hang it," he added, with a sudden note of appeal, "why the dickens can't you do the decent thing, and come indoors?"

"By gum, he's right!" said Goodwin promptly. "We'll come, Dick!"

"Yes, there's no fun in this rot!" agreed Duncan.

"Come on, you chaps—let's chuck it!"

Dick Hamilton was gratified to hear these encouraging shouts of support. Fully half the Remoyites backed him up, once a few of their number had started the ball rolling. But a number of others, consisting of the irresponsible element, flatly refused to tamely walk indoors. They were encouraged by the derisive shouts of the Fourth Formers.

"That's right—walk in like good little boys!" jeered Armstrong. "What about our game, you rotters? How can we finish it if you desert us in the middle of it?"

"Yes, you chaps—let's finish the game, anyhow!" shouted Hubbard.



"No, it's a mad sort of affair, at the best," said Duncan. "I'm going to follow Hamilton's advice, and go indoors."

"Same here!" declared Goodwin.

Within a minute the Remove had ranged itself into two opposing parties—those who supported the captain, and those who were in favour of continued liberty. It was useless to talk to these latter of honour. They were far too excited—far too irresponsible to listen to any reason.

The game was off, anyhow, and even the Fourth Formers weren't sorry about this. There hadn't been much fun in it, anyhow. They needed something more thrilling—something with a real "kick" in it.

It was Marriott, of the East House, who solved the problem.

"Great Scott!" he shouted suddenly. "I've just remembered something, you chaps! What about the Fifth?"

"The Fifth?"

"To-day's Guy Fawkes' Day!" roared Marriott excitedly.

"My only hat! So it is!"

"We'd forgotten all about it!" yelled Hubbard, of the Remove. "I've got piles of fireworks, too! What with all this shin-ly, we'd nearly overlooked the Fifth! I say, what a chance to have some sport!"

"We ought to wait until this evening—"

"No fear!" grinned Hubbard.

"There are plenty of fireworks that are just as good in the daytime as at night! Crackers and squibs and things! Let's bring 'em out here, and have a regular celebration!"

"Hurrah!"

"Hold on!" shouted Dick Hamilton angrily. "Haven't you fellows got any brains at all? You can't disturb the school with fireworks in the middle of the morning! It's a filthy trick to defy the Head—"

But it was like talking to a horde of Red Indians. The juniors took not the slightest notice, but rushed off, yelling and dancing—filled with enthusiasm for this new thrill. Fireworks, of course, were forbidden during the morning ordinarily. But nothing was forbidden now! And to-day was the Fifth! It would be sheer insanity to neglect an opportunity like this.

"Well, we'd better go into the class-room," said Dick curtly. "Thank goodness half of you have had enough sense to keep out of this rot! Poor old Crowell is worried stiff! Let's go and cheer him up a bit!"

"Why not stay here, and drag these chaps in by the scruff of their necks?" suggested

Duncan. "I was an ass myself—but you've knocked a bit of sense into me, Hamilton! And this firework business is too thick for words!"

Now that the Removites had come round to Dick's way of thinking, they were eager enough to support him. They were hotly opposed to the wildness of the others.

Without the support of the Fourth Formers, the remaining Removites might have been dealt with effectively. But with Armstrong and his irresponsibles to back them up, they were determined to extract every minute of fun from this occasion.

Many of them were soon back, armed with squibs and giant crackers and every possible variety of firework.

"It's the Fifth—so we can't be blamed for having some sport," said Armstrong, grinning. "It ought to have been a whole holiday to-day, but as the Head hasn't had sense enough to grant one, we're taking it ourselves!"

"Hear, hear!"

The next moment the air was filled with hundreds of sharp explosions, as jumping crackers were set off in a dozen places at once. The air became filled with the pungent smoke of burning gunpowder, and the revelling juniors danced about with frantic excitement.

"Come on!" said Dick Hamilton gruffly.

It seemed to him that the only way

was to leave these idiots to it. The presence of any spectators only made them worse—particularly when they knew that these spectators were hostile towards them. A ridiculous spirit of bravado had prompted this mid-morning letting-off of fireworks. And, somehow, the very noise of the explosions seemed to encourage the young rascals. They were celebrating their hour of independence! For the moment the sacred St. Frank's code of honour was abandoned.

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CHAPTER 8.

MORE THAN THEY BARGAINED FOR!

URRRRRRH!



With a terrific roar, a rocket went zig-zagging giddily across Little Side, almost parallel with the

ground. Some lunatic had lighted it without troubling to secure the stick.

"Hi! Look out there!"



"Out of the way, you fatheads!"

The rocket was a big one, and if it had hit anybody it might have done some damage. But, by sheer good luck, it fell hissing and sizzling to the ground, after it had shaved Dick Hamilton's head by a mere four inches.

"You dangerous maniacs!" roared Dick furiously.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Dick ran to the rocket, and stamped upon it furiously; he extinguished the burning powder, but he was smothered in a cloud of acrid smoke.

"Hi, that's my rocket!" yelled Hubbard, as he ran up. "You've ruined it!"

"Yes, and unless you stop this madness I'll ruin you!" retorted Dick hotly. "Haven't you got more sense than to fire those things off like that? You'll kill somebody unless you're careful."

"Go and boil yourself!" shouted Hubbard recklessly.

Dick compressed his lips, knowing that it would be useless to thrash this irresponsible hothead. The others would only receive encouragement. They were bad enough already, without making them worse.

"We'd better get out of this, by gum," said Dick Goodwin uneasily. "If the Head sees us, he'll think we're mixed up in the business!"

"Yes, we'll go!" said the captain, with a nod.

He was looking upset. He took a great pride in the honour of the Remove, and it hurt him deeply to see these young fools jeopardising the Form's good name by their frenzied exhibition of so-called independence.

But something happened just then to pull the level-headed juniors to a halt.

Somebody—whether it was Hubbard or not, Dick couldn't discover—fired off another rocket. This was an enormous thing—one that must have cost nine or ten shillings for the single piece. And when a rocket of that kind is mis-fired, something pretty serious is liable to happen.

With a devastating roar, and amid wild yells from the juniors, the rocket half rose at a low slant. And then, zig-zagging fearfully, it crashed full tilt into the junior pavilion. There was a clatter of broken glass, and then the interior of the pavilion was luridly filled with green fire.

"Oh, my goodness!"

"Bullseye!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The shouts, however, were somewhat subdued. The wild excitement ceased, just as though a wet blanket had fallen over the party. This pavilion incident had sobered the young idiots very effectively.

"The pavilion's on fire!" gasped Hubbard, turning pale.

"Rats! It's only the rocket!"

The green flare had now changed to red, and a terrific racket was going on inside the wooden building. Smoke was pouring out of the windows, too. And the firework fiends

ceased all their efforts, and stared in awed dismay.

"This looks serious!" snapped Dick. "And it's no good leaving anything to these madmen! Come on, you fellows—we've got to get a hose going!"

They ran like mad for the pavilion, and their action caused the others to follow. Hamilton was the first to arrive, and his fears were justified. The rocket had expired, but the fiercely roaring contents of it had done their work. One corner of the visitors' dressing-room was blazing and crackling with ever-increasing fury. The flames were licking up, and the room was choking with smoke.

"By gum!" gasped Goodwin, staring.

"What can we do?" asked Duncan. "The place is on fire!"

The Form captain was too busy to make any reply. He ran swiftly to the end of the little building, and assured himself that the fire hydrant was in working order. Then he rushed in through the back doorway, with half a dozen fellows crowding after him. They knew what he was after.

In less than a minute the hose was down, and while two juniors carried the end of it round to the hydrant, and fixed it into position, the others prepared to fight the fire. Fortunately, the whole incident had happened so quickly that none of the masters were yet aware of it.

But the fire had quelled every atom of the riotous excitement.

There was still plenty of excitement, but it was of a different kind. The firework enthusiasts had lost all their incentive. They trembled to think of what might happen to them if the junior pavilion was burnt down! The Head's new ruling did not permit them to destroy the school property with impunity!

Zzzzz!

With a sudden hissing spurt, the hose filled, and the nozzle sent forth a devastating volume of water. It came so suddenly that Dick, who was holding the business end, had no time to swing it round. About twenty of the culprits were thoroughly drenched.

"Whoa! Steady, you dangerous ass!"

"Turn that thing away, confound you!"

"Put the fire out, Hamilton—and don't act the goat!"

"If some of you have got wet, all the better!" retorted Dick, as he leapt towards the burning room. "Stand clear, there, unless you want to get soaked again!"

The fire, after all, was so quickly dealt with that it had no real opportunity of gaining a dangerous hold. After the first minute, Dick turned off the nozzle-cap, and fell back. Clouds of evil-smelling steam were billowing out through the smashed window.

"I'm going inside!" said the captain curtly. "And you other fellows had better stand back," he added. "You ought to be jolly thankful that this fire isn't more serious! And if you're not thoroughly ashamed of yourselves, you ought to be!"

He expected a roar of defiance, but none came. The juniors were feeling too scared—





"Cutting lessons and going to the races, eh?" roared Handforth. "I'll teach the rotters to let down the school!" "It's all right, Ted, we've stopped their little game," said Willy. "There's no need for you to risk another ducking." And it was quite apparent that Willy and the fags had done their work pretty thoroughly.

and too relieved. Going into the pavilion, Dick flung open the door of the affected room, and stood there. The steam was dispersing, and except for a flood of water on the floor, and a few charred panels, there was no damage done. Dick had drenched every trace of the fire out. But he looked grim as he realised that the whole building might have been gutted if those irresponsible feather-heads had been left to themselves.

"All safe?" asked Duncan anxiously.

"Yes, it's out, and not much damage done," replied Dick.

"Thank goodness!" said Brent, taking a deep breath. "I say, what about giving those Fourth Formers a soaking? There are some of our fellows with them, too. They need cooling off."

Dick had his own idea, and he strode out on to the verandah, and faced the scared crowd. They were all in a big bunch—just as he wanted them. He held his hand on the nozzle-tap.

"Don't move!" he said warningly. "At the first sign of bunking, or any movement, I'll turn this tap on, and soak the whole crowd of you!"

"Hi, steady!" gasped Canham, in alarm.

"Chuck it, Hamilton!" said Owen major.

"I'll give you a fair chance," retorted Dick. "If you haven't got any code of honour of your own, I'm going to do my best to hammer

it into you! Will you give me your word that you'll come straight indoors for morning school, or shall I turn this tap?"

"We're not going to be ordered about!" roared Hubbard.

"All right—I'll show you whether I'm serious or not!" said the captain dangerously. "Remember, you can't escape—this hose has got a range of—"

"All right—we'll go!" gasped Canham hurriedly.

"Don't turn that tap, you fathead!"

"We're sobered now!" said Doyle, with a feeble grin. "Thank goodness that fire's out—that's all I say! Let's go indoors before we get another fit of madness! After all, it's a dirty trick to defy the rules like this!"

"I'm glad you admit it," said Dick gruffly. "Hang it, you fellows! I at least expect the Remove to do the right thing! Don't you think it's up to us to show the Fourth a lesson in decency and good manners?"

A chorus went up, and Hamilton had his way. All the juniors promised to go forthwith to the class-room. And Dick lowered the hose, and the Fourth Formers made a wild dash out of range. They had an idea that they weren't quite safe near the pavilion!

"Yes, let's chuck up this silly rot!" agreed Canham. "After all, it was these fat-headed Fourth-Formers who suggested the idea!"



"Never mind the Fourth-Formers," said Hamilton. "They can do as they please—without any advice from us. Mr. Crowell is regularly cut up, and I don't wonder. Unless we all attend lessons in the usual way, he's practically helpless. I'm not going to say any more—but I'm expecting some action."

Dick Hamilton was very wise. He walked off, without waiting for any of the other fellows to follow him. He rather thought that he had done the trick. But he couldn't be quite sure yet. When he got to the Remove class-room, he found that Handforth had got in before him.

"I feared as much, Hamilton!" said Mr. Crowell, when he observed that Dick was alone. "You had better go to your place, and we will get on as best we can."

Handforth was grinning.

"What did I tell you?" he said. "If I fail, everybody else fails. A thing like that stands to reason. You're jolly lucky to escape without a ducking."

"Give them a chance," said Dick. "I've got an idea that some of the fellows will soon turn up." He turned to Mr. Crowell. "If they do, sir, I hope you'll back me up by pretending that everything's the same as usual. It's the only way to teach the bounders."

"I shall be only too pleased to see them," replied Mr. Crowell bitterly. "I may as well tell you, Hamilton, that I have very little faith in the success of your efforts. Handforth, did you report to Dr. Brett?"

"No, sir," said Handforth, in surprise. "Why should I?"

"I think you ought to have taken some medicine," replied Mr. Crowell. "We don't want you laid up—"

But before he could get any further the door opened, and the Remove came in. At least, eighty per cent of the Remove came in. Only a very few obstinate weaklings were absent. In their own petty way, they wanted to maintain their new independence. They hadn't got sufficient sense to realise that these very methods were totally opposed to their own interests.

"Bless my soul!" murmured Mr. Crowell.

There was a whole procession—orderly and sedate. They filed in, went to their places, and sat down. The majority of them were looking rather sheepish. Some were sullen, having been shamed into this action by the taunts of their fellows. But nothing could alter the fact that they had come. And it was perfectly obvious that it was Dick Hamilton who had contrived this return.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" said Handforth, staring. "By George, the fatheads must have taken some notice of me, after all!"

"Don't be an ass!" muttered Church impatiently. "This is Hamilton's doing. So you needn't pat yourself on the back for nothing."

McClure grinned.

"Forceful methods may be all right in our study, Handy, but they're no good anywhere

else," he said, with a chuckle. "Churchy and I understand you—but the other chaps don't. They're liable to kick a bit. They don't appreciate your wonderful methods of persuasion. Silly of them, of course."

