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HANDY CURES

A powerful story of school life, featuring the Boys of St. Frank's and the Mystery Funk.

THE COWARD!

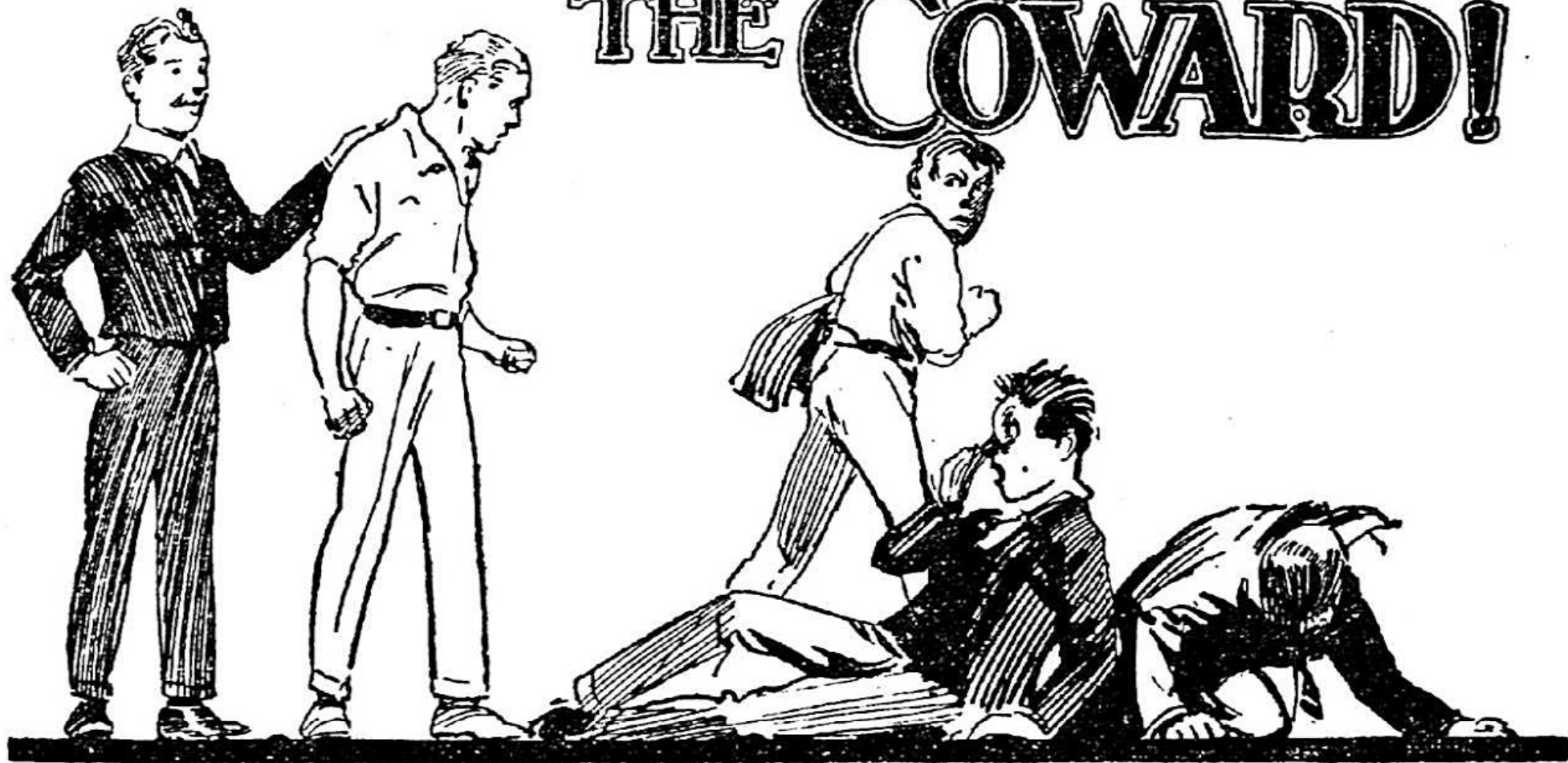
New Series No. 54.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

May 14th, 1927.



Handforth gave a roar as the mysterious shape slunk away into the darkness and he dashed blindly in pursuit—to crash full tilt into a tree. His forehead received a tremendous crack, and he reeled back, half dazed. And all the time Harry Gresham lay upon the ground terrified.

THE TRIUMPH OF THE "MYSTERY FUNK"!**HANDY CURES
THE COWARD!**

By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

A rousing complete story, introducing the Boys of St. Frank's and Harry Gresham, the funk of the school!

CHAPTER 1.

THE SAME OLD GRESHAM!

"OUT of the way, funk!" Harry Gresham, of the Remove at St. Frank's suddenly received a shove from the rear, and he went sprawling headlong down the Ancient House steps. He arrived in a disorderly heap on the gravel.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Hubbard cackled loudly. Seeing Harry leaning thoughtfully in the doorway, he had thought it rather good sport to barge him outside on his neck. It was just one of those little habits which many of the juniors had lately got into. Annoying Harry Gresham had become a favourite sport.

The Funk of Frank's was not treated in the same way as any other junior. If Teddy Long was biffed over, he would howl and kick up such a din that interfering with

him was risky. But Harry Gresham always took these insults quietly—meekly. The juniors knew that he hadn't the courage to retaliate—and, tragically enough, Harry knew this, too. He invariably walked quietly away, an object of scorn.

"Come up here, and I'll do it again!" grinned Hubbard.

He wasn't a valiant junior, really. If it had come to a fight with a determined fellow, Hubbard would have crumpled up. But even the weakest felt that they could do just as they liked with Harry Gresham.

It was nearly tea-time, and the dull, close May afternoon was giving indications that there might be some rain in the evening. A good many fellows were taking advantage of the present dryness to practise at the nets on Little Side.

But there was no practice at the nets to Harry Gresham.

And this in itself was an anomaly

Harry's father was the famous Hampshire and England amateur, Sir Stewart Gresham—known throughout the cricketing world as "Hat Trick" Gresham.

Harry was a worthy son of his skilful father, for he was extraordinarily keen on cricket, and he was a player of outstanding ability. But owing to his unfortunate displays of cowardice, he had never been allowed to play in any important match. The prejudice against him was too strong. The juniors didn't want a funk in the eleven.

Harry picked himself up while Hubbard, looking on from the top of the steps, grinned. Nobody else seemed to be about. Harry's face had turned a dull, heavy crimson. The veins stood out in his neck, and on his forehead.

"I'll not stand it!" he muttered fiercely.

He had said that to himself before, but he had always failed to gather up the necessary courage to retaliate. Sometimes he would be tripped, sometimes pushed over from behind deliberately—as in this particular instance with Hubbard—and occasionally he would be ragged by a whole crowd.

The juniors had become so used to the game that it was getting rather stale, and only isolated instances of such persecution would occur. Harry had thought himself free from it, and his blood rose to fever pitch at Hubbard's uncalled-for action.

Getting to his feet, he found that he was quivering with rage. He had no feeling of fear now. It was usual for his courage to desert him at the final moment. He could be very brave until the actual crisis came. Then he always backed out. Hubbard knew this, and he only grinned when Harry Gresham came running up the steps.

"You did that on purpose!" shouted Harry thickly.

"Of course I did," said Hubbard.

"Put up your hands!"

"Oh, don't be funny!" said Hubbard contemptuously. "I wanted to have a look at the East House, and you were in my light. I don't allow funks to get in my light."

"I'm going to knock you down!" said Harry quivering. "I don't hit people from the back, and take them unawares, so I'll give you a chance to put your hands up!"

"You funny insect!" said Hubbard scornfully.

"If you don't put 'em up, I'll smash you!" panted Harry passionately.

"Yah!" sneered Hubbard. "You couldn't smash an empty egg-shell!"

Crash!

Hubbard received the surprise of his young life. He wasn't a particularly brilliant youth, and he had not observed the obvious danger signals. For once, Harry Gresham was in a reckless mood. He knew Hubbard for what he was, and he slashed out before he realised the actual daring of his procedure. Never before had this new fellow hit out,

And the honour of receiving Harry's first decisive blow was Hubbard's. But Hubbard

didn't seem to think a great deal of it. That punch was a terrific swipe, and it had all the weight of Harry's shoulder behind it.

Hubbard reeled back, howling wildly. He sagged against the wall of the lobby, drooped precariously, and then slid to the floor like a pricked balloon.

Harry stood in the doorway, aglow with a new exhilaration. He had hit back! He had conquered his fear for once—and he had punished his tormentor as he deserved!

"Hi! Quick, somebody!" howled Hubbard, staggering to his feet. "You—you rotter! You punched me!"

Harry nodded, perfectly cool.

"And I'll punch you again, you cad, if you try any more of those dirty tricks!" he said grimly.

"My only hat!" gasped Hubbard. "What's come over the chap?"

At that moment Owen major and Doyle, of the West House, strolled in. They paused in the doorway, and regarded the little scene in amazement. Hubbard's nose was already beginning to flow red.

"Good!" he gasped. "Lend a hand, you chaps! This—this beastly funk has had the nerve to slosh me in the face!"

"Funk, eh?" said Doyle, staring. "He seems to be changing his character!"

"Rats!" yelled Hubbard. "It was a beastly, cowardly attack! I wasn't prepared for it!"

"That's a lie!" snapped Gresham. "I warned you!"

"He didn't!" howled Hubbard. "Come on—let's smash him!"

Owen major and Doyle were not averse to a little harmless amusement. They held Harry Gresham in the same contempt as most of the other juniors. And it was unbelievable to them that he could have knocked Hubbard down by a fair blow. His record was such that the very idea of it was inconceivable.

"Right-ho!" grinned Owen major. "We'll lend a hand!"

The three of them rushed at Harry as one. There was something ugly and determined in their onslaught. And something seemed to go wrong with Harry at the last moment. As of old, his nerve deserted him, and—he bolted!

CHAPTER 2.

SOMETHING WRONG WITH DUNCAN.



AH! Coward!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Gresham, pulling up short in the Remove passage, felt his ears burning like fire as he listened to those jeering shouts. His face was burning, too, and he was in a turmoil within. And he had meant to show them that he was made of something better than jelly, after all! What a frost! What a pitiful fiasco!

But Harry was unjust to himself. He had, at least, taken the first big step. He had knocked Hubbard down—and would probably have knocked Hubbard down again if the fellow had come for him single-handed. But three at once had been too much for Harry's nerve.

He went into Study J, and found Alec Duncan, the New Zealand junior, sitting rather listlessly in the easy-chair. Duncan was Harry's study-mate, and a bond of friendship had sprung up between these two. Duncan was more patient than the other fellows, and he had grown to like this new boy. There was something very taking about Harry Gresham. He was a fine-looking youngster, with curly hair, frank eyes, and a cheery, open face. Only his cowardice marred him. But for that one failing he was an all-round good sort.

"I've made a mess of things again, Alec," muttered Harry, as he perched himself dejectedly on the corner of the table.

"What's happened now?" asked Duncan, looking up heavily.

"Why, that rotter, Hubbard, shoved me in the back as I was leaning against a doorway," said Harry. "He pitched me—Anything wrong, Alec?" he added abruptly, looking at Duncan closely.

"Headache," said Alec. "It's nothing. A cup of tea will work wonders, I expect. But what's that you were saying about Hubbard? He pitched you down the steps, did he?"

"Yes, the cad!" snapped Harry. "Took me from behind."

"And what did you do—smash him on the nose?"

Harry Gresham nodded.

"Yes," he replied. "That's just what I did do."

"You did do?" yelled Duncan. "Good man! By Jove, Harry, that's the stuff to give 'em!"

"But wait a minute," growled Harry. "A couple of West House chaps came in, and when they all rushed at me I lost my nerve again, and bolted. It's no good—I shall never be any better!"

Duncan gave a faint grin.

"It seems to me that you're improving pretty rapidly already," he said with approval. "Can't expect these things all in a minute, you know. I say, I'm awfully pleased to hear this. Just what I've been waiting for. It's the turning-point, old man. There's hope for you yet!"

But Harry was disgusted with himself.

"I wish I could believe it," he muttered. "I'd like to show everybody that— But I say, Alec, you're looking jolly queer, you know," he added concernedly. "There's a rummy colour in your cheeks—"

"Rats!" said Duncan roughly. "I'm all right, except that I feel as though somebody had shoved me through a mangle. I'm aching in every giddy limb for some reason.

I can't make it out. I haven't done any jumping, or straining, or—"

"I think I'd better fetch Mr. Lee," said Harry, staring.

"If you do, I'll never speak to you again!" said Duncan, in alarm. "You howling ass! I don't want to be bunked off into sanny. They shove you in there for the slightest thing!"

Harry came nearer to his chum, and looked closely into his face.

"Alec, you're looking awful," he said earnestly. "Pains all over you, eh? A general feeling of laziness? Yes, by jingo, and your forehead's as hot as fire."

"Well, it's close this evening," blustered Duncan.

"Well, anyway, I'll fetch Hamilton," said Harry.

He went out before Alec Duncan could protest further, and, as it happened, he ran full tilt into Nelson Lee himself. The Housemaster of the Ancient House had been on the point of halting at Study J.

"Is Duncan here?" asked Lee.

"Yes, sir."

The Housemaster nodded, and walked in. Duncan jumped to his feet, and gave Harry a look of reproach and indignation.

"I didn't say a word," exclaimed Harry, in self-defence.

"Mr. Crowell reports to me, Duncan, that you were looking very queer in class this afternoon," said Nelson Lee. "He questioned you about it, but could get no satisfactory reply."

"I—I'm all right, sir!" protested Alec unhappily.

Lee felt his forehead, and gave him a swift examination.

"You'll come with me, Duncan," he said gravely.

"To—to the sanny, sir?" asked Duncan, with a groan.

"Most decidedly—and there you'll remain for three days at least," said the Housemaster. "It's no good protesting, young 'un—you've got a severe touch of influenza. You ought to have reported this much earlier to-day. I think we shall be in time to prevent any serious developments, but you'll have to remain in bed."

"Oh, crumbs!" murmured Duncan bleakly.

He went out, and Harry Gresham felt bleak, too, after he'd been alone for five minutes. He made no attempt to prepare for his tea. He felt depressed. Alec's unexpected illness was a blow, for until this afternoon the New Zealand junior had shown no sign of the 'flu.

A heavy footstep sounded in the corridor, and then the door of Study J burst open, and Edward Oswald Handforth looked in.

"Hallo! Alone?" he asked breezily. "Where's Duncan?"

Harry explained.

"Oh, tough luck," said Handforth. "Carted off to the sanny for three days, by George! That means a week, or I'm a nigger. Once they get you into the sanny

they practically put chains and padlocks on you. So you'll be all alone?"

"Seems like it," said Harry miserably.

"Well, come along and have tea in Study D," said Handforth cordially. "You don't want to potter about here by yourself."

"Thanks—I'd like to come," said Harry gratefully.

"That's all right, you're as welcome as the flowers in May," said Handforth genially.

"What's this I hear about you smashing Hubbard? Did you biff him on the nose?"

"Well, yes——"

"Good man!" said Edward Oswald, clapping Harry on the back in a fatherly way. "Of course, Hubbard's not much of a chap to slosh, but he'll do for a beginning. Go ahead—walk in."

They entered Study D, and found Church and McClure busy with hot scones, tea-cakes and other delicacies.

"Just in time, Handy," said Church. "Eggs are just boiled to a turn, and the tea's been made for five——"

He broke off, and stared at Harry Gresham. McClure was staring, too, and the expressions on the faces of Handforth's chums were not exactly cordial.

An awkward silence fell.



CHAPTER 3.

HANDY THE COMFORTER.

EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH was not a great success when it came to a matter of tact.

He was, in fact, one of the greatest blunderers in the Remove. But his blunderings were generally good-natured, and all St. Frank's knew him to be a fellow with a heart of gold. He could be exasperating, and could be dangerous. But Handy was one of the best.

"What's the matter with you chaps?" he asked, gazing at Church and McClure coldly. "What's the idea of freezing up as soon as I bring Harry Gresham into the study? Haven't you got anything to say to a guest?"

"I—I think I'd better go," said Harry quietly.

"Go!" roared Handforth. "You silly ass, this is my study, and I've invited you to tea. These silly rotters won't bother us."

"Not at all," said Church. "We're only the serfs."

"Serfs?" repeated Handforth.

"What else are we?" demanded Church. "You give us your orders, and we've got to come and make toast, boil eggs, and do everything else. And afterwards you'll coolly go out to cricket again, leaving us to clear up. We're like a couple of galley-slaves."

Handforth frowned.

"You're simply trying to change the subject," he said suspiciously. "You can't put me off like that. You've got a down on Gresham, and I don't like it. If you're

going to act in the same way as all these other idiots I'll clear out of this study, and leave you to fend for yourselves. And then where will you be?"

"In paradise, I should think," said McClure promptly.

"Are you suggesting that you'll be better off without me?" roared Handforth.

"Look here, Handy——"

"I don't want any more of your nerve, Arnold McClure!" bellowed Handforth.

"Just a minute, Harry. I'll show you what I do with these chaps when they get nervy."

"It's all right," said Harry hastily. "I know!"

McClure dodged round the table, and Handforth raced after him. He caught the corner of the table-cloth and dragged the whole contents of the table on to the floor with a fearful crash.

"Look out!" howled Church. "Our crocks!"

"Look at the sardines in the jam-tarts!" hooted McClure.

"And all the toast in the fender!" said Church, in despair. "Oh, you hopeless ass, Handy! Is this what you do when you invite a guest to tea? It's a nice idea to wreck the study!"

Handforth gazed at the debris in full astonishment.

"Who—who did that?" he asked fiercely.

"Oh, cheese it!" growled McClure.

"You'll try and fix this on us now, I suppose? Don't take any notice, Gresham. This sort of thing happens here every day. Half Handy's pocket-money goes on buying new crocks."

"Well, he won't have to spend much this time," said Harry, with a smile. "It's pretty marvellous, but hardly anything seems to be broken."

When the table was prepared again it was found that the damages were nothing more serious than a broken cup, a chipped saucer, and two shattered plates. This was a very light casualty list for Study D.

Tea proceeded somewhat strainedly. Handforth tried to make himself very pleasant, but Harry Gresham did not appreciate it. For Handforth, in his efforts to be pleasant, over-acted the part appallingly. He was not merely cordial, but exaggeratedly effusive.

Church and McClure, on the other hand, were perfectly polite, but decidedly distant. They could not forget that Harry Gresham, in spite of his good qualities, had proved beyond all question that he was a funk. And Church and McClure were rather inclined to be biased. They were excellent chaps, but they had no use for funks.

So the tea was a rather dismal failure, taking it all round.

At the earliest possible moment Harry excused himself, and went back to his own study. On the whole, he rather liked Church and McClure's attitude better than Handforth's. For he had a strong conviction within him that Handforth was only pleasant to him out of a sense of pity. It was like Handforth's generous heart to do anything

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COMING NEXT WEDNESDAY!

in his power to show the new boy a friendly spirit. Unfortunately, Handforth did these things in the wrong way.

In Study D a little argument was proceeding.

"I do all I can to make the chap comfortable, and you fellows thwart me!" Handforth was saying, in a bitter voice. "You're always thwarting me. By George, I've a good mind to biff you! You're nothing but a couple of thwarters!"

"We're not persecuting that chap in any way, and we think it's a low-down trick to taunt him," said Church. "But, at the same time, it's no good saying we're keen on him."

"He's a coward," said McClure. "And that puts him out of the picture. It's a mystery to me, Handy, why the dickens you chum up with the chap. He's the last fellow in the world for you. We always thought you had a partiality for men who could fight!"

Handforth regarded them coldly.

"Gresham can fight," he retorted.

"He hasn't shown many signs of it yet,"

growled Church. "He seems to have spent all his time in practising how to run away!"

"All right—wait!" said Handforth darkly. "That's all I ask you to do—wait. I know a fighter when I see one! And Harry Gresham's going to give you a shock one of these days. I'm taking him under my wing, and I'll soon make the Junior school sit up!"

Handforth was naturally a fellow who loved to be in direct opposition to everybody else. And just because the majority of juniors were down on Harry Gresham, he showered embarrassing attentions upon the new boy. And it was practically impossible for Gresham to rebuff him, for he knew that Handforth was acting in a kindly spirit.

"Well, we don't want to say any more about it," said Handforth, as his chums remained silent. "I suppose you know that Duncan has been carted off to the sanny?"

"Well, we ought to know it," said Church tartly. "You've told us about it three times."

"And that poor chap is left on his own—in Study J, all by himself," continued Handforth. "I've just made up my mind to show

him a real expression of my friendship. The fact is, I'm going to clear out of this study, and go into Study J."

"What?" yelled his chums.

"It's a fact," said Handforth. "You needn't try to dissuade me."

"And—and is that what you call an act of friendship?" asked Church faintly.

"What do you call it?"

"I wouldn't like to say," replied Church. "But, as a random shot, I should call it an act of sheer cruelty. Don't go, Handy! We want you here. Don't desert us, old man!"

"You wouldn't do a thing like that, Handy!" pleaded McClure earnestly.

Handforth regarded these appeals with cold indifference. It never occurred to him that his chums were taking this line on purpose to strengthen his determination. A few days of Study D without Handforth would be like a stroll into Arcadia.

"My mind's made up, and there's an end of it!" he said firmly. "I've decided to comfort Gresham—to comfort him while Duncan is in the sanny."

Church and McClure stared at him.

"To comfort him?" breathed Church faintly.

CHAPTER 4.

HANDFORTH DEFIANT!



CHURCH and McClure wanted to laugh. But, being youths of much wisdom, they refrained from this strategic blunder. The

idea of Edward Oswald Handforth as a comforter struck them as grotesque in the extreme. A wild rhinoceros, straight out of the jungle, would have filled the bill more successfully.

"What a chap you are for ideas, Handy!" gurgled McClure at last. "A comforter, eh? By jingo, Harry Gresham ought to feel himself honoured. It'll be quite a novelty for him to have Study J wrecked twice nightly, with a matinée on Wednesdays and Saturdays!"

Handforth sniffed.

"I don't wreck studies!" he retorted. "Now and again there may be a little breakage, but who causes them? It takes two to make a quarrel, my lads—don't forget that!"

"That may apply with other people—but not with you," said Church. "You could pick a quarrel with a deaf and dumb man who hadn't got any arms! Until now, I was a bit down on Gresham. But now I'm sorry for him."

"So am I, poor chap!" said McClure. "My hat! He's in for something!"

Handforth fairly danced.

"You—you exasperating fatheads!" he roared. "Don't I keep telling you that I'm going to change into his study so that I can comfort him?"

"It's a dotty idea!" said Church. "He won't appreciate you—he'll probably do his best to get rid of you. Take my tip, Handy, and stay here."

That settled it.

"Gimme my books!" said Handforth curtly. "Bring everything along, and shove 'em in Study J. I'll go to Gresham, and tell him the good news."

"You'll probably drive him into the sanny, too," said Mac. "He admits his nerves are a bit weak, and he'll never stand a shock like that."

Handforth strode out, walked into Study J, and calmly saddled himself on Harry Gresham, whether that unfortunate youth wanted him or not. Edward Oswald took it for granted that Gresham would be overjoyed with his company.

"Hallo!" said Harry, looking up. "Here again, then?"

"Yes; I've come to stay," said Handforth.

"To stay?" gasped Harry, changing colour. "But—but—"

"You needn't thank me," interrupted Handforth kindly. "I'm like that, you know. I get these impulses, and act upon them at once. I've come here to share your troubles. Until Duncan comes out of the sanny, I'll stay with you."

"Thanks awfully!" muttered Harry, with a gulp.

He had been feeling rather lonely in the study, but the advent of Handforth was a shock for which he had not bargained. Handforth's personality was tumultuous. He was a thundering good chap, but he was too much like a human earthquake.

"Yes, I've come here to comfort you," said Handforth, rather pleased with that term. "It may be weeks before Duncan comes out of the sanny."

"Weeks?" ejaculated Harry.

"You never know with 'flu," replied Handforth darkly. "For all we know, it may carry the poor chap off within a couple of days. 'Flu sometimes turns into pneumonia, you know. I shouldn't be surprised if you catch the germs by to-morrow."

As a comforter, Handforth was starting very well.

"It's best to be prepared," he continued. "I don't mind telling you, Gresham, that I've taken pity on you—"

"I don't want to be pitied!" said Gresham fiercely.

"Eh? Oh, well, perhaps— H'm! I didn't quite mean that," said Handforth hastily. "You're a touchy bounder, aren't you? Well, what about prep? I'll lend you a hand."

"I—I'd much rather do it alone, thanks," said Harry in a feeble voice.

"Rats! I'm going to help."

"But—but—"

"And if I have any more of your objections, my lad, I'll biff you on the nose!" roared Handforth. "I have enough trouble with Church and McClure, without you start-

ing! I've taken you under my wing—see? And if you don't like it, you'll have to lump it!"

If Harry had been in a happier frame of mind he would have laughed at Edward Oswald's quaint idea of bestowing his friendship. But Harry was feeling rather depressed this evening. Alec Duncan's departure into the sanatorium had been a blow, and Harry had grown to turn to Alec in all his little confidences.

Ever since he had arrived at St. Frank's, Harry Gresham had met with opposition. His fatal weakness had marked him out as a butt for everybody's jeers. A few fellows, such as Nipper, Reggie Pitt, Handforth and Archie Glenthorne were very decent to him. They seemed to understand that he was not a natural funk. There was something behind Harry's strange behaviour, and they were ready to give him the benefit of the doubt. They were waiting, fully confident that their faith in him would be ultimately justified. The rank and file were too hasty to be generous.

It was bad enough for Harry to show flight when any perilous emergency arose. But he had earned the Junior School's most bitter scorn by showing a childish fear of darkness. More than once, indeed, he had been almost in hysterics. Only a few nights back he had cried aloud after midnight, swearing that he had seen a horrible apparition at the window. He had believed this to be a creature of his own imagination, and the other fellows had thought that, too—until Nipper had found the marks of a ladder against the window-sill.

Later, Nipper and a few others had espied a strange, prowling figure, and had almost succeeded in capturing it.

From that night Harry had felt more confidence. For he knew that his imagination was not so strong as he had believed. The lurking figures he had seen at different times were real! For some unaccountable reason some enemy was trying to frighten the life or the sense out of him.

Nipper had questioned him closely. But Harry could throw no light on the extraordinary business. He knew of no soul on earth who would perform such malicious tricks with any possible motives of gain. What, indeed, could be gained by such devilment?

By frightening the unfortunate boy into a state of hysteria, nobody could benefit. For a brief space, Harry half suspected Mr. Hubert Addison of this trickery. But after a short consideration he had realised that Mr. Addison could be dismissed. This man, although of good family, was evidently unscrupulous, for he had been extorting money out of Harry Gresham ever since the latter had arrived at St. Frank's—a kind of petty blackmail. He knew a secret of the Gresham family—a secret which Harry was anxious to keep dark.

And so it was obvious to the junior that Mr. Addison could know nothing of this unknown rascal who had been trying to frighten him. For if Mr. Addison was responsible, it would be akin to killing the goose that laid the golden eggs.

Who, then, was doing it? One of the boys? Forrest, or a fellow of similar vindictive spirit? Nipper hardly thought so, and Harry was just as convinced.

All these things were weighing on his mind. And now Alec Duncan had unwittingly deserted him, Handforth, as a substitute, was a poor exchange.

Prep in Study J was a farce. Harry was anxious to get on with his work, but Handforth persisted in interrupting him. At last, in despair, Harry pleaded a headache—which he really had—and decided to go for a walk in the Triangle. His room was becoming more like Study D every minute, and the prospect alarmed him. He couldn't tell Handforth bluntly that he didn't want him, and he despaired when his broadest hints failed to take root.

He wasn't even allowed to have his walk in the Triangle, for Handforth followed him along the passage, linked his arm in Harry's, and cheerfully marched him into the common room—where a big meeting of the Remove was taking place, concerning a forthcoming paper chase. The West House section of the Remove was strongly represented.

"Here, chuck that, Handy!" shouted Doyle, as Handforth and Gresham came in. "Leave that cad alone!"

"Which cad?" demanded Handforth, flaring up.

"That beastly funk, Gresham!"

"Gresham's my pal!" roared Handforth. "I have changed into Study J, so that I can be near him!"

"Out of evil cometh good," murmured Reggie Pitt. "It's rough luck on Gresham, but I'll bet Church and McClure are dancing a hornpipe of joy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You funny fatheads!" thundered Handforth. "You can stare—you can glare at me! I don't want anything to do with you! In fact, I send you all to Coventry—the whole lot!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The common-room howled. The hostile shouts had given place to a yell of uproarious laughter. Edward Oswald Handforth was nothing if not original. There was something whimsical in his statement that he would send the whole lot of them to Coventry. It was just the sort of topsy-turvy thing that only Handforth could think of.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go on—laugh away!" roared Handforth. "But I mean it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let's go, Handy!" muttered Harry. "I know you mean well, but this isn't very pleasant for me—"

"My son, you don't come into this!" said Handforth gruffly. "I've sent these rotters

to Coventry, and they'll be sorry for themselves before long. I've a good mind to fight the whole gang, one after the other! By George, I'll make a start, anyhow!"

He ripped off his jacket, and the common-room nearly fainted from sheer exhaustion.



CHAPTER 5.

THE SHAPE AT THE WINDOW!

HANDFORTH was in earnest, too.

He advanced into the common-room, with clenched fists and blazing eyes.

"Come on!" he said grimly. "I don't care who starts, but I'm going to take on all of you, one by one!"

"Why one by one?" asked Pitt. "Why not two by two? We'll line up, Handy, in a double file, and you can barge in with an alternate left and right, and slaughter the lot of us within two minutes!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm not going to fight you, anyhow!" snapped Handforth, glaring at Reggie. "I don't even send you to Coventry."

"No?" said Reggie. "Then I'm safe?"

"You've been decent to Gresham, and so has Nipper," continued Handforth. "I'm only up against these cads who set themselves up as judges! I'm sick of their beastly intimidation and victimisation."

"They're good words!" said De Valerie approvingly.

"He read them in one of the papers, I expect!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Handforth sailed in without any further argument. There was a rush, for when Handforth sailed in, he generally did quite a lot of damage before he could be subdued.

And Harry Gresham, in the confusion, managed to escape. He was feeling more unhappy than ever. Handforth was getting into trouble with his form fellows on his—Harry's—account, and Harry wandered away, depressed and heavy-hearted. He didn't realise that Edward Oswald was thoroughly enjoying himself.

Harry went back to his own study automatically. He had really intended going out into the Triangle for a stroll, but the dusk was getting very deep now, and it would be better, perhaps, to sit in the quietness of the study, where he could think undisturbed. Harry had recently got into the habit of getting away alone. It was not very pleasant to walk in the Triangle, or in the squares, and to have jeers levelled at him every other minute from passing groups of fellows—or flung at him from open study windows. That sort of thing made him want to hide somewhere.

He sank into the easy chair in Study J, and wondered how on earth he could get rid of the embarrassing Handforth. It was a very difficult task. Hints were quite useless, and to tell Handforth bluntly that he wasn't

wanted would be ungracious. It would probably be risky, too, for Handforth was quite liable to give Gresham one look and then tell him to put his hands up. Handforth was quite impartial when it came to fighting.

"No, I'm blessed if I know what to do about Handy," murmured Harry Gresham, as he glanced round the study. "My hat! What a mess! And he came here to comfort me!"

The immediate future was gloomy. Harry hardly liked to think of it. Three days, at least, with Handforth as a constant companion! Harry didn't know all the little tricks with which Church and McClure kept their leader in order.

Study J was, indeed, in disorder.

Handforth had flung his own books all over the place, and he had created a sort of general untidiness. Alec Duncan was an orderly fellow, and so was Harry. Together, they had kept this little room neat and tidy.

"I can't go and see Alec, either," muttered Harry unhappily. "Nobody's allowed to see him until he's better. It's just the same as being shoved in quarantine. My hat, what beastly luck!"

He felt slightly nervous as he looked into the gloomy corners of the room. Gloom or darkness always had this effect upon him. But now he checked himself, and his eyes looked rather stern.

"I'm not going to give in!" he muttered. "I've finished with that beastly funkiness! I've got a pretty vivid imagination, but there's nothing to be afraid of here."

And yet, five minutes later, he switched on the electric light. He told himself that he wanted to read. But in his heart he knew that he desired the cheery comfort which the light would afford.

Besides, there was his prep to go over. He was fairly certain that Mr. Crowell would have something to say on the morrow unless he did so. Handforth had bothered him so much that he had hardly known what he had been doing.

But he couldn't get on with his work. He couldn't read. Somehow, he felt a sort of void. Now that Alec Duncan was gone, Harry realised more than ever how much he had valued the friendship of the New Zealand boy.

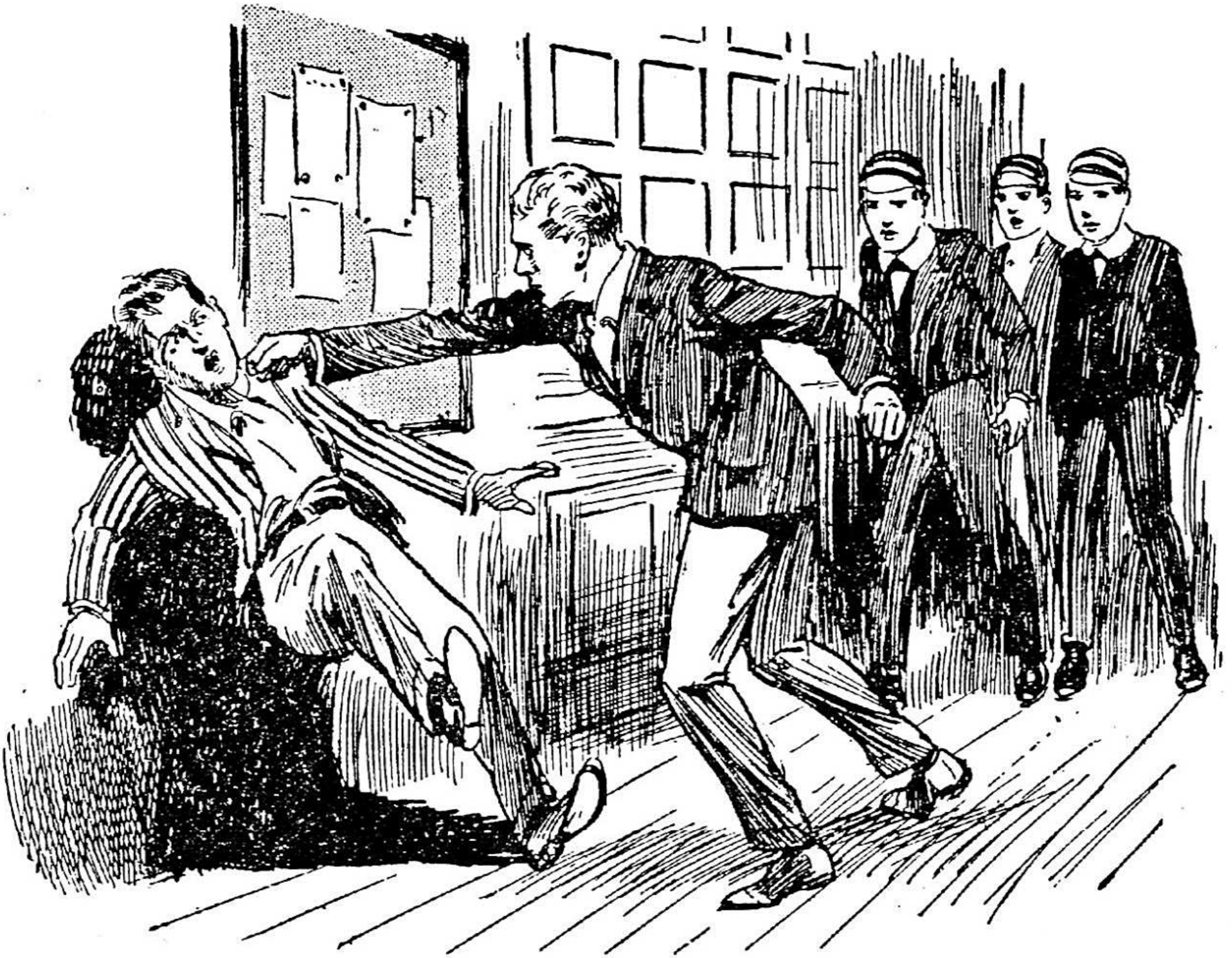
He was worried about Alec, too.

How had he contracted such a nasty attack? Not a fellow in the school had 'flu, and Duncan hadn't been out for days. During the previous evening, in fact, he had even remarked how fit he was feeling. There was something mysterious about Alec's sudden seizure.

Tap, tap!

Harry started round, his heart jumping.

The window was a black patch, and lurking out there in the gloom of the square was a dim figure. Just for a second Harry felt himself slipping. Then he took a tight hold of his nerves.



Harry Gresham brought his right round in a terrific swipe, and caught Hubbard on the jaw. The cad reeled back, sagged against the wall of the lobby and then slid to the floor. Gresham had hit one of his tormentors for the first time : no wonder the other juniors looked on in amazement !

Idiot! What was there to be afraid of at this hour of the evening? He jumped to his feet, and ran to the window. Mr. Hubert Addison was standing there!

CHAPTER 6.

NOT ACCORDING TO PLAN!

HARRY GRESHAM felt his heart resume its normal beat. He looked at Mr. Addison with cold intensity. He hated this man with a curious whole-heartedness. He loathed him. For he knew that Mr. Addison was a wolf in sheep's clothing.

Everybody else in the school regarded him as a gentleman. Was he not the Headmaster's private secretary? True, he did not come in contact with the boys, and he had no authority over them, since he was in no way empowered to give orders. As the Head's secretary, his work was confined purely to Dr. Stafford's own private house.

He was an unpleasant-looking man, with rather watery eyes and a skinny frame. Yet he bore the stamp of good breeding. He

was a poor relation—a distant connection—of the famous Addisons, of Hampshire. It is quite likely that Mr. Addison felt that he had a grudge against humanity in general. By a sheer accident of birth, he was poor, while other members of his family were enjoying the luxuries that riches could bestow.

"What do you want?" asked Harry bluntly.

"Hush!" muttered Mr. Addison. "Not so loud!"

"Well, I didn't ask you to come here——"

"It's risky—and I can't stay," said the other, in a tense voice. "I'm pretending to tie up my shoe-lace on the window-sill. Don't show yourself, Gresham! Meet me at eleven o'clock to-night, by the corner of the monastery ruins. I must see you then!"

Harry compressed his lips.

"I can't do it!" he snapped. "I'm not going to break bounds!"

"Hang you!" breathed Mr. Addison. "You'd better not make objections! Eleven o'clock—behind the shrubbery, at the corner of the monastery ruins. Be there prompt on time, or——"

"Or what?" breathed Harry

"You know what!" said Mr. Addison mockingly.



He withdrew his foot from the window-sill, and strolled on. If anybody had chanced to see him from a West House window, he would have thought nothing. For Mr. Addison had only paused for a few brief seconds.

Harry withdrew into the study, and stood against the table, staring fixedly in front of him. Eleven o'clock—by the corner of the monastery ruins! An eerie spot! And yet, of course, a very secluded one, and quite ideal for a secret rendezvous.

The one thought which troubled Harry most was that he would have to obey. There could be no getting out. If he refused, Mr. Addison might reveal that secret—he might let out the story of the Gresham family skeleton! And Harry couldn't risk that.

"Of course, he wants more money," muttered Harry fiercely. "Oh, the highwayman—the blackmailing rogue! And I can't do a thing—I can't tell anybody, or——"

He broke off, his heart beating rapidly.

"Tell anybody?" he muttered. "Why not? Unless I speak to somebody before long, I shall go clean out of my mind! I can't keep this thing to myself for ever! There's Alec! He'll understand——"

He groaned. Alec was not available now, and would probably be confined to the school hospital for the rest of the week.

This gave rise to another thought in Harry's mind. Wasn't it rather a strange coincidence that Alec should be so conveniently ill just now? It enabled Addison to come to this study, and find Harry alone—and, furthermore, Harry would naturally sleep by himself to-night. Duncan was the only other fellow who shared that particular bedroom with him, and it was more than likely that Addison knew this.

Alec's illness—and his absence—would make it possible for Harry to slip out at eleven o'clock, unknown to any of the others. It was certainly a queer coincidence, unless—unless—— But how the dickens could Mr. Addison be responsible for a junior catching a bad cold, or the 'flu? That was the snag.

"If Alec had met with an unaccountable accident, I could understand it better," murmured Harry. "But Addison can't be responsible for an illness. Oh, I don't know what to think."

He soon dismissed the subject. Weightier matters were bothering him. He only had about five pounds in his possession, and Addison would demand a fiver, at least. What would his father say, if he wrote and asked for more pocket-money so quickly? It was much less than a week since he had received a tenner from Sir Stewart. His father had told him to be liberal with his cash, but there was a limit. And he didn't want to worry his father by telling him of Addison's extortion.

And there was that eleven o'clock meeting in prospect. In a way, Harry felt just a tiny thrill of pleasure at the thought—that kind of pleasure which is closely akin to fear.

There would be a spice in it. He was afraid of the dark—and until recently he had believed that the awful things that he had seen in the gloom were horrors of his own imagination. But he knew different now. The knowledge fortified him, and he was curious to see how he would behave.

In the meantime, Edward Oswald-Handforth was in a bit of a quandary.

Handy's war-like decision to fight the better part of the Remove had fallen to the ground. Ridicule had killed the project. And ridicule was the most effective weapon that one could use against the war-like leader of Study D.

He had just been out into the Triangle, looking for Harry. He had glanced into Study J first, but it so happened that Harry had popped out at that minute to fetch a book from the House library.

"Where the dickens has the chap got to?" muttered Handforth, as he came to a halt in the lobby. "Hi, Doyle, you ass! Seen Gresham?"

Doyle, of the West House, who was passing, took no notice.

"Didn't you hear me?" roared Handforth.

Doyle still walked on.

"By George!" fumed Edward Oswald, striding up, and swinging the junior round by the shoulder. "Are you deaf, you ass?"

Doyle looked at him, and then turned to Reggie Pitt, who was just coming out of the passage.

"What's the matter with this chap?" asked Doyle. "He sends us to Coventry, and then speaks to us!"

"That's wrong, of course," said Pitt. "When a chap is sent to Coventry by the Form, he's simply ignored. So it stands to reason that when one fellow sends the rest to Coventry, he's got to ignore 'em all!"

"Just what I thought," said Doyle.

Handforth goggled.

"Rats!" he said. "If I speak to any of you fellows, you've got to answer. If you don't, I'll smash——"

"Can't be done, Handy," interrupted Pitt. "I'm not in Coventry, so I can have a chat with you in safety. But if you speak to any of these others, you naturally give them a free pass out of Coventry. That's a recognised rule."

"By George, so it is!" gasped Handforth. "Then—then if I keep 'em in Coventry, it simply means that I can't speak to them."

"Exactly," grinned Pitt. "In other words, and in actual practice, you've sent yourself to Coventry, old man!"

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

Somehow, his "punishment" was recoiling on his own head. It wasn't so good, after all. He had sent everybody to Coventry, so he couldn't speak to them—and that meant he was penalising himself.

However there was an easy way out of it.

"So, you see, it's a delicate position," said Reggie Pitt solemnly.

"Delicate be blowed!" retorted Hand-

forth. "I'm letting everybody off from this minute! And if any fathead refuses to answer me, I'll slaughter him. Doyle, you ass, where's Gresham?"

"Rats!" said Doyle. "I haven't seen the funk. He doesn't interest me any more than an earwig. Thank goodness the chap isn't in my House, that's all."

And Doyle scuttled out before Handforth could reach him.



CHAPTER 7.

CLOSER THAN A BROTHER!

EGGIE PITT frowned.

"Leave him to me, Handy," he said grimly. "I'll settle with Doyle in a few minutes! I don't

believe in this beastly set against Gresham. It was bad enough to have him resign from the cricket——"

"He didn't resign! He was kicked out!" said Handforth fiercely.

"It comes to the same thing, I suppose," admitted Reggie, troubled. "If Gresham hadn't resigned, Nipper would have been forced out of the captaincy, and it was jolly decent of Gresham to settle the thing by waiving his rights. It must have been a fearful blow to the poor chap," he added thoughtfully. "Cricket's a sort of religion with him—a second nature to him. And now that Duncan is ill, he's probably as miserable as——"

"Oh, that's all right," interrupted Handforth. "I've taken Duncan's place. I've changed into Study J."

"Yes, so you told us," nodded Pitt. "I'm sorry for Gresham. I don't think it's quite fair of you, Handy, to pile these troubles on him, and make things worse."

"Worse?" roared Handforth. "I'm going to comfort him."

"You mean well, old man, but you've got a weird and wonderful idea of what the word 'comfort' means," replied Pitt. "You seem to think that it stands for noise, scrapping, jawing, and arguing. But if you look 'comfort' up in the dictionary you'll find that it means 'to console — to strengthen — to inspirit.' It means 'consolation,' 'encouragement' and 'quiet enjoyment.' If you can provide Gresham with those delights, then I shall believe that a leopard can change its spots."

Handforth only took in a small portion of this great truth, and he fastened on to Reggie's final sentence.

"Are you calling me a leopard?" he asked fiercely.

"Certainly not," replied Pitt. "You've got the spots all right, but a little warm water and some soap will easily remove them!"

"You—you——"

"I'd like to stop and continue the discussion, but time presses," said Reggie politely. "So long, Handy!"

"You funny West House fathead!" hooted Handforth. "I've a good mind to come over to your quarters, and rag the lot of you!"

"Never spoil good mind," said Pitt promptly. "We'll give you a hearty welcome, Handy. Just what we need to buck things up!"

He went out grinning, and Handforth snorted. On second thoughts, he decided that it would be a risky business to go into a rival House singlehanded on a war-like mission.

So he cooled down and remembered that he was a comforter. He went along to Study J, and brightened up when he found Harry Gresham sitting at the table writing a letter.

"Hallo! Where the dickens have you been to?" asked Handforth.

"I've been here all the time."

"Rats! You weren't here when I looked in ten minutes ago."

"Oh I stepped into the library for a minute, to fetch a book," said Harry. "I—I thought you might like to read it, Handy."

"What?" said Handforth, staring.

"It's a jolly good book," went on Harry carelessly. "I simply went dotty over it. It's all about adventures in Africa——"

"Thanks all the same, but I'm a bit particular about what I read," said Handforth gruffly. "I like detective stories, and yarns about Redskins and pony express riders. Either that, or stories about pirates, or highwaymen."

"And you're particular?" asked Harry politely.

He had vainly hoped to get Handforth interested in a book, so that there might be a little peace. This only went to prove how little Gresham knew of his new friend's character!

"In any case, I don't want to read now," said Handforth firmly. "I've come here to chat with you, Harry."

"What about Church and McClure?"

"Never mind them——"

"But they'll be lonely without you."

"It'll serve them right," said Handforth callously. "I expect the poor fatheads are mooning about, miserable and gloomy. Well, it's their own fault—they shouldn't be so obstinate."

At that very moment, Church and McClure were lounging in Study D, reading with unwonted peace and contentment. Their faces were expressive of quiet, enduring joy.

"About to-night" went on Handforth, thrusting the picture of Church and McClure's misery out of his mind. "Now that Duncan is shoved into the sanny, I suppose you're booked to sleep alone?"

Harry nodded.

"Well, yes, I suppose I am," he admitted. "But that'll be all right——"

"Oh, will it?" said Handforth. "What about the other night? Even with Duncan there, you nearly went dotty with fright."

You know as well as I do that you're scared of the dark, my lad."

Harry crimsoned.

"I—I— Yes!" he muttered lamely.

"Eh? Oh, sorry!" said Handforth, with concern. "I didn't mean to rub salt into the open wound, old man. Still, there's nothing like being frank, is there? That beastly phantom thing might appear again, too. And I've decided to sit up until midnight, and keep watch."

"That'll be fine of you," said Harry, trying to look appreciative.

"Of course I shall sleep in Duncan's bed," announced Handforth.

Harry started violently.

"You—you mean you're going to come into my dormitory?" he asked.

"Yes, rather!" said Handforth, with a cheerful nod. "And I'm going to keep awake until midnight, so that you can be quietly comforted, and sleep will come to you—"

"But—but— Oh, you mustn't!" gasped Harry.

Handforth stared.

"Don't you want to be cheered up?" he asked blankly.

"I—I— No!" panted Harry. "I—I mean, there's no need for you to sleep in my dormitory, Handy. Please don't think of it, old man! It would only make me uncomfortable, you know."

"Uncomfortable?" repeated Handforth ominously.

"Well, you know what I mean," said Harry, in confusion. "It would break up things in your dormitory, as it were—and I don't want you to feel that I'm such a baby that I can't sleep by myself."

Handforth looked at him grimly. He didn't know, of course, the real cause of Harry Gresham's alarm. Harry knew that he would have to get dressed at a quarter to eleven, and steal out in order to keep that secret appointment with Addison.

And Handforth had threatened to keep awake until midnight! Truly, Edward Oswald was sticking closer than a brother!



CHAPTER 8.

THE FAITHFUL WATCH-DOG.

CHURCH groaned in anguish, and clutched at McClure's arm for support.

"Did—did you hear, old man?" he asked hoarsely.

"It can't be true!" panted McClure, in horror.

"Oh, can't it?" said Handforth, with satisfaction. "To-night, my lads, you've got to sleep alone! I'm changing into Gresham's dormitory until Duncan comes out of the sanny."

Handforth had thought it just as well to prepare his chums for the change. They received the news with expressions of dismay,

but inwardly they were wondering how much longer this state of paradise would last. It was altogether too good to be true.

"You're deserting us, then?" asked Church, in a tragic voice.

"Gresham needs me more than you do," replied Handforth, in a fatherly way. "The poor chap will be alone to-night if I don't rally round him. And I mean to stick to him until Duncan comes out of the sanny."

"Is 'flu very slow?" asked Church hopefully. "Do you think it's possible that Duncan can be kept in the sanny for a month?"

"That's too much to expect!" said McClure, shaking his head.

Handforth looked at them suspiciously.

"What do you mean—a month?" he asked. "You fatheads, if you two were left alone for a month there'd be no holding you! Even if I'm only away for three days, I expect you'll get practically out of hand."

"Oh, I dare say we'll survive somehow," said Church sadly. "Not that we shall be able to sleep to-night, of course. We shan't get a wink without you in the room, Handy."

"Why not?" demanded Handforth.

"Well, it's obvious," said Church. "Haven't you heard about the general who came back from the war, and found that he couldn't sleep because of the absence of explosions and things? The silence was too much for him!"

Handforth stared in amazement.

"What's that got to do with me?" he asked blankly.

"Well, Mac and I are in the same position," said Church innocently. "We're like that giddy general, in a way."

"Almost exactly the same," agreed McClure gloomily.

"What the dickens—" Handforth paused, and started. "By George!" he gasped. "Are you trying to make out that I'm noisy?"

"We don't need to make it out," replied Church. "Hang it all Handy, any chap in the Remove will tell you that your snore is like a giddy hippopotamus with the whooping cough. You can't help it, of course—it's one of your misfortunes."

"One of our misfortunes, you mean," corrected McClure.

"Oh, I don't know!" said Church. "We've got so used to it now that it's part of the night. Without you, Handy, we shall be lost. We shan't be able to sleep a wink—"

"You—you funny idiots!" hooted Handforth, suddenly realising that his leg was being pulled. "I'll jolly well— Hi! Come back! I'm going to punch your heads!"

"Rats!" sang out Church. "Punch Gresham's! He's your study-mate now!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" cackled McClure.

They sped off, leaving Handforth seething. Somehow it seemed to him that his chums weren't half so cut up as they ought to have been. However, he had no time to waste on them. They weren't worth it. It was

nearly bed-time, and he wanted to get back to Gresham.

In fact, the Junior bell was just sounding, and he met Harry at the door of Study J.

"Oh, I'm glad I met you, Handy," said Harry. "About that suggestion of yours. I wish you'd cut it out, you know."

"Cut it out?" said Handforth darkly.

"Yes. There's really no need——"

"Rats! I've made up my mind, my son!"

"But I don't want you to!" said Harry earnestly, and with just a trace of desperation. "I'm not a kid, Handy! Don't you see that this will be the worst kind of service to me? The fellows are sneering at me already, and they'll jeer no end when they hear that you've decided to take Duncan's place in my bed-room. They'll think I'm afraid to sleep alone!"

There was a great deal of truth in this statement. Harry was concerned about his eleven o'clock appointment with Mr. Addison, but he was also worried on this other point. He could just imagine what the juniors would all be saying about him. Handforth's pressing friendliness was not merely embarrassing, but it was becoming a positive menace.

"Nonsense!" said Handforth airily, waving the new boy's objections aside with a single gesture. "If the chaps jeer, I'll smash 'em!"

"But that won't help me!" said Harry fiercely.

"Look here, my lad, I don't want any of your back answers!" said Handforth, frowning. "Duncan's in the sanny, so I'm taking his place. That's final, you understand!"

"Oh, but look here——"

"And when I say 'final,' " said Handforth, "I mean final!"

"Oh, crumbs!" groaned Harry.

For an instant he thought about calling Handforth an interfering busybody, and having a good old row. That, perhaps, might work the oracle. But Harry couldn't bring himself to do it. He did not lose sight of the fact that Handforth's efforts were kindly. Besides, there wasn't one chance in a thousand of shaking him off, even if it came to a fight. Harry had been at St. Frank's long enough to know that when Handforth got an idea he clung to it with the tenacity of a leech. He had made up his mind to sleep in Gresham's dormitory, and wild horses wouldn't drag him from his purpose.

So Harry was compelled to face the problem.

Handforth was like a faithful watch-dog, and a pretty dangerous watch-dog, too! Harry had only one hope. There was just a chance that Edward Oswald would fall asleep before eleven. If that happened, all would be well.

So Harry did everything he could to further this end. He refrained from arguing; he yawned continuously, and pretended to be very sleepy. Within five minutes of getting into the dormitory he was in bed, and Hand-

forth had great difficulty in getting any answers out of him.

By maintaining this policy, Harry hoped to lull his unwelcome companion into a sleepy mood. It was, indeed, the only chance.

"You're a fine kind of chap!" grumbled Handforth at last. "I've come here to comfort you, and you can't even answer me."

"Eh?" mumbled Harry. "Goo'-night, old man!"

"You're jolly sleepy, aren't you?" demanded Handforth.

Harry made no reply.

"I want to talk to you about cricket, and all sorts of things," went on Handforth. "Unless you buck up, my lad, I'll come over there and pitch you out of bed!"

Harry couldn't help grinning to himself under cover of the sheets. Considering that Handforth had come into this dormitory on purpose to lull Harry to sleep by his friendly presence, he was acting in a somewhat peculiar way.

"There's something wrong with this bed, too," went on Handforth. "It feels damp, or something. Why the dickens didn't they air the sheets before they put them on? I might get pneumonia!"

Harry sat up, very wakeful now.

"By Jove!" he said. "I wonder——"

He broke off, a startled expression in his eyes.

"I wonder?" he repeated, taking a deep breath.

CHAPTER 9.

THE HORROR IN THE SHRUBBERY!



HANDFORTH stared curiously.

"You wonder what?" he asked.

"This is Alec's bed," said Harry, as he stepped across the room. "The sheets haven't been changed, or anything. The House matron wasn't told that you were going to sleep with me to-night, so she left the bed just as it was. Get out, Handy—quick!"

"Why, what's the matter?" asked Handforth in surprise.

But he got out, and Harry felt the under-sheet. Then he pulled it back, and closely examined the under-blanket. There was a keen light in his eyes.

"Feel this!" he said tensely.

"Why, it's damp!" said Handforth indignantly.

"It's damp all over—and it couldn't be like that by accident. This blanket has been tampered with."

"Tampered with?" gasped Handforth.

"Mrs. Poulter wouldn't allow it to go on a bed in this condition," declared Harry. "Chaps sometimes empty water-jugs over beds, but this blanket is damp over every inch of it. It must have been soaked in

water, and then wrung out and half-dried."

"But—but——"

"Don't you understand?" asked Harry. "No wonder poor old Alec was taken queer to-day! No wonder he's got a fever! Why, sleeping in this bed was enough to give him rheumatