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HOW

HANDFORTH RAISES THE WIND

THIS
WEEK!

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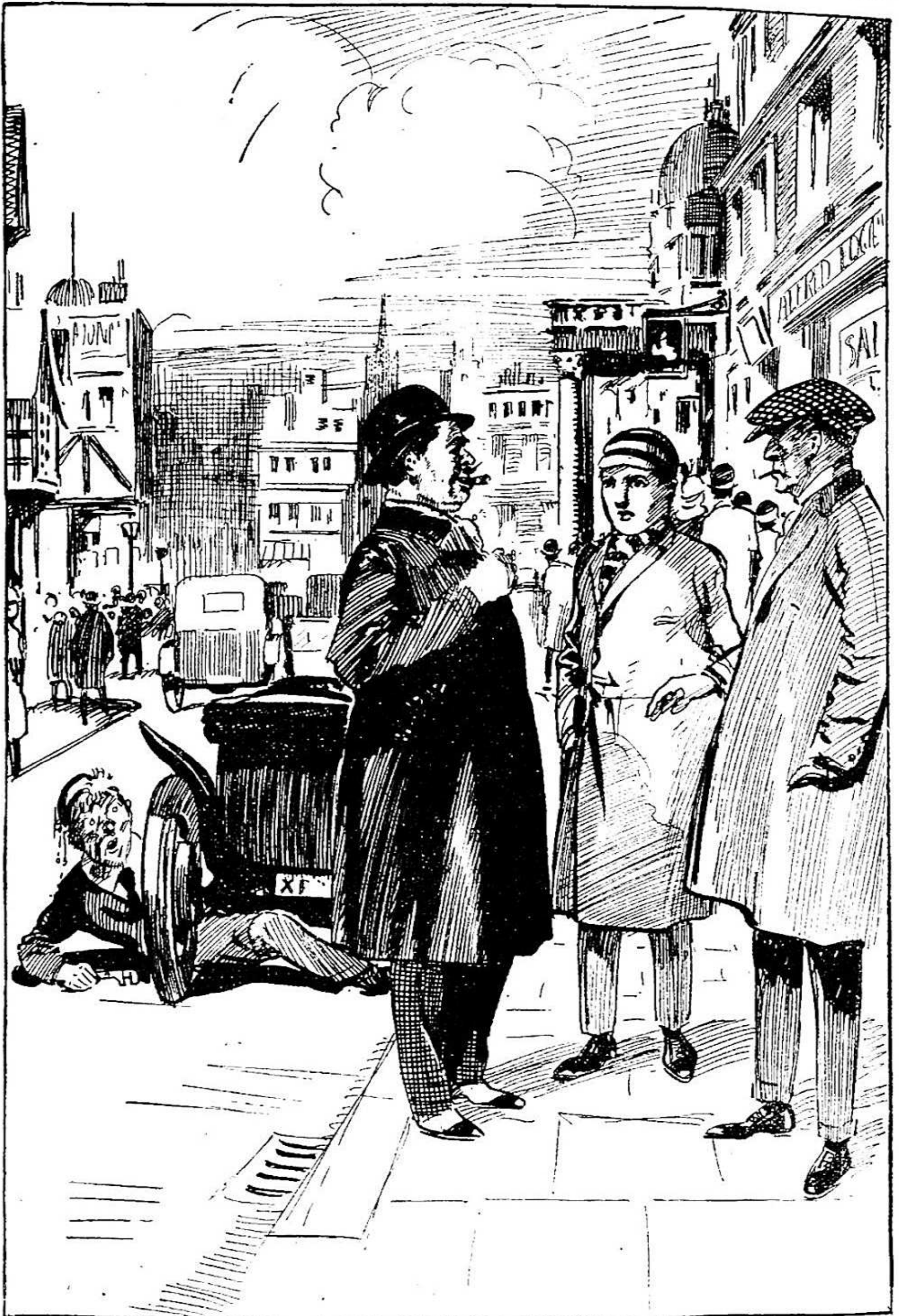
ALL THE FUN OF THE FAIR!

A Lively Long Complete Story of the
Boys of St. Frank's.

New Series No. 31.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

December 4th, 1926.



"I didn't send back your twenty pounds!" said the croupier curtly. Fullwood stared in amazement at the two men from the gambling club. If they hadn't returned the money he had lost at roulette—then who had sent it? From underneath the car, Handforth listened aghast. In a moment, Fullwood would guess the truth, and all the plans of the Remove Vigilantes would be ruined!



By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

There's a wealth of fun and thrills in this stunning long complete story of the Boys of St. Frank's.

CHAPTER I.

NUTTY!

EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH picked up something from the ground, and stared at it.

"What's this?" he asked ominously.

Church and McClure, his famous chums of Study D at St. Frank's, took a look at the little object in their leader's grasp. They had just climbed out of Handforth's neat little Austin Seven, and they were standing in the wide part of Bannington High Street, where all was quiet.

"What's this?" repeated Handforth grimly.

"Looks like a nut," said Church.

"It is a nut!" declared McClure, without qualification.

"You fathheads!" snapped Edward Oswald. "Of course, it's a nut! Do you think I don't know what a nut is when I see it?"

"Well, you asked," said Church.

"Yes, but where did it come from?" demanded Handforth, turning the nut over and over, and frowning at it accusingly.

"Where did it come from? That's the point we've got to settle!"

Church glanced up at the Town Hall clock.

"We came here to play in a football match," he said casually. "The match starts in a quarter of an hour, and it's five minutes' walk to the Grammar School. It takes us five minutes to change, so that leaves just another five minutes to decide this nutty problem. If we trace every car that's been through Bannington during the past week, examine them all over, and closely question their owners, there's about one chance in ten million that we shall solve the riddle."

McClure shook his head.

"We might do it in five minutes, but I'm a bit doubtful," he said.

Handforth sniffed.

"Jolly clever, aren't you?" he asked sarcastically. "I suppose you think you're being funny, Walter Church?"

"I thought it was slightly humorous," admitted Church modestly.

"Then you'd better think again—it's painful!" said Handforth. "This nut is one of

mine. It was just behind my Austin, so it stands to reason that it dropped from somewhere underneath. Before I go to that football match, I've got to locate where this nut came from, and put it on again."

His chums dropped their bantering attitude.

"Cheese it, Handy!" said McClure, in alarm. "We can't mess about here, tinkering with your car, when they're expecting us up at the Grammar School. My dear chap, it's hopeless! You've no proof that that nut dropped from your car! It was probably lying here for hours. Looks more like a lorry nut," he added. "Let's get a move on, instead of messing about here."

But Handforth was the most obstinate fellow in the Remove.

"Not until I've satisfied myself about this nut," he replied firmly. "There's one golden rule in motoring. Never allow nuts to work loose! I shan't be comfortable until I've settled this point."

"Well, leave it until after the match——"

"No, it's got to be done now," insisted Handforth. "First of all, we'll go round the outside, and examine everything. Then we'll look underneath."

"My stars!" breathed Church. "He means it!"

He glanced at McClure, and Mac nodded. There was always a perfect understanding between them, and they had special glances for special purposes. It was never wise to make verbal arrangements in the proximity of their leader.

There was no earthly reason why the car should not have been taken up to the Grammar School itself. But Handforth preferred to leave it in the High Street—which, at this particular section, was a public parking-place. Being Wednesday afternoon, and early-closing day, Bannington was deserted. Handforth considered that his car would be safer here than at the Grammar School. He had a certain amount of excuse, for on the last occasion when he had taken his Austin to the school, numerous Grammarians had not only climbed all over it, but two of the outrageous young miscreants had actually scratched their initials on the body! And Handforth wasn't taking any more chances.

"Don't bother about it, now, Handy," said McClure. "Here's Fullwood coming along, and we might as well walk up to the Grammar School with him."

Handforth glanced round.

"Blow Fullwood!" he said frowning. "By George! What a difference in the chap! Look at his sprightly walk! He's himself again now—and only a few days ago he was a wreck. Our money was well spent!"

"Rather!" agreed Church. "But don't talk so loud, you ass! He might hear you, and that would ruin everything. The whole success of that affair depends upon Fullwood being spoofed."

"It's all right—he's gone into a shop," said Handforth. "Sweets, by the look of it!" he added, frowning. "I'll tick him

off when he comes out! Nobody ought to eat sweets just before footer!"

"It's silly," agreed Church, unwrapping a caramel.

"Simply asking for trouble," said McClure indignantly, as he went one better than Church, and popped a caramel into his mouth.

Handforth was so concerned about the missing nut that he did not even see these sinister manoeuvres. And while he continued his inspection, Church and McClure edged quietly away.

They decided not to wait for Fullwood, especially as Handforth was just beginning to worm his way beneath the car. It was a fine chance to escape while he was at a disadvantage.

Their recent references to Fullwood were connected with an affair, which was now almost forgotten. During the previous week, Ralph Leslie Fullwood had incurred the enmity of Bernard Forrest, the cad of the Remove. And Forrest, by a cunning trick, had lured the unsuspecting Fullwood into a trap. He and Clive Russell, his study-mate, had had a quarrel, Fullwood suspecting that Clive was being led away by reason of the present Honour System, which was in vogue at St. Frank's. And Fullwood had gone to a night club, after lights out!

He had gone, thinking that Russell was there. His motives had been of the best. But Fullwood, in earlier days, had been very much of a "sport," and had indulged in gambling. Nowadays he had better sense, and was, indeed, one of the soundest fellows in the Remove.

But in that night club he had idly watched the play at a roulette table. And then, forgetting all his good resolutions, he had given way to a moment of folly, and had allowed the gambling fever to grip him again. And that fatal moment had lengthened into an hour. An hour of madness—during which he had lost all his own money, and had squandered away twenty pounds belonging to Clive Russell.

Afterwards, he had realised his dishonourable conduct; his remorse had been genuine, and he had suffered. His hours of torture had been harrowing, and indeed, had been made doubly acute by the fact that all the decent fellows in the Remove pooh-pooched Forrest's story.

That story had been true, but scarcely anybody believed it. Ralph Leslie Fullwood had received the sympathy of the Form, and this had hurt him more than anything. Then, by talking in his sleep, he had revealed everything to Clive Russell. His tortured mind had betrayed him without his knowledge of the fact.

And Clive had forgiven him. Clive had put the facts before the Remove Vigilance Committee—that body which had been formed to enforce the weaklings to respect the St. Frank's code of honour. Dick Hamilton, Handforth, De Valerie, and the other good fellows of the Remove, had

clearly understood that Fullwood was penitent, and that his conscience was torturing him. So they had clubbed together, and had engineered a little plot.

That evening a special letter had arrived for Fullwood—a letter containing twenty pounds in notes, and ostensibly from the croupier who had presided over that roulette table. And Fullwood suspected nothing! He believed that the croupier had really had pity on him, and had returned his money. And the stricken junior's agony had ended.

He believed that the secret was entirely his own: that Clive's money was intact, and that nobody need ever know of his folly. He had repented; he was resolved to keep to the straight path, and the affair was forgotten.

Since then, Fullwood had been his old self again, and the Vigilance Committee was perfectly satisfied that it had done the right thing. And that was how matters stood at the moment. None of those involved had the slightest inkling that Chance was even then preparing one of her capricious tricks.

Fullwood, of course, had no reason to suspect that he was the victim of a kindly dodge. He took it for granted that Forrest had been boasting to the croupier, and that the latter, being a man of understanding, had appreciated the unfairness of keeping Fullwood's money. So he had generously returned it. Fullwood did not realise that such a man is really too good to be true!

With the money in Clive's possession again, the unhappy junior had tried his best to forget everything, and he still believed that the secret was his own. And as none of the others ever referred to the subject—for even Forrest had found it too costly to repeat the scandal—Fullwood felt that life was worth living again.

He was looking with keenness to the football-match this afternoon, and when he emerged from the confectioner's shop, he noticed Handforth's little Austin standing further up the High Street. He moved towards it, although there was no sign of its owner, or his chums.

Handforth, in fact, was underneath, trying to find out where that nut had come from! And Church and McClure had vanished. Unhappily, Handforth did not realise this. He thought they were still there.

"Can't see anything wrong," he said, in a strangled voice. "All the nuts seem to be all right. But now I'm here, I might as well tighten up everything within reach. Give us a spanner, Church!"

He only received a stony silence.

"Church, you ass!" gurgled Handforth.

"Gimme a spanner!"

Still no reply.

"Mac!" roared Handforth thickly. "Get a spanner out of the tool-box, and look sharp about it! I'll smash you, Walter Church, when I get up!"

The silence was more stony than ever.

"Great Scott!" breathed Handforth, the truth forcing itself upon his amazed understanding. "They've gone! The—the traitors! The cunning bounders! They slipped away while I was under here! By George!"

He was so indignant that he sprawled there on his back, helpless. A drop of oil, thick and murky, dislodged itself from the tray, and dropped into his eye. He gasped, and searched frantically for his handkerchief.

"This is their fault," he breathed, most unreasonably.

But Handforth was not the kind of fellow to give in. For a moment he thought about emerging, and going in search of his deserting chums. But he dismissed this idea. He would locate the position of that missing nut before anything else!

Ralph Leslie Fullwood, therefore, was quite certain that the Austin Seven was deserted. The pavement just here was rather high, so he couldn't get a glimpse of Handforth's sprawling figure underneath the car.

Not that Fullwood was looking at the car now. A man was walking along the pavement towards him, and there was something about him which Fullwood vaguely recognised. Somehow, he seemed familiar.

"I've seen that fellow before!" murmured Fullwood, frowning. "I'm sure I've met him somewhere, but—"

Then he broke off, and his eyes gleamed. Memory had come back to him. This man was the croupier himself—the presiding genius of that vicious roulette table! It was a fateful meeting—much more fateful than Fullwood realised.



CHAPTER 2.

A SHOCK FOR FULLWOOD!

"HE croupier!" murmured Fullwood breathlessly. "By Jove! Here's a chance to thank him! He sent that money back

to me, and it was the act of a white man!"

He hurried forward, positive of his man now. And here was where Chance played her second trick, for the schoolboy and the gambler met exactly opposite that apparently deserted Austin Seven!

In the night club, the croupier had worn a mask. But Fullwood believed that this mask had been more for effect than anything else—a theatrical touch in order to make the place seem romantic. For the junior had very little difficulty in recognising the man.

Here was a pretty position!

Those innocent plotters—the members of the Vigilance Committee—could never have foreseen such a possibility as this! For Fullwood was about to thank this rascal for something he had never done! And the outcome of such an expression of gratitude was likely to be an eye-opener!

And there was Handforth, too—one of the

fellows who had contributed towards the twenty pounds—unseen, but within earshot. If he could have known what was about to happen, he would have dragged Fullwood away by sheer force. For Handforth would have known what to expect. He was not renowned for his quick thinking, but in a case like this he would not have hesitated. It would be a disaster if Fullwood discovered the truth about that returned money!

Unfortunately, Handforth knew nothing.

"Just a moment," said Fullwood, as he and the croupier met face to face, alongside the little Austin. "I'd like a word with you, if you don't mind."

"Eh?" mumbled Handforth, in surprise.

He recognised Fullwood's voice at once, and assumed that the junior was addressing him, although he couldn't quite understand why Fullwood should be so formal. He was about to answer properly when another voice spoke.

"A word, young 'un?" said the other voice. "Certainly! As many as you like! This is my leisure hour, and I'm an obliging sort, anyhow."

"My hat!" murmured Handforth. "Who the dickens is that?"

But neither Fullwood nor the croupier heard him.

"You don't need to tell me that you're an obliging sort," said Fullwood readily. "I'm glad we've met again, because I want to thank you for what you did the other day."

The croupier was mildly astonished.

"The fact is, I do so many generous actions that I've lost sight of this one," he said dryly. "What's the idea, young 'un?"

"You remember that twenty pounds?" asked Fullwood.

"Twenty pounds!"

"Yes; the money you sent me by express letter last week."

"Did I?" said the man. "I must have got a rotten memory, because I don't seem to know anything about it. In fact, I'd be obliged if you'd tell me what in thunder you're talking about!"

A gurgle came from beneath the car, near by; not merely a gurgle, but a loud gasp of dismay. But as a steam wagon was passing up the High Street at the moment, Handforth's startled exclamation was drowned.

"Great jumping beans!" gasped Edward Oswald. "Oh, corks! The fat's in the fire now! Hi, Fully! Fully, you chump! Clear off— Blow that rotten lorry!"

He broke off, undecided. Should he worm his way out, and drag Fullwood away, or should he— But what was the use? It was too late now! The man had already denied all knowledge of that money, and Fullwood wasn't a fool. Handforth relaxed himself, and sprawled there, utterly alarmed.

His wits had served him well. He already knew that this man to whom Fullwood was speaking was the croupier from the nightclub. It didn't need much guesswork to

arrive at that conclusion! For hadn't Handforth heard Ralph Leslie mention the twenty pounds?

"It's very nice of you to pretend like this," Fullwood was saying, as the rumbling of the steam wagon died away. "But there's no need to be so secretive about it, is there? I know who you are, and you must know who I am."

The man looked at Fullwood curiously, and not without suspicion. He certainly did recognise the boy. He remembered Fullwood's frantic play that fateful night. But he couldn't see any reason why Fullwood should thank him! Indeed, he had every reason to anticipate the contrary.

"What's your game, my lad?" he asked gruffly. "You've made a mistake, haven't you? Why should I know who you are? I've never seen you before; I've never sent you any money!"

"Aren't you the croupier from that nightclub?" asked Fullwood.

The man started. He was a rather coarse-looking individual, well dressed, but obviously of the racing fraternity. Indeed, he and another man were running that gambling club between them, and in their ordinary line of business they were book-makers. But they had been barred from the Turf for a period, and were filling in the off-season by running a questionable gaming resort.

"Well?" said Fullwood. "You're the croupier, aren't you?"

This was a direct question, and the man didn't like it.

"You're talking out of your hat, youngster," he replied curtly. "I tell you I've never seen you before, and I'm a commercial traveller. Croupier? What are you getting at? You'd better be careful what you say?"

Fullwood looked at him hard, and for a moment he wondered if he had made a mistake. That would be a blunder, indeed! But as he looked at the man, he noticed a peculiar little twist of his mouth. And he had seen that twist frequently during that hour at the roulette-table.

So it was fairly obvious that the fellow was merely denying his identity as a safety measure. Naturally, he would not like to admit that he was in any way connected with an illegal establishment. Fullwood suddenly remembered that he had been previously masked, and perhaps he was now startled to find that he had been recognised.

And Handforth, beneath the Austin, was still undecided. It was altogether too late to interfere now. And Handforth thought, perhaps, that he would be wiser to remain where he was. He hated eavesdropping, but, in a case like this, he couldn't help himself. Besides, he had no intention of leaving Fullwood in the dark about the matter. As soon as that rascal had gone, he would have a word with Fully!

"What's the good of denying anything?" smiled Fullwood. "I want to thank you

for what you did. You returned me the money I lost—"

"You're crazy!" interrupted the croupier curtly.

And just then Mr. Snagg strolled along, and joined them.

"Hallo, Chris!" he said genially. "Having a chat with one of our clients?"

"Confound you, Snagg!" snapped the other. "Can't you be careful—"

"Pshaw!" laughed Mr. Snagg. "There's nobody within a hundred yards of us, and this young spark is one of our friends. Weren't you introduced to the club by young Forrest?" he added, turning to Fullwood.

"Yes," said Fullwood uncomfortably.

"So what's your worry?" asked Mr. Snagg, grinning at Chris.

Mr. Snagg was a dapper little gentleman, and looked more like an aristocratic man-about-town than a mere bookmaker's tout. He probably belonged to an excellent family, for he was refined in speech, and certainly well bred. But his mode of earning a living was a dubious one.

"Of course, it's no good denying the kid's statements any more," said the croupier irritably. "But I wish you'd be cautious, Snagg. I don't like this habit of talking about our affairs in the open street."

Mr. Snagg laughed.

"It's the safest thing in the world, old boy," he replied. "Who would think, to look at us, that we were deep-dyed villains, running a wicked gambling resort?" He grinned more broadly than ever. "Anybody might think we were coiners, by the way you're talking, Chris."

"We've got to be careful with the police, anyhow," growled the other.

"Perhaps you'll let me thank you now?" said Fullwood, anxious to get away from this pair.

"Did you hear that?" said the croupier, turning to Mr. Snagg. "This young idiot thinks that I've sent him some money, or something. Do you know anything about it?"

"Not a thing," said Mr. Snagg. "Let's have the yarn, bright boy!"

"I lost over twenty pounds at that roulette table the other night—and this man was decent enough to return twenty pounds to me through the post," said Fullwood. "I want to thank him for being so generous."

Mr. Snagg stroked his chin.

"Chris may be generous, but he's not quite insane," he replied. "If you lost any money at that little merry-go-round—then you lost it. We're not philanthropists. We don't make any gifts. How did you get hold of this wondrous fairy-tale, innocent youth?"

Fullwood stared, his mind already bewildered.

"But it's not a fairy-tale," he insisted. "The money came by express letter, and there was a note in it signed 'The Croupier.'"

Mr. Snagg chuckled with great amusement.

"My dear Chris, somebody's been forging your name," he grinned. "A fake, of course.

Chris didn't send you that money, my lad. Some of your large-hearted pals of St. Frank's—"

"Great Scott!" breathed Fullwood, with a jump.

"Ah, that's set your mind working, eh?"

"I—I can't understand—" began Fullwood.

"That's all right—think it over! Have a wrestle with it," interrupted Mr. Snagg calmly. "Come along, Chris. We don't want to enlighten your young friend any further. We'll see you again at the old place, I suppose?" he added, with a nod to Fullwood. "Good! Always welcome!"

They went off, and Ralph Leslie Fullwood stood there, pale and dazed.



CHAPTER 3.

HANDFORTH DOES HIS BEST.

CONSTERNATION was Fullwood's chief sensation—consternation, mingled with a dull sense of alarm and dismay. He remem-

bered those words of Snagg's, words that burned into his mind.

"Some of your large-hearted pals of St. Frank's!" muttered Fullwood. "That's what he said! And that croupier chap didn't send the money at all! Where's Clive? I've got to ask Clive about this!"

The suspicion came over him that he had been tricked. Indeed, it was more than a suspicion, it was a certainty. A kindly trick—a generous expression of faith and large heartedness—but a trick, nevertheless. Clive and some others had supplied the money, had written the fake letter, and had made him believe that the cash had been returned from the night club!

Now that he knew the truth, Fullwood was full of amazement at his own previous obtuseness. Why, any fellow with a grain of commonsense would have guessed that no professional gambler would part with money, once it had fallen into his hands! But, at the time, this great truth had never occurred to him. Now that he knew the facts, it stood out like a beacon.

"Just a minute, Fully!"

Ralph Leslie spun round, startled.

"Who—who's that?" he ejaculated breathlessly.

He stared. There was nobody in sight. Yet he could have sworn that he had heard the unmistakable tones of Edward Oswald Handforth. He looked up and down the High Street. In the distance, Church and McClure were running up, but there wasn't a soul nearer than a hundred yards.

"I'm crazy!" muttered Fullwood aghast.

"No, you're not, ass!" said Handforth tartly.

This time Fullwood jumped, and took a step forward. Gazing round the angle of the

little car, he beheld Handforth's hot, oily, and perspiring face on the ground. The rest of Handforth was invisible.

"Have you been there all the time?" asked Fullwood hoarsely.

"Be sensible, for goodness' sake!" retorted Handforth. "Do you think I've just come up out of the earth, or something? Of course I've been here all the time!"

"And—and you heard?"

"Not being deaf, I did!" replied Handforth uncomfortably.

"My goodness!"

Fullwood turned paler than ever, and his thoughts became confused. Handforth had heard everything—he had heard his attempt to thank the croupier—he had heard him refer to the money that he had lost at roulette! And, hitherto, he had thought that guilty secret his own!

Handforth stood upright, grubby and dishevelled.

"It's all right. You needn't look so jolly startled," he said. "I haven't heard anything I didn't know before! I'm not an eaves-dropper, if that's what you're thinking! But if you choose to meet your shady pals next to my car, it's your own fault——"

"Shady pals!" burst out Fullwood. "It's not true——"

"Sorry!" said Handforth calmly. "I know they're not your pals, but you know what I mean. Aren't they the rotters who are running that filthy night club? And didn't you go there one night, and fall into Forrest's beastly trap? I wanted to stop those beggars from telling you about that money——"

Fullwood grasped his companion's arm.

"Do you know anything about that money?" he asked quickly.

"Of course I do——"

But at this moment Church and McClure came dashing up, and they were both looking very anxious.

"What on earth's the matter, Handy?" burst out Church. "Do you know that everybody's waiting? The match ought to have started five minutes ago, and we're three men short."

"Bother the match now!" said Handforth curtly.

"Bother the match!" yelled McClure. "Do you want to be left out? Hamilton's talking about playing a reserve in your place—and another in Fullwood's. He's given us three minutes to find you!"

"I'm sorry," muttered Fullwood. "It's my fault."

Church and McClure, who were already in their football things, stared.

"Anything happened?" asked Church. "You're looking pretty white about the gills, Fully, old man! I hope there's nothing wrong——"

"It's only a trifle," interrupted Handforth, aroused into activity by the news of Dick Hamilton's ultimatum. "It can wait until after the match, anyhow. Come on, Fully! Forget about that giddy money!"

The chums of Study D rushed off, and Fullwood, quite mechanically, followed them at the double. But he hardly saw where he was going, and he had forgotten all about the football match. A trifle. It may have been a trifle to Handforth, but to Fullwood it seemed like a tragedy.

Even the little that Handforth had told him was sufficient.

The fact that Handforth knew about the money was enough. For if Handforth knew, it stood to reason that Clive Russell and Dick Hamilton and others knew, too! And what, exactly, did this indicate.

One fact, at least, above all others! It indicated that a group of Remove fellows knew the whole truth about his guilty secret. Until that fatal meeting with the croupier, he had believed that everything was over and forgotten. But now he knew the real position. And the result was exactly as the plotters had feared. Fullwood was cast into the depths of misery again.

He appreciated their generous action. Indeed, he was amazed at the knowledge that had come to him. They had sent him that money—they had performed that little trick upon him—in order to spare him, and to make things right.

But they knew of his dishonour!

This was the point which seared into his intelligence. They knew of his dishonour, and they had kept it to themselves. Clive Russell had been more friendly than usual during the past week. Complete harmony had reigned in Study I. And all the time Clive had known. All the time, too, Fullwood had thought that his secret was buried!

How could he face them now? The very thought appalled him. It would be bad enough to face the others, but Clive—— His own chum—the fellow who had expressed implicit faith in him all along the line! Fullwood was staggered by his realisation of Clive's good nature.

And the money! That was another point—the most agonising point of all. He had gambled Clive's money away, and Handforth and some others had secretly clubbed together, and had made it good! This meant that he was under an obligation to them. He owed them that twenty pounds.

"I'll get to know who they are!" muttered Fullwood tensely. "I shall have to pay them back every penny. Until the money is found, I shall never be able to hold up my head!"

How could he hold up his head in any case? The unfortunate junior was beset with endless worries. Thinking that the money had come from the croupier, he had been comfortable. It was Clive's money—the money that had been lost at roulette.

But now the whole position was altered.

The money had come from a group of Removees! Fullwood wanted to find out the facts then and there. Handforth had done his best to explain, but the football match would not wait. So nothing could be done



Handforth was furious as he picked the ball out of the net. "Where's Fullwood?" he roared. "That goal was his fault—the Grammarians are one up now! What's the matter with him?" In a way, Handy had a right to complain, because Fullwood was completely off form. His thoughts were centered on the amazing revelations that had come just before the start of the match.

until after the game. Ninety minutes in suspense!

In Fullwood's present state of mind, that hour-and-a-half's game seemed like an epoch. He felt that it would never be over. It occurred to him to throw up his position in the team. Then he dismissed this idea.

What would be the use? All the fellows that mattered were playing—Hamilton, Handforth, and all the others. Even Clive was in the team. So it would be useless to stand by and watch. Indeed, this would only add to his torture. Far better to play, and do his best to forget the wretched affair.

The playing fields of the Grammar School were reached before Fullwood had had time to compose himself. Dick Hamilton, the captain of St. Frank's Junior Eleven, was looking rather annoyed.

"What's the idea?" he asked gruffly, as they came up.

"We're not late, are we?" said Handforth.

"Only about seven minutes!" snapped Dick.

"Oh, that's nothing," said Handforth airily.

"Come on, Fully—we'll go and change. Be ready in two minutes, Hamilton!"

"I'll see that you are!" said the skipper, with a snort.

An ironical cheer went up from the Grammarians as Handforth and Fullwood ran into the pavilion. There were a good few fellows standing round the ropes, for there was a lot of interest displayed in this match. The

Saints and the Grammarians were old rivals, and it was always difficult to prophesy the result of any particular match.

Fullwood was momentarily hopeful. Perhaps he would get a chance of questioning Handforth while they changed. But this prospect was killed when Dick Hamilton and Tommy Watson and a few others piled into the dressing-room with them.

So Fullwood kept mum. Perhaps Dick knew all about that money, but Fullwood wasn't taking any risks. Handforth *did* know, so Handforth was the fellow to question. Ralph Leslie was determined to discover the truth.



CHAPTER 4.

OFF COLOUR!

DICK HAMILTON looked at Fullwood curiously.

"Feeling fit?" he asked.

"Ready to score a dozen goals, Fully?"

"Eh?" said Fullwood, with a start. "Oh, I'm all right."

"You're looking worried, old man."

"It's nothing—nothing at all," broke in Fullwood quickly. "Just—just a bit of worry over something. I shall be all right!"

Dick nodded, and said no more. Fullwood was a brainy, brilliant forward, and just now

he was at the top of his form. On the previous Saturday he had scored two individual goals in a House match, and his general play had been excellent.

Dick Hamilton had every reason to suppose that Fullwood would repeat his display, and some smart forward work would be required in this game, for the Grammarians were particularly strong in their defence. They had only conceded four goals in all the matches they had played this season, and they were anxious to maintain their high standard.

Dick Hamilton was leading the forwards himself, with Fullwood in the inside-right position. Reggie Pitt was the outside-right winger, and great things were expected of him. The Saints were looking to Pitt to knock the Grammarian defence into a cocked hat. For Pitt was dazzling on the wing.

Handforth, of course, played goalkeeper. In that particular branch of the game he was inimitable. He was too headstrong to make a good forward, too impulsive to play as a back. But as goalie he was a formidable customer indeed. His punch was nearly as strong as any other fellow's kick, and he took risks that any other goalie would tremble to think of. It required a deadly shot to get past this stalwart!

In spite of Fullwood's intention to throw himself whole-heartedly into the game, he found his thoughts wandering before the teams were even lined up. He hardly remembered where he was, or that he was expected to do big things in this game. His mind kept reverting to that talk with the croupier, and to the discovery that Handforth had heard everything.

And when he found Dick Hamilton's eyes upon him—when he saw Clive Russell looking at him—he felt small and feeble. They knew! They were aware of his dishonourable guilt on that never-to-be-forgotten night! They didn't look upon him as an honourable fellow, but as a weakling and an outsider!

But that couldn't be true, he reflected. If they really thought he was an outsider, they would have shunned him. And yet here he was, in this match, in his old position—

He gasped. The forwards were on the move, and he was standing there like a fool! Without his realising it the whistle had blown. The game was in full swing. He looked about him in bewilderment, trying to bring himself to earth.

"Yours, Fully!"

"Now, then, centre it!"

He heard some shouts dimly, and saw that the ball had been passed across to him by one of the half-backs. He let it roll past his toes, without even realising that he was required to trap it, and carry on with the attack. And seconds are of value on the football field. In a moment one of the Grammarians had swept up, and the ball was soaring down-field.

"What's the matter with you, Fullwood?" went up a roar. "Wake up, fathead!"

"Pull yourself together, Fully!"

And then fell a silence. Fullwood's failure had given the Grammarian forwards a chance. The inside-right slipped past McClure, the latter unfortunately skidding on a wet piece of ground.

"Shoot, Jenkins!"

Jenkins, a new man in the Grammarian forward line, made no mistake. He sent in a terrific shot which Handforth only just succeeded in fisting out. One of the home half-backs was running up, however, and his head met the leather, and diverted it at an acute angle round the nearest upright. Handforth flung himself wildly sideways, but it was an impossible feat.

"Goal!"

"Hurrah!"

"First blood to us!"

The Grammarians were delighted, but Handforth wasn't.

"Where's Fullwood?" he roared indignantly, as he picked the leather out of the corner of the net. "This is his fault! They're one up now! If he hadn't muffed that opening a minute ago—"

"What's the good of growling, Handy?" asked McClure. "It's all in the game!"

"You've got a fat lot to boast about, haven't you?" snorted Handforth. "What's the matter with you all? What have you got on your feet—skates?"

"Can't a chap slip now?" roared McClure. "How could I help—"

"No decent footballer should slip on the football field!" interrupted Handforth coldly. "It's as bad as a cricketer having butter-fingers!"

Very wisely, McClure took no more notice, but went to his position. After all, it was one of Handforth's little habits to "hold an inquest," not only after the match, but after every little incident of the game.

That goal acted as a spur to both teams. The Grammarians were anxious to consolidate their early success, and the St. Frank's players were determined to put matters on an equal footing again. So they all played at high pitch.

Fullwood did not even realise that he had recently been at fault. He had more attention on the game now, but he was playing mechanically. His thoughts were only half concentrated on the football. Even while he was tackling an opponent, the memory of that dramatic revelation was at the back of his mind.

For five or ten minutes the play was hot—one of those periods which are crowded with incident, but which result in no goals. The Grammarian defence was wonderful. Again and again Reggie Pitt centred the leather with his usual accuracy, but always the home backs were there first. And during this dramatic spell, Fullwood did nothing to improve his reputation. He was like a passenger. When he received the ball he fumbled it. His actions were listless, and his passing atrocious. He seemed like the veriest novice.

And then he received a golden opportunity. It was a chance that a footballer gets only about once in a season. Fullwood was just within the Grammarian penalty area, and a mix-up occurred. About twelve yards from him, on the left wing, Jack Grey had attempted to centre the ball, but was frustrated. Two Grammarian defenders got confused, and between them they fell over, and the ball rolled to Ralph Leslie Fullwood's foot.

He was facing an open goal! He was well on-side, and there was only the goalie to beat!

"Shoot, Fully!" yelled a dozen excited voices.

At any ordinary time, Fullwood would have snapped up the leather, and a first-time stinger would have been the result. But now he was worse than a fag. He saw the ball and kicked. But a groan went up when the leather dribbled weakly over the goal-line, ten or twelve feet wide of the upright.

"You're no good, Fully!"

"Who said you could play football?"

"Yah! Rotten!"

It was a goal-kick, and the Grammarians knew that they had had a very lucky escape. Dick Hamilton gave Fullwood a very curious glance, and the self-conscious junior dropped his gaze.

"Sorry!" he muttered awkwardly.

Not that he was any better as the game proceeded. His very presence in the forward line was a hindrance, and many a promising movement fizzled out, owing to his extraordinary weakness. And matters were by no means improved when the Grammarians scored another goal just before half-time.

The whistle blew at last, and Dick Hamilton's first move was to clap Fullwood on the back.

"You're ill, aren't you, old man?" he asked concernedly.

"No, of course not," replied Ralph Leslie. "I—I'm awfully sorry, Hamilton. I've been putting up a rotten show, haven't I?"

"Rotten isn't the word!" snorted Handforth, as he ran up. "What's the matter with you, ass? Do you realise that we're two goals down, and that you've messed up the whole game?"

"I'm the captain, Handy," said Dick Hamilton quietly.

"Sorry!" Handforth apologised for his impulsiveness.

"Oh, I deserve it," said Fullwood, turning aside. "I'll try to buck up in the next half, Dick."

There was a look of misery on his face, and Handforth would have detained him, but Dick shook his head. Reggie Pitt joined them as they watched Fullwood walking off by himself.

"There's something on his mind," declared Dick. "It would only have made things worse if we had questioned him. It's better to leave him alone, perhaps. I can't understand it. He was as keen as mustard on the game this morning, and seemed chock-full of eagerness."

"That's what I thought," said Reggie Pitt, nodding. "In fact, we planned all sorts of movements, and when I tried to keep to the plan, he let me down. Something must have happened. He's a susceptible beggar, I'm afraid."

Handforth started.

"By George!" he ejaculated. "I've got it! I know why he's gone wonky! It was that meeting!"

"What meeting?" asked Dick curiously.

Handforth looked mysterious.

"Sorry, but I can't explain just yet," he replied, with an air of carelessness which deceived nobody. "I've got to speak to Fullwood about it first."

"Well, you won't have any chance of speaking to him now," said Dick. "We're kicking off again at once. It looks like rain, and the referee has a peculiar dislike of getting wet."

Handforth had intended grabbing Fullwood on the spot, and speaking to him. But Fullwood was mooning about on the other side of the ground, alone. He even avoided Clive Russell, and the Canadian boy felt rather hurt in consequence. However, there was no time for any inquiries or explanations now.

The whistle blew, and the teams lined up for the second half.

And Fullwood had lost a great deal of his anxiety. The brief interval had served him well. He knew that he had been letting his side down, and he prayed that it would not be too late for him to redeem his bad play.

CHAPTER 5.

FULLWOOD HEARS THE TRUTH!



"HOOT, Hamilton!"

The second half was five minutes' old, and, so far, the Saints had had all the best of the play.

They were pressing vigorously. And Dick Hamilton sent in a low shot which ought to have scored. But the goalkeeper, flinging himself headlong to the ground, just managed to tip the ball round the post.

"Oh, well saved!"

"Corner!"

Jack Grey took the corner kick, and he judged it with nice precision. The leather dropped, there was a scramble of figures, and out of the confusion rose Fullwood's head.

Head and ball met, and Fullwood managed to get a twist which had the desired effect. The leather veered round, and dropped over the goalkeeper's shoulder. It was a beautiful header.

"Goal!"

"Well played, Fullwood!"

"That's more like it, old son!"

Nothing was better calculated to fill Fullwood with an enthusiasm for the game.

Now that he had done something praiseworthy for his side, he allowed all his worried thoughts to go. He gave himself wholeheartedly to the game. And having subconsciously come to this decision, the change in him was extraordinary. His play, instead of being listless and slow, became dazzling.

He was even above his usual form, for he wished to wipe out the impression that he had created in the first half. It was the game that mattered now! He was playing for St. Frank's—for the school—and his own little worries could be shelved until victory had been won.

It was in this spirit that he continued, and it was solely owing to his well-timed pass that Dick Hamilton scored a second goal five minutes later. The enthusiasm was tremendous, and the interest in the game was at fever pitch.

The Saints had equalised!

And the home team was being outplayed all the time. They were thrown into confusion, and the visitors pressed harder than ever. Here was a chance to snatch victory while the spirit moved them!

The Grammarians, however, had something to say about this—and something to do, too. They were rather staggered. They looked upon this game as a certain victory. Two goals up, and the Saints easily beaten. And here were these self-same Saints, calmly wiping out the deficit, and showing every sign of gaining the lead!

The Grammar School pulled up its socks, so to speak, and got busy. But it was impossible for them to attempt any scoring. They had all their work cut out to defend their own goal. Practically all the play was in their own half, and although they were pressed continuously and relentlessly, they managed to keep their end up. The game became a grim struggle, with nothing certain. At any moment a goal was likely.

And within five minutes of the whistle it arrived.

It was Ralph Leslie Fullwood again who did the trick. And now his every movement was cheered! The onlookers recognised that he had recovered his form, and that he was the most dangerous forward on the field. Even Dick Hamilton, who was renowned for his consistent play, was eclipsed by Fullwood's present brilliance.

Fullwood accepted the leather from one of the half-backs, and everybody gasped when it was seen that he was bent upon an individual effort. The centre-forward was momentarily out of position, or Fullwood might have passed. Instead, he raced for goal, with the leather in perfect control at his feet.

"Out to Pitt, Fully!"

"Pass, man!"

But Fullwood didn't pass. In rapid succession he tricked two of the Grammarian defenders—he absolutely made circles round them, as the onlookers afterwards declared. And he continued his triumphant rush as though nobody challenged his right. One of

the home backs came rushing at him in a final effort, but Fullwood pulled up short, tapped the ball to the side, and the back blundered past before he could stop himself.

And Fullwood went on, with only the goalie to beat. He steadied himself while the spectators held their breath. And then came the shot—a low, wicked drive which rose sharply. It was a perfectly-judged kick, and in spite of all the goalie's efforts, the ball crashed in, just under the bar.

"Oh, good old Fully!"

"Goal!"

"Well played, St. Frank's!"

Fellows came rushing at Fullwood, they shook his hand and clapped his back until he hardly had any breath left.

"Good man!" said Dick Hamilton heartily. "That was a corker!"

"You're yourself again now, Fully!" grinned Church.

"I made an awful mess of things in the first half," admitted Fullwood ruefully.

"Why worry?" smiled Dick. "You've won the game for us, old man."

And this turned out to be a true prediction. For no other goals were scored, although the unhappy Grammarians ran themselves nearly off their feet in a frantic endeavour to draw level. But their efforts were fruitless, and when the whistle blew, St. Frank's left the field, having thoroughly messed up the Grammar School's record.

Fullwood was again the centre of attention, and congratulations were showered upon him by friend and foe alike.

"No wonder we lost!" said the Grammar School skipper, with a snort. "We thought we were going to play an ordinary team—not an Eleven with a magician in its forward line! This chap hypnotised everybody, blow him! All the same, Fullwood, good luck to you! You played a marvellous game."

"Particularly in the first half!" said Fullwood.

"Ahem! We needn't mention the first half," grinned De Valeric.

And nobody else did. Fullwood's play in the second forty-five minutes had easily redeemed any faults that he had made during the first. But now that the game was over, and the glamour of the sport had left him, his old worries returned.

"Is anything the matter, old man?" asked Clive Russell, as he approached his study-mate. "That worried look is coming over you again."

"It's all right, Clive—don't bother," said Fullwood gruffly. "If—if there's anything to tell you, I'll have a word later on."

"Then there really is something?"

"I wish you wouldn't insist, Clive," said Fullwood quietly.

And Clive, who had every reason to know that his chum was inclined to be touchy, nodded. He went off into one of the other dressing-rooms to change. And when he came back, Fullwood had gone.

In fact, Ralph Leslie had been the first out, and now he was waiting for Handforth.

It was the leader of Study D that he wanted! For he felt certain that Handy would be able to enlighten him.

He was rather lucky, for Handforth came out alone. Church and McClure were not yet ready, having, in fact, had a slight disagreement with their leader in the dressing-room. Sponges and cold water were now being applied.

"Just a minute, Handforth," said Fullwood, falling into pace.

"Oh!" said Handforth, as they walked briskly towards the road. "Yes, I was going to have a word with you, my lad! I'll bet I know why you played so rottenly during the first half."

Fullwood nodded.

"There's not much guesswork about it," he said quietly. "Look here, Handy, I want the truth from you."

"What else do you expect, you rotter?" demanded Handforth indignantly. "Do you think I'm in the habit of telling whoppers?"

"No, but you might try to evade me," said Fullwood. "It's about that twenty pounds."

"What twenty pounds?" asked Handforth innocently.

"You're trying that evasion dodge already!" growled Fullwood. "Don't be an ass, Handy! You know well enough what twenty pounds! Until this afternoon I thought it was a secret."

"Then you'd better be careful," said Handforth warningly. "I don't want to hear your secrets—"

"I received twenty pounds by express letter," continued Fullwood. "I kept that incident absolutely to myself—I destroyed the letter and envelope at once. I thought that even Clive knew nothing about it. But I was wrong. And I want you to tell me who really sent it."

They were out in the road by now, quite by themselves.

"I say, tuis is rotten!" complained Handforth. "How should I know anything about your money, and your express letters, and your secrets? If you expect me to tell you anything—"

"You hopeless chump!" said Fullwood exasperated. "What did you say to me before the match?"

"Eh?"

"Didn't you tell me that you knew all about the money?"

"By George, did I?"

"Yes, you did!" said Fullwood gruffly. "I want to know the whole story, if you don't mind. This afternoon I found out that the croupier of that rotten night club did nothing. So the letter and the money came from somebody else. Be a sport, Handy, and tell me. Can't you see that I'm in a beastly hole over it?"

"Where's the hole?" asked Handforth.

"Where?" said Fullwood, between his teeth. "Ye gods and little fishes! What a question! Until to-day I've thought that all you

chaps regarded me as honourable. And now you know that I gambled Clive's money away. I—I don't know how I shall face everybody. You're a bit different, Handy, somehow."

Edward Oswald felt complimented.

"Of course I am," he agreed. "I can understand things better than the others. And the sooner you get that idea—us looking down on you—out of your head, the better. We don't think any the worse of you at all."

"And yet you know about that—that night?"

Handforth shrugged his shoulders.

"A slip, my lad," he said kindly. "We're all liable to have a skid now and again. We understand that Forrest trapped you, and that the affair wasn't really your fault. And you were so jolly cut up that we clubbed together, and made up the twenty quid between us, and faked up that croupier letter. That's all. There's nothing in it, you ass. Take my advice, and forget all about it."

But this was the kind of advice that could not be followed.



CHAPTER 6.

WINNIE'S ADVICE!

FORGET all about it!

There was something rather hollow in the sound of that suggestion, although Handforth had meant it in all sincerity. He was a fellow who lightly dismissed the troubles of another.

"No, Handy, I can't forget it," said Fullwood quietly. "And I want to know some more, too. Who helped you with that money? I mean, whose idea was it, in the first place? Yours?"

Handforth coughed.

"Well, you can call it mine, if you like," he said modestly. "Russell first suggested it, but he happened to get it out first, that's all!"

"So Clive worked it!" murmured Fullwood. "Good old Clive! But, look here, Handy—I'm puzzled. How did anybody know that I was short of that twenty pounds? I didn't tell a soul! I tried to tell Clive, and the rest of you, but you wouldn't let me. And I kept it a secret. And then that money came from the croupier—as I supposed—and I thought everything was all right. Did you believe Forrest's story, after all?"

"No, we thought he was lying—as usual."

"Then how did you know?"

"Because you told Russell all about it!" said Handforth.

"I told Clive!" repeated Fullwood, staring.

"Of course you did."

"But I never said a word—"

"In your sleep!" said Handforth calmly.

Ralph Leslie came to a halt, and he looked at Handforth in blank astonishment. They were in the High Street now, but very few people were about.

"I told him—in my sleep?" repeated Fullwood breathlessly.

"The whole bag of tricks!" nodded Handforth. "Do you remember how old Crowell sent you out of the Form-room, and told you to lie down? Well, when Russell went into your study he found you fast asleep, writhing like the dickens, and babbling to yourself!"

"Babbling!"

"Absolutely babbling!" insisted Handforth. "You let out the whole yarn—all about the roulette wheel and Russell's twenty quid, and everything. So Russell got the wind up, and called a meeting of the Vigilance Committee."

"My only hat!" breathed Fullwood.

"He thought you were going off your rocker with worry, or something," explained Handforth. "Something had to be done. So we got our heads together, and whacked out our cash, faked up that letter, and there you are. The whole thing's over, and there's an end of it."

"An end of it!" said Fullwood huskily. "But—but you don't understand, Handy! I owe you that money—and I shall never rest until I can pay it! Besides, I can't face them—I'm ashamed to!"

Handforth patted him on the back.

"Rats!" he said uncomfortably. "There is nothing for you to get worried about. We all know that you didn't mean to run off the rail like that. It was Forrest's fault, the cad; for tempting you. You were a silly ass to fall into the trap, but you were sorry for it afterwards, weren't you? Well, that was good enough for us. So we thought we'd put things right without you knowing anything about it. It was just a piece of rotten luck, you meeting that croupier. Blow him!"

"Who helped with the money?" asked Fullwood quietly.

"Hamilton, Watson, Tregellis-West, Archie, De Valerie, Church, McClure, and I," replied Handforth. "All Ancient House chaps, of course—we didn't tell anybody in the West House. And we don't want that money back, either. It was sent to you by the croupier. Understand?"

Fullwood understood, but he didn't heed. And as he saw Church and McClure hurrying down the road he made an excuse, after urging Handforth to say nothing to anybody. He went into a shop, and managed to get away without being seen, while Handforth was talking to his chums, near the Austin Seven. He believed that Edward Oswald was explaining everything, for he hadn't given his word that he would not talk. But, as a matter of fact, Handforth was merely reopening the problem of the loose nut.

Handforth didn't view Fullwood's troubles heavily. He regarded the affair as a trifle, and he fully expected that Ralph Leslie would soon dismiss the whole subject from his mind. But this was very far from being the case.

Alone, Fullwood allowed the matter to prey upon him.

After a week of serenity he was now cast into the depths of despair. That secret of his was practically public property! This was the thought that tortured him so much.

At least eight Remove fellows knew of his dishonourable conduct! And he had been living in a fool's paradise for the last six or seven days, thinking that the secret was entirely his own. He had had the courage to face Handforth, because it had been necessary to get the information from somebody.

But how could he face the others—Clive, in particular? How could he go back to St. Frank's, and live in the usual way, with this devastating knowledge on his mind? He would never be able to hold his head up again. He was disgraced—dishonoured!

In the old days, Fullwood would have treated all this sort of thing with contempt. But since he had learned the meaning of honour, he was perhaps more acutely conscious of it, and all that it stood for, than a fellow who had always been honourable. It was something comparatively new in his life, and he prized it highly. It was his dearest wish to retain the respect and esteem of all the decent fellows who daily surrounded him.

He had made that blunder, and he had hoped that he would be able to forget it by the passage of time.

But how different was the position now!

Eight others knew—eight others had made good that money that he had squandered away. And they still treated him in the same cordial manner as before. Their utter generosity, their genuine decency, hurt Fullwood like a stab. He didn't deserve it! And he was positively afraid to meet them face to face. Of Clive, his own chum, he was in absolute dread. For Clive had been the best of them all. And Clive knew that he—Fullwood—had acted like a cad and a thief!

"I can't go back to St. Frank's!" he muttered miserably. "I daren't face them. If only I had the money, so that I could pay them back—it might be different. But as it is, I'm in a hopeless hole. I can't go back until I've done something to prove that I'm worthy of their friendship!"

He wandered aimlessly about, undecided, unsettled. The more he thought, the greater seemed his problem. He had been worried before—when all this trouble had first arisen. But now it seemed to him that his woes were even worse. For then he had used Clive's money without Clive knowing about it. But now, these other fellows had supplied that cash, and he was under a double obligation to them.

He went past the entrance of the picture theatre in the middle of the High Street, and he felt suddenly confused when he found himself in the midst of a crowd of picturegoers, who were just coming out at the end of the afternoon performance.

He walked hurriedly, anxious to get past these frivolous people as quickly as he could. He marvelled that they could go to an entertainment. Heedlessly, he pushed into somebody, and strode on. He hardly saw where he was going, and he didn't care which direction he took.



Fullwood barged like a coal-heaver into the group of Moor View girls and sent Doris spinning. His mind was so weighed with his troubles that he did not notice what he had done. "Thanks, awfully, Ralph!" exclaimed Doris indignantly, then her eyes widened as she saw that Fully's face was drawn and wan.

"Thanks awfully, Ralph!" said an indignant voice.

Fullwood half turned, and caught his breath in when he saw that he was in the midst of several Moor View schoolgirls. He had, as he now acutely realised, barged like a coal-heaver into Doris Berkeley.

"Oh, I say, I—I'm awfully sorry!" he blurted out. "I—I didn't see—"

"That's all right," smiled Doris cheerfully. "If you want to see a really terrible picture, try a shillingworth here! Of all the awful shows—"

"It wasn't so bad as that, Doris!" protested Winnie Pitt, as she joined them. "Were you just going in, Ralph?"

"No," said Fullwood awkwardly. "That is— I—I was just walking by, you know. So—so the show wasn't good?"

His manner was so strange, and his face so pale and drawn, that Winnie looked at him very closely. In a way, Reggie Pitt's sister was Fullwood's special girl chum. And she knew a little of what had recently been happening. At least, she had guessed that Fullwood had had some worries.

"Shan't be a minute, girls," she said quietly.

Irene Manners smiled, and her blue eyes twinkled.

"We understand perfectly!" she said sweetly.

"She and the others went off, chuckling, and Winnie flushed slightly. She took Full-

wood's arm, and led him in the opposite direction.

"They're only going to the Japanese Café, so I'll join them after I've had a few words with you, Ralph," she said, with something of her brother's decisive way. "Now, what's the matter?"

"Nun-nothing," said Fullwood lamely.

"Don't tell fibs!" replied Winnie. "You haven't seen me for nearly a week, and you're looking worried and troubled, and there's an expression in your eyes I don't like. Some little hitch somewhere—eh?"

"Honestly, I—I can't tell you," blurted out Fullwood.

"You haven't quarrelled with Clive Russell again?" she asked. "I heard that you had had a tiff, and that it was made up—"

"No, we're the best of pals," interrupted Fullwood. "I—I'd like to— The fact is, Winnie, I'm pretty miserable. Oh, I'm a cad! I'm a weak, contemptible rotter!"

"I believe the first thing you said, but not the rest," declared Winnie coldly. "I can see you're miserable, Ralph, but if you tell me that you're a cad again, I shall be cross with you."

"But it's true!" muttered Fullwood unhappily.

He knew well enough that Winnie was the last girl in the world to pry into matters that didn't concern her. Her present anxiety for knowledge was only an expression of her friendship. She wanted to sympathise with

him, if he had any real worry. It was Winnie, indeed, who had played a large part in Ralph Leslie's earlier reformation. It was chiefly owing to the girl's faith in him that he had fought down his dishonourable self.

And, suddenly, he had an overwhelming desire to tell her everything. If the thought had occurred to him five minutes earlier—the thought of telling Winnie of his folly—he would have laughed it to scorn. But now that he was with her, he felt that open confession was his only course. It was a rather curious sidelight on his character. He couldn't face Clive; he couldn't unburden himself to a member of his own sex—but he felt that he could tell Winnie everything, and be relieved in mind by the confession.

"You don't understand, Win," he said wretchedly. "I've not only been a cad, but I'm a thief! I'm a weak rabbit, if you want to know the truth! Let's come in here!"

They were close against the War Memorial Gardens, and they walked in, and sat down on one of the park seats. There was little fear of them being interrupted, for the early December day was chilly, and dusk was already drawing on. But Winnie was well provided with furs, and Fullwood himself didn't care whether he was cold or not.

"Now, Ralph, you've been talking nonsense, and I'm angry with you," said the girl quietly. "If you don't want to tell me anything, I won't press you, but I'm sure you've exaggerated—"

"I do want to tell you," interrupted Fullwood quickly. "And I'll tell you why. You've trusted me, Winnie, and I'm not worth it. By the time I'm finished, you'll walk away, and you'll never speak to me again."

"Well, we'll see about that," said the girl.

And Fullwood plunged straight into his story. Winnie Pitt listened almost without comment until the end. Her brown eyes were concerned and grave, but there was no look of condemnation in them. Anybody could see that she was Reggie Pitt's sister. Reggie was rather a handsome youngster—and Winnie was not only pretty, but somehow inexpressibly charming.

Fullwood told her everything—eagerly and in a flood of words. He needed no prompting—all he wanted to do was to make himself look as black as possible. He felt that he didn't deserve her friendship, and so it was his duty to show her what an outsider he was.

"That's all, Win," he ended up soberly. "Until to-day I thought that twenty pounds had been returned by the croupier, but now I know it was contributed by the fellows. And I daren't go back to face them. Just before I met you, I was thinking of running away somewhere. I can't look anybody in the face now. And I want you to cut me dead in future—I'm a rotter!"

Winnie looked at him very seriously.

"Do you know what you've got to do?" she asked.

"I wish you could tell me!"

"There's nothing easier," she replied. "First of all, put all this nonsense about being a cad out of your head, and then go back to St. Frank's, face the music, and show everybody that your backbone is as solid as ever!"



CHAPTER 7.

HANDFORTH HEARS SOME NEWS.

Fullwood held his breath. "I'd like to!" he said, in a low voice. "But I daren't. Why don't you get angry with me, Winnie? Why don't you tell me that I'm only —"

"If you're going to call yourself names again, I shall get angry!" interrupted Winnie severely. "You were caught in a trap, and if there's any cad in the case, he's that worm, Forrest!"

"But it was all my fault—for being so weak—"

"We're all weak at times, and that was what Forrest counted upon," said the girl quickly. "But because you were weak then, it's all the more reason that you should be strong now. I think that Ted Handforth and Dick Hamilton and Clive Russell and the others were just splendid. They knew that you had made just a little slip, and so they wanted to keep everything dark. But now that you've learned of their action, you naturally feel self-conscious about the money."

"That's just it," said Fullwood glumly. "The money! Before I see them again, I've got to get that money, and pay them back! That's why I want to run away, so that I can come back with the cash, and face them with a clean conscience."

"You can face them with a clean conscience now," said Winnie. "You can't find twenty pounds in a minute, Ralph, so you'll have to wait. Why don't you go back, and see them all, and tell them frankly that you'll pay them back as soon as you can get the money? They're all good fellows—they'll be willing to wait until you can pay. Promise me that you won't even think of running away."

"I—I— Well, I'd like to—"

"Promise me!" she insisted.

"Yes, but—"

"I'm waiting, Ralph," said Winnie calmly.

"All right, I promise!" muttered Fullwood, not daring to look into her face. "I won't run away—but it'll be pretty hard—"

"You've exaggerated the whole affair," she put in lightly. "I knew it from the first, of course. Why, Ralph, there's nothing to worry about at all. So I'll just say good-bye now, and join the other girls."

She held out her hand, and smiled at him. There was any amount of wisdom in that small head of hers—for the less said now, the better. Fullwood had unburdened himself, and his relief was obvious. Winnie knew

that she could do no good by remaining—in fact, what Fullwood needed now was to be left alone for a bit.

"Good-bye, Ralph!" she said cheerily, as she held out her hand.

He hesitated to take it.

"I—I don't deserve this!" he muttered, flushing.

"Don't be silly!" she laughed. "Shake!"

He took her hand then, and she gave him a warm grip. A moment later she was gone, and Fullwood watched her graceful figure as it turned out of the gardens into the High Street. There was a lump in his throat.

"What a brick!" he muttered hoarsely. "And what a rotter I am!"

He sat there for a long time, as Winnie had known he would. And, gradually, he came to the conclusion that her simple advice was the best. He wouldn't run away—but he wanted to get hold of that money more than anything else in the world. How could he raise twenty pounds before he went back to the school?

He smiled bitterly at the very thought. He might as well expect to raise twenty thousand. Anyhow, there was no reason why he should go back yet. Any time before calling-over would do. The longer he left it, the better, perhaps.

And so, feeling chilled, he got up at last, and walked aimlessly into the High Street. In the meantime, the Moor View girls were already on their way back, and Winnie was rather relieved because her chums did not question her concerning Fullwood. She had returned to them very quiet and subdued. And they instinctively felt that it was not a time for pointed questions.

Edward Oswald Handforth was hanging about the gateway of St. Frank's when the girls cycled past. As a matter of fact, Handforth was thinking about Fullwood, and had just been making some inquiries. Nobody had seen Ralph Leslie come in. Clive Russell had been looking everywhere for his study-mate—for Clive wanted to have a little celebration.

Fullwood was the hero of the afternoon, for his brilliant play in the second half of the match had won the game for St. Frank's. And yet Fullwood hadn't returned yet!

The Canadian boy was very upset about it. For some unaccountable reason, as he instinctively felt, Fullwood had deliberately avoided him. It puzzled Clive enormously, for their recent quarrel was thoroughly made up, and they were on more friendly terms than ever before.

Clive's anxiety had impressed Handforth so much that the leader of Study D had begun to think. And while Clive went round the school, looking for Fullwood, Handforth stood at the gates.

For Edward Oswald remembered Fullwood's talk. The fathead had said something about not being able to face the fellows! Handforth recalled this now—although he hadn't breathed a word to Clive on the sub-

ject. He felt that he was responsible, for he had told Fullwood the full truth about that money.

And when the girls came by, Handforth hailed them.

"Seen anything of Fullwood?" he asked. "By George, Irene, I must say you look topping in that dinky little hat!"

"Flatterer!" laughed Irene. "Sorry, Ted—we can't stop now. We're late already; and you don't want us to get lines, do you?"

"My hat, no!" replied Handy. "But about Fullwood—"

"I can tell you," said Winnie, allowing the other girls to cycle on. "I saw him in the town, and I thought he would have been back by now."

"I'm worried about him," growled Handforth. "I told the ass that everything would be all right. Just like him, to think about running away—I—I mean— That is, he's—ho's—"

"Then you know everything?" asked Winnie. "But of course you do—you were there when the croupier spoke to Ralph, weren't you? Yes, Ted, he told me all about it."

Handforth stared.

"He told you—everything?" he asked, in astonishment.

"Yes."

"Good man!" said Handforth, with a sudden nod. "And what do you think about it?"

"I think he's made a mountain out of a molehill."

"Put it there!" said Edward Oswald, thrusting out his hand and gripping the girl's. "Anybody can tell you're Reggie Pitt's sister—you've got such a lot of sense! Of course he's making a mountain out of a molehill—that's just what I told him. The man's all right—as sound as a bell! He made a bloomer, he was sorry about it, and, as far as I'm concerned, that squared the whole thing. But he's got a bee in his bonnet about that silly money."

"I think he's better now," smiled Winnie, amused at Handforth's vehemence. "Anyhow, he gave me his promise that he wouldn't run away—and, of course, I believe him. Still, I think it's quite possible that he'll wander about in Bannington until the last minute. Ralph is very sensitive, you know—and he feels his position keenly."

"He's too jolly sensitive!" growled Handforth.

Winnie smiled.

"And yet, in the same position, Ted, I'll bet you would be just the same," she said calmly. "We don't really know how sensitive we are until we've made a little side-slip. But I can't stay another minute—I shall be late as it is."

She bade him good-bye, and hurried off. Handforth was a fellow of impulses, and he had one now. He obeyed it without a second's hesitation.

He got out his Austin, and sped towards Bannington.

CHAPTER 8.

HANDFORTH HELPS!



NINE fellows out of ten would have acted quite differently. For example, they would have sought out Clive Russell, and invited him to accompany them—they would have told Clive what had happened. For Clive, after all, was Fullwood's best friend.

But not so Edward Oswald Handforth.

He was so impulsive that as soon as he made up his mind, he acted. He knew that Fullwood was miserable—he knew that Fullwood was worrying. So he just got out his Austin, and rushed off to find the unfortunate chap.

He didn't even tell Church and McClure anything about it. And Church and McClure were patiently waiting in Study D, with tea all ready, wondering where the dickens their leader had got to. But it was just like Handforth to overlook them, and to omit having a word with Clive Russell.

Edward Oswald was about the most thoughtless fellow in the Remove—as well as being the largest-hearted. Just at present he wanted to find Fullwood, whisk him back to St. Frank's, and comfort him on the way.

And, as luck would have it, he ran right into Ralph Leslie on the outskirts of the town. Fullwood was wandering about as before. He had forgotten his bicycle, he had never given a thought to tea, and the question of the twenty pounds was still weighing heavily upon him.

"Just what I expected!" muttered Handforth grimly.

He pulled up, and gave Fullwood a hail. But the other junior didn't even hear, although he was within five yards, and he walked straight by.

"Hi, Fully, you ass!" roared Handforth.

This time Fullwood started, and twirled round.

"Oh, hallo, Handy!" he said. "Just off back?"

"Yes!" retorted Handforth. "And you're coming with me!"

"No, don't trouble——"

"You fathead! I've come all the way from St. Frank's for you!" snapped Handforth. "Winnie told me that you were wandering about here, so I came along to drag you home. What's the idea of mooning about the town like a half dead fish? Jump in, and don't be dotty!"

But Fullwood declined the invitation.

"I—I'm not ready to go back yet," he muttered. "I'm worried, Handy. I want to raise that money. I'm afraid to face Clive. You're different—somehow, you're more— Well, I don't know. But, anyhow, you're different."

Handforth smiled indulgently.

"Of course I'm different," he agreed, getting out of the car, and clapping Fullwood on the back. "But there's no need for you to make such a fuss. Unless you get into

that car within two ticks, my lad, I'll biff you!"

"But look here——"

"I'll bash you in backwards!"

"It's no good threatening me——"

"Isn't it?" snapped Handforth. "All right, then—I'll finish with threats, and try a little action!"

He proceeded to push back his sleeves.

"Chuck it!" said Fullwood hastily. "Don't be a chump, Handy! We don't want a scrap here, in the road, I suppose?"

"You may not want it—but you'll get it!" retorted Handforth coldly. "Now then, are you going to act like a sensible chap, or do you want me to slosh you into the middle of next week? You've only got to say the word!"

Obviously, it was necessary to do something with a volcanic fellow like this. Fullwood, as a matter of fact, was a skilful boxer, and he was in tip-top condition. If it came to a scrap, there was very little to choose between them.

"I don't want to fight you, Handy," he said quietly. "But if I do, there'll be bloodshed."

Handforth stared.

"My hat!" he ejaculated. "Would you resist me, then?"

"Well, I shouldn't let you bash me, as you put it, without giving you something to be going on with in exchange!" replied Fullwood grimly. "But, hang it, we don't want to fight! We want to raise twenty quid—at least, I do!"

Handforth was successfully sidetracked.

"Twenty quid?" he repeated. "Easy!"

"Perhaps you can suggest something—easy."

"My dear fathead, it's simple," said Handforth airily. "Twenty quid—eh? Well, let me see. I've got three or four to start with, and if the worst came to the worst, I could pawn my watch, and take the tools out of my Austin——"

"Thanks all the same, old man, but that wouldn't be the thing," interrupted Fullwood, shaking his head. "I want this money to pay you back with—you and the other fellows. I should simply be going round in a circle if I borrowed it off you to pay you back!"

"H'm! I hadn't thought of that," admitted Handforth, scratching his head.

"No, I've got to earn this money—*earn* it!" said Fullwood gruffly. "I could write to my pater, and there's just a bare chance that he would spring the twenty. But that wouldn't be the thing, either. I shall only be satisfied if I earn the money, so that I can feel that I've squared things up. I lost it, and so I've got to make it again."

Handforth looked at him curiously.

"By George, you're a queer chap!" he said, with a sniff. "You want a lot of pleasing, don't you? Haven't I told you twenty times that we're all perfectly satisfied?"

"But I'm not!"

"That doesn't make any difference," said

Handforth severely. "Dick Hamilton and Archie and the rest collected that twenty quid, and we never want to see it again. So what the dickens is the worry?"

Fullwood took him by the arm.

"Look here, Handy," he said quietly. "Put yourself in my place."

"Eh?"

"Supposing you gambled somebody else's money away——"

"But I don't gamble."

"Yes, but supposing you fell into a trap like I did, and was a weak fool like I was, went on Fullwood. "And supposing you lost twenty pounds of McClure's money, say, and then you found out that eight fellows had clubbed together and paid it to McClure for you? What would you do?"

"Do!" roared Handforth. "Why, pay them all back, of course!"

"There you are, then," said Fullwood simply.

Handforth realised the trap into which he had fallen.

"Eh?" he gasped. "I—I mean——"

"You can't get out of it, old man," interrupted Fullwood. "And you wouldn't be satisfied unless you earned the money, would you? You wouldn't feel that you had squared things properly unless you made it by your own efforts?"

"No, I'm blowed if I would!" admitted Handforth frankly. "Fully,

old man, you're right! You're absolutely right! In fact, you're so jolly right that I'm blessed if I can understand why I didn't look at it like this before. And one thing's certain. You can't go back to St. Frank's until you've got that cash!"

"I wish this was the age of miracles!" sighed Fullwood.

"If I was in your place, I tell you what I'd do," said Handforth thoughtfully. "I'd make that money somehow, and I'd let you help me to make it, too. If you offered to lend a hand with the job, I'd jump at it."

"Yes, but——"

"So I'm offering to help you—see?" said Handforth calmly. "Is that thoroughly understood? We've got to make twenty quid between us, and then everything will be straightened out."



CHAPTER 9.

NO COCO-NUTS!

ALPH LESLIE FULLWOOD shook his head.

"It sounds very simple, Handy, but it isn't," he said. "It's awfully decent of you to suggest such a thing—and, of course, I'd be a poor sort of boor if I refused your offer of help. But it's impossible! We simply couldn't raise a sum like that!"

"Nothing's impossible," declared Handforth. "It's simply a question of determination. Look at old Browne, of the Fifth! That chap can work miracles, and do you think I'm going to be whacked by 'a giddy Fifth Former?"

"But I promised Winnie that I'd go back to St. Frank's—that I wouldn't think of running away——"

"My dear, simple lunatic!" interrupted Handforth pityingly. "Who's talking about running away? If you get back to St. Frank's to-night, you won't be breaking your word to Winnie, or anybody else. So it's simple. It just means that we've got to raise the twenty quid this evening—within the next three hours!"

But Fullwood was not such a hopeless optimist as Handforth.

"Can you suggest any method of earning it?" he asked dubiously.

"Of course I can't! But that's nothing," replied Handforth, with perfect candour. "We'll buzz into the town, put the car up, and then walk round. And if we can't find a way of earning twenty pounds this evening, I'll fry my spare tyre, and eat it for breakfast!"

"In any case, we shall miss calling-over, and be late for bedtime——"

"Under the honour system we're not obliged to get permission to stay out," interrupted Handforth. "We're on our honour to keep to the rules, I know—and, if it comes to that we're both Vigilantes. But there's an exception to every rule, and this is one. Circumstances alter cases, my lad! And if we're late for once we shall be late in a good cause. Now, hop in, and don't let's have any more arguments."

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Fullwood felt it was rather a hopeless task to argue, in any case. Edward Oswald Handforth had made up his mind, and dynamite wouldn't shift him now. Besides, Fullwood felt grateful—he deeply appreciated the friendly spirit which was prompting Handforth to throw himself so wholeheartedly into this quest for cash.

That the money could be raised seemed outrageously improbable. Only Handforth's unquenchable optimism led him to suppose that it could. He hadn't any plan—or any ghost of a plan. His idea was to wander about, and wait for something to turn up.

But it was useless to argue, and, at least, they would be doing something. Fullwood knew that Handforth would only lose his present enthusiasm after he had met with constant rebuffs.

So they went into the town, garaged the car, and then walked down the High Street. Edward Oswald was like a hound on the scent. Suddenly he came to a halt, and looked at Fullwood with wide-open eyes.

"Got it," he said eagerly. "Let's go and get the car out again!"

"But we've only just put it up——"

"We'll take it to the station, and use it as a taxi-cab," explained Handforth triumphantly. "We'll take people all over the place, and——"

"I can see three good reasons against it."

"Eh?"

"In the first place, we should get in trouble with the police," said Fullwood. "A car can't ply for hire unless it's licensed. In the second place, we shouldn't stand an earthly chance with your little bus against the regulation taxis, and there's too many hanging about the station already—except on a race day, or when there's something special on. So where would your Austin Seven be?"

"H'm. You may be right——"

"And thirdly, I wouldn't allow it," concluded Fullwood. "I don't mind letting you help me to earn the money, Handy, but I'm hanged if I let you do *all* the earning."

So Handforth gave it up, and they walked on, trying to think of another plan. Even Handforth did not realise how much good he was doing, even though there seemed little or no prospect of "raising the wind." He was lifting Fullwood out of his agony of despair, and bringing him back into a healthy, normal state of mind. The reason was simple. There was something for him to think about now—something to take him off the contemplation of his own follies. Another hour of this, and Ralph Leslie would be so much cheered that he would face the return to St. Frank's with all the courage that Winnie Pitt gave him credit for.

"Let's turn back," said Handforth abruptly. "We're getting down into the low quarter of the town—the poor district—and there's no chance of earning money there. My hat! We're near the gasworks!"

"And there's a fair, or something, isn't there?" asked Fullwood, as he caught a strain of discordant music from the middle

distance ahead. "Look at those flaring lights. It's a rummy time of the year to hold a fair, isn't it?"

"There's no accounting for what they do in this quarter," replied Handforth gruffly. "Besides, this is a permanent affair, isn't it? They've always got swings, or roundabouts, on this piece of ground, I believe. It's a kind of institution. Let's get away from it."

But Fullwood suddenly looked keen.

"I don't know," he said thoughtfully. "We're out to earn money, aren't we? Well, it's early closing day, and the town's practically dead—except round here. There's not a chance in a thousand that we shall get any opportunities, but if there are any, they'll be here."

"Jiggered if you're not right!" said Handforth warmly. "As a matter of fact, I was going to suggest something of the sort!"

He pressed on eagerly, and Fullwood was rather upset to note his companion's air of expectancy. What possible chance was there here?

They came to the fair at last—a rather poor concern on the whole. It was in the very lowest part of Bannington, almost opposite the gasworks, and the fair ground was small and tawdry. Admission was free, and the attractions were very second-rate. Most of them were illuminated by oil-flares, but a wheezy old roundabout boasted of electric lights—although it certainly could not boast of the ghastly organ which was jerking out its abominable travesty of a tune.

As the evening was so fine, business was brisk. Indeed, Fullwood was astonished to see the crowds. Most of them were attracted by the lights, perhaps. The swings were badly patronised, and the roundabouts were mainly the refuge of children. Most of the business was being done in the sideshows, and where there were automatic machines. The youths of the lower town formed the greater proportion of the patrons. And these were trying their skill in all sorts of ways.

"It's no good, Handy," said Fullwood glumly. "What can we do?"

"Plenty of things," replied Handforth, without hesitation. "If you think I've given up hope, the best thing you can do is to think again! What's the matter with this chap here? A coco-nut shy is a fat lot of good without any coco-nuts, isn't it?"

He indicated a gloomy-looking gentleman who was leaning despondently against the cage-like receptacle which contained the wooden balls. The shy was illuminated, but no business was being done. All the pegs at the lower end of the shy were empty. Handforth moved over.

"Business bad, or what?" he asked.

The gloomy gentleman removed his clay pipe, and glared.

"I'm fed up!" he said. "That's wot's the matter with me, young gent! I'm fed up to the neck!"

"You look it!" said Handforth, nodding.

"Yus, an' who wouldn't be?" demanded the

man. "The best night we've 'ad this 'ere week! Crowds o' people, an' all of 'em with plenty o' money, by the look o' things—an' me without any blinkin' coco-nuts! 'Ow's a cove to make a livin'? That's wot I want to know!"

The coco-nut shy proprietor spoke indignantly. He was a short, fat gentleman, with a red face, and he didn't look as though he needed to make a living. He could safely exist on his own fat for at least a month. But this solution to his worries did not seem to strike him.

"Why don't you get some coco-nuts, then?" asked Handforth.

The stout gentleman gasped.

"Lummy!" he exclaimed. "Wot d'you take me for, young shaver? Do you think I ain't been all over the town, tryin' to buy coco-nuts? Five sacks of 'em I ordered—five sacks, mark you—an' when I goes to the station, wot do I find? Nothink! Nothink but a lot of arf-dead blokes wot can't answer a civil question!"

"Hard lines!" said Fullwood.

"You're right, young gent," agreed the proprietor. "Me—Bill Stiggins—without no coco-nuts! The fust time in ten years, or I'll eat the old shy! An' all 'cos of some blinkin' fool on the railway! Look at 'em!" he added, indicating the crowd. "'Undreds! An' all a-throwin' of their money away like it was water! An' me without no coco-nuts!"

He turned away in utter disgust, and Handforth gave a violent start. He grabbed Fullwood's arm, and drew him aside. But he changed his mind, and instead of taking Fullwood into his confidence, he turned back to Mr. Stiggins.

"Will those coco-nuts turn up to-night?" he asked quickly.

"Wot 'opes!" said Mr. Stiggins gloomily.

"You mean they won't?"

"Not a chance, wust luck!"

"Well, look here," said Handforth briskly.

"You're not using this shy, are you? Supposing we hire it from you for the evening? How much do you want?"

"'Ire it?" said Mr. Stiggins, scratching his scrubby chin. "Wot's the good o' that? If I can't do no business, I should like to know wot you sprightly young shavers can do?" he added suspiciously. "Young gents from the big school, too, by the look o' ye! I ain't feelin' in the mood for none o' your jokes!"

"Honest injun, how much?" demanded Handforth.

"A quid!" said Mr. Stiggins sarcastically.

"A quid, an' it's yours for the evenin'—an' I'll chuck in the lamps!"

"Done!" said Handforth promptly.

The shy-proprietor stared. He had only spoken in derision, never dreaming that his offer would be accepted. He thought the boys were trying to be funny.

"Crikey!" he said. "You don't mean it?"

"I do mean it—and here's your quid!" replied Handforth. "And I'll tell you what—

as we don't want to take advantage of you, you can help us to run the shy, and we'll give you ten per cent. of the profits at the end. That's fair enough, isn't it?"

Mr. Stiggins knocked his pipe out so violently that he broke it.

"Tell me this!" he said. "Wot's the good of a shy without no coco-nuts?"

"I'll show you in about two ticks," said Handforth, with a grin. "Come on, Fully—you, too, Stiggy! Bring some baskets, if you've got some. If we can't get coco-nuts, we'll use something else. Twenty quid?" He laughed. "Just you watch!"



CHAPTER 10.

THREE SHIES FOR SIXPENCE!

HERE was something so convincing about Handforth's manner that even Fullwood felt his heart give a jump.

"But—but I don't understand!" he said breathlessly.

"We've got to earn that money—and we're not too proud to run a coco-nut shy, I suppose?" breathed Handforth. "You promised to let me help you—and that includes laying out a bit of capital. Money makes money, my son!"

"Yes, but—"

"Look at that shop across the road," said Handforth, gazing out beyond the fair ground. "That one with the lights."

"Strike me pink!" ejaculated Mr. Stiggins, in disgust. "That there greengrocer's? Why, you young ijit, they ain't seen a coco-nut in that shop since Noah rowed across the Red Sea in 'is Hark!"

"We're not talking about coco-nuts," said Handforth serenely. "What's the matter with cabbages? Cauliflowers? Bananas? Oranges? Melons?"

"By jingo!" breathed Fullwood, his eyes sparkling. "Handy, forgive me! I didn't think you had so much brain! It's absolutely brilliant!"

Mr. Stiggins didn't think so.

"You're off your honion!" he said fiercely. "Who ever 'card of horanges an' cabbages on the pegs of a coco-nut shy?"

"Nobody—but that's why it's a cert!" said Fullwood quickly. "The crowd will patronise us just because of the novelty! And oranges and cabbages are cheaper than coco-nuts! We ought to do a roaring trade!"

Mr. Stiggins took a long breath.

"An' I never thought of it!" he said dismally. "Me standin' 'ere all the evenin', doin' nothink! Still, a bargain's a bargain—an' Bill Stiggins is a man of his word! The shy's yours, young gents!"

"Good man!" said Handforth heartily.

All the same, Mr. Stiggins was still a bit dubious. With all his years of experience, he had never used anything but coco-nuts in his shy. And he did not quite share Handforth's enthusiasm. After the first burst of



“Three shies for sixpence!” bawled Handforth. “Roll up and try your luck!” The people rolled up! There was something novel in a fruit and vegetable shy, and Fullwood was raking in money as fast as he could hand out the wooden balls. It looked as though Handy’s brainwave was going to prove a good one!

excitement, he was inclined to believe that the public would steer clear of this novel type of shy. Mr. Stiggins was not a man of imagination.

However he had been promised ten per cent. of the profits, in addition to the pound he had already received, so he helped with a will. They went across to the greengrocer's with the baskets, and the proprietress nearly had a fit when Handforth stated his requirements.

Edward Oswald, in short, wanted to buy up the shop.

"None of your games, young man!" said the woman severely.

"Games be blowed!" said Handforth. "I want all these greens—the hard ones—and lots of oranges and bunches of bananas, and some of those apples. But look here," he added. "We can't wait while you weigh them out. Give me a price for all this lot."

He indicated a large trayful of oranges, another trayful of apples, numerous bunches of bananas, and piles of cabbages.

"I say!" murmured Fullwood, while the startled woman was trying to reckon up. "It'll cost you quids, Handy!"

"It can't cost me more than four—that's all I've got!"

"Yes, but that'll make five, with the pound you gave to Stiggins," murmured Fullwood. "And it's a bit of a risk, when all is said and done. Stiggins knows more about the game than we do, and what's going to happen if all this stuff is left on your hands?"

Handforth eyed him coldly.

"I'd like you to know, Ralph Fullwood, that I can buy what fruit and vegetables I like without any criticism from you!" he said. "So the sooner you dry up, the better. Well, ma'am, what about it?"

"Three pounds," said the lady.

"Done!" said Handforth promptly.

He had an idea that the good woman had robbed herself—for there was an enormous lot of stuff. But the chances were that the shopkeeper had made just as much profit on her goods as though she had sold them in the ordinary way.

Handforth didn't wait.

"Look here, I'll take this basketful over," he said briskly. "You and Stiggins can come along with the rest in two or three loads. There's no reason why I shouldn't be getting to business."

And Edward Oswald hurried off, staggering under a miscellaneous assortment of cabbages, oranges, apples, bananas, and even potatoes.

He was as keen as mustard on this affair, and he carried his purchases to the end of the shy, and judiciously set up the various fruits and vegetables. By the time he had done, the pegs wore a look that they had never before assumed. Some were especially choice—for on some pegs rested six or seven bananas, whilst on the next peg there was only a solitary potato. The apples and oranges were liberally distributed, too.

Handforth surveyed his work, and then noticed that a few people were already at-



"Three shies for sixpence!" bawled Handforth. There was something novel in a fruit and veg hand out the wooden balls. It looked a-

tracted, and were looking on in surprise. Fullwood and Mr. Stiggins came up, with two more basketfuls.

"My hat!" said Fullwood, staring.

"Now then—roll up!" roared Handforth, at the top of his voice. "This way, ladies and gentlemen! Three shies for sixpence—and everything you knock off is yours! Walk up—walk up!"

"This way, gents!" bellowed Mr. Stiggins loyally.

"Three shies for sixpence!" thundered Handforth.

They made so much noise that people came round to see what it was all about. Other showmen were shouting to a certain extent, but Handforth's voice drowned them all. And a crowd is always drawn by something novel—here there were two novelties.

Firstly, it was something new to have a schoolboy in charge of a coco-nut shy—and a public schoolboy at that. And, secondly, the variegated prizes proved an added attraction.

"Come on, who's going to be the first to start?" shouted Fullwood enthusiastically. "This is the first shy of its kind in England! Try for the bananas—they're the best



try your luck!" The people rolled up! Fullwood was raking in money as fast as he could. Handforth was going to prove a good one!

value! But you're entitled to all you knock off!"

"Walk up, you slowcoaches!" roared Handforth. "Come on! What's the matter with you? Three shies for sixpence! Who's the first customer?"

"Is this a fake, or what?" asked a burly youth.

"A fake!" snorted Handforth. "If you want a thick ear——"

"Here you are, sir—three balls!" interrupted Fullwood hastily, as somebody decided to try his skill. "Come on! The more the merrier!"

Fullwood did not want to see the whole affair wrecked at the outset—as it would be if Handforth started distributing thick ears.

Whizz!

The first customer was successful with his very first shot—and, moreover, he knocked off a bunch of bananas worth at least eighteenpence. There could not have been a better start.

"Them bananas is mine!" said the customer. "None o' your tricks——"

"Of course they're yours!" interrupted Fullwood promptly.

"An' I've got two more shies!" said the customer.

Handforth rushed down, picked up the bananas, and substituted another bunch. The fruit was handed over, and the crowd became alive to the fact that this was something worth going in for.

There were eager demands for balls, and the money flowed in at great speed. Although Fullwood did not actually mistrust Mr. Stiggins, he was not acquainted with that gentleman's record, so he thought it wise to act as money-taker, and to preside over the balls.

The rush of trade was astonishing.

Once the crowd was fairly started, it was almost impossible to hold them back. The two juniors and Mr. Stiggins were kept so hard at work that they were run off their feet. Handforth was in deadly danger of being brained, for he insisted upon keeping at the end of the shy, and he caused huge amusement by the way he kept dodging.

As Fullwood had hoped, that first shot had been more or less of a fluke. Most of the customers threw their missiles for nothing. Not one ball in a dozen succeeded in dislodging a fruit or a vegetable. And then it was generally an apple, or a cabbage. So, by a simple process of calculation, it was easy to see that the shy was making money rapidly.

"Here you are—a lovely orange for somebody!" shouted Handforth, as he picked up an orange that had been hit. "Who does this belong to?"

It wasn't worth taking, for it was smashed to pulp. Indeed, plenty of the sportsmen were only trying their luck just for the pleasure of seeing the fruit go flying, squashed to pulp.

However, after an hour of it, the enthusiasm began to wane—particularly as the stocks of material were running out. And at last the crowd grew tired of the novelty, and only a few urchins were left—and these wanted to have three shies for half-price—or even less.

"Well, that's over, anyhow," said Fullwood, at last. "Phew! It was pretty hot work, Handy! It's a wonder you're not dead!"

"I am, nearly," said Handforth, trying to rub himself in half a dozen places at once.

"I'm black and blue all over! But never mind—what's the amount of the takings?"

"Strikes me you've made a few quid!" said Mr. Stiggins enviously.

And after a long task in counting up endless coppers and small silver, the result was known. When Mr. Stiggins had received his ten per cent., and Handforth had put his four pounds back in his pocket, the net profit was six pounds ten. And this, after all, was a prize worth having.



CHAPTER 11.

STILL GOING STRONG.

"IX pounds ten!" said Handforth gloomily.

"No need to use that tone, old man—we're lucky!" said Fullwood.

"Lucky!" repeated Handforth, staring

"What's the good of six pounds ten when we want twenty?"

"A lot of good," replied Ralph Leslie. "After all, it's nearly a third of the amount, isn't it? And I was half afraid that you wouldn't even see your money back, old son. I think we've done marvellously."

Handforth shook his head.

"It's not bad for a start, but we shall have to think of something else," he said. "Let's have a look round the other shows. There might be something—Hallo! What's up with the Aunt Sally?"

"Somebody hurt, by the look of it," replied Fullwood, with concern.

They went over to the Aunt Sally, where the proprietor and a crowd of people were bending over an unfortunate youth who had just been laid out. This daring young sportsman had been the fellow who projected his head through a hole in a sheet at the bottom of the range. It had been his job to dodge the hard rubber balls that were flung at his face. It was a somewhat novel form of Aunt Sally, and Handforth looked eager.

"I should think that chap must be paid well!" he said, turning to Fullwood. "I mean, it's a bit thick, sticking your head through that gap, and waiting for everybody to biff you. Those balls must want some dodging!"

"Better come away," said Fullwood.

But he didn't move. The showman, having seen his assistant carried off, was trying to entice somebody to help him. But there were no takers. The game didn't seem to be worth the candle!

Fullwood made up his mind.

"I'll have a shot, if you like," he said.

"You?" exclaimed the showman. "I ain't so sure— Still, it's your own business young gent. I don't usually employ smart schoolboys—"

"Well, I'm game!" said Fullwood. "How much is the pay?"

"It all depends upon the custom," said the man.

"Well, what about fifty-fifty?" asked Fullwood. "You take the money, and I take the risk! It's worth halves, isn't it?"

The showman considered, and then nodded. He was a shrewd man. He realised that he would have to close up his Aunt Sally unless he accepted this offer. And the crowd was already interested in Fullwood and Handforth. Indeed, the Aunt Sally man had noted how he had lost all his customers when the improvised coco-nut shy had been at its height.

"Right you are!" he said eagerly. "Halves it is!"

"Hold on!" snorted Handforth. "Where do I come in?"

"This is my affair, Handy," said Fullwood. "Don't forget that I'm earning the money—not you. All right, boss—take the money!"

Fullwood ran round, well aware of his risks. And Handforth was consoled somewhat when the showman informed him that he would not have to wait very long, if he was anxious for a trial! At three shots for twopence!

And as soon as Fullwood's head appeared through the slit in the canvas, there were plenty of customers. It had been novel to aim the rubber balls at an ordinary yokel. But it was different when a smart schoolboy took the risk!

Business woke up with a vengeance, and Fullwood found it necessary to wake up, too. In the first minute he was hit nearly a dozen times, and his face felt as though it had been lashed with a whip. However, practice makes perfect, and in a surprisingly short time he was dodging about with great skill.

But this sort of thing couldn't last long.

A well-directed blow caught him fairly between the eyes while he was dodging another ball; his head vanished, and left only a gap.

"By George!" breathed Handforth, in alarm.

He rushed round before anybody else could get there, and found Fullwood picking himself up, dazed, but by no means out.

"It's all right—I'm still fit!" he muttered. "This is my affair—"

"Rats!" snapped Handforth. "You go and watch the chap with the money! I'll take this on now—and I'll show you how it ought to be done!"

He thrust his head through the opening, and a shout went up from the crowd at the other end of the range.

"Hit me!" hooted Handforth. "Come on! Try it!"

A roar answered him.

"You think you can—eh?" yelled the leader of Study D. "I'd just like to see one of you score a bullseye! Come on! I'm waiting!"

Whizz! Whizz! Whizz!

It was not necessary for him to wait long. There was a rush to buy the balls, and Handforth found himself receiving far more attention than even Fullwood had done. To a certain extent, he was as good as his word, for he moved so rapidly that a few dozen balls had been flung before he was hit. He had a cricketer's eye, and followed the flight of each ball accurately. But he couldn't very well keep his eye on several balls at once. And after about ten minutes he was bombarded by a sudden fusillade, and collapsed. But the crowd hardly noticed it—for Fullwood popped his own face through within the second.

And so they kept it up. While one recovered, the other took on the job. After all, the blows from the balls were not heavy—they only smarted for a time. And at the end of half an hour, the two juniors had become remarkably skilful at the game. They developed the art of dodging to such an ex-

ANSWERS

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tent that direct hits were few and far between.

However, it was getting a bit late, and custom fell off when the novelty of it waned. So at length they decided that they had had enough, and claimed their half share.

The showman was full of enthusiasm.

"Well done, young 'uns!" he said heartily. "I'm blowed if you ain't the best kids I've ever 'ad at the game! Here you are! Here's a quid each."

"How much do you charge for a go?"

"A tanner for three tries."

"Then what's the idea?" asked Handforth gruffly. "You've taken more than four pounds since we started on the game!"

"Not a penny, I ain't!" replied the man indignantly.

"You've been doing a roaring trade ever since we started," said Handforth. "Fair's fair, so keep to the bargain. Either that, or we'll shove you through that slit, tie you there, and pelt you—"

"Oh, all right—just to please you!" said the showman hastily. "I ain't greedy! I'll give you three pun' ten between you. How's that? It's robbing myself—"

"Come on, then; hand it over," said Fullwood. "We'll call it quits."

They received the money, and went away, for the fair ground was now no longer a possible source of income. The two juniors were feeling the effects of their strenuous work, too. They had received good money, but they had earned every penny of it.

"Ten pounds!" said Fullwood breathlessly. "Why, Handy, it seems almost too good to be true! That's half the money! Thanks awfully, old man, for what you've been doing—"

"Rats!" interrupted Handforth. "Rot! What's the good of talking about being successful? Too good to be true? Huh! We want twenty quid—not ten!"

"Half a loaf's better than no bread—"

"We're not talking about bread!" interrupted Handforth tartly. "We've made ten quid, and it's getting pretty late. We shall have to think of something desperate now. In my opinion, we've done badly—"

"And in mine, we've worked a miracle," said Fullwood happily. "At least, I can pay the chaps half the money I owe them."

They were out in the road by this time, wending their way back towards the more respectable part of the town. It was half-past eight, and Fullwood was getting anxious. He remembered his promise to Winnie, and he was determined to get back to the school.

"We've done wonders, Handy," he went on. "You've been a brick, and I'm feeling loads better. It's impossible to get that other ten pounds—"

"Ten pounds!" said Handforth. "That's rummy!"

He had halted, and was staring at a gaudy-looking poster on the wall. It was pasted up just opposite a street lamp. And the most prominent thing about it was a huge "£10" in the centre.

"What's this?" said Handforth. "Ten quid for the chap who can stand up to Smiler Hogan for three rounds in the ring! Wednesday night— Why, what the—" He broke off, and gazed at Fullwood. "Wednesday!" he gasped. "That's to-night!"

"Yes, but—"

"Ten pounds!" said Handforth, in a yell.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Fullwood. "You—you mean— Oh, but—it's impossible, Handy! We couldn't win a prize like that! This Smiler Hogan is a professional bruiser. I don't suppose I could last one round, let alone three."

Handforth grinned.

"You don't need to!" he replied. "I'll take him on!"



CHAPTER 12.

TAKEN ON!

PROVIDENTIAL was the correct word to use in connection with that unexpected announcement. Ralph Leslie Fullwood wanted another ten pounds to make up his twenty, and here was a chance of winning it!

Not that there was one chance in a hundred of any success. As Fullwood had pointed out, how could they expect to stand up to a professional boxer for three rounds? Besides, the proprietor of the place would never offer ten pounds so rashly if there was the slightest chance of anybody winning it.

"Yes," said Handforth, "I'll take him on."

"You won't, Handy," replied Fullwood quietly. "Good heavens! You've helped me enough as it is, but if it's a question of which of us shall have a shot at Smiler, I'm the one. I'm after this money, and I've already told you that I've got to earn it. So don't argue."

Handforth was compelled to see the line of reasoning.

"Of course, if you like to be obstinate—" he began gruffly.

"Honestly, Handy, it's up to me," interrupted Fullwood. "But we needn't count our chickens before they're hatched. We'll go along to the place, and see what it's like, but it'll be no good."

"Anyhow, let's go and see," said Handforth eagerly.

They had another look at the bill, and found that the "great boxing tournament" was to take place in "Bud Mason's Gigantic Arena," in South Street.

"By George! It must be a big place," said Handforth enthusiastically. "Rummy we've never heard of it! I say, officer!" he added, as a policeman was in the act of passing.

"Where's the arena?"

"The which?" asked the constable.

"Bud Mason's Gigantic Arena."

"Oh, that!" said the policeman drily. "I suppose you mean Bud's booth? That's what they call it round here, anyway—and you'd better give it a wide berth, young gentlemen! It's no place for the likes of you!"

"We just wanted to have a look at it," said Fullwood vaguely.

"Well, take my advice, sir, and don't," replied the constable. "Young gentlemen from the Grammar School, aren't you?"

"No, St. Frank's."

"My stars! You've no right to be down here!" exclaimed the officer, looking at the two juniors curiously. "And you'd better not go to Bud Mason's place. I'm warning you, sir!" he added to Fullwood. "I know what I'm talking about, and you'll be sensible if you get straight back to your school."

He walked on, and the Removites looked at one another.

"I expect he's right," said Fullwood reluctantly. "He wouldn't speak like that unless he knew. I shall have to give it up, Handy—not that there was any chance, anyhow—"

"Rats!" broke in Handforth. "Blow that bobby! Let's find the place!"

A passer-by directed them to it without trouble, and Fullwood thought that it would be as well to take a look at the booth, anyhow. Perhaps that would be enough to choke Handforth off. For, curiously enough, although it was Fullwood who desired the money, Handforth was the more eager of the two.

It did not take them long to locate "Bud Mason's Gigantic Arena." As the policeman had hinted, it was nothing but a dirty, disreputable-looking booth. And it was situated in an even worse part of the town than the

fair. The juniors hardly realised it, but they had penetrated into the really dangerous slums of Bannington. Almost every town has its bad quarters—and this was Bannington's.

"My only hat!" murmured Handforth. "What a hole!"

Fullwood was reading a flaring poster against the entrance of the booth. It boldly stated that ten pounds would be presented to anybody under ten stone in weight who stood up to Smiler Hogan, the champion light-weight, for three rounds.

"I'm under ten stone, if it comes to that," murmured Fullwood.

"Coming in to try your luck, young gent?" asked a beefy-looking man, dressed very flashily. "Everybody welcome! Just give me your name, and you can have a shot for the ten quid! Everything fair an' square! Honest Bud—that's me!"

"I'm under ten stone," said Handforth, promptly. "I'll try—"

"No, you won't!" broke in Fullwood.

"Look here—"

"Confound you, Handy—"

"I tell you—"

"Now then, young gents—now then!" said Bud Mason severely. "No need to quarrel—you can both have a shot."

"Then put me down first!" said Fullwood quickly. "My name's Fullwood!"

"Right you are," grinned the proprietor. "As you're a smart-lookin' young gent, I'll let you have the first try—it'll give us a

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tone, Bill," he added, turning to one of his own kind. "How many names down?"

"Eight—an' that's the lot!" said the other man. "Can't take no more."

"What about me?" demanded Handforth indignantly.

"Sorry, young 'un—too late!"

"Don't worry, Handy—I'm glad they won't take your name," muttered Fullwood, as he turned aside. "I'm an idiot for giving mine, but I did it on the spur of the moment. This place is a blot! It's a wonder to me they allow it in the town. If I hadn't given my name, I'd go."

"Don't be an ass!" said Handforth. "There's a chance to win that ten quid, and I wish I had been the first! Of course, if the Head got to know that we were here, he'd sack the pair of us. But there isn't much risk, and it's all in a good cause!"

"How could he sack us?" asked Fullwood. "That sort of thing is abolished nowadays"

"By George, so it is!" interrupted Handforth, with a start. "Why, then, it's easy. Particularly if— Well, never mind," he said. "I'll tell you what. You go inside, and get near the ring. Don't let them diddle you out of your chance. You buzz in!"

"And what about you?"

"Never mind about me—I'll show you what I'm going to do later on," replied Handforth mysteriously. "Fully, old man, this is your lucky night! You didn't think you were going to earn any money at all, did you? And yet you've got ten pounds already!"

Fullwood caught his breath.

"You're right!" he muttered tensely. "And if we can make ten, why not twenty? By gad, I'll fight like a demon! Only three rounds!" he added to himself. "And this Hogan chap is probably a slogger. There's a chance, Handy—I really believe there's a chance!"

"Of course there is!" declared Handforth. "You go inside!"

Edward Oswald moved off, and Fullwood stood there for a few moments, oblivious to the fact that he was now in very bad company. The men round about the booth were ruffians of the worst type, by the look of them. And some of them were giving Fullwood very furtive glances. Such a smartly dressed youngster was seldom seen here.

But Fullwood had no eyes for anything. He was thinking. Yes, this Smiler Hogan was probably a common bruiser—an alleged "champion" who only had to deal with local rustics. But Fullwood was a real boxer, with a perfect knowledge of the science of self-defence.

And he only had to stand up to Smiler Hogan for three rounds!

"By Jove, I believe I stand a chance!" Fullwood told himself, with a catch in his throat. "And if I last out, I win the ten pound prize! That makes the whole twenty! Oh, my goodness! I wonder if this really is my lucky night?"

A voice broke in upon him.

"Best thing you can do, young shaver, is to clear off!" said the voice.

Fullwood looked up, and found Bud Mason looking at him rather grimly.

"Clear off?" gasped Fullwood. "But—but you've got my name down!"

"Rot!" said the man. "That don't make any difference. You'd best get away while you're safe. I was only kiddin' you just now. This offer is open to men—not infants!"

Fullwood looked at him aghast.

"But I want to try my luck!" he protested.

"You'll be lucky if you cut and run for it!" retorted the booth proprietor. "This is no place for you—an' I can give you fair warning that if you go into the ring on your feet, you'll come out on a stretcher! Smiler is a killer!"

"I'm game!" flashed Fullwood hotly.

A suspicion came to him that Bud Mason had been sizing him up, and that he was regretting the fact that he had taken his name. If Mr. Mason was a man of any intelligence at all, he must have known that public schoolboys are frequently expert in the noble art. And Fullwood wasn't the kind of entrant he wanted.

"Understand?" he said. "Hop it!"

"I'm hanged if I will!" retorted Fullwood, this attitude firing him with a grim determination to go in and win. "What does it say on that poster?" he added, pointing. "What does it say? 'Open to all comers'! Why, you crook, I'll fetch the police if you don't keep your word!"

The man's eyes narrowed.

"Threats won't do any good, my lad," he said curtly. "All right, I've warned you. I've given you a fair tip, an' if you don't take it, don't blame me if you wake up in 'ospital! Here you are—here's your card! That admits you to the ringside, ready for the first bout! Go in, an' see what you can do!"

Fullwood took the card, and his eyes glittered.

"I'm going to try for that ten pounds!" he said breathlessly.

"I hopes you win it!" said Bud Mason, with a sneering chuckle.



CHAPTER 13.

THE TELEPHONE CALL!

LIVE RUSSELL was nearly at his wits' end.

Throughout the evening he had wandered about like a lost sheep. He had gone from House to House, up and down corridors, in and out of studies and Common-rooms. He had haunted the Triangle and the gateway. He had made inquiries over and over and over again.

But nobody had seen Ralph Leslie Full-

wood since the football match had ended. Fullwood had not returned.

Clive had been worried even at tea-time, for he had seen that something was wrong. But his state of mind now was ten times more acute. It was well past calling-over, and not very far from bed-time. The gates were locked, and still Fullwood was missing.

It was an anxious situation.

Clive had an uneasy feeling that his study chum had either met with an accident, or had run away. Something exceptional must have happened during the afternoon, Clive told himself, but he didn't know what. Fullwood's actions during the first half of the football match had been inexplicable to the Canadian boy. Why had he played so badly? Why had Fullwood avoided him? And why, above all, had he failed to come home?

Knowing all about that recent affair of Fullwood's, Clive was naturally suspicious. It relieved him a trifle when he learned that Handforth was missing, too—for he at once assumed that Handforth was with Fullwood. They had been together during the afternoon, he remembered.

"Heard anything yet?" asked McClure, as he and Church met Clive in the Ancient House lobby.

"Not a thing," replied Clive unhappily.

"Well, it's the rummiest go I've ever heard of!" said Church. "We haven't seen anything of Handy since tea-time. He went out, saying that he'd be back in five minutes—"

"He went out to look for Fullwood, didn't he?"

"Yes," replied Church. "But he was seen talking to Pitt's sister, at the gates. We're simply going round in circles, though. We don't get any further. I think something ought to be done."

"It's easy enough to talk like that," growled McClure. "It's a cert that Handy and Fullwood are together. But what are they doing? Why haven't they come back? I've got an awful feeling that Handy's had an accident. Don't forget, he was in his Austin!"

"Perhaps they're both dead!" said Church gloomily.

The Canadian boy shook his head.

"That's the last thing I should suspect," he replied, in his level-headed way. "If an accident had happened, we should have heard about it long ago. No, I believe that Fullwood has run away from school—and I shouldn't be surprised if Handy is trying to bring him back. It's time we got the Vigilantes on the job, and did something definite."

Handforth's chums fully agreed. They felt that this was a task for the Remove Vigilance Committee. This was a selected body of juniors who maintained discipline. Under the Honour System, the fellows were supposed to stick to all the rules of the school without any compulsion. But there were certain boys who deliberately, maliciously, or weakly ignored the rules. These young gentlemen were kept in order by the Vigilantes. With-

out these committees, the Honour System would have been very much of a failure. The boys themselves were seeing that the honour of St. Frank's was kept clean.

"I've spoken to Dick Hamilton about it," said Church, with a frown. "But he won't listen. Let's go and talk to him again. I think he's in the Common-room."

They hurried off, and when they got to the Common-room they found the apartment fairly well filled.

"Good gad!" said Archie Glenthorne, as he met the trio in the doorway. "I mean to say, odds lines and furrows! The good old brows are somewhat worried, laddies! Is aught amiss?"

"Handy's still away!" said Church worriedly.

"Oh, well, I mean, dash it!" said Archie. "Nothing very frightfully ghastly in that, surely? Nothing really foul, what? After all, dear old Handy is a frightfully erratic cove, and one never absolutely knows what he's going to do next, does one?"

"You needn't worry yourselves so much, you fellows," put in Dick Hamilton, coming up. "It isn't bed-time yet, and I shan't do any worrying until then. I know Handforth too well! If it was anybody else, I might—"

"But it's Fullwood!" interrupted Clive.

"Exactly—and Fullwood is with Handforth," said Dick. "And that's enough. They're bound to turn up—"

"Hallo, the telephone!" sang out somebody.

Church made a dash for the box, his alarm obvious to all.

"An accident!" he gasped. "Handy's smashed himself up, or something!"

He flew into the box, and unhooked the receiver.

"Hallo!" he panted. "Who's that?"

"By George!" came a voice. "Is that you, Churchy?"

"Handy!" shouted Church. "Are—are you all right?"

"Of course I'm all right!" came Handforth's voice. "What did you think I was?"

"You haven't had an accident, or anything?"

"An accident! Don't be dotty!"

"Well, why haven't you come back?" demanded Church, his anxiety giving place to wrath. "Why didn't you let us know something?"

"I've been busy!" replied Handforth coldly.

"Busy!" howled Church.

"You needn't try to smash up this telephone with your yelling!" said Handforth gruffly. "I wanted to speak to Dick Hamilton, but you'll do. Tell the chaps to come along to Bannington at once. Fullwood's here, and in about twenty minutes he's going into the ring, to box. So if you want to see him beat Smiler Hogan, you'll have to buck up!"

"Fullwood's there!" gasped Church. "Is he all right, too?"



Bud Mason made a sudden leap for freedom, but Dick Hamilton put his foot out and the fellow went sprawling. Next moment and the Vigilantes piled on him, and this time the man had no chance of escape.

This was rather an unnecessary question, for Fullwood was necessarily all right, otherwise he could hardly indulge in boxing. But Church was so startled that he hardly realised what he was asking. Clive Russell and a number of others were crowding against the telephone-box, too, all anxious to hear the news.

"Is that fixed?" came Handforth's voice. "Good! I shall expect you in about twenty minutes, then. I'll wait for you outside, and then we can go in and see the scrap. Can't stop any longer—"

"Hold on!" ejaculated Church. "Where are you?"

"In a telephone-box, of course, you ass!"

"Yes, but where?"

"Oh, I'm in Bannington," said Handforth. "Tell the chaps to get their bikes out quickly—"

"You—you exasperating ass!" interrupted Church. "How do we know where to come to? We can't find you unless you say—"

"I've never known such a chap for asking inquisitive questions!" broke in Edward Oswald impatiently. "You'll find me outside Mason's Gigantic Arena—just past the gasworks, in the lower part of the town. Fully's due to go into the ring in twenty minutes, so get a hustle on! I thought you'd like to come along and watch. It ought to be worth looking at!"

"I'll tell the others—"

"All right," said Handforth. "So-long!"

"Hi! Wait a minute—"

But the impulsive Handforth had hung up his receiver and the line was dead. Church fairly reeled out of the telephone-box, and stared at the crowd of juniors who gathered round him.

"What about Fullwood?" asked Clive eagerly.

"I can't make head nor tail of it!" replied Church. "It was Handy on the 'phone. He's in Bannington—down by the gasworks. He says that Fullwood is going into the ring to fight a chap named Smiler Logan, or something. And we've got to get there within twenty minutes to see the fun!"

"A fight!"

"By Jove! Let's rush off!"

"Come on, everybody—we can't miss this!"

"No fear!"

But Dick Hamilton rushed for the door, and put his back against it.

"Hold on!" he said grimly. "Do you know it's nearly bed-time? If anybody goes to Bannington, it'll be the Vigilantes—and they'll go to bring those two idiots back—not to watch any boxing bout!"

"Rats! Handy's invited us—"

"That doesn't make any difference!" snapped Dick. "There's going to be no rushing off like that. Just because Handforth acts the goat, and drags Fullwood into it, there's no reason why the whole Remove should go crazy. What else did Handforth say, Church?"

"Not much," replied Church breathlessly. "This boxing match is to take place in Mason's Arena—I think that's what he said—and it's down past the gasworks somewhere."

"A nice part of the town!" said Dick, with a snort. "Just the sort of thing that we can expect of a chap like Handy! Look here, all of you—the Vigilantes are going, and nobody else. Don't look so sick! As I said before, we're not going to watch any match. We shall simply bring those two asses back. And we shall bring them as quickly as we can. That's all."

"Well, I'm going, anyhow!" shouted one of the juniors rebelliously.

"Any fellow who goes, and breaks the rules, will be dealt with by the committee to-morrow!" retorted Dick coldly. "I'm only going because it's my duty. Vigilantes, attention! Follow me out!"

The Vigilantes obeyed, and the other fellows, after the first excitement had died down, felt that it would be unwise to defy the skipper. And thus only the members of the Vigilance Committee rushed for their bicycles and set off—not to witness the boxing match, but, if possible, to stop it! For Dick Hamilton knew what to expect from the slum quarter of Bannington!



CHAPTER 14.

FULLWOOD IN THE RING!

RALPH LESLIE FULLWOOD was rather horrified.

Judging from the outside of "Bud Mason's Gigantic Arena," he had expected to find a somewhat tough atmosphere within. But that noisome booth was far worse than anything that he could have imagined.

Fullwood had been in a boxing booth before. But there are booths and booths. Some of them are quite respectable, decent places. Some are just on the verge—whilst others are unfit for decent people to enter.

This was decidedly one of the latter brand.

Never had Fullwood seen such villainous-looking types. He hadn't believed that the town of Bannington contained such ruffians. He was convinced, in fact, that the majority of these men were strangers within the town. The whole booth was crowded with the dregs of humanity.

And far from being "gigantic," the booth was a miserably, poky affair. The ring was merely a raised platform in the centre, with loose ropes round it, and a flaring oil lamp overhead. But the admission charge was high for such a wretched place, and the proprietor was evidently doing well, for the show was full up.

"My only hat!" muttered Fullwood, in disgust.

He was sitting right next to the ring-side. There was no escape for him, even if he wanted to get away. He couldn't even see

any exit. Men were crowding round him on all sides. He bitterly regretted the folly that had led Handforth and himself to come near the place.

Before the "great £10 Prize contest" there were one or two bouts between loutish youths. The referee was a bullying scoundrel who alternately cursed and encouraged the "boxers." Fullwood would never have believed that such a place as this could exist. And here it was—in Bannington! He didn't know that this type of booth was rare.

And while he sat there, having been pushed to the ring-side by scores of rough hands, Handforth was trying to gain admission. Handforth had done his ringing-up, and now he was going to see Fullwood win that tenner!

For Edward Oswald had no inkling of the truth.

He felt that he had done rather a decent thing by spending a few minutes in the telephone-box. He was giving the Remove a chance to come along and see a jolly good battle in the ring. Then he found that he couldn't even see it himself!

For when he tried to enter, a burly ruffian in a striped sweater, and with a jaw like a ham, barred his way.

"Full up!" he said briefly.

"Rats!" retorted Handforth. "My friend's in there—he's going to try for that ten pound prize. I'm going to see him win it!"

"You're a liar!" said the bruiser.

"Why, you—you—"

"I don't want any lip—so if you ain't lookin' for a swipe across the jaw, you'd best 'op it!" said the man coarsely. "Clear off, you young whelp!"

Handforth fairly boiled.

"I'm going in!" he roared hotly.

He made a dash. But the bruiser made short work of him. Handforth was seized as though he had been a kitten. This man was a heavy-weight, and he simply lifted Edward Oswald off his feet, swung him round, and threw him across the pavement, into the gutter.

"Now come back and try agin!" he said jeeringly.

Handforth picked himself up dazedly.

"You—you ruffian!" he panted. "I'm not fool enough to try to fight you—but you're a dirty, cowardly cur! You wait till the chaps come along!"

He was really hurt, for he had struck the pavement with his left shoulder so violently that he half thought he had dislocated something. He picked himself up, and reeled across the road. He swayed along for twenty yards or so, and then paused, looking back.

"Fully!" he muttered. "I—I believe there's something squiffy about this rotten place! I've got to get Fully out!"

But how? Single-handed, he could do nothing. And even when the Remove came along, what could they do? Handforth knew that that booth was filled with toughs of the worst type.

NEXT WEDNESDAY!**"UNCLE
HANDFORTH!"**

Handy means well.

All he wants is to help Fullwood out of his trouble—but it doesn't come off in the way Handy expects.

Handforth as Uncle Julian from the Argentine is a real scream!

Next week's long complete yarn is packed with rollicking incidents—it is one of the best in this great series.

Don't miss this latest episode in the progress of the Honour System at St. Frank's!

**"SONS OF THE MEN
OF MONS!"**

More thrills and excitement in next week's long instalment of this grand war serial. Tell your chums about it!



Handforth as Uncle Julian from the Argentine is a great joke! Look out for this cover next Wednesday.

ORDER IN ADVANCE!

"Take my tip, young 'un, and scoot!" said a quiet voice near him.

Handforth turned, and saw a man in an ordinary lounge suit. But there was something about his erect carriage which suggested a policeman.

"Who—who are you?" asked the junior.

"Don't ask questions," said the other curtly. "Cut!"

"I can't!" replied Handforth. "A friend of mine's in there—"

"The worse for him, then!" interrupted the plain-clothes man, in a grave voice. "You ought to have more sense than to come near this place. Your young friend is going to get into serious trouble, by the look of things."

"I—I'm going in there!" muttered Handforth. "I'll drag him out!"

A hand was laid on his arm.

"No you won't, sir!" said the other. "Sorry, but you can't go near that place now. And you'd better clear. I may as well tell you that I'm a police officer. Don't ask

questions, and don't stand here, talking. That's all I've got to say to you now."

"Yes, but—"

"Sorry, my lad, but you'd better clear off."

Handforth moved off, thoroughly scared. It took a great deal to startle the valiant leader of Study D. But the realisation had come upon him that there was something very fishy about this booth. And Fullwood was inside! Fullwood had gone there to fight in the ring! Handforth trembled for Ralph Leslie's safety—as well he might.

The preliminary bouts were over, and Bud Mason, from the ring, announced that the prize of ten pounds could now be competed for. The first aspirant for the honour of standing up to Smiler Hogan for three rounds was a schoolboy. A yell of laughter went up at this announcement.

"Smiler won't take ten seconds over this youngster," continued Mr. Mason. "As soon as the stuffing has been knocked out of him, you'll see some real sport. But the kid wanted a shot at it, an' fair's fair."

"Smash 'im, Smiler!"

"Kill 'im for 'is cheek!"

Fullwood was in a daze. He was pushed up into the ring, and he found Smiler Hogan grinning at him maliciously. Smiler was one of the worst rascals that Fullwood had ever set eyes on—a low, bestial type of humanity. His face had been knocked about so much that he looked positively gruesome. He was obviously out of condition, for his muscles were flabby. But Fullwood indignantly guessed that the man turned the scale at eleven or twelve stone. To put him up against such a ruffian was criminal.

When he had entered his name, he had assumed that the booth was a decent place, and that Smiler Hogan was naturally a genuine light-weight. This man was nothing but a common bruiser—a hired hooligan.

But Fullwood never dreamed of backing out.

He wasn't going to show the white feather like that. He had asked for this himself, and he was going through with it. And, what was more, he would try to win that tenner! He would fight—he would do his utmost to keep his end up.

Clang!

The gong sounded, and he saw Smiler Hogan coming at him. The whole booth was filled with derisive yells. Fullwood had only removed his jacket, waistcoat and collar. And his gloves were ill-fitting and badly worn.

But the instant he started fighting, he forgot everything.

Smiler Hogan meant to finish him off at the outset, and he came in like a bull. But the ruffian received a surprise. For Fullwood, with wonderful speed and agility, dodged every move, and avoided every vicious lunge. Indeed, he got in a heavy blow on Smiler's jaw.

The man tried to clinch, but again Fullwood avoided him. The fight was no fight at all—for Smiler Hogan was simply trying to half kill the youngster with a murderous blow. Fullwood knew that if one of those punches got home he would be done.

When it came to a matter of skill, there was, of course, absolutely no comparison. The schoolboy was brilliant in his footwork, and he knew all the science of the sport. The bruiser was a bully and an elephant, with little or no knowledge of sportsmanship or skill. He relied upon his brute strength to beat his man, assisted by open fouls.

But in spite of this handicap, the first round ended, and Fullwood was still in the ring. The crowd of roughs yelled themselves hoarse with laughter and cheers. And Fullwood found himself the favourite. These men were pleased at the way he was dodging every one of Smiler's murderous drives.

But Bud Mason was furious—and so was Smiler.

"Get him this time!" muttered the proprietor angrily.

"He'll be in hospital for a year!" snarled Hogan.

But Fullwood had got the measure of his man. He knew that if he avoided those clumsy blows, he would be safe. It would be madness to attack, and so he would concentrate all his skill upon defence. And if he could outlast the three rounds, he would be the winner of the prize!

Just before the second round started, he had a vague fear that there would be monkeying with the time-keeping. But he dismissed this. The audience, although rough to a degree, would not allow anything of that sort. And so the farce went on.



CHAPTER 15.

THE RAID!

DICK HAMILTON leapt from his machine, and the other Vigilantes followed his example.

"My hat!" said Dick, as the juniors gathered round him. "That's the place! They're in there! Of all the idiots——"

"Here's Handy!" gasped Church suddenly.

Handforth had suddenly appeared from the shadows on the other side of the road. He came up eager and flushed.

"Thank goodness you've come!" he said breathlessly. "And thank goodness you haven't brought any of the other chaps with you. Only the Vigilance Committee, eh?"

"That's all," said Dick. "I'm jolly glad to find that you're not in that fearful booth. Where's Fullwood? You'd better fetch him, and we'll get out of here as soon——"

"He's in there!" panted Handforth.

"In the booth?"

"Yes—fighting!"

"You—you madman!" snapped Dick Hamilton. "I'm surprised at you, Handy! Hadn't you got more sense than to——"

"I know—I know!" muttered Handforth. "But I never suspected that it was anything like this! Fullwood wanted to get ten quid—we'd already made ten—and we thought it was a good chance for him to get the money. I say, there are police about here, I believe——"

"A pity there aren't more!" said Clive Russell. "They ought to shut this place up—it's a disgrace to the town."

"Well, we can only wait," said Hamilton. "We'd better get back here, and watch for Fully. We'll collar him as soon as he comes out. You can explain the details later on, Handy."

But Handforth insisted upon explaining them then, and the Vigilantes, who now knew all the facts concerning Ralph Leslie's worry, listened with interest. Indeed, they were the fellows who had collected that twenty pounds for Fullwood. So they would easily appreciate everything that had occurred.

Cheering and yelling from the booth interrupted Handforth's story constantly, and all the juniors grew more and more anxious. A

tremendous outburst of shouts sounded much louder than the previous applause, and they wondered what had happened. They little guessed the truth!

That shout signalled Fullwood's victory!

For the junior had fairly and squarely won the ten pound prize. He took little or no credit, for to a lithe young boxer of his skill, it had been comparatively easy to avoid Smiler Hogan's clumsy rushes. Fullwood's greatest care had been in dodging the criminal fouls. But he had succeeded! And when the gong went at the end of the third round, he was still on his feet. He had given an exhibition of sheer skill that had dumb-founded that coarse audience.

"Gents, the youngster has won the prize!" announced Bud Mason, with as good a grace as he could manage. "Ten quid for this boy! I'm proud and pleased to pay over! Smiler failed, and I lose."

"Good old Bud!"

"Always the sportsman!"

Fullwood listened to all this in a daze. So he had won, after all! He turned to the proprietor with an eager, flushed face, and his eyes were gleaming.

"When—when can I have the money?" he asked breathlessly.

Mason gripped his arm fiercely.

"Get out of this place, or I'll break your neck!" he muttered.

"But the money—"

"You young fool!" snarled the man, in an undertone. "You won't get a cent! You'll be lucky to get out of this place whole! Now then—scoot! If you're here within a minute, I'll smash you!"

Fullwood went burning hot.

All this trouble for nothing! That fight—in which he had worked himself up to a pitch so that he could win the money—all a fraud! And this man had the effrontery to tell him the blunt truth in the ring itself!

"You swindler!" roared Fullwood passionately. "I've won that ten pounds—fairly! Give it to me!" He turned to the audience. "This man says I won't get a cent," he went on. "It's not fair—"

A roar went up, and exactly what might have followed one could hardly hazard a guess. But just then there was a series of shrill whistles. Shouts followed, and then a kind of panic seized the audience.

"Police—police!"

There was a stampede, and that booth became like a place of wild animals. Fullwood was thankful, indeed, that he was in the ring, away from that struggling mob. He was sure that he would have been trampled underfoot, and mortally injured.

Amid the confused shouts came shrieks of agony as men were kicked and tripped. And then Fullwood saw the police. Dozens of them. Most of the audience escaped, but Bud Mason, Smiler Hogan, the seconds, and a number of men near the ring found it impossible to break through the crush. And at last, when the audience had gone, the police took charge.

There were several injured men to be carried out. Inspector Jameson—an officer well known to the St. Frank's boys—was in command. It appeared that no arrests were being made.

"Mason, you'll take this booth of yours, and dismantle it within twelve hours!" said the inspector curtly.

"I've got as much right here—"

"That's enough!" rapped out the police officer. "I want the names of everybody here. We're going to clear this gang out. We're going to—"

Smiler Hogan leapt upon the inspector, and attempted to fell him, but two constables were on him in a flash. There was a quick struggle, and the ruffian was handcuffed. But it took half a dozen policemen to carry him out, roaring and yelling.

"What are you doing here?" demanded the inspector, a little later, when he saw Fullwood. "Good heavens! Gloves on! Have you been fighting in this ring?"

"I—I tried to win the prize—"

"You're a St. Frank's boy, aren't you?"

"Yes," muttered Fullwood.

"What's your name?" demanded the inspector angrily.

"Fullwood—Remove Form."

"I shall make a note of that," said the inspector. "It may be my duty to report you to the headmaster of your school. You ought to be ashamed of yourself for being in a place like this! You young idiot! You might have known the whole thing was crooked!"

"If it's crooked, why don't you arrest Mason?" demanded Fullwood angrily.

"Mason will be arrested if he remains in this town another twenty-four hours," retorted Inspector Jameson in a low voice. "You'd better cut out of here, my lad! And look sharp about it."

The unfortunate junior was only too glad to take the advice. He felt sickened by everything that had taken place, and now he had a fresh worry—an overwhelming worry. The inspector was going to report him to the Head!

What would that mean? Expulsion!

His troubles seemed to be getting worse and worse—just when he had thought that they were going better. He hardly remembered getting out of that awful place. Indeed, he knew nothing until he found himself gripped by Handforth and Clive Russell and the others.

"Thank goodness!" gasped Russell. "We didn't know what had happened, Fully."

"They—they've raided the place!" muttered Fullwood. "The police!"

"Yes, we know that," said Handforth. "Didn't we see—"

"And the inspector recognised me as a St. Frank's chap, and took my name," said Fullwood tremblingly. "He's going to report me to the Head!"

"Great Scott!"

"That's the end of things for you, old man!"

"Rot!" snapped Handforth. "Under the present system, nobody can be expelled! There won't be any punishment. And we know that Fully wasn't doing anything dishonourable. In fact, he went into this place to save his honour! How was he to know that it was such an awful hole?"

"Yes, that's right," admitted Dick Hamilton. "We'd better go."

"If it comes to that, the whole thing was my doing," went on Handforth bitterly. "I saw the poster first, and I urged Fully to try for the prize——"

"I won it, too!" said Fullwood fiercely.

"You won it!" yelled Handforth.

"Yes!"

"But—but——"

"I won it, I tell you!" insisted Ralph Leslie. "Hogan tried to foul me a dozen times, but I was too quick for him. I lasted out the three rounds—and he didn't touch me once. I won the prize fairly and squarely!"

"Good man!" said Handforth delightedly. "Well, dash it, this makes a difference. If you've got the money——"

"Got the money!" interrupted Fullwood bitterly. "That cur, Mason, told me that I wouldn't get a cent, and he said that if I didn't get out of the ring he'd break my neck. Oh, it's our own fault for being such idiots!"

"And—and you didn't get the tenner?"

"Of course I didn't," muttered the unhappy victim. "It was all a swindle—a fraud! I don't know what would have happened, but the police broke in then, and cleared the place. I thought they were going to arrest everybody, but it seemed they only wanted to break up the party."

Handforth looked at the now nearly deserted booth. There were scarcely any police inside—for the ruffians had vanished like magic. But Bud Mason himself was walking in the direction of the schoolboys.

"By George!" breathed Handforth excitedly. "This is the rat! Fully earned that ten pounds, and it's his. We're Vigilantes, aren't we? We're out to see that justice is done! There's work for us here!"



CHAPTER 16.

MR. MASON SHELLS OUT.

MR. BUD MASON was in an evil temper.

He realised that he was lucky to escape arrest, but, at the same time, he had

been sternly ordered by the police to dismantle his booth, and to cease his activities from this night onwards. And as he was making a lot of money out of the wretched place he was furious.

He had no suspicions regarding the schoolboys as he swung past. He was thinking about Smiler Hogan. The man was a fool! If he hadn't attempted that attack on the

inspector, the police couldn't have touched him——

"Just a moment, Mr. Mason," said a voice.

The man pulled up, and noted, for the first time, that a number of grim-looking schoolboys had closed round him. It was Dick Hamilton who had spoken—for Dick thoroughly approved of Handforth's idea, and he felt it was up to him, as chief of the Vigilantes, to do the talking.

"What do you want?" asked Mason harshly.

"One of our friends met your boxer in that booth to-night, and fairly won the offered prize of ten pounds," replied Dick. "You refused to pay the money."

"Well?"

"Is that true?"

"Get out!" snarled the ruffian.

"Because I might as well tell you at once, Mr. Mason, that we're not going to allow you to swindle anybody—at least, not Fullwood," continued Dick. "You'll either pay up the money willingly, or we'll take it!"

The man was startled.

"You young fools!" he roared, "if you try to lay your fingers on me——"

"I won that prize, you swindler!" panted Fullwood. "Of course, now I understand why you offered a big sum like ten pounds. It didn't matter whether it was one pound, or ten pounds—or a hundred pounds. You never meant to pay it. Most of the poor fellows who went into your ring were probably knocked out by fouls. But I was too quick for your bruiser. And I want my money!"

"Hear, hear!" chorused the angry Vigilantes.

"Out with it—or we'll take it!" thundered Handforth.

Mason pulled his fist back, and the next instant he would have knocked Handforth down with a terrific blow. But this attempt at violence was enough. The Removites simply hurled themselves at him, and fell upon him in a body. The next moment Mason was down on his back, with most of the breath knocked out of him.

The juniors were thoroughly enraged. They all knew that Fullwood had won the money—that it belonged to Fullwood as much as his own name belonged to him. And they were going to see that he received it!

They were so excited that nobody noticed that two policemen were watching from the shadows across the street. But these officers had recognised Mason, and they shrewdly guessed what was taking place—and they made no attempt to interfere. They wisely ignored the little fracas.

"Now, Mr. Mason, what's it to be?" panted Dick Hamilton. "Are you going to pay?"

"No, you young whelps!" snarled the man. "I'll skin you alive——"

"You're not in much of a position to skin anybody," interrupted Dick contemptuously. "We'll give you just ten seconds to decide.

(Continued on page 42.)

WAR THRILLS!**SONS OF THE MEN OF MONS!**

By

ROGER FOWEY**HOW ENGLAND WAS INVADED.**

When Germany declares her War of Revenge, TOM LEE, JACK BENNETT and BUSTER KIRK, Fourth-Formers at Cliff House School, fall right into the thick of the attempted German invasion, which, at that point, is being directed by wireless by a German named STUTZ—who poses as a French master at the school. The chums acquit themselves well in the battle of Denge Village—a place between Folkestone and Hastings—and are commended by Brigadier Gordon, who sends them with some papers they have taken from Stutz to Lord Marlow,

the commander of the Southern Army at Whitehall. They arrive in the midst of an air raid in which the Germans destroy all the bridges over the Thames. From the papers, Lord Marlow learns of a secret German fort at Chilles Quarry, near Hastingleigh, from which the enemy hope to cover their advance up the Wye Valley, to link up with troops who are attacking Canterbury. The General gives the chums a despatch to Colonel Dunton in that area. A small armoured car is handed over to the trio, in which they are to travel to Hastingleigh.

(Now get busy on this week's thrills!)

London after the Raid!

THE three chums stood gazing at the little armoured car. It was short, low-built and fierce-looking in the light which came from out the doorway behind them. The yellow glow gleamed on the khaki-painted armour plating and on the wicked black barrels of two machine-guns, projecting from either side of the small turret.

Another machine-gun poked forward from the driver's seat at the front, and, through the open door the chums could see stacked belts of ammunition and racks full of hand-bombs.

The heavy wheels were double-tyred, and the tyres carried non-skid chains at front and rear. The little car was all ready for action.

"Looks all right," commented Jack.

"Hope they've padded some o' the sharp corners inside," grunted Buster. "It was a bit rotten gettin' knocked about inside that tank, when we—"

"This'll be different," said Tom. "It won't be so hot, for one thing, and there's little bucket-seats for us—see 'em?"

While he and Buster were investigating the interior, Jack turned as an orderly hurried out from the door behind.

"This chit is from General Marlow!" he said. "He asked me to remind you that you are to start as quickly as possible."

Jack took the chit; it was simply an order bearing his signature which directed that the trio should be passed anywhere on the way south. Jack saw that it might prove useful if they reached any points where the war-bound traffic was excessive.

There was nothing to delay them. The captain, who had handed the little armoured car over to them, made certain that the fuel and oil tanks were filled to the brim, then Jack and the others climbed aboard.

The controls were exactly the same as any other car, and Jack saw at a glance that he would have no difficulty in handling the machine. He opened up all the observation ports, while Buster and Tom settled themselves in the bucket-seats behind their machine-guns—powerful little Vickers belt-fed guns that were simple to handle and easy to understand.

"All right?" called Jack, as he settled in his seat.

"Fine!" answered Tom.

"Can we have the lights on inside?" asked Buster.

"You don't need them—swing open the top of the turret!" called the captain. "That's the idea! Off you go—good luck!"

Jack trod on the engine-starter switch, and the engine roared willingly; a moment later and they were swinging round, heading for the exit from the Horse Guards Parade to Whitehall.

The mounted sentries on the gate had been replaced by men in khaki, and the car swept through, then turned up towards Trafalgar Square. It was less than a couple of hours since the enemy had made their giant air-raid on the capital, and the results of the raid were only too plainly visible.

The armoured car had to fall in with the rest of the traffic and make a circuit of Trafalgar Square to reach the Strand. They saw that a bomb had ripped a mighty hole in the paving squarely against the foot of Nelson's column; one of the lions had a leg and part of his head missing, while two omnibuses lay on their sides in the roadway, a small and curious crowd watching the efforts of a squad of soldiers to clear away the debris of the wrecked vehicles.

On the far side of the square, by the National Gallery, Jack had to check to give way to a regiment of the Sherwood Foresters as they marched past—probably they had detrained at Marylebone and were making for the war area.

They went by with the faint lights of the darkened street glinting on the smooth steel of their rifles and tinting the polished brown of bayonet scabbards. They were all in fighting order, and were marching swiftly, unhampered by their packs and burdened only by their weapons and ammunition.

Crowds lined the pavements as they went, and, here and there, someone started a cheer; but for the most, the Foresters went by in grim silence—it was no time for cheering with the invader hammering almost at the gates of London.

Jack accelerated as the last man passed him, and in a little while they were speeding smoothly down the Strand—to bring up with a jerk as a yawning crater showed near Wellington Street. As he skirted it, Jack had a momentary glimpse of Waterloo Bridge—twisted girders jutting to the sky, masonry piled at one end and, in the centre, a gaping cavity with small figures in uniform searching the debris for wounded.

By Bush House, a hoarding was blown half across the road, with civilians helping to clear away bomb-shattered woodwork and torn posters; one side of the building beyond it had been shorn away as though some gargantuan knife had cut it—and on the pavement quiet figures lay in a shrouded row, still and dark and silent. A girl was crouched by one of them, sobbing pitcously; bereaved by the horror that had dropped from the sky.

All three of the chums saw that girl. She was young, and a gleam of yellow light lined her dead-white, tear-stained features. She was just one of many who had already suffered at the hands of the invader; yet, somehow, the memory of that weeping figure stuck in the minds of the trio.

When they drove on, skirting yet another bomb crater by the Law Courts, Jack was white, and his face was set. Tom, too, was grim, but Buster's chubby features were full of sympathy for the girl—he knew how she was feeling, because it was at the hands of the Hun that he had lost his young brother.

They passed a giant crowd outside St. Paul's; it seemed that many folk had taken sanctuary in the cathedral during the raid. They had a glimpse of Southwark Bridge wrecked like the rest. As they went on, they saw more wrecked buildings; turnings gave them glimpse of ruins that were blazing fiercely, the lurid flames lighting up the agile, daring figures of London's fire-

fighters, and tinting the silver streak of hose-thrown water to quivering strips of fire.

When Jack headed for London Bridge, he was stopped by a mounted military policeman.

"It's down—the only way across the river is through the Blackwall Tunnel, and if you get across it to-night you'll be lucky! Everything's tryin' to go the same way. I should go down by Eastcheap an' Cable Street."

They tried it, but at the entrance to Eastcheap they were stopped by a cordon of police and soldiery. A building was in flames and nothing could pass—but they let the armoured car through when Jack produced General Marlow's chit.

A mighty office building was sending gigantic flames towards the sky, and the wall on the street side crashed down in a smother of sparks and red-hot debris just after the chums had won clear of the fire engines and the toiling firemen.

After that, they had a clear run to Stepney, and here the road seemed to be blocked stiff with traffic—infantry-men, cavalry, lorries, cars, machine-gun limbers and artillery. Reinforcements headed south, but cut off from succouring their comrades by the enemy's cunning destruction of the Thames bridges.

Once again the magic pass came into action, and a military policeman edged the car past the waiting traffic. Finally they reached the mouth of the tunnel, and joined the great stream of traffic that was pouring into it.

Ready for the Fight!

THE tunnel was clangorous with the roar and clatter of vehicles and the thud of marching men. The air was acrid from the fumes of thousands of motor-exhausts, while, here and there, cavalry men fought for control of horses scared by the din.

It was a relief finally to emerge into the cool night air; in a little while they won clear of the chokage of troops, and Jack sent their car humming towards the arterial road which began beyond Eltham.

They reached it—in company with fast lorries laden with troops, charabancs, omnibuses, taxicabs, private cars—anything which could carry men had been pressed into service, and soldiers were being raced south as fast as wheels could bear them. Dawn would find a fierce battle waging from the Kentish Weald to the North Downs—and with every hour that passed, it seemed that the enemy was pouring fresh troops into the country.

Flotillas of submarines and fleets of swift war vessels were holding the Navy in check, while false landings had so split up Britain's defence that it was hard to judge where the enemy was feinting and where he meant to establish himself.

The armoured car was fast. Jack switched on the single headlight—it was really a searchlight with a steel cover which could be brought into use in battle—and the broad beam cut a swathe of white through the darkness. On the broad road, Jack opened wide the throttle, and soon the car was speeding along at little less than fifty miles an hour, passing slower troop-carrying vehicles, but itself being passed by furiously-driven Headquarters' cars.

The miles hummed beneath the threshing wheels, but dawn was already beginning to brush the eastern sky with grey when Jack picked a sign from the darkness ahead; the sign was lit by arcs: ASHFORD-BOUND TROOPS THIS WAY.

The road indicated was a narrow, one-way by-pass, and Jack slowed with the rest to enter it. At the mouth he saw a group of figures in familiar uniforms, handing out hot coffee to passing troops and distributing handfuls of sandwiches.

"Tom—look who's there!" Jack exclaimed.

"Some of our chaps—Remove fellows!" Buster gasped, while Tom heaved himself over the edge of the conning tower and yelled:

"Hi—Western! Clegg! What-ho Smiler! Slow up, Jack—pull into the side!"

Jack obeyed. Ten seconds later and a dozen Removites were clustering round the car, eyes wide in amazement as they recognised the trio. They all wore cadets uniform—which had been salvaged. The chums learned, by the sergeant-instructor when the boys were ordered from the school.

"Where'd you get this, Jack?" Smiler Glee wanted to know as he saw the armoured car. "What have you been up to? Where—"

"We've been right in the thick of it!" Tom told them. "Got in an old tank at Denge and had a corking time. Then we were left behind after the Germans captured the village—and now we're going to Hastingleigh to try and blow up a fort, or something, before the enemy capture it!"

"Good! Then I'm coming with you!" exclaimed Smiler. "Any room inside, Buster? My hat, you've got machine-guns and—bombs, eh? Gosh, you chaps do things in style! What say we give 'em a hand, fellows?"

"Can't take you chaps!" Tom informed them. "There isn't room, and this might be dangerous! We've got a—"

"That's the idea!" exclaimed Smiler scornfully. "Hog everything! We chaps got cut off from the others; we don't know where the rest are, so you might as well let us come with you!"

Tom glanced at Jack. Both realised that they might find their Form-mates useful; at the same time, the venture might come to nothing. The two had already experienced how gruelling was actual war but they both knew that, if it did devolve upon themselves to wreck the fort at Chillen Quarry, then it was not something they could leave to chance. These fellows might be absolutely invaluable—and, in any case, the Cliff House boys settled the problem for the chums.

Smiler Glee clambered aboard, and the rest piled in with him. Some stood on the heavy mud-guards, others found positions on the metal running-boards; one or two managed to get inside the machine, then, with one voice, they yelled to Jack to go ahead.

He did, and as he went Tom and Buster explained to the rest exactly what they were trying to do. On through the darkness the armoured car ran, and it was full dawn by the time they reached Charing. Grey mist wreathed from the valleys to the west as, guided by the Ordnance sheet they had brought, Jack headed the car for the little village of Westwell.

They reached it in a matter of minutes, and Jack slowed as they ran between the buildings. The early sunshine was picking tints on the roofs of the cottages, and it limned clearly the Red-Cross flags which dotted the village.

"They've turned it into a clearing station for wounded!" exclaimed Tom, in Jack's ear. "Look at the ambulances! My hat, look at the way they're coming in!"

Half a dozen roads converged on Westwell, and on each of them showed ambulances. Across the fields and the footpaths, from out the wood down the hill, lone figures came haltingly; here and there little groups moved slowly—all drawn to the Red-Cross flag that fluttered lazily in the breeze of the waking day.

"Walking wounded," muttered Buster. "Look at those chaps over there!"

A number of men were standing or sitting about outside the village hall—awaiting attention. The wide-eyed boys hanging on round the armoured car saw field-service bandages that were stained and smirched; they saw brown-faced

men who were smiling through their pain. Busy Red-Cross men were tending quiet figures on stretchers, with less hurt men holding bandages and water for them—helping before their own wounds were tended.

As the chums rode forward, they passed a continuous stream of wounded men hobbling back from the firing line, while a line of ambulances made slow progress towards the Maidstone road.

Just as they got through the village, they made out the buildings of Ashford then, away to the right, they heard a series of crashes that shattered through the staccato rattle of distant rifle-fire.

"Bombing the station—that's Hothwell!" somebody said. "Look at the soldiers coming out of the trains."

The little station was the centre of a dozen troop trains, and from each train khaki figures were pouring, pausing to shoot up into the sky, where three enemy machines wheeled and soared while they dropped their bombs.

One bomb caught the station fairly, and it went up in a gout of flame-shot, yellow smoke, with black debris erupting from the edges of the mass—then the scene was wiped out for the chums by a curve of the road as Jack headed the car down the highway to Kennington.

Just as they reached it, they saw a long column of motor-lorries streak up the broader road from Ashford. They thundered into Kennington on the railway side, and stopped in the heart of lifting dust. By the time that the dust had died the chums saw that troops were leaping from the lorries and were walking steadily forward down the slope to the valley, moving in open order. The empty lorries raced on.

Jack brought the armoured car to a stop, and turned to Tom.

"Have a look at the map," he suggested. "Where will those chaps be making for?"

"If they keep on, they're making for Hastingleigh," answered Tom, after he had consulted the sheet. "And Hastingleigh's where we're going. Those men must be reserves," he went on. "I expect they're going out to take up a position, ready to move forward if they're wanted."

Jack nodded.

"I'd better try and find out if Colonel Dunton is still over there," he said. "Let me get out!"

He climbed from the car and went forward. He guessed he would find someone in authority near where the lorries had halted, and his surmise was correct. Three officers were standing outside a white-fronted cottage. There was a table between them, and on it was spread a big map, held down by ornaments filched from the parlour mantelshelf.

"If they get us off the high ground on the other side of the river, it's useless to try and check them," one of them was saying, as Jack came up. "We'll use those men to cover the retreat of the rest, and then make a stand on the high ground by Boughton Lees. They'll have to attack us across the valley, then, and we'll have 'em in a—"

He broke off as Jack came up and saluted.

"Can you tell me where I'll find Colonel Dunton, sir?" he asked.

The officer stared at him; the man was tall and wiry, and his uniform was stained and marred by mud. His left cuff was stiff with blood, and Jack got a glimpse of a bandage about the wrist.

"Dunton—what d'you want Dunton for, lad?"

"A despatch for him from Lord Marlow, sir!"

The officer grunted.

"Dunton and his headquarters were surrounded at Brabourne five miles from Hastingleigh, last night," he said slowly. "We tried to get at them, but we couldn't. Colonel Dunton died

fighting at two o'clock this morning, lad. Is there anything I can do for you?"

Jack did not answer for a moment. He had the despatch for the colonel, but he could not deliver it. He had been told that, if the colonel was not available, he was to act on his own initiative.

"Thank you, sir—there's one thing. Do you know if we still hold Chillen Quarry, by Hastingleigh?"

"I don't," said the other bluntly. "If we do—we shan't be holding it a couple of hours from now! The Hun is driving up on a parallel with the valley—and he's got us where we're weakest!"

"Thank you, sir!" Jack saluted again, spun on his heel and returned to the armoured car. He stared when he saw that all the fellows had disappeared, but they came back on the run just as he reached the machine. They were all armed with rifles now, and each one was wearing regulation fighting kit.

"Got 'em off a stack round the corner," Smiler Glee informed Jack. "They're stuff they've taken off the wounded. What next, Jack?"

Jack stood a moment, staring down the road and across the valley to the slopes on the far side. To his ears came the crack of firing and he could see, on the horizon, black-edged shell-bursts. Across the River Stour, engineers were throwing hastily-built footbridges.

"Look here, you chaps," he said at last. "Tom's told you what we're out to do—and it looks as though the Germans will have got the Quarry before we reach there. If they have, we—"

"We'll jolly well get it back!" Smiler Glee cut in. "I'm game, and so are the rest. Get on with the job, Jack!" He grinned in his cheery way, then added seriously. "All right, old man, we know all you want to say—you can count on us. That's why we went and got these rifles!"

Jack said nothing more. He climbed into the armoured car again, dropped into the driving seat, and sent the machine scudding down the road to Hinxhill, from which he could turn off to Hastingleigh and be ready to face whatever fate awaited them there.

The Forlorn Hope!

THE road ahead seemed oddly quiet. Once they passed a couple of wounded gunners, who cheered them on. Jack slowed for the bridge over the river, then went forward at a crawl into the village of Hinxhill.

There was no one about. One or two of the cottages bore the marks of shell-fire. Everything was strangely silent until they neared the cross-roads. They were a hundred yards from them when Jack sighted moving shapes on the road ahead. Above the roar of the engine, he heard Smiler Glee yell:

"Germans—look!"

"Sit tight—hang on, you chaps!" Tom yelled.

"Let 'em have it, Buster! Keep going, Jack!"

The Huns were spread out across the road—a sort of patrol who quested each building and each turning as they came to it. Queer, drab, strange figures they looked in that sun-lit English village, with their squat helmets and dust-covered equipment. They halted when they saw the car; at one side, three men with a machine-gun snapped open the tripod and dropped prone as they shaped to bring the weapon into action.

Jack opened the throttle of the car, and, as the machine surged forward, Tom's gun barked its fierce war-song. Bullets snapped a cloud of dust from the front of the three German gunners—then Buster brought his weapon into action.

The patrol melted; some dropped to the dust,

others leaped for the shelter of the houses—and the German machine-gun never loosed a round! In a cloud of dust, with both her guns blazing madly, with boys clinging on like grim death to the steel sides, the armoured car skidded the corner on the road to Hastingleigh—and Jack found himself plunging straight at another German patrol!

There were three horsemen and a score of soldiery. Jack had a glimpse of rearing horses and scattering men. Then they were through and roaring up the hillside on the road to Hastingleigh, while Buster swung his gun round in the turret and brought it to bear on the road behind. His fount of bullets kept the Huns down, and the car was out of sight before any of them could bring their weapons to bear.

"Anybody hurt?" Jack yelled over his shoulder, and Tom took swift stock.

"Chippy Weston's lost his cap!" he announced.

"You can't go back for it, Chippy—this is a non-stop 'bus!" Buster told him.

Jack did not slow the pace of the car. He knew that if they were meeting German patrols, then the British line must have been broken somewhere, and the roar of the car drowned for him all sound of the fighting that was going on just ahead.

It was when Jack came within sight of where the road branched direct to Hastingleigh that he trod with all his strength on the broad brake-pedal. There were Germans on that road—not one, but hundreds of them. He picked out the grey figures—running and dropping to fire. While, between them and the village, Britishers were retreating steadily.

It was useless to try and get through the Germans. He might have done it had he been able to close the car; but with fellows hanging on it, he could not. The road went straight on to Brook; Jack remembered from the map that a narrow track ran up from there to the quarries. They might yet do it!

The car sped past the branch road. Soldiers lining a ditch gave it a cheer as they went, then turned to use their weapons on the enemy as they bore down anew.

The chums sped on, crashed through Brook, and saw British and the enemy fighting hand to hand on a hill-crest just outside the village; jerkily-moving figures silhouetted against the skyline, with the sun glittering on naked steel.

Jack sighted the Quarry—a bare gash just below the summit of the hill. British were retreating from the village, running back to where support troops were covering them from the far side of the road. Jack swung off on to the rough track to the quarry.

The entrance showed plain and clear. It lay below the crown of the hill, and over the summit of the rise, he saw Germans hastening.

They were coming at the double, three small parties of them; all obviously making for the quarry.

The chums were not yet too late!

The car leaped over the rough road, lurching and bumping, while Jack yelled to Tom:

"Tell the fellows—jump off—when we—stop! Try to—stop these—Germans getting—to the quarry!"

Tom shouted Jack's instructions, and ten seconds later the armoured car shot through the quarry entrance and braked to a halt—to the blank surprise of half a dozen Germans, who had just entered it from the other side.

They lifted their rifles, and their weapons cracked as the machine stopped. It was the ready Buster who settled them—one mad burst from his gun, and the grey-clad invaders were blotted out.

The Cliff House boys needed no telling what to do. They jumped down, and went racing to the

side of the quarry from which the Germans were approaching, clambering up a rough pathway which led to the top, where they dropped into what appeared to be a natural trench.

As they went, Tom wrenched his machine-gun round, and found that he could just command the route by which the enemy was approaching. The slewing muzzle of his weapon was spurring fire as Jack and Buster clambered from the car.

"My Gosh! Look at that!" gasped Buster. "Look at those guns!"

Sheltered by the cliff, formed by the quarry workings, had been a number of wooden sheds—they were all broken down. Their debris had been cleared from giant shapes shrouded in canvas—guns which commanded the Wye Valley and the line of the German advance.

They stood on concrete emplacements, and in front of them were embrasures designed to house smaller weapons which, no doubt, were even then being rushed forward from the enemy landing places on the coast.

From that quarry, six hundred feet above sea level, the Germans could command the valley and the heights on the far side all the way from Ashford up to Chilham—point-blank range! It was the highest point for miles around—the corner-stone of the German advance in this sector!

"We can't hold this—but we've got to until we can put those guns out of action or something!" Jack gasped. "It's a— My hat, look at the way they're coming over the top of the hill!"

The enemy was coming forward in a wave now—piling up under the fire of the boys and the machine-guns in the armoured car. Jack took swift stock of the situation, then he spoke quickly:

"Buster—get on to that other gun. I'll try and signal up some of those fellows who're retreating from Brook Village. If we can get them here we can do something!"

He leaped away as he spoke, making for the entrance to the quarry. He stopped a second, to snatch up a square-shaped piece of board, part of one of the wrecked sheds, and painted white. He reached the gateway and stopped there in the shelter of a post, then waved the white side of his board so that it showed down the slope. He signalled in the quick, spasmodic jerks of the Morse code:

S—O—S S—O—S S—O—S

He hoped that there would be a signaller somewhere down there—someone who would read the message. Nothing happened; he signalled once again:

S—O—S S—O—S S—O—S S—O—

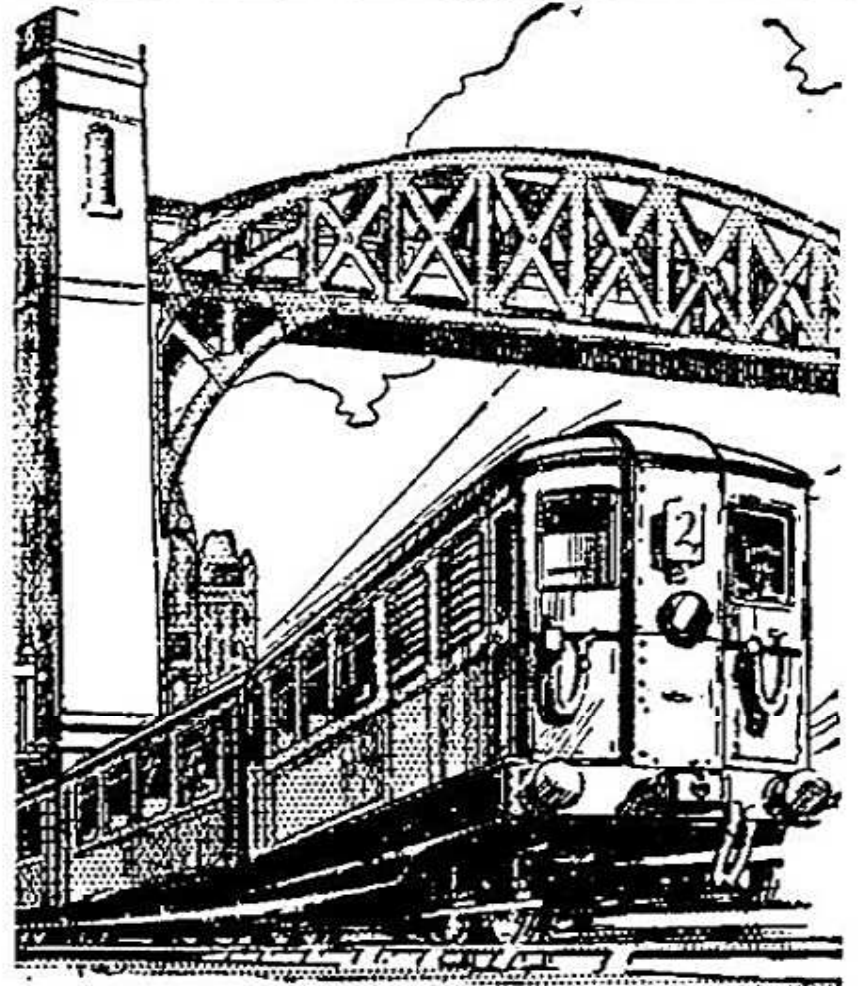
He got a glimpse of fluttering white from out the green of a hedge—the white of a handkerchief being waved to and fro. That was enough for Jack, someone down there could read the message he was sending. His board wagged again:

E—N—E—M—Y G—U—N—S H—E—R—E.
H—Q. O—R—D—E—R—S C—E—R—T—A—I—N
D—E—S—T—R—U—C—T—I—O—N. N—E—E—D
H—E—L—P T—O H—O—L—D O—U—T F—O—R
H—A—L—F H—O—U—R.

He waited. The handkerchief fluttered in the hedge:

H—A—N—G O—N.

(Continued on next page.)



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SONS OF THE MEN OF MONS!



By
ROGER FOWEY.

(Continued from previous page.)

With the last slash of the white against the green, Jack saw a figure shoot up—an officer. He stood with his hands to his mouth, yelling. For nearly half a minute he stood there, and with every shout that he gave, figures seemed to appear—to halt on their way down the slope. The officer waved the sword that he held in one hand, slashing it up towards the quarry, then he began to run up the slope, waving the steely blade to the men around and behind him.

They followed him, doubled-up khaki-figures that trotted steadily in his wake. They appeared from all sorts of places, leaping up and following the rest, echoing the officer's rallying-cry.

He was fifty yards in front of the foremost man when he reached Jack. He was quite a young fellow, and he smiled as he looked round at his men.

"Here they come—good lads! I knew I could count on 'em. They're all dog-tired and— But what's the trouble here? Who are— Phew!"

He whistled softly, as he glimpsed the shrouded shapes on the far side of the quarry. One glance round gave him the strength of the position, and the importance of it to the Germans.

The men the officer had rallied came in, and he sent them to join the Remove boys in the trench around the quarry. Jack told him swiftly of how he came to be there and what he had to do.

"We'll soon fix 'em!" the officer told him. "Let's look round while my chaps hold 'em off! Got an armoured car, eh? Those two machine-guns are worth a bit just now—good lads! Those Germans up there won't attack for a bit; they'll want to get the strength of us first."

The officer was wrong. Even as he spoke, the enemy attacked. They came on three sides, rising out of the coarse grass-land and charging down on the quarry—and as they did so, a machine-gun got into action to the left of where Jack and the officer were standing.

It was a German machine-gun, with a crew of four. They had lain hidden, and now they were getting the Britishers in the back.

Jack saw the quivering, bulky muzzle of the weapon, then he leaped forward.

"Take this!" he heard the officer say, and felt the butt of a revolver thrust into his hand, while the officer himself shot forward, armed only with his sword.

He was long-legged and fast on his feet. He was ten yards from the machine-gun when its crew saw the two coming at them. Jack saw one of the men open his mouth in a shout, then the muzzle of the weapon began to slide round to bear on himself and his companion.

Jack lifted his revolver. Almost blindly, he pressed the trigger—once, twice—a third time! The firing of the gun ceased as one of his bullets took effect—then the officer was at them, with his sword stabbing mercilessly.

Jack fired again as one of the Germans heaved to his feet, with his hands wrapped about the

muzzle of a rifle. He tried to bring the clubbed weapon down on the officer's head—but Jack got the man first.

The man spun on his heels and dropped, as Jack fired. The officer had made a clean job of one of the others; the fellow who had been firing the gun had fallen to the first shots from Jack's weapon, and the fourth man went running like a hare down the slope.

"Never mind him—let him go!" yelled the officer. "I know how to use one of these guns—we'll give 'em a taste of their own medicine." This belt's empty—give me the end of another out of that box—right! Stand by!"

With a snapping roar, the captured gun got into action, now enflaming the Germans who were attacking on the left, just at the point where the weak defence was weakest. The concentrated fire withered the attack on that side. At the head of the quarry, the Remove lads might have been veterans by the way they were using their weapons, and every second saw them stiffened by the reinforcements that were pouring in, in response to the officer's rallying call.

There is nothing so deadly as British rifle-fire. Backed by the two guns in the armoured car, the enemy attack was held. The grey forms dropped back to earth as suddenly as they had appeared. "Held 'em—good!" The young officer grinned cheerily, as he slipped from behind the gun. He gazed round the quarry once again, then left the machine gun and ran with Jack to the shrouded shapes under the low cliff.

"Guns all right—what a size! We'll have to smash these up before they drive us out of here, lad! Listen, you scout round the place and see what you can find—see if there's a magazine, we might be able to blow it up! I'll go and position our defences—I'll get those machine-guns out of your car and shove them up in the trench for cross fire, for a start. After that, we'll tackle these enemy guns!"

He went off on the run, jumping over the debris scattered about the great emplacements of the big guns. As he went, he shouted to men who were still straggling into the quarry, sending them to the side which he and Jack had defended with the captured gun. The men went on the run, dropping to the shallow trench which seemed to encircle the place.

But the line they formed was thin. It seemed impossible that they could withstand another attack. More and more Germans were piling over the brow of the hill, sweeping round to engulf the quarry—to cut off all possibility of retreat for the defenders.

Jack saw their movements, watched for a few seconds, then started off to examine the quarry. As he did so, there came the shaking roar of an aeroplane overhead. He looked up, to see a German machine, flying low. Clearly he could discern the head of the observer as he peered over the side.

Something seemed to shift beneath the machine—then it swooped away.

As it went Jack saw something dropping down towards him. It was a bomb!

He glimpsed it in the moment that it was carried under the impetus of the machine—just before it straightened and began to drop sheer.

He saw the spreading fins and the rounded nose, red-tinted as the sun caught it.

Then the bomb was dropping sheer towards him!

(All but surrounded—and now attacked from the air! What chance of success has the little band of Britishers? Read all about the fight at the quarry, next Wednesday—and tell your chums about this thrilling war story.)

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(Continued from page 34.)

Either you promise to pay that money, or we'll go through your pockets."

The man was beaten.

"Curse you!" he panted. "I'll pay!"

They allowed him to get up. He swayed giddily, and put a hand to his head. He seemed on the point of collapse. Then, abruptly, he made a leap for freedom—obviously intending to run for it.

But both Dick Hamilton and Handforth had suspected this move.

A foot shot out, and Mr. Bud Mason went sprawling headfirst to the pavement. And this time the juniors gave him no choice. They held him down, and his wallet was wrenched out of his breast pocket. It was bulging with notes.

In full view of the man, Dick Hamilton extracted ten pounds, and then closed the wallet up, and put it back. Again he counted the notes in front of Mason's eyes.

"Now you can go," he said curtly. "And I hope this will be a lesson to you to play the game in future. A few more of these scraps, and you might even begin to appreciate that it's wiser to be honest."

Mason struggled to his feet, nearly foaming.

"Police!" he gasped. "I've been robbed!"

"You—you lying hound!" roared Handforth furiously. "You only paid a debt—and you'd better get off while you're safe. Come on, you chaps, grab him again, and give him a—"

But Mr. Mason thought it very unwise to wait. With a gasp of alarm, he took to his heels, and ran for his life. The juniors made no attempt to follow. They stood there watching, grim and breathless from their exertions.

"There's your money, Fully," said Dick quietly.

But Fullwood backed away.

"It's not mine!" he muttered. "And this isn't mine, either," he added, pulling out the ten pounds that he and Handforth had made in the fair. "There's—there's the twenty that I stole of Clive's—"

"You didn't steal it!" interrupted Clive uncomfortably.

"I gambled it—I lost it," said Fullwood. "I—I was afraid to meet any of you chaps again. But it's better now that the money's paid. I've had my lesson—and I'm—"

"That's all right, old man," said Dick Hamilton softly. "We all understand—and we know that this puts everything on a proper footing. The ten pounds you earned may be all right, but I'm not so sure about this other money. Fullwood wants us to take it, you chaps," added Dick. "I suggest that we accept the ten, but this money of Mason's strikes me as being pretty awful. Let's send it to the Cottage Hospital."

"By Jove, that's a good idea!" agreed De Valerie, nodding.

And the others readily complied. It was a good solution to the problem. After what had happened, they didn't feel like taking that money. But there was no reason why the Cottage Hospital shouldn't benefit.

And so they all went back to St. Frank's. And everybody but Fullwood was feeling relieved. This, surely, would be the end of all the trouble. Ralph Leslie Fullwood, too, felt that that old matter was wiped out. He had obtained that money, and the fellows were ready—and eager—to forget everything.

But what would be the cost of this night's work?

That was the thought which tortured the unhappy junior now. The police had seen him in that booth—and perhaps the Head would get to know! And in spite of Dick Hamilton's assurance that there would be no expulsion, Fullwood was by no means so confident. The fear was over him that St. Frank's would soon know him no more.

He had got out of one trouble, only, it seemed, to be faced with worse!

THE END.

(In next week's rollicking story, "UNCLE HANDFORTH!" Handy will keep you laughing throughout. It is one of the best yarns of the Honour series. Don't miss it—order your copy in advance!)

THE ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE APPLICATION FORM.

Owing to the heavy demands on space, the Chief Officer regrets that he is unable to publish the League Form this week. He hopes, however, to resume this feature at the earliest opportunity.

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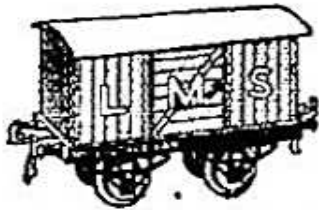


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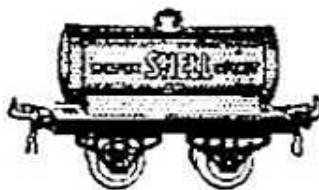
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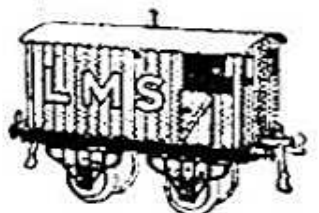
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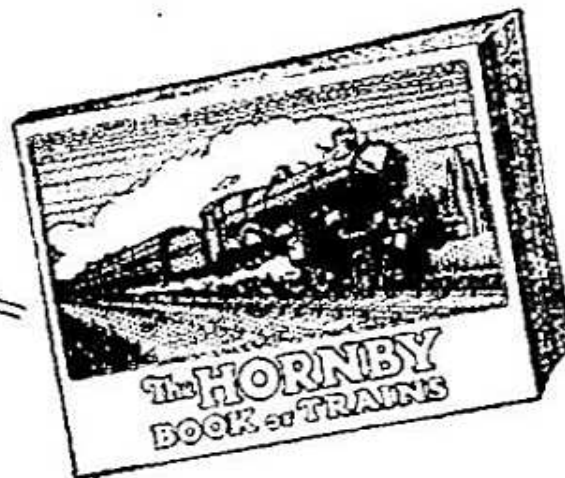


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