Handforth nodded.

"Nobody understands me, except you chaps!" he said tartly. "Blessed if I know why it is, either; I'm always making—"

Mr. Crowell's voice interrupted them.

"Ah, this looks more like business!" said the Form-master genially. "I am glad you have remembered that we are primarily here for the purpose of imbibing knowledge. Splendid, boys!"

Mr. Crowell was genuinely pleased. Until now he had despaired of the whole experiment. He had regarded it as a freakish whim—and one that was liable to create havoc throughout the whole school.

"I feel that it is my duty to apologise to you, boys," he continued, much to the Form's surprise. "I had been telling myself that you were devoid of any sense of honour—that you could not be expected to rise to such an occasion. But I was wrong. Without any compulsion, you have shown the spirit I hoped you would show—but which I feared would be much longer in manifesting itself. I suggest that we make a big effort to recover the lost time."

"We're game, sir."

"Hear, hear!"

"We won't be such asses again, sir."

And the Remove settled down to work in real earnest. Mr. Crowell was highly delighted, and the Form was relieved. It was a surprise to find that lessons, after all, were more enjoyable than stolen play. And there were many in that room who had the decency to feel ashamed.



## CHAPTER 9.

FORREST GETS AN IDEA.

WILLY HANDFORTH looked round the Triangle, and grinned.

"Not a sign of them!" he said. "Of course, the

beggars are keeping out of my way—they know where the atmosphere is unhealthy! But there's one bell they won't ignore. And that's the dinner-bell!"

"Nobody will ignore that bell!" said Chubby Heath, nodding.

"And when it goes, we shall get those rebels!" said Willy darkly. "Eight of them! Eight mouldy traitors in the Third! By jingo, they haven't got the faintest idea of what they've earned for themselves!"

"Why, what are you going to do?" asked Juicy Lemon curiously.

"Fancy asking that!" said Chubby. "Willy's going to take them one by one, fight them until they're dazed, and then—"

"That's just where you're wrong!" interrupted Willy serenely. "Physical punishment



is all very well in its way, but I've got a better scheme for these traitors. I'll bet they won't miss any more lessons! Now, let's number them off."

He took hold of his little finger.

"There's that rotter Fullerton," he said grimly. "Old enough to be in the Fourth, and ugly enough to be in the Zoo! Thinks he's so jolly important that he's always bursting his caps!"

"We know them," said Chubby Heath. "It's the East House crowd—Fullerton's set. Why name them one by one?"

"Mind your own business," said Willy coldly. "There's Fullerton, and there's Parry minor. Every time I see Parry minor, I want to squirt some Flypic over him. It's good for killing insects!"

"But it's harmless to human beings, you ass," said Lemon.

"We're not talking about human beings—we're talking about Parry minor," replied Willy. "One dose of Flypic, and he'd crumple up. Then there's young Sullivan, the beastly little snob! He's the worst humbug in the Third, and Sims minor is always cribbing and sneaking, and young Ryder is as sly as a fox. As for Jimmy Hook, he's got about as much brains as a clothes' prop! That's seven, isn't it? Yes, and there's Conroy minimus."

"He's harmless enough," said Chubby Heath.

"To see his brains," replied Willy, "we should need one of those giant microscopes. He's been led away by the other crowd—but that doesn't alter the fact that he's guilty. There's eight of them—and all belonging to the East House! They're going to get a surprise when the bell rings for dinner. I'll teach them to disobey their captain's orders!"

Willy would not enlighten his chums as to his proposed method of teaching. But, knowing him as they did, they had a shrewd notion that it would be something unusually drastic. Willy was hurt. He had always prided himself on the fact that the Third backed him up to a man. Some, of course, backed him up under compulsion—but it was very seldom that he met with such defiance as now. The truants should be made to suffer.

"They've marred the Third's honourable record!" said Willy fiercely. "One dose of punishment won't be enough. They're going to have two or three days of it, my sons. In the meantime, take a look at the sporting gentry on the extreme left. I think there might be some work for us here."

He was looking at Forrest & Co., who had just appeared. The cads of Study A were talking earnestly.

"You needn't argue!" Forrest was saying. "We're going!"

"But what about afternoon lessons?" asked Gulliver.

"We're going to cut them."

"But didn't you say this morning that our best policy was to attend lessons and create a good impression?" asked Bell, in wonder.

"You've changed your mind pretty quickly, haven't you?"

Bernard Forrest nodded.

"Circumstances alter cases," he replied calmly. "You know Snagg? That chap who introduced us to the roulette club? Well, he 'phoned me up ten minutes ago."

"Oh, that's why you've got us out here, all dressed up?"

"Yes," said Forrest calmly. "He's willing to give us a ride in his car to Helmsford, and he's got some good tips. We're going to have an afternoon at the races, my sons. There's nothing like being on the course."

"Well, don't speak so loud," muttered Gulliver uneasily.

"Why not?" asked Forrest. "I don't care who hears! A master can come by, if he likes—there aren't any punishments nowadays. We can go when we please, and get back when we please! What's the good of an Honour System if we don't take advantage of it?"

"Still, we'd better be careful," said Gulliver.

"Rot!" laughed Forrest. "We're going to the races, and we'll have lunch at the Wheat-sheaf in style. My treat, you know. I've got plenty of cash!"

Bernard Forrest had many faults, but meanness was not one of them. When he was flush, he was always generous. This, indeed, was the main reason why Gulliver and Bell supported him so whole-heartedly. And Forrest's present wealth was the result of a recent visit to a gambling house, in Bannington—where there was a full-sized roulette table. Forrest was determined to take full advantage of the present system at St. Frank's to visit this delectable establishment nightly. Why shouldn't he? Under the present rules, he and his chums could go to bed at any hour they pleased, with no questions asked. Perhaps the new order would fizzle out before long, so it was up to them to get the best out of it while it lasted.

"Yes, we'll have a nice lunch at the Wheat-sheaf, and then motor off to the races in style!" said Forrest genially.

"You rotters!" broke in Ralph Leslie Fullwood, who happened to be passing. "You'd better not try any of those dodges!"

"Jealous?" sneered Forrest.

"No, confound you, I'm not!"

"Not so long ago you would have been pretty eager to join us," went on Bernard, with a grin. "Why not cut out this pretence, you ass, and have an afternoon of sport? You're welcome to join us, if you choose to drop your saintly pose."

Fullwood's expression became hard.

"Any more insinuations like that, Forrest, and I shall be obliged to knock you down," he said calmly. "I don't want to do it—I'm rather particular about dirtying my hands—but I'll do it at a pinch."

The leader of Study A flushed.

"It's no good arguing," he retorted. "You





Bang! Bang! Bang! The Roman candles pinned to P.-c. Sparrow's coat-tails did their work only too well. "Crikey! I'm on fire!" Sparrow leaped a yard in the air and ran like mad, to the accompaniment of jumping crackers.



may like a brawl in the Triangle, but I'm not keen on it. Ready, you fellows?"

He turned his back on Fullwood, and they strolled off towards the gates. They were in no hurry, for they had planned to catch the midday train to Bannington, and they had twenty minutes before they need be at the station.

Willy Handforth, who had been strolling near by, joined Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon underneath one of the chestnuts.

"I thought so!" he said briskly. "There's work for us."

"Work?"

"Rather!" said Willy. "Those cads over there are planning to go to the Helmford races this afternoon!"

"Openly?" gasped Juicy Lemon.

"Absolutely as boldly as you like!" replied Willy. "Somehow, I don't think they'll go, do you? Doesn't it just show the folly of opening your mouth too wide?"

Willy gave vent to a shrill, peculiarly piercing whistle. It was one that was well known throughout the Third. It penetrated into every House, and it meant that the Third was urgently wanted. Woe betide any fag who deliberately ignored it!

Near the gateway, Forrest & Co. were preparing to leave.

"Yes," said Forrest, "we're our own masters, my sons!"

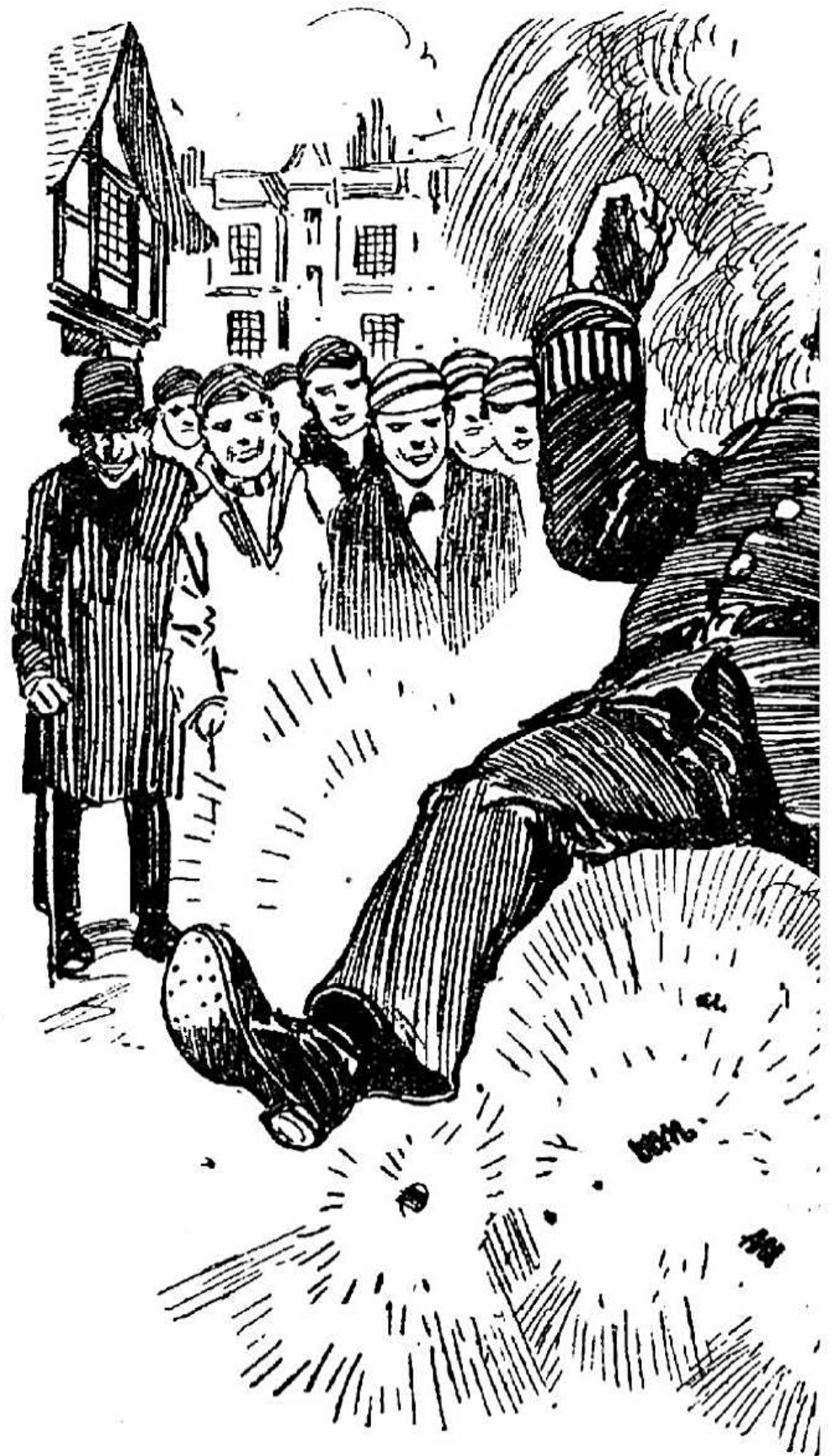
But were they? It was all very well for the Head to intimate that the boys were their own masters—but it seemed that Willy Handforth was going to have something to say in the matter. From every quarter the fags were running up. They gathered round Willy like magic, and awaited orders. None of them thought of asking any questions. Experience had taught them that such a policy was useless. Willy was a much greater autocrat in the Third than his major was in the Remove. For while Edward Oswald was regarded as a joke, his minor was a kind of miniature Mussolini. Not that Willy habitually enforced his authority. As a rule, the Third was only too eager to obey his call. His leadership was supreme.

"There's just a little job on," said Willy, at length. "See those Study A cads over there? Well, grab them! Bowl them over, search their pockets, and empty them! Keep all the spoils separate, and then report to me!"

The order was sufficient. The Third leapt to the attack.

Bernard Forrest and his elegant cronies were treated to a first-class exhibition of the Third's efficiency. Unfortunately, the three Removites were the star turn, as it were, of this exhibition, and this rather detracted from its charm.

There was a sudden running of feet, a swift converging of figures, and before Forrest & Co. could possibly guess what was in the wind, they were bowled over like ninepins, to vanish amid the general smother.



Bang! Bang! Bang! The Roman candles  
"Crikey! I'm on fire!" Sparrow leaped a y

## CHAPTER 10.

APPLY TO THE THIRD!



EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH strode up, and frowned.

"What's all this?" he asked curtly.

Willy turned to his major.

"If it's all the same to you, Ted, we'd prefer you to go away somewhere," he said plaintively. "Go and find Church and McClure, for example."

"Look here, you young ass——"

"They're bound to be about somewhere," went on Willy, glancing towards the Ancient House. "And it's ten chances to one that you're anxious to punch their heads. So be a sportsman, Ted, and toddle off!"

"If you think you can get rid of me——"





row's coat-tails did their work only too well. In like mad, to the accompaniment of jumping

"Either go," said Willy, "or I'll ask you for five bob."

Handforth started.

"Blackmail!" he said fiercely. "By George! I've always thought you capable of ordinary burglary, but blackmail's something new! I'll go when I like, my son! • And before I go, I want to know what this noise is about. You can't create havoc in the Triangle without answering to me!"

"My men are just doing a little job," said Willy patiently.

Handforth glanced at the "little job," and noticed that a great deal of the commotion had subsided. The entire Third Form seemed to be crawling over the carcasses of their victims.

"I notice you kept out of it!" said Handforth accusingly.

"Oh, this was one of those simple jobs—no need for me to take an active part in it,"

replied Willy. "As a matter of fact, we've been scalping three Remove chaps, and the business ought to be over by now!"

"Three Remove chaps!" roared Handforth indignantly. "Why, you young bounder! The Remove can look after itself—without you fags interfering! If anybody in the Remove needs scalping, I'll do the job!"

"Poor old Ted!" sighed Willy. "I've heard about your wonderful efforts this morning. Any sign of a cold yet?"

Handforth turned red.

"That was a slip!" he grunted. "I want to know who these Remove fellows are, and what you're doing to them?"

"We're teaching them the St. Frank's Code of Honour!" replied Willy calmly. "You stand back there and watch." He turned, as Dicky Jones ran up. "Got the envelopes?" he said. "Good man!"

Handforth watched in wonder. The methods of his minor were not his methods, and he was so surprised by what he saw that he forgot to barge in. But his eyes glittered with satisfaction as he recognised the victims.

Forrest & Co., absolutely inarticulate with rage, were allowed to stand up. Their former magnificence had gone. No longer were they elegant and spruce. Dust and dirt smothered them; their collars were missing; their sporting suits were little better than food for the old clothes sack; their hair was tangled and matted, and their faces were only just recognisable.

"That's what I call doing a job thoroughly," said Handforth minor contentedly.

There was no escape for the would-be racegoers. The Third-Formers encircled them, and any breakaway would have been doomed to failure. Not that Forrest & Co. were feeling strong enough for any such venture.

"You've done well, my lads," said Willy, with perfect coolness. "So all this stuff belongs to Forrest, eh? You're sure? You haven't got anything mixed up?"

Chubby Heath, who had his hands full, grinned.

"Juicy and Owen minor and Hobbs and I took charge of Forrest, and all this kelter has come out of his pockets," he explained. "Look at the cash, too! Pound notes and ten-bob notes, and silver—"

"That's all right," interrupted Willy. "We wouldn't touch this money, even if we were starving! We draw a line somewhere, you know! Put everything in this envelope, Chubby, old son!"

The envelope was a huge one, and it readily engulfed the contents of Bernard Forrest's pockets—his money, his watch, his pocket-book, his wallet, his gold matchbox, and so forth. Everything went into the envelope, and Willy sealed it down. Then he scrawled Forrest's name on the front.

The spoils from Gulliver's pockets and Bell's were treated in just the same way. Each lot was sealed and labelled. Then Willy bowed with exaggerated politeness to the stripped



trio—stripped, that is, of all their personal belongings. They didn't possess a loose button between them.

"All right, my merry punters, you can buzz off to the races now as soon as you like," said Willy smoothly. "We hope you lose all you've got!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you young demons!" snarled Forrest, beside himself. "You—you——"

"Races!" roared Handforth. "Were these rotters going to cut afternoon lessons, and disgrace St. Frank's at the races? By George, I'll smash 'em——"

"Chuck it, Ted—they've had their gruel!" interrupted Willy coldly. "Besides, I'm conducting this pantomime. You can butt in if you like, but it'll probably cost you another ducking."

Handforth controlled himself with an effort.

"All right!" he muttered. "Perhaps you know best. I can't grumble at the way you've handled this affair, anyhow. Jolly good! In fact, I couldn't have done it better myself."

Forrest came up, white with rage.

"You young thieves!" he shouted hoarsely. "Give us our money back—and our other things! If you think we're going to be burgled——"

"That's enough!" interrupted Willy coldly. "We've sealed your belongings into separate packages, haven't we? That doesn't look like burglary, does it? Take a squint at this, you ass!"

He held up Forrest's envelope, and in addition to Bernard's name, there was this legend: "To be called for after 4-30, Friday, November 5th." Forrest simply goggled at it.

"What—what does this mean?" he shouted thickly.

"It means that you can have your property back at four-thirty, or after," replied Willy, with a grin. "Apply to the Third, my lads! But it's no good applying before half-past four. That's the time of the last race," he added calmly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Forrest & Co. were speechless again. They realised the full meaning of Willy Handforth's attack. All their money had been taken away from them, and their other personal property, too—which they might conceivably have pawned, in order not to be done out of their afternoon's sport.

But now they were utterly stranded.

They knew that it would be useless to apply to the Third until afternoon lessons were

over. And what was the good of going to Bannington with empty pockets? Forrest couldn't treat his chums to a luncheon on tick—and as for the races, they had now become a dream.

"I'll smash you for this!" snarled Forrest, when he found his voice. "You—you young demons! I'll make you pay dearly! We're our own masters now, and we can do as we like——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Third-Formers yelled at the unconscious humour of Forrest's words.

"Your own masters, eh?" chuckled Willy. "Well, that's a matter of opinion. Somehow, I've got an idea that rotters of your sort will have a hard time of it. If you haven't got enough honour of your own, it's going to be thrown at you in slabs. St. Frank's for ever! Down with the rule-breakers!"

"Hurrah!"

"And you can put that in your cigarette-holder, and smoke it!" added Willy curtly. "You needn't stand there raving—you needn't think I'm going to relent. Come to me at half-past four, and you'll get your goods back intact. They'll still be sealed up, and safe."

The Third trooped away, and Forrest & Co. looked at one another with such murderous expressions that words were entirely unnecessary. Edward Oswald Handforth met Church and McClure by the Ancient House steps.

"I don't like admitting it, but, by George, that minor of mine is a caution!" he said grudgingly. "There'll be nothing wrong with the Third while he's skipper of it. It's the Handforth blood again!"



## CHAPTER 11.

### THE HUNGRY EIGHT.

R. BEVERLEY STOKES, the Housemaster of the West House, glanced up as Willy Handforth came into his study.

"Shan't keep you a tick, sir," said the Third-Former briskly. "Sorry to trouble you, and all that, but there's something special on this morning. But I'd like your permission before I get going."

"That's very kind of you, Handforth minor," said Mr. Stokes dryly. "I was under the impression that you youngsters could do as you pleased, without applying for any official permission."

"Oh, we don't take advantage of the Honour System like that, sir," replied Willy. "Some of our chaps—no need to mention names—made a hash of it this morning, and I want the Third to have a clean sheet."

"I admire your principle, young man," said Mr. Stokes. "But while you are on this subject of cleanliness, might it not be a good

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idea to believe in clean collars and clean faces as well as clean sheets? I passed several of your Form fellows a few minutes ago, and they were, to put it mildly, in a most disreputable condition."

"Scars of war, sir," explained Willy. "We've been having a bit of trouble, you know, to enforce this code of honour of ours, and if you saw any untidiness, it was unavoidable."

"Oh!" said Mr. Stokes, nodding understandingly.

"I'm just giving you the tip, sir, that the West House fags might be late for dinner," went on Willy coolly. "In fact, it's just possible that they won't come in until it's nearly time for dismissal. Business of honour, sir. I don't mind missing dinner for once, but the other chaps are a bit anxious. How do we stand, sir?"

"You mean, if they come in late, will they still be able to dine?"

"Exactly, sir," said Willy. "Mark you, we shall only be absent on a strict matter of business."

Mr. Stokes was inwardly chuckling. He knew Willy well enough to be quite convinced that the "business" was an honourable one. In fact, Mr. Stokes could put two and two together very accurately.

"I might mention, sir," added Willy casually, "that Mr. Lee has already granted permission for we Ancient House fags. But for this particular job we need rather a

crowd. And the crowd, being hungry, wants to be certain that it'll get its dinner after the job's over."

"All right, Willy," smiled Mr. Stokes. "You can tell them that they need have no fear. Their dinners will be awaiting them, even if they are not in evidence until the final grace."

"Thanks, awfully, sir!" grinned Willy. "I knew it was a cert, of course."

He hurried off, and glared at the West House fags who were waiting in the lobby.

"You fatheads!" he said. "Of course it's O.K."

"In that case, we'll back you up to the limit, old man," said Dicky Jones.

"You would have backed me up in any case, or I should have wanted to know the reason why!" retorted Willy gruffly. "Now, you've had your orders. You know exactly what to do. To your stations, my sons!"

The West House fags crowded out eagerly. It was a strict rule at St. Frank's that any meal should be missed entirely if a fellow

came in more than twenty minutes late. Needless to say, it was one of the rules that was very rarely broken. Under the new order of things, with every boy his own master, it was different, perhaps. But nobody liked to take any risks where food was concerned. A fellow couldn't very well come in at the end of a meal and demand his full share. The catering department would be at sixes and sevens if such liberties were taken. And it was generally felt that it was wise policy to be on the safe side.

Willy was very grim regarding Fullerton and his seven supporters of the East House. They had deliberately defied the bell for morning lessons—and, what was far more criminal, they had deliberately defied Willy. It was necessary to teach them an appalling lesson—one that would live in their memory for ages, bringing back shudders whenever they thought of it.

Willy had dismissed the idea of taking them one by one, and reducing them to pulp. He didn't mind the physical exercise, but he felt that it would not be effective. Their punishment would have to be much more drastic.

And Fullerton and his gang were becoming bolder. They hadn't been interfered with. They had even ventured into the Triangle, and Willy had made no attempt to approach them. And now, while they awaited the dinner-bell, their confidence increased. They lounged in the Triangle openly—

not, however, without a weather-eye on the alert for sudden emergencies. In case of trouble, they could scoot through the East Arch and escape.

"It's about time young Handforth learned that he was at the end of his reign," said Fullerton boastfully, as he talked to his supporters. "We East House fellows have proclaimed our independence."

"Hear, hear!" said the faithful seven.

"Now that we're starting on this new system, we've got to branch out on our own," declared Fullerton. "What's the good of every chap being his own master if that young bounder of a Handforth minor lords it over us?"

"No good at all!" said Jimmy Hook.

"He belongs to the other side of the Triangle, anyhow—and he can keep there!" went on the leader of the rebel fags. "You chaps back me up in this affair, and we'll form an independent unit. We've broken with young Willy, and we're not going to go back. In fact, he's given us up already."

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George Fullerton was full of complacency. He was the scamp of the Third—a kind of inferior Bernard Forrest. He was the most dandified fag at St. Frank's, and it was his favourite hobby to ape Forrest in every way. Practically all his supporters were of no account—those members of the Third who caused Willy more trouble than all the rest put together.

"We've got a chance to have some good sport," continued Fullerton, with a grin. "This afternoon, for example, we're going to have a spree on the main road."

"Are we?" asked young Ryder. "That sounds exciting."

Fullerton frowned.

"I don't want any sauce from you, Percy, my lad," he said. "We'll get some broken bottles and nails and things, and shove 'em on the road. We ought to get some good fun out of it."

The others giggled gleefully, and felt very bad and bold. And then, at that moment, a very welcome sound made itself manifest—the deep-throated boom of the dinner-gong.

This was a summons which nobody attempted to ignore. The bell for lessons could be disregarded with impunity—calling-over was a nuisance, anyhow—and even the bed-time bell could easily be laughed at. But the dinner-gong—No! This was one of the school rules that nobody was likely to ignore!

"Come on!" said Fullerton. "We've had a good morning, and we're going to have a good afternoon. I've always reckoned that school life was more like torture than anything else. But the Head's found some sense at last!"

The eight fags crowded into the East House lobby, hungry and eager. Then they paused. Right in front of them, barring the way completely, stood Willy Handforth, Chubby Heath, Juicy Lemon, and several other Ancient House fags.

"It's all right," said Willy calmly. "Don't look scared. We're not going to smash you. Life's too short for unnecessary scrapping."

Fullerton felt bolder.

"Look here, Handforth minor; we've decided to cut adrift from your set," he said grimly. "We've made up our minds to be independent."

"That's interesting," said Willy.

"So, from now onwards, these chaps don't recognise your leadership," declared Fullerton. "They've taken me as their leader, and we're a separate party."

"I'm always ready to learn," nodded Willy. "Thanks awfully for telling me the facts of the case. Do as you like, of course."

Fullerton flushed with triumph.

"Then—then you agree?" he asked eagerly. "You accept our breaking away?"

"Aren't we all our own masters?" asked Willy with a shrug.

"By Jingo, you're a sport!" said Fullerton

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with an unpleasant smirk. "I thought you'd kick up a dust, Handforth minor! Good! You heard him, you chaps? From this minute we're an independent party, and I'm your leader."

"The East House stands alone!" chorused the seven.

"Of course, there'll be conditions," said Willy casually.

"Conditions?" repeated Fullerton with a start.

"My dear chap, you don't suppose I can afford to lose your steadfast loyalty without some compensation?" asked Willy in surprise. "You can do just as you please about forming an independent party. Stick to me, and you'll feed at the usual times, without any interference. Continue this little rebellion of yours, and I'm afraid you'll go rather hungry."

"Go hungry!" gasped the East House fags in one voice.

"For example, you're not getting any dinner to-day," explained Willy sweetly.

"No—no dinner!" yelled Fullerton in alarm.

"Not a bite—not a crumb!" said Willy. "You eight fellows ignored the bell for morning school, so you can ignore the gong for dinner. Why not do the thing thoroughly while you're at it?"

Fullerton saw the trap.

"Quick, you chaps!" he shouted. "These rotters are trying to keep us out of the dining-hall! Let's rush 'em!"

Willy gave a sharp order, and his men prepared for action.

"Come on!" invited Willy. "You want trouble? Good! We're here to supply it!"

Fullerton & Co. hesitated. There was something so grim about this opposition that they didn't care to tackle it. They were not particularly good fighters. In a general Form scrap they could make themselves useful, perhaps, but opposed to the pick of their own Form they were helpless.

"We're not going to fight!" roared Fullerton furiously. "And you can't keep us away from our dinner, either! Quick, you chaps—let's dash round to the back door!" he added excitedly. "We can get there first!"

They swept out, helter-skelter. They arrived at the rear door, and found Dicky Jones, Hobbs, and a crowd of other fags barring the way.

"Dinner?" said Dicky briskly. "Sorry! No admittance!"



## CHAPTER 12.

### THE GATHERING EXCITEMENT.

Fullerton recoiled aghast.

"You—you rotters!" he panted. "You West House bounders! Clear out of here! We're not

going to be kept out of our own House!"

"No?" said Jones. "Opinions differ, of course."

"Go round to the front again, and have another shot," suggested Hobbs blandly.

"Willy's round there with his Ancient House set. And if you get any dinner to-day, my sons, you'll be magicians!"

Willy came up grinning.

"Fine!" he said approvingly. "You might as well know, Fullerton, that this order is now permanent—unless you fall into line with me."

"Permanent?" babbled Fullerton.

"Exactly," said Willy. "For example, we shall guard the tuck-shop strongly, and we shall stop you from going into Hall at tea-time. It'll be just the same when the supper-gong sounds—and just the same to-morrow at breakfast-time."

"They're going to starve us!" wailed Parry minor.

"If you can ignore the bell for lessons, you can ignore the gong for meals," explained Willy calmly. "Of course, if you agree to follow my lead, and obey my orders, we'll drop the matter and say no more. But I've got to have your word of honour that there'll be no more of this independence stuff. The Third must set an example to the Fourth and the Remove, and I'm not going to have any rebels."

Fullerton & Co. looked slightly relieved.

"You—you mean, if we come back to your leadership, we can have dinner?" asked Ryder anxiously.

"There'll be no dinner to-day—for any of you!" replied Willy with firmness. "You'll go hungry this morning—as a punishment for missing lessons. That's settled. But if you do the right thing this afternoon, and obey all my orders, I'll remove the ban."

"But what about our dinner?" hooted the hungry fags.

"What about morning school?" mocked Willy.

"That's a different thing!" howled Fullerton wildly.

But Willy remained as hard as a rock. And there was no dinner for the East House fags that day. They were kept out of their dining-hall until the meal was completely over. Willy took no chances. He maintained his guard until the other fellows came trooping out. By then, of course, it was obviously too late for the discomfited fags to obtain their meal.

"Well, anyway, you've sacrificed your own grub!" said Fullerton savagely.

"Have we?" grinned Chubby Heath. "Willy made special arrangements for us, my son! Toodle-oo! We're just off to dinner!"

"What?" gasped Fullerton feebly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The barrier was withdrawn, and Willy and his crowd rushed off to their own Houses to partake of a belated meal. But when Fullerton & Co. went in to their own dining-hall, they were sharply questioned by Mr. Goole, their Housemaster. Famished, they blurted out everything, blaming Willy entirely. But Mr. Goole, who knew that these boys of his had "cut" morning lessons, quickly guessed



the reason for Willy's dodge. And he ordered the fags out with peremptory coldness.

Fullerton's supporters turned on him viciously.

"No more of your rotten leadership!" said Ryder miserably. "No dinner, and we're all starving and broke! We can't go and buy anything to eat, because we haven't got the money! What are you going to do about it, Fullerton, you rotter?"

"Don't ask me!" snarled Fullerton. "Don't you think I'm hungry, too?"

"Well, you can jolly well lead yourself after this!" roared Parry minor.

"Hear, hear!" said Sullivan. "We'll go back to Willy's leadership—and obey his orders! What do you chaps say?"

"Yes, rather!"

And Fullerton, finding himself robbed of all his support, and in a minority of one, could do nothing else but toe the line. And when the bell rang for afternoon school, the Third—to Willy's great pride—created a record. The Form trooped into its class-room intact—hungry, perhaps, here and there, but nevertheless intact. Fullerton's gang had had enough of independence!

Willy, with rare astuteness, had struck a blow at their most vulnerable spot—below the belt. But not, however, in the usual way that a blow is struck below the belt. Willy's method could in no way be called a foul. Without delivering a single punch he had brought the rebels back into the fold.

Mr. Suncliffe was delighted. A glance told him that there were no absentees, and as he had just looked into the class-rooms of the Fourth and the Remove he had every reason to feel pleased.

"I think you ought to know, boys, that we have easily beaten the other Forms in the Junior School," he said contentedly. "Indeed, we are the only Junior Form to uphold the honour of St. Frank's with a full muster. I need hardly say that I am proud of you."

Even Fullerton and his gang felt pleased—and one or two of them had the decency to look a bit sheepish and ashamed. The rest were all whole-hearted in their support of Willy, and Mr. Suncliffe's obvious delight encouraged them enormously. By Jingo, there was something good in keeping faith, according to the headmaster's wishes!

The Third, in fact, was experiencing that sensation which Professor Hudson had hinted at. How much better it was to attend lessons of their own free will—and not by compulsion! They felt, somehow, that they were individually helping to maintain the honour of the Old School. But how many realised that they had Willy Handforth to thank for this spirit?

The Fourth was the worst Form in the school on that day. There was still a growing feeling of excitement. The liberty of the morning had taken a firm hold on the weaklings. No punishments! So why should they attend lessons at all? The weather was fine, and it was Guy Fawkes Day! And so, that afternoon, the Fourth

Form room was nearly empty, and Mr. Pycraft, after being highly enraged, was secretly pleased. He was finding that his work was reduced to practically nothing. And Mr. Pycraft took the view that if the Head chose to adopt these hare-brained schemes, he could do all the worrying!

In the Remove, seventy per cent of the fellows turned up. The rest played truant. They had not yet learned the joy which came from performing a duty voluntarily. And Dick Hamilton was looking serious and anxious. It worried him to think that the fags should do better than the Remove. But, then, Willy was a very exceptional leader. In a way, he eclipsed Dick Hamilton himself in this particular line.

When tea-time came, and when school was over for the day, it was universally agreed that prep. should be allowed to go by the board. Prep., in fact, seemed utterly ridiculous on such an evening as this. There were bonfires to be prepared, fireworks to be brought out and let off. What a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the New Freedom!

And celebrate the school did!

Not one bonfire was lit in the gathering dusk, but eight or nine of them. The paddocks were crowded with excited fellows, and calling-over was completely forgotten, or deliberately missed. The masters kept watchful eyes open, in case of a fire, and there was a general feeling of anxiety among those in authority.

The headmaster, indeed, was becoming acutely alarmed. All day he had watched the behaviour of the school. St. Frank's was on its honour—and yet a large percentage of the boys were taking a mean and contemptible advantage of their independence. It was as he had feared from the very first.

"Professor Hudson, this cannot continue," he said grimly, as he stood at the window of his study, watching the lurid reflection from the bonfires. "To-day is Friday. On Monday, sir, the school resumes its old restrictions."

The American professor was distressed.

"But, my dear doctor, that is impossible!" he protested.

"Impossible or not, my mind is made up—"

"But consider!" broke in Professor Hudson urgently. "Is it fair to form any judgment after such a brief test? Surely, we must have a week, at the very least? Personally, I do not think we can call it an experiment unless we continue this system for a month."

"A month!" echoed the Head bitterly. "There would be no school left!"

"I am very much afraid that you are too ready to jump to a hasty conclusion," said Professor Hudson with genuine regret. "How often do business men change their policy, lose money, and then go back to their old-fashioned methods? And yet, if they had only persevered, and braved their losses, they would have become millionaires."

"St. Frank's is not a business house, sir!" said the Head coldly.





"That'll give you something to go on with!" Forrest hissed, bending down over his victim. But although Fullwood was badly winded, he shot up his right with all the strength he could muster and caught the cad a terrific blow on the jaw, sending him toppling backwards.

"But the principle is just the same," urged the professor. "You are talking about reverting to the old system on Monday. And it isn't playing the game, Dr. Stafford! It isn't giving me even a sporting chance to prove that my theories are sound."

The Head sighed.

"I am full of regret, Professor Hudson," he replied quietly. "But look!"

He indicated the window. And for a moment they stood there, listening to the yells of the excited school and the explosions of the fireworks.

"It is very unfortunate," said Professor Hudson, pursing his lips. "If I had remembered this national celebration of yours, I would have suggested waiting until Monday. But I am an American, Dr. Stafford, and I overlooked this Guy Fawkes Day of yours. It is hardly giving us a chance to form a correct judgment. The boys are naturally excited—fireworks always have that effect, especially when there are no restrictions. If you can only wait—"

"Honestly, I am afraid to wait," confessed the Head.

"You must remember that boys will be boys," continued his guest earnestly. "Give them a chance to settle down—to grow accustomed to this unwonted freedom—and there will be a very different result."



## CHAPTER 13.

### GETTING OUT OF HAND.

IN the face of it, it seemed that St. Frank's was coming an awful cropper.

The Honour System looked like being a dismal failure, and all because of the irresponsible recklessness of the thoughtless and the weak-willed. Here was a chance to celebrate their independence! The fact that they were on their honour to strictly obey the old rules was forgotten.

And yet Professor Hudson's theory was perfectly sound.

Among all the decent fellows, the scheme was working exactly as the American psychologist had foretold. They were more than ever determined to adhere to the regulations, and to set an example to the minority.

But it wasn't working properly. The minority was rapidly becoming a majority. This, no doubt, was mainly due to the influence of the "Fifth." It was Guy Fawkes night, and large numbers of fellows, who would ordinarily have behaved themselves, grew alarmingly irresponsible.

The professor was consequently anxious.

It seemed that his experiment was to prove a terrible failure—even before St. Frank's



had had a proper chance of testing it. It was a pity—for the professor had built his hopes on St. Frank's. He had gained the consent of the governors, and he had worn down the resistance of the Head. And now, before the boys could have a chance of appreciating what was expected of them, the school was losing its head.

Outside, the bonfires were blazing merrily. Fireworks were going off in endless displays, and one rather wondered where they all came from. And as long as they lasted, the excitement was maintained.

And it was bed-time already! Hardly anybody had troubled to obey the bell. The lure of the fireworks had been too great. And now, when all should have been getting undressed, two-thirds of the Junior School was still out of doors—still revelling. The Third was again the only Form which honoured its trust, but the credit was all due to Willy Handforth. He and his immediate supporters had spent a hectic hour in rounding up the backsliders. And, even if they were a full half-hour late in getting into their dormitories, they were at least far in advance of the other Forms.

There was one pleasing feature of the evening's events.

The boys, although taking an unfair advantage of their liberty, had kept their heads in the main. They were merely having a good time. There was no attempt to get out of hand. Bonfires were only lighted on permissible ground, and fireworks were only exploded in an orthodox way. The Head had feared much worse happenings, and in a way, he was relieved. The school, when all was said and done, was only having a good time. It was thoughtlessness more than anything else—a natural disregard, perhaps, of the trust that had been imposed on them.

But now that bed-time had gone past, things began to get more exciting still.

Some idiot suggested a rag in the village, and a number of other idiots supported him. The idea was to take the noisiest fireworks they could lay hands on, and explode them in the High Street—"just for fun." There was nothing particularly vicious in the proposal, but it was senseless. It was an indication of the lengths to which the more reckless elements were prepared to go.

"We've got to do something about this," said Dick Hamilton grimly, as he stood at his dormitory window. "Look at those madmen out there! They're crowding out into the lane, and they're going towards the village."

"Yes, but what can we do?" asked Watson dubiously.

"Get up a party and drag the fools back!" snapped Dick.

From this window of the Ancient House, they could see across the angle of the West Square into the Paddock. The bonfires were growing lower, but there was still plenty of light to show up the Fourth-Formers and Removites who were breaking through the

hedge into the road. The party for the village was just starting.

"Dear old boy, we're helpless, aren't we?" asked Sir Montic mildly. "I mean, we're on our honour to keep bounds, you know. If we go after these frightful chumps, we shall only make ourselves as bad!"

"Not if we get permission to go!" retorted Dick.

"Yes, that's an idea," said Tommy Watson, with a gleam in his eye. "I should think Mr. Lee ought to approve, wouldn't you? It'll be a totally different thing if we show him that we're upholding the honour of the school."

"Leave it to me," said Dick gruffly.

The chums of Study C, with a number of others, had come up to bed in the usual way. But, although they had gone into their bedrooms, they had neglected to undress. They considered—quite justifiably—that if they went into their rooms at the usual time, they were keeping faith. And they were all very uneasy.

They knew well enough that they did not represent more than half the full number. The rest were still out there, revelling with the fireworks.

Handforth was as aggressive as Dick Hamilton over this affair, but in another way. In his own dormitory, he was laying down the law to Church and McClure—just as though they were responsible.

"It's no good you chaps getting undressed!" he was saying. "We've got to do something. Do you hear? We've got to do something!"

"All right—tell us what to do, and we'll do it!" said Church wearily. "So far, there's been nothing but talk—and you've collared the first prize!"

"I don't want any jaw!" said Handforth, frowning. "Half the Remove is messing about outside—still letting off fireworks, and generally behaving in a way that'll discredit the school. We've kept faith all right—we're in our bed-room. But what's the good?"

"No good!" said McClure bitterly. "A bed-room is a place to sleep in—and there's a fat chance of sleep with you roaring at the top of your voice. Why should we bother ourselves, anyhow?" he added practically. "We've done the right thing, and our consciences are clear. If those other chaps like to be idiots, it's their funeral!"

"Hear, hear!" said Church, nodding.

Handforth regarded them in amazement.

"And is that all the thought you've got for your school?" he asked accusingly. "Is that all you can say? You'd calmly go to sleep, and let St. Frank's cover itself with undying shame?"

"Well, tell us how to prevent it!" snapped Church.

"It'll be easy," declared Handforth. "I'll dash out and give an alarm of fire!"

"That'll help a lot!" said McClure tartly.

"Can't you let me finish?" snorted Edward Oswald. "I'll give an alarm of fire, and



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*Don't miss BUSTER KEATON next week! He'll be on the cover, as above, to remind you that his stand-up portrait is being GIVEN AWAY inside.*

everybody will believe it, because of these squibs and rockets and things going off. Then we'll grab the fire-engine out of the shed, rush it down to the village and put the hose on all the fireworks. How's that?"

His chums were not impressed.

"Hopeless!" said Church curtly. "For one thing, it's a pinch on what Dick Hamilton did this morning. Besides, what's the good of going to the village?"

"Why, you ass, a crowd of fellows have gone there to have a rag!" said Handforth. "Didn't you hear them shouting?"

"Well, the idea's not good, anyhow," declared Church.

"If you want a thick ear, Walter Church

"I don't, so keep your fists down!" roared Church. "But where's the sense of giving an alarm of fire? You hopeless ass, you'll have all the fags out, and the domestic staffs, and there'll be a panic! That'll be a fine way to restore order, won't it?"

Handforth started, and looked thoughtful.

"H'm! Perhaps you're right," he admitted. "I hadn't thought of a panic, you

know. And there wouldn't be much sense in alarming the whole school, would there? But it's no good standing here and doing nothing—"

The door opened, and Reggie Pitt looked in.

"Good!" he said briskly. "I thought you'd be dressed. Come on!"

"What are you doing in this House?" demanded Handforth, staring. "Is this what you call keeping your word of honour? You ought to be in your own bed-room, over in the West House!"

"Dry up!" said Pitt. "We've got special permission from Mr. Stokes—and Dick Hamilton is just getting the O.K. from your own Housemaster. This is a big occasion, and we've got to grab it with both hands. We're all mustering."

"Mustering?" repeated Handforth.

"Downstairs," said Pitt. "The whole crowd of us—with old Browne, of the Fifth, in command. At least, he thinks he's in command."

Handforth took a deep breath.

"Why wasn't I told?" he roared.



"My dear ass, I'm just telling you——"

"Yes, but I ought to have been told first!" snorted Edward Oswald fiercely. "As a matter of fact, this is my idea, and if I'm not allowed to lead the party, I shan't go!"

"Good!" said Pitt. "That's settled, then."

"What's settled?"

"You're not coming!" said Reggie. "It'll be a lot more peaceful."

He went out, and closed the door, and Handforth gave a jump.

"Did you hear that?" he asked thickly. "They're going to sneak off without me! By George! I'll show them whether I'm going to be left behind or not! Come on, you chaps!"

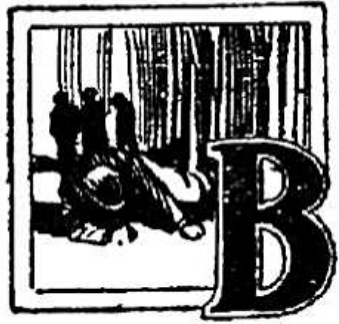
"Hold on!" gasped Church. "Don't you want your boots?"

"Eh? I can't be bothered——"

"Of course, you can go in your socks, if you like," grinned Church. "But the lane's a bit flinty——"

"Hi! They're mine!" yelled McClure, as Handforth made a grab at the nearest pair of boots. "Don't get so jolly excited, you ass! In about two ticks you'll be as bad as any of these revellers! There's plenty of time yet—they're not all mustered downstairs yet."

"But I'm mustard!" said Handforth fiercely. "And if they try to push me into the background, I'll make it jolly hot for them!"



#### CHAPTER 14.

FULLWOOD DOES HIS BEST!

BERNARD FORREST looked at his watch and nodded.

"If you fellows are ready, we'll be getting off," he said softly. "It's

half-past ten, and I told old Snagg that we'd meet him promptly at eleven. We can't keep him waiting, either—he's an impatient blighter."

Gulliver and Bell, who were also fully dressed, looked rather uneasy. The cads of Study A were in their own dormitory, and the school clock had just struck, in verification of Forrest's watch.

"I say, is it safe?" asked Bell dubiously.

"Safe?" said Forrest, staring. "What do you mean—safe?"

"Well, hang it, look at the time," said Bell. "And you're talking about going out in the ordinary way, as bold as brass——"

"Aren't we allowed to do as we like?" interrupted Forrest curtly. "I shan't go and tell the Head we're off to play roulette, if that's what you mean. But there's no reason why we shouldn't walk out, and snap our fingers at any prefect who gives us a suspicious look. We're going to enjoy this new liberty, my lads! Come on—we might as well go."

Forrest and his chums were feeling themselves again—after spending an afternoon and evening of boiling rage and sullen chagrin. They hadn't gone to the races that afternoon.

What was the use, when they hadn't any money? But Willy Handforth, true to his promise, had handed over their property intact at tea-time.

So Forrest had consoled himself by planning to go on the "razzle" after the usual lights-out hour. Mr. Snagg was a racing acquaintance, whom they sometimes played billiards with at the Wheatsheaf, in Bannington. He also accepted bets from them, although he wasn't actually a bookmaker. Mr. Snagg was not of the "horsey" type, but a very neat, very smart and elegant gentleman. His latest exploit had been to introduce the cads of Study A into a sort of rural casino—a large private house on the outskirts of Bannington, where the game of roulette was the chief attraction.

Having been foiled in his plan to attend the afternoon races, Forrest was now determined to risk his money on roulette. For some peculiar reason, Forrest was never satisfied to spend his cash in the ordinary way. He always got rid of it, sooner or later, by some form of betting or petty gambling.

"Half a minute," said Gulliver, as his leader made for the door. "This wants thinking about, Forrest. It'll be pretty risky to go out now, you know. Half the chaps are still up and about."

"Supposing they are," said Forrest.

"Well, you know what a lot of narrow-minded prigs they are!" growled Gulliver. "They'll only rag us, or make some sort of fuss. Why not wait until things have quietened down a bit?"

Forrest sighed.

"Haven't I told you that Snagg is going to meet us at eleven o'clock?" he asked.

"Can't he wait?"

"No, confound you, he can't!" snapped Forrest. "Do you expect a man like that to wait for us if we're late? He introduced us into that place, and although he said we can get in any time we like, I'm not taking any chances. I've arranged to meet him underneath the last lamp-post of the town at eleven o'clock. The house is only a few yards from there, and if we don't turn up, he'll go in without us. So come on, and don't make such a silly fuss."

"I'm only thinking of the chaps," said Gulliver. "You know what happened to us this afternoon—with those infernal fags! How do we know they aren't on the watch again? Do you want another taste of the same medicine?"

"By gad, he's right, Forrest!" said Bell uneasily.

Bernard looked at his companions sharply.

"Perhaps there's something in it," he admitted. "Well, I'll tell you what—we'll go down the back stairs, and slip out on the quiet. Then we can edge round to the bicycle sheds, and fetch our jiggers."

Gulliver and Bell were more satisfied with this arrangement, and they set off without any further talk. It seemed that they were wise in their decision, too, for the sound of many voices came up from the front lobby,



where the other juniors were mustering in readiness for their visit to the village.

The cads of Study A succeeded in getting out without being spotted. And Gulliver's apprehensions, after all, were more than justified. For if these three had boldly walked downstairs in the ordinary way, their motives would have been promptly questioned, and they would probably have been hustled back to bed, after a similar experience to that of the early afternoon.

As it was, nobody knew of their departure. Nobody, that is, with the sole exception of Ralph Leslie Fullwood. And it was rather curious that he should come upon them, because he happened to be in a position to make a correct guess at their intentions.

Forrest & Co. had just reached the private road which ran round the school buildings when a figure loomed up. The trio had purposely placed their bicycles behind the shed, in case it should be impossible to open the door after lights-out. And they were on the point of penetrating the bushes, to get their machines, when Fullwood confronted them.

"I say, anybody got a match?" asked Fullwood. "I came here for my bike-lamp, and now I haven't got—Hallo! So it's you fellows, is it?" he added, with a note of suspicion, as he recognised the trio.

"What of it?" growled Forrest. "Must we ask your permission before we can walk about? You go and bury yourself, Fullwood!"

Fullwood laughed.

"While you go and bury your money, eh?" he asked scornfully. "You prize idiots! Haven't you got more sense than to sneak off to a rotten gambling den? You'll only lose your money at that roulette table, Forrest."

"I can keep my head better than you," sneered Forrest. "You've lost a lot of money at roulette, at one time or another, haven't you, Fullwood?"

"Fortunately, a taunt from you doesn't sting in the least," retorted Fullwood. "At one time of day I was a blithering idiot of your sort—although I hope I was never quite so blackguardly. Perhaps I was, though," he added thoughtfully. "That's all the more reason I'm in a good position to warn you."

"You can keep your warnings to yourself."

"Everybody knows my record—and the decent fellows don't remind me of the old days," went on Fullwood curtly. "These two worms used to be my pals!" he added, with a sniff. "Ye gods and little fishes! I *must* have been a crazy loon!"

"Here, chuck it, confound you!" said Gulliver angrily. "Come on, Forrest—let's smash him!"

"It's only jealousy," jeered Forrest. "If he had half a chance of sneaking off to a game of roulette, he'd go. And once he got beside a roulette wheel he wouldn't be able to resist the temptation, no matter how hard he tried."

"You'd better be careful, Forrest!" snapped Fullwood.

"It's in the blood!" sneered Forrest. "Just

at the moment it may be lying dormant; but once a gambler always a gambler."

"Piffle!" said Ralph Leslie, with a snort. "I was just a plain fool—that's all. And now I've got more sense. And I've a good mind to take a tip from those Third Formers, and stop you going."

"You!" mocked Forrest. "Do you think you could stop us?"

"Yes, if I tried!"

"Better try, then!" said Bernard, with another sneer.

Crash!

Fullwood was no mean fighter—he had always been a good man with his fists, even in the old days—and he got home a beautiful left. But, as he didn't like taking a mean advantage of his opponent, he struck Forrest in the chest, and Forrest reeled back with a grunt.

"I'll accept that challenge," said Fullwood grimly.

The next moment he was going for Bernard Forrest with all his strength—goaded to even greater prowess, perhaps, by reason of Forrest's recent sneers. Gulliver and Bell backed away, and looked on apprehensively.

"You confounded hypocrite!" roared Forrest. "For two pins you'd steal off to the first gamble you could—Ugh! Confound you!"

Fullwood was getting more telling blows home, and Forrest found little opportunity to speak. But it soon became apparent that he was getting the worst of it. He was out of condition, and his boxing ability was of a far lower standard than Fullwood's, too. And his capacity for bearing pain was limited.

"Can't you fellows help?" he snarled suddenly. "Hi, Bell! Slam into him from behind, Gully! Drag the fool off!"

Gulliver and Bell, thus appealed to, entered the fight. They had feared that other juniors were near by, but as they were still alone after an elapse of several minutes, they felt more secure. They hurled themselves on Ralph Leslie Fullwood without the slightest compunction.

Gulliver delivered a fierce sideways kick, and Fullwood caught it on the edge of his knee. He sagged over with a gasp of pain, and at the same second Bell punched viciously at the back of his neck. In face of this foul treatment, Fullwood staggered over.

"Take that!" panted Forrest furiously.

He brought his knee up, and caught the unfortunate Fullwood such a terrific blow below the belt that every ounce of fight was knocked out of him. Fullwood fell prone, moaning with pain.

"The infernal cad!" snapped Forrest harshly. "That'll teach him a lesson, perhaps. I'll show him whether he can try these games on with me!"

He bent down, gloating over his victim. But he was rather incautious. Although Fullwood was in mortal pain, he had sufficient presence of mind to shoot up his right, and he caught Forrest squarely in the mouth. It was such a terrific



blow that the leader of Study A toppled over backwards, and lay there, dazed. His mouth was full of blood, and he felt that half his teeth were knocked out.

"All right!" he hissed viciously. "I'll show you!"

He reeled to his feet, and delivered kick after kick as Fullwood tried to get to his feet. Gulliver and Bell stood by, aghast. They could stand a good deal, but this was rather too much for them.

"Steady, you ass!" muttered Bell hoarsely.

Forrest had just succeeded in getting in a kick which caught his victim on the side of his head, and he sagged over, and remained still. Forrest dragged himself away, breathing hard.

"That's taught him something!" he muttered. "Come on, you chaps!"

They secured their bicycles, and went—leaving Ralph Leslie Fullwood lying on the ground, dazed, battered, and in agony.



## CHAPTER 15.

### THE FIREWORK FIENDS!

WILLIAM NAPOLEON BROWNE, the volatile skipper of the Fifth, cast his eye over the crowd, and nodded with approval.

"I venture to predict, Brother Horace, that we are assured of victory," he observed, as he took Stevens' arm. "A valiant force of warriors confronts us. Under my leadership, what marvels of derring-do can they not accomplish?"

"As it happens, they're not required to do any derring-do business," said Stevens practically. "Neither are we. We've got to go to the village, and collect up those feather-brained raggers. And the sooner we go, the better."

"It gratifies me to hear such words of wisdom from your usually commonplace lips, Brother Horace," said Browne. "As you say, the sooner we go, the better. I shall now give the word of command—"

Dick Hamilton bustled up.

"If it's all the same to you, Browne, I'll do all the commanding of the Remove," he said. "You can take charge of your Fifth Form contingent. We're all here now, and we'd better get down to the village at the double. Those idiots are making an awful noise in the High Street, I hear. One of the villagers has just run up, and he wanted to know if there was a riot here."

Browne promptly agreed.

"Splendid!" he said. "I will be responsible for the Fifth, Brother Hamilton, and you can lead your own men—"

"Can he?" said Handforth, pushing in. "I'm going to lead the Remove! This is my idea, and I'm not going to be pushed into the background—"

"Oh, my hat!" groaned Dick despairingly. "Everybody wants to lead, by the look of it!"

What on earth does it matter, anyhow? Let's get down to the village and do something! Hang the leading!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Dick's right—let's get a move on!"

And while the parties were streaming out of the Triangle at the double—all of them going with the express consent of their Housemasters—the excitement in the village was reaching fever pitch.

The whole affair had started as a piece of fun—as a Fifth of November rag. But a rag of this sort, entered into by a crowd of twenty or thirty, is always liable to go beyond the bounds. Not content with letting off fireworks in the school paddocks, these young feather-brains were now letting them off in the village High Street.

And Bellton, of course, had gone to bed long since.

But there was no sleep for the village after the arrival of the ragging party. Jumping crackers were the most popular form of attack, and at first these were merely flung about in the middle of the road, to the accompaniment of yells.

But then somebody got the bright idea of setting up a row of Roman candles in a window-box, in front of one of the cottages. It was certainly an excellent bedding for this particular type of firework, and the display was first rate.

The owners of the cottage, however, were not particularly gratified. Gazing out of their window, they beheld coloured stars and fiery rain shooting up in wild cascades, to the accompaniment of tremendous reports.

And then three cannon crackers were exploded in quick succession in the doorway of Sharpe's, the ironmonger. They went off with such devastating effect that the glass of his shop door was nearly cracked.

A moment later it was cracked in real earnest, for somebody let off a rocket before it was fixed, and it hurtled across the road, and went clean through Sharpe's door and into the shop. The glass was shattered in all directions—and this wasn't the worst catastrophe, either. For Mr. Sharpe, hastening downstairs to protect his property, received the rocket squarely in the middle.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come on, you chaps—let him have some jumpers!"

Mr. Sharpe flung his broken door open, picked up the hissing rocket, and hurled it out into the road. He was an unpleasant man, and by no means a favourite among the boys.

"You young scoundrels!" he shouted angrily. "Hi, Sparrow! Why don't you clear these young fools away? They'll have the whole village afire in another minute!"

"What can I do?" roared the village constable helplessly. "I've spoken to 'em till I'm tired of it! An' they ain't no worse nor the village kids, neither!" he added, with a snort. "Enough trouble I've 'ad with 'em all the evenin'! It needs a 'undred

(Continued on page 41.)



*Start reading this great serial to-day!*

# SONS OF THE MEN OF MONS!



By

**ROGER FOWEY**

## FOR NEW READERS.

Tom Lee and his chum, Jack Bennett, are in the Form-room at Cliff House School when news comes through that Germany has declared a war of revenge on England and France. Simultaneously, an officer enters the school and orders the place to be abandoned—just as a German submarine breaks the surface of the Channel and fires the first shot of the war, which passes above the school and bursts in the fields beyond.

The chums watch soldiers and field-guns being rushed up, and they delay while the rest of the boys leave the school. When Tom and Jack start after them, they are intercepted by two soldiers who want to get up into the clock-tower for signalling purposes. The boys show them the way—to discover that

a room in the tower contains a powerful wireless installation, which is being operated by a German spy named Stutz. This man has been directing the German vessels to the English coast, and, even as the chums find him, the enemy start to land on the shore just outside the school. Stutz gets away, and the Germans begin to shell the building. In the hall below the chums find Bates, the school porter, who has been shot by Stutz; Bates says he is a Secret Service man, and gives them a message for Brigadier Gordon. The chums get him to an ambulance, then join up with Buster Kirk, a fat junior whose brother has been killed by a shell. They leave the school, and reach the road just as the invaders make good their landing and start an attack.

## Caught in a Barrage!

**T**OM and Jack, with Buster close beside them, leaped from the shelter of the hedge and dashed forward. Ahead of them, British soldiers had jumped from the ditch from which they had been firing, and raced to meet the grey-clad invaders sweeping up from the sand below.

The noon-time sun gleamed and glittered on the chill steel of British bayonets, as the khaki wave surged forward—and the Germans' rush checked. Apparently, they had not expected to find Britishers there in such numbers.

Behind the invaders, more flat-bottomed boats were heaving from the troopships towards the shore; every moment, more of the Hun hordes leaped waist-deep to the water and came wading ashore to join in the attack.

Although the three Cliff House cadets had rifles, they had no ammunition yet, and it might have gone hardly with them had they joined the ranks of the Kentish battalion in the brief hand-to-hand fight which followed in the lane outside the school

There came the clash of arms, throaty shouts, then the leading Germans turned and ran—while a battery of British machine-guns got into action on the left and enfiladed them as they retreated.

The three chums checked, dropped into the ditch and crouched there, watching. They saw lithe, active figures in khaki shooting and running behind the bunches of men in grey; they heard the shattering, staccato voices of the machine-guns coughing through the snapping crackle of rifle-shots. They heard whistles blowing shrilly through the uproar, and almost with the first notes the British soldiers dropped to the wiry, shore-land grass and, prostrate there, began firing at the Germans as they scuttled for the shelter of their boats.

In what seemed a matter of seconds, the German assault had been frustrated—but the flat-bottomed boats did not leave the shore. There were enough of them now to form a long cordon, behind which the Germans crouched. From the shelter of the armour-clad sides of the vessels, they began to rake the shell-torn grass with machine-guns.

From somewhere behind the school the chums



heard a series of fierce, coughing explosions—howitzers getting into action. Simultaneously, three shells plugged to the sea between the Germans' boats and the vessels from which they had come. A fourth shell dropped fairly in the centre of the row along the shore, and a boat vanished in flailing debris that showed black through a yellow fount of sand and foaming water.

"Beat 'em!" Jack exclaimed. "Gosh, didn't they run!" There was a shaky timbre to his voice, and he was a little pale, but his eyes were shining. "Here, where's Buster gone to— Hi! Buster! Come—"

But the fat Fourth-former was already crawling back along the ditch, head low, as there sounded above them the tearing "Whe-e-ew!" of the machine-gun bullets. The bullets struck the road aslant some little distance away, and in the heart of the shuddering trail of dust that they raised the chums saw the leaping red of sparks—struck from the surface as bullets hit the flints and stones.

In his hand, Buster was dragging equipment cast aside by some wounded soldier.

"Here's some ammunition!" he gasped, as he crawled along the bottom of the dry ditch. "Now we'll give 'em something!"

He plucked the pouches open and tumbled gleaming clips of cartridges to the grass. The three of them stripped their rifles of the canvas which had covered them when they took the weapons from the shattered gun-limber; each filled his pockets with cartridge clips, and then they loaded their own weapons.

"Two clips—an' an extra shot for the breech!" Jack and Tom heard Buster mutter. "That's eleven—I'll make 'em pay for"—he half choked as the bolt of his weapon clattered home—"for Fatty!"

A moment later and he was leaning forward, rifle pushed over the front of the ditch. Buster was deathly pale now, and his lips were a mere line. His young brother was lying dead beside a shell-hole at the back of the school, and it was Buster's desire for vengeance that had brought the three to the ditch.

He squinted along the short barrel of the service rifle, caught his breath—and then his right shoulder jerked back as the rifle spanged its messenger of death. A lazy wreath of blue smoke curled from the breech as Buster pumped the bolt and ejected the spent cartridge, forcing another home.

"Don't know if that got anybody," he growled. "But I hope so!"

The acrid reek of cordite came to the nostrils of Tom and Jack—then they, too, were leaning forward, their weapons trained on the beached boats of the invaders. Low to the ground they crouched, adding their fire to the withering volleys that blazed from the rifles and machine-guns of the soldiers lying along the steep slope before them.

Whether they hit anything they could not tell, but they knew that their shots must have some effect, for all had more than proved themselves on the school rifle-ranges when they had taken their firing course with the cadets.

For perhaps three minutes they fired—then the very earth before them seemed to erupt!

With an abruptness that struck them dumb with amazement a barrage dropped from the war vessels now anchored off-shore—a veritable screen of shells that the Germans designed should utterly smash all resistance. Behind that barrage they massed their forces for a fresh assault.

The air was filled with the whine and burst of missiles. Before the chums, barely fifty yards' distant was what looked like a shifting wall of smoke, dappled and split by the fiery hearts of bursting shells—livid splashes of red flame.

The burning reek of high explosive came to their nostrils; they heard shell-fragments sear the air above them, while over-shot shells burst behind—some hit farther along in the ditch in which they lay.

From out the smoke and inferno, small figures came running, leaping from one shell-hole to another as they strove to escape the fringe of the barrage. One of these figures came straight towards the chums, running quite steadily and calmly. As he came nearer, they saw that it was a young officer; he carried a walking stick in one hand and he dropped lightly into the shelter of the ditch.

"Warming things up now, aren't they!" he said cheerfully. "They— Hallo, who the dickens are you fellows?"

"We're Cliff House cadets, sir!" Jack told him. "We're—"

"Cadets, are you!" exclaimed the officer, and he looked at them one after the other. "Well, I admire your pluck—but you get out of this as fast as you can! This is no place for you, boys! Get behind the school and cut— Isn't that barrage coming nearer?"

His last words snapped out—he was right. The barrage was lifting, stealing forward. Even as they saw it someone came running along the road behind them—running despite the bullets and steel which whistled through the air.

"Get your men out of this—get 'em away! Form up in the dip behind the school until the barrage lifts!" The words were roared by a man who wore on his cuff the crown and double stars of a British colonel. His left arm hung limply at his side, and there was blood on his tunic at the shoulder. "Germans are massing behind that barrage—pass the word along!"

He trotted on, oblivious of his own danger—wounded, but still doing his duty. The officer beside the chums started half to his feet, but he paused for one word more to the boys.

"You get out of this—it's going to be pretty tough here in a bit," he said. "Bad enough now, but—"

Jack caught his arm.

"Can you tell us where to find Brigadier Gordon?" he asked. "We've got a message for him!"

"He's at headquarters—Denge Village!" the officer answered. "Clear out now, lads!" Then he was gone, rallying his men as they made their escape from the barrage—some falling even as they got clear.

"Better give old Bates' message to the Brigadier," said Jack to the others. "Maybe he'll give us a job to do, or something. Anyway, we can't do much here. Denge is straight along the lane—we'll run for it!"

Together they leaped from the ditch to the roadway and ran along it. They had covered barely a dozen yards before a shell hit the side of the road. A livid sheet of flame spouted from the earth, dirt hurtled up about it; then the three of them were knocked flat by the concussion, and deafened by the tumultuous, rolling roar with which the shell exploded.

They picked themselves up, staggering through the acrid smoke; their rifles had fallen from their hands, but none of them realised it until they got clear. Jack's tunic was split down one side and Buster's cheek had been cut; Tom was limping a little where something had caught him, but his shin was only bruised and the limp soon passed off.

"I'm all right!" Buster gasped, when Jack examined the wound in his cheek. "It's only a scratch! Come on!"

They ran on. In a little while they won clear of even the over-shot shells from the barrage.



For a quarter of a mile they kept going, and then they paused in the shelter of a hedge and looked back.

#### At British Headquarters.

**T**HE Germans were trying to land on the Dungeness side of Littlestone. Their murderous barrage was still scouring the earth, but beyond it, the chums could glimpse the activity of the German vessels.

All were firing now, even the four submarines; in their rear, the great troop-ships were simply ablaze with guns, while the water between them and the shore was thick with boats going to and returning from the sandy strip. Plainly enough, the Germans were massing for an attack which should make good their footing.

"There are our chaps!" exclaimed Tom, "all getting together behind the school. Gosh, there aren't many of them!"

The British soldiers looked a mere handful compared with the masses of grey-clad invaders assembling on the sands, and slowly following up as the barrage advanced before them.

"There—yes, there's another battery of our guns coming up!" Buster pointed to a by-road as he spoke. Four field-guns showed, and even as he pointed to them, the leader of the foremost team turned his horses straight at a low hedge beside the road. The limber crashed through, followed by the others; the battery strung out in line, then wheeled round.

Instantly men leaped from the limbers, the horses were loosed from the swingle-trees, and in a matter of seconds the guns were in action, pitching shells through the enemy barrage.

Farther distant, a line of motor-lorries raised dust along the New Romney road; the boys could see that they were crowded with soldiers. From the horizon beyond the lorries, a squadron of aeroplanes swept into the blue, streaking in wedge-formation towards the coast.

Elsewhere, everything seemed quiet and calm. The sun was shining, a warm breeze stirred the bushes and the trees near the boys. Grass rustled on the flats of Denge Marsh behind them, and the lighthouse showed white and sedate on Dungeness Head.

But, beyond Dungeness, they thought they could hear—like an echo of the battle before the school—the crash of shells, as though another landing was being made there. They stood a moment looking at the school.

The clock-tower was but a broken stump, the roof was torn and slashed, great holes showed in the red walls, and the little copse on the far side—where the first battery of field-guns had got into action—was just a mass of broken trees and shell-shattered trunks. Sight of the old school brought home to them, more than anything else, the fact that England was at war.

In the space of but little more than an hour, the peace of the Fourth Form-room had been shattered—invaders were hammering shells through the walls, British soldiers were massing by the old school, and in a little while, the building might be in the hands of the enemy.

"Better get on," muttered Jack; and the three turned to walk steadily onwards towards Denge Village. As they went they could see khaki figures here and there among the bushes and hedges; now and again they got a glimpse of artillery on the distant roads, while out at sea, they saw three destroyers coming from the direction of Portsmouth and firing as they came. Their guns were directed towards the other side of Dungeness, and it was not until the boys came in sight of Denge Village that they discovered the objective of the destroyers' weapons.

They glimpsed the red roofs of the village, saw shells bursting on the far side and then, beyond that, they could plainly see Germans

advancing from the shore. Another landing-party had gained a footing there, and it was at their vessels that the destroyers were firing.

The chums could not see much, because the straggling buildings of the village hid a lot of what was happening on the far side, but they made out columns of soldiers coming along the road from the direction of Lydd.

From the main street of the village, a despatch rider came hurtling; he was lying flat along the tank of his motor-cycle, his machine going all out. The bike bucketed and leaped on the rough road as he shot towards them; the chums jumped for the grass border and he roared past, scattering stones in his wake—eyes grim behind his goggles, brown hands wrapped knuckle-white about the handle-bar grips.

"Wouldn't mind if the Brigadier gave me a job like that!" Buster gasped, when the despatch-rider had passed. "It—"

"You'd be shaken to a jelly in about a mile of it!" Jack chuckled, as he glanced at the fat junior. "They don't want—Hallo, what's up over there!"

Just at this point, the railway from New Romney ran close to the lane on its way to the junction in Denge Village; from the village it went on to Appledore. The line ran along an embankment, and four soldiers suddenly appeared on the metals. All four stopped close against where the line bridged a road running past the village, they lifted their rifles and the whipping cracks of explosions came as they fired downwards.

Through intervening bushes, the chums could just glimpse a black figure doubled up and running madly in their direction. The soldiers fired again, and spurts of dust woke from the road about the dashing form of the civilian, then the khaki-clad men came plunging down the embankment, casting glances at the bridge near them as they ran.

"They're after him for something!" Jack exclaimed. "Perhaps—Gosh, he must be a spy!"

The three of them ran to cut the fugitive off. Two of the soldiers continued to chase him, the others remained by the side of the road, taking pot-shots at the man.

The chums were some fifty yards from the junction of the road under the railway and the one leading to the village, when a second civilian appeared from the hedge at the roadside. In his right hand glinted the blued steel of an automatic pistol. It barked twice in quick succession; the two soldiers both pitched forward and dropped full-length.

Almost as though their fall was a signal, the railway bridge heaved abruptly into the air—blown up! In the heart of brown earth from the embankment showed the grey mass of the bridge stone-work, lifting lazily before it crashed down.

The three juniors pulled up aghast, and Jack was the only one who did not look at the bridge. He was staring with all his eyes at the man with the automatic pistol—it was Stutz!

It was the spy who had posed as the French master at the school—the man who had used the wireless installation which had brought the enemy to England's shore. Evidently, he had come to the aid of a fellow spy engaged in blowing up the railway bridge, thus cutting off all chance of sending reinforcements down the line to the battle that was raging in front of the old school.

Jack saw Stutz grab the other's arm, then the pair of them darted off the road, sped across a field, doubled back on their tracks, showed for the fraction of a second as they scaled the railway embankment and then were gone. But the two soldiers who had remained behind saw them going, and they went over the railway, pausing on the lines to stop and shoot before they disappeared.



"That was Stutz!" Jack exclaimed. "I saw him plainly!"

"Then those two others'll get him!" Tom said quickly. "Let's have a look at the pair he shot down, we might—"

The three ran on. They reached the two still figures lying athwart the road. They had been shot as cleanly as Stutz had killed the signaller in the school clock-tower; there was just a blue hole in the forehead of each. The spy was a wonderful shot with an automatic pistol, and the three chums realised it.

There was nothing they could do. It was useless to join in the pursuit, because they were unarmed, and in any case, they would probably do more good by reporting to the brigadier, as old Bates had told them to do.

In silence they hurried on, and the mind of each was busy with the warning those two dead soldiers had given them. Each carried a picture of the limp figures in the dust, rifles cast aside, bent fingers gripping at the road-surface, limbs inert. Stutz was a dangerous, ruthless man—more dangerous, perhaps, than either of them fully realised.

"That—that looks like the headquarters!" Buster said presently, and he pointed a stubby finger towards Denge Inn, an ancient hostelry in the main street of the village. Two powerful-looking cars were standing outside, and three or four despatch-riders were waiting with their machines near at hand.

As the chums looked, they saw a motor-cyclist roar in from the Lydd end of the village; at the moment that he appeared a shell crashed to the road behind him, landing squarely and tearing up the surface. The despatch-rider wobbled right across the road, steadied, then braked to a skidding halt in front of the inn. He leaped from his machine, kicked down the back stand and dashed inside the building.

Just outside the village was a barn with a Red-cross flag fluttering from a hastily-erected staff at the top; three ambulances were loading up before taking a cut across the fields to the Lydd road.

Past the barn, the chums came to a shell-hole at one side of the road. It was outside Jennifer's tuck-shop, and the whole front of the building had been ripped out. The three of them paused to stare with wide eyes.

A case of ginger-beer bottles lay against the broken stone step—the bottles shattered and their contents drying in the sun. Dough-nuts and pastries from the window were scattered amongst the broken brick-work, and through the black opening that had once been the front of the shop they could see the riven wood of the counter.

"They've hit the tuck-shop!" Jack gasped.

Many an afternoon had the trio spent in the village, and many a tea had they had in that cool little shop.

"Wonder if old Jennifer got away!" Tom muttered. "I expect they were cleared out with the rest."

Buster was staring at the debris, thinking, maybe, of the waste of food. He said nothing, but went on with the rest; Buster had not forgotten the twisted little figure laying by the shell-hole behind the school. Loss of his brother had robbed Buster of his normal cheeriness.

The despatch-riders stared curiously at the three chums as they reached the front of the inn, and Jack spoke to one of them.

"Do you know where I can find Brigadier Gordon?" he asked.

The man jerked a thumb towards the building.

"In there," he said. "Have you come from Littlestone way? How's things there? They've made a landing, haven't they?"

Jack nodded.

"Yes. Have they landed anywhere else?"

"Other side o' Dungeness, that's all I know," the man answered, and the trio moved on to the inn.

They stepped inside, and their path was instantly stopped by an armed orderly.

"What d'you want?" he demanded.

"We've a message for Brigadier Gordon."

The man looked at them, hesitated, then growled:

"All right—tell the orderly outside the door at the end."

The chums passed along the passage to the doorway of what had once been the bar parlour. The small room had now been made the headquarters of the British troops operating in that area. Just as the chums reached the half-open door, the orderly was called by someone inside and he stepped into the room.

The chums moved in after him; neither of them fully appreciated the iron-hard discipline which girds any headquarters on the field, otherwise they would have waited until the orderly re-appeared.

Inside the room a map was spread out on the table. On the far side of it stood three officers, in front of them Brigadier Gordon bent above the map. Actually, he was not a brigadier, because that rank was abolished after the great war of 1914, but the term still stuck in the army.

He was a tall, lean-faced man, with a short, bristling moustache and steel-grey eyes; his jaw was strong and square, and he looked up as the three chums entered and saluted. Words rose to his lips as he was about to order them out, then he noticed that their khaki was different from that of the men under his command; he saw, too, that their uniforms were soiled and that there was a smear of blood on Buster's cheek.

"What do you want, boys?" he asked, and his voice was crisp.

"Message from Mr. Bates—Secret Service, sir!" Jack answered, and he saw the brigadier's eyes widen a little, then Jack told what had happened, making it as concise as possible.

"Stutz—that's the man we have to thank, eh? And you saw two of our men chasing him across the railway line? And that bridge is blown up, too—confound it! Well, we can't bother about Stutz at the moment, but I'll send a party after him the minute I can and— Yes?"

A dust-covered despatch-rider dashed in through the door, saluted and passed a flimsy across to the brigadier, who scanned the message. He seemed to forget the boys as he read it, and turned to his companions.

"Dallas says he can't hold the enemy down by Littlestone—their artillery is too heavy for him. They're advancing behind a creeping barrage and he daren't let his men stay for it. He's on the retreat along the coast in this direction. That means that the enemy are trying to link up with this lot on the Dungeness side of the village. We've got to stop that at all costs!"

He bent to the map, and came to a swift decision.

"Get the troops off those two trains from Lydd—put them in the buildings on the seaward side of this village. Throw barricades across either end of the main street. If we can hold out here, we shall be able to prevent the two enemy landing parties from uniting. In two hours we shall have enough reinforcements to drive the whole of them back into the sea—but we must hold this village at all costs! Get busy!"

In the fraction of a second, it seemed, the room was cleared but for the three boys and the brigadier. He looked at them interrogatively.

"Is there anything we can do to—to help, sir?" Jack asked.

"I think you boys have done enough already," the brigadier answered. "You had better walk



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back along the lane to Appledore—you'll be safe there."

"We don't want to do that!" Buster blurted. "My—my brother's been killed, and I—I—" He broke off.

The brigadier looked them over.

"You're cadets, I see—school cadets, eh? You can all shoot? Well, I need every man who can handle a gun. If you don't want to go, then get rifles and join the men behind one of the barricades. Please yourselves!"

"Thank you, sir!" The three stepped back and saluted smartly. The brigadier eyed them for a moment, then, very suddenly, he drew himself upright, returned a full salute and said:

"Good luck! I've got a lot of veterans in my battalion—but we need lads like you. Well, I hope you're as good as some of the old ones that fought at Mons!"

**The Tank!**

**T**HE three fled out from the inn, to run into an officer talking with two others. "We've beaten 'em off at Walmer, and we've whacked 'em at Pevensey Bay!" he exclaimed excitedly. "Beat 'em here and the blighters won't have got a footing anywhere!"

Jack looked at his chums with shining eyes, when they were in the road again.

"Did you hear that!" he exclaimed. "If this village holds out like the brigadier said, for two hours—"

"We'll be able to whip 'em!" Buster exclaimed. "I'm goin' to help with that barricade."

"I'm not—not yet, anyway!" Tom told them.

"I want some grub! We haven't had anything since breakfast, and you can't go on without food. It's going to be hot work here presently, and we—"

"That's right," agreed Buster. "We ought to keep our strength up. What about going along to the tuck-shop?"

They made for it. Already, just beyond the place, a party of engineers were flinging a barricade across the road, while others filled sandbags with earth dug from a field close by.

The three clambered over the debris into the shop. The whole place was in a state of confusion, but nothing seemed to have been taken. There were loaves in the glass-fronted shelves behind the counter, cheese and butter and tinned meats and undamaged cases of ginger pop and lemonade.

"Old Jennifer wouldn't mind," Buster said, as he reached for a loaf. "Anyway, if we don't take the stuff, then it may only get smashed up, and— Gosh!"

A shell burst somewhere at the back, but the



engineers in front of the shop went on working calmly, taking no notice of it. In a little while, the chums forgot any danger they might be in, as they satisfied their hunger. It was nearly half an hour before they decided that they had had enough, and by that time they became conscious that a great change had come over the village.

When they stepped into the sunlight, they saw that the barricade had been finished. It was only a couple of feet high, and behind it a trench had been dug—a trench which was occupied by six machine-guns and their crews, the black barrels of their weapons poking through narrow gaps in the heavy sandbag wall before them.

Beyond the barricade the road stretched to the school and Littlestone; over the fields and flats on either side, British soldiers were moving in on the village, some firing backwards as they came. Beyond them was a thin screen of bursting shells, thrown from the German vessels before the advance of their own troops. The barrage was thin because the men were now some distance from the ships and there were not a great number of guns which could carry so far—quite apart from the fact the front they had to cover had now increased enormously.

Here and there amongst the buildings on the other side of the village street, the chums could see soldiers moving. Now and again they heard the smash of glass as men shattered window-panes through which they intended to fire at the enemy.

"No good stopping by this barricade," Jack observed. "We sha'n't be able to do much—and we haven't got any rifles or anything. We've got to find some, and—"

"We'll soon find 'em!" Tom exclaimed. "Let's go along the street; we're bound to pick up something."

They moved away, just as a score of sweating gunners ran a field-gun by hand along the road, until they could tuck it between two cottages and fire above the barricade. From somewhere at the back of the village came the high-pitched bark of anti-aircraft guns: "Bew-w-w! Bew—ew—ew—ew—w—w—w!" as they slammed shells at a single enemy scouting 'plane which had lofted from one of the German ships.

In half a minute, the chums were in the village green. Very few soldiers seemed to be about now; all had gone to cover so that they might not be observed by the scout overhead. When the trio reached the green, only one man was in sight, and he was in his shirtsleeves, although on his head showed the flopping black cap of the Tank Corps.

The man was working at the engine of a lorry which lay tipped up on its side at the edge of the green. Behind him, in the centre of the patch of grass, showed the giant, rusted bulk of an old tank—relic of the last war and presented as a memento to the village. It was Jack who recognised the man by the shattered lorry.

"It's Jennifer!" he exclaimed. "Bill Jennifer!" and he went forward at the run.

Bill Jennifer was the son of the old people who owned the village tuckshop, and he looked up when he heard his name called, then grinned through the oil and grime on his sweat-streaked face.

"Hallo—you here still! You ought to ha' got out of this!" He recognised the trio; many was the yarn he had had with them when he had been on leave, and had met them in his father's shop.

"What are you doing?" Buster asked, and he glanced from the lorry to the old tank.

"Doin'? Well, I'll tell you," said Bill. "I come 'ome last night on four days' leave—special leave, at that! Bless me, if old Jerry didn't start droppin' shells into the village this mornin'. I saw my mother an' the old dad on a train when all the non-combatants left, an' then I thinks I'll stop an' give a hand. I saw the way the Germans was givin' it to our boys down by Rye Bay, so, thinks I, what's needed 'ere is tanks—see? Then I remembered this old tank here, and I wondered if I couldn't get her goin'! That's what I'm doin' now?"

"Tryin' to get it going?" asked Jack. "Can you?"

"You bet I can!" Bill Jennifer answered. "I'm in the tank corps, anyway—an' if I can't get this old 'bus movin' I'll eat my hat. She's sound as a bell pretty near all through, except that the magneto's gone west—that's why I'm tryin' to get the one off here. Fill that old tank up with petrol an' oil, give her a new set o' plugs an'— Well, there's everythin' that I want on this busted lorry. Care to give me a hand, and— What's that? Ah, they've got him!"

The four of them looked up to where the German scouting 'plane was coming down. Flame streaked from its tail as it shot earthwards, twisting and surging in its downward flight. The anti-aircraft guns had found their target.

They watched the 'plane fall beyond the village, then turned to the lorry and the old tank again. Bill Jennifer suddenly lost his smile as he faced the boys.

"Listen," he said. "In about 'arf an' hour this little village is goin' to be right in the thick of it—an' if we don't 'old out, the Germans'll get a proper footin'! They've got guns ready to sling ashore as soon's the infantry have pushed us back a bit, an' once they're established it'll take a lot to shift 'em. We ain't got no tanks here—an' there ain't no tellin' but what this old bus, if I can get her goin', won't do a mighty lot o' good!"

He glanced from one to another of the boys, and then added:

"Us four inside there—we could let them Germans know we was about, couldn't we?"

They did not answer. They stood staring with glowing eyes at the great lines of the massive tank. To be in that—going baldheaded at the advancing enemy, striking a blow in vengeance of what the Huns had done to the old school—and to little Fatty Kirk!

"You bet we could do something!" Buster gasped—and with his words they set to work.

And as they worked, the roar of battle began to swell about them, as the enemy concentrated on either side of the village.

From buildings and barricades, grim-visaged men in khaki fought in dour desperation, while the three chums and Bill Jennifer struggled to repair the old tank which had fought for England on the shattered fields of Flanders, and which was now to fight for her again against the same enemy—but on British soil.

*(Read about the Battle of Denge Village next week—how the Cliff House juniors turn the tide of battle with the giant tank! Next Wednesday's chapters are full of real excitement and thrills—order your copy of "The Nelson Lee Library" in advance. And don't forget that next week's FREE GIFT is a STUNNING COLOURED STAND-UP FIGURE OF BUSTER KEATON.)*

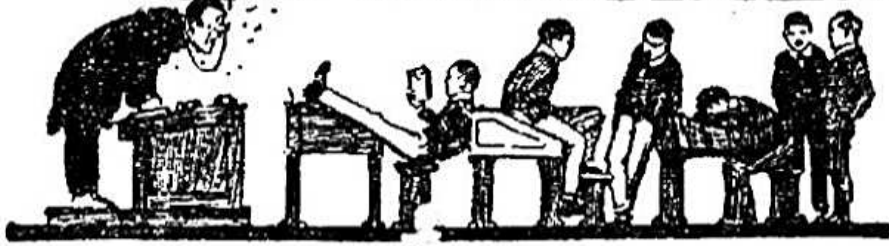
**A FINAL REMINDER!**

**BUSTER KEATON**

**NEXT WEDNESDAY!**



# EVERY BOY HIS OWN MASTER!



(Continued from page 34.)

policemen to deal wi' these young varmint!"

"You clear away!" thundered Mr. Sharpe, making a menacing gesture towards the excited juniors. "Throw any of those fire-works at me, and I'll—"

The next moment he was dancing madly, for about thirty jumping crackers were hurled round his feet. Even P.-c. Sparrow grinned. There was something comical in this spectacle. Mr. Sharpe was dancing in his own doorway, and the jumping crackers were exploding like living things all round him.

"Help!" yelled the ironmonger. "They'll have my shop on fire! By thunder! I'll prosecute you for this, you young demons!"

Somehow he managed to get inside, and he not only slammed the door, but barricaded it with two or three sections of corrugated iron. And, fortunately for him, the crowd found some entertainment in another direction.

Two daring juniors had stolen up behind the policeman, and while he was hustled by a number of others, they succeeded in pinning a couple of Roman candles to his coat-tails. Before he could be aware of their game, they were alight.

"Bust my heyes!" gasped Sparrow, as a sudden shower of sparks hit the ground behind him. "Hi, what's all this 'ere? What the— Crikey! I'm on fire!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The village constable ran like mad—not because he had any objective, but it seemed to him that it was the only sensible thing to do. His helmet dropped off, and the ragers conveniently made an avenue for him. And his path was strewn with jumping crackers, flares, and numerous other fireworks. And all the time those Roman candles were endlessly spurting stars and silver fire and other abominations out of his coat-tails.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go it, Sparrow—you're winning!"

By the time the fireworks were exhausted at the constable's rear, the constable was also exhausted, and he took the greatest possible care to remain well clear of the field of action. After all, what could he hope to accomplish against a crowd of irresponsible youths of this type? As long as their fireworks lasted, they would continue the orgy of explosions and lurid displays.

Mr. Sharpe was ringing up the school—heatedly and frantically. There was rather a pathetic element in his own particular case—for it was he who had been selling fireworks

to the St. Frank's fellows throughout the day! It was too much of a good thing for them to come back and explode them in front of his very shop!

"Is that the headmaster?" he roared, when he heard Dr. Stafford's voice. "Confound it, sir, these boys of yours are trying to burn down the village! They're out of hand, and the whole of Bellton is like pandemonium!"

"Good gracious!" gasped the Head. "Who—who is that?"

"I'm Sharpe—the ironmonger!"

"In that case, Mr. Sharpe, I fail to see why you should make such a fuss!" retorted the Head indignantly. "To the best of my knowledge, you are the very tradesman who has been supplying these boys with fire-works."

A strangled cry came across the wire.

"But—but I don't expect them to burn the village down with them!" hooted Mr. Sharpe, at last.

"You know very well, sir, that it is against my express wishes that any of the village tradesmen should supply my pupils with fire-works!" retorted the Head. "I have repeatedly given you my views on the subject. But for the sake of vulgar profit, you choose to ignore my—"

"Bah!" snarled Mr. Sharpe, hanging up the receiver.

"Well, Professor Hudson, things are going from bad to worse!" said Dr. Stafford, as he turned to his agitated guest. "Half my junior boys are rioting in the village, and it seems that an everlasting disgrace will be brought upon us. I am intensely grieved that I ever gave my sanction to this hare-brained scheme."

Professor Hudson was rather pale.

"I regret that you should so characterise it," he said coldly.

"I apologise, professor," said the Head. "But, upon my soul, I am so worried that I am afraid I am unconsciously rude. What can we do in this terrible situation? If I go to the village and order the boys back to the school, matters will only be worse. I am helpless—utterly helpless! I have given the boys their liberty, I have made them their own masters, and they have rewarded me by setting my wishes at defiance!"

## CHAPTER 16.

NOT SO BAD, AFTER ALL.

URRAH! Here's another crowd coming. Perhaps they've got fireworks!"

"Good egg!"



The ragers cheered vigorously as large numbers of figures hove in sight down the High Street. But they soon discovered the nature of their mistake. Dick Hamilton and Edward Oswald Hand-

(Continued on page 43.)



# HOW TO JOIN THE LEAGUE

## ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE APPLICATION

FORM No. 56.

**SECTION**

**A**

**READER'S APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP.**

I desire to become enrolled as a Member of THE ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE, and to qualify for all such benefits and privileges as are offered to Members of the League. I hereby declare that I have introduced "THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY" and THE ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE to one new reader, whose signature to certify this appears on second form attached hereto. Will you, therefore, kindly forward me Certificate of Enrolment with the Membership Number assigned to me, and Membership Badge.

**SECTION**

**B**

**MEMBER'S APPLICATION FOR MEDAL AWARDS.**

I, Member No..... (give Membership No.) hereby declare that I have introduced one more new reader, whose signature to certify this appears on second form attached hereto. This makes me..... (state number of introductions up to date) introductions to my credit.

**SECTION**

**C**

**NEW READER'S DECLARATION.**

I hereby declare that I have been introduced by (give name of introducer) ..... to this issue of "THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY."

(FULL NAME).....

(ADDRESS).....

### INSTRUCTIONS.

**INSTRUCTIONS.—Reader Applying for Membership.** Cut out TWO complete Application Forms from Two copies of this week's issue of THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY. On one of the forms fill in Section A, crossing out Sections B and C. Then write clearly your full name and address at bottom of form. *The second form* is for your new reader, who fills in Section C, crosses out Sections A and B, and writes his name and address at bottom of form. Both forms are then pinned together, and sent to the Chief Officer, The St Frank's League, c/o THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY, Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C.4. **Member Applying for Bronze Medal:** It will be necessary for you to obtain six new readers for this award. For each new reader TWO complete forms, bearing the same number, are needed. On one of the forms fill in Section B, crossing out Sections A and C, and write your name and address at bottom of form. The other form is for your new reader, who fills in Section C, crosses out Sections A and B, and writes his name and address at the bottom of

the form. Now pin both forms together and send them to the Chief Officer, as above. One new reader will then be registered against your name, and when six new readers have been registered, you will be sent the St. Frank's League bronze medal. There is nothing to prevent you from sending in forms for two or more new readers at once, provided that each pair of forms bears the same date and number.

Bronze medallists wishing to qualify for the silver or gold medals can apply in the same way as for the bronze medal, filling in Section B. Every introduction they make will be credited to them, so that when the League reaches the required number of members, they can exchange their bronze medal for a silver or gold one, according to the number of introductions with which they are credited.

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If you want help or information on any subject, you will find the Chief Officer ever ready to assist you.



# EVERY BOY HIS OWN MASTER!



(Continued from page 41.)

forth were in the forefront of the new arrivals, and they were looking very grim.

"Haven't you had about enough of this?" shouted Dick. "Why don't you come back to the school, and behave like human beings, instead of disgracing the old place?"

"It's no good talking to them!" thundered Handforth. "We've got to fight!"

And without waiting for any preliminaries, he flung himself into the fray. In about twenty seconds, the entire High Street was swarming with struggling figures. A free fight was in progress.

And for once, let it be said, Handforth's ram-headed methods were successful. Within five minutes the raggers had lost all their spirit. They were overwhelmingly defeated, and they came to the conclusion that a long rest was indicated. The prospect of bed, indeed, seemed very alluring—for most of them were suffering from various acute pains.

"Good work, Brother Hamilton—stout doings!" declared Browne, who had been scrapping as vigorously as anybody. "I suggest that we make a bee-line for home without delay."

"You're right!" said Dick promptly.

And, forthwith, the crowds were lined up, and ordered to march. Upon their arrival back at St. Frank's the fellows went to their various Houses, and silently went up to bed. The last of them had just gone indoors when the headmaster and Professor Hudson came briskly through Big Arch, and crossed the Triangle. They were going down to the village to investigate the riot!

The measures against the raggers had been so swiftly accomplished that the entire force was back at the school before the Head started out. Thus, going into Bellton with vague fears, Dr. Stafford arrived there to find the whole village in a state of blissful peace.

"Good heavens!" muttered the Head anxiously. "Is it possible that they have ventured into Bannington with their appalling nonsense? If so, the London newspapers will get hold of the story, and that will be a calamity."

P.-c. Sparrow came by, saluting.

"Tell me, constable," said the Head, "where did the boys go?"

"Why, ain't you just come from the school, sir?" asked Sparrow. "They all went back a quarter of an hour ago, as peaceful as you like! Ah, they're sensible young gents,

Master Hamilton an' Master Pitt an' Master Handforth an' them others. They came down 'ere, they did an' everything was over inside of a minute or two."

"Thank you, Sparrow—I am greatly relieved," said Dr. Stafford with a sigh of relief. "I—I trust that you will not make any serious report concerning the incident."

"I ain't so sure as what I oughtn't to!" growled the constable, then, as Dr. Stafford slipped a pound note into his hand he added: "Still, it's over, so I won't say no more."

They bade him good-night, and turned back.

"So the school's sense of honour is not entirely lost," said Professor Hudson gently. "It is the boys themselves who have remedied the lapse from sanity. I think it is a very good augury, Dr. Stafford."

"I am certainly relieved," declared the Head. "And if there is a semblance of order to-morrow, I may continue the experiment throughout next week. But I will confess that I am dubious."

And while they were walking up the lane, Edward Oswald Handforth and Dick Hamilton were having a little chat just outside the latter's bed-room door. And Ralph Leslie Fullwood joined them.

"Where did you spring from?" asked Handforth. "Great guns! Look at his face! What the dickens——"

"Don't make a fuss!" growled Fullwood. "I found Forrest and his pals starting off on the spree, and I tried to stop them. The curs used foul play, and kicked me until I was half dead. But don't say anything to anybody about it—I don't want a lot of commotion."

"They've gone out on the spree!" said Handforth darkly. "And they kicked you, did they? By George, I'll——"

"Steady!" murmured Dick Hamilton. "We can't do anything more to-night, Handy. Let's be thankful that the school's quiet. But let me tell you something. We've got to organise a committee of level-headed chaps to deal with these fellows who haven't got any sense of honour. There aren't any punishments now—the masters are more or less helpless."

"My only hat!" breathed Handforth. "Set up our own tribunals, you mean?"

"It's a corking idea!" nodded Fullwood, with gleaming eyes.

"We'll get busy on that committee to-morrow—and I shall want you fellows," said Dick Hamilton, as he prepared to go into his bed-room. "It's too late to discuss it to-night. But I'm determined on one thing. St. Frank's is going to show this American professor that it can be trusted on its Honour!"

THE END.

(Another grand long complete story next week: "THE SCHOOL WITHOUT RULES!"—and a corking stand-up coloured figure of BUSTER KEATON—FREE.)



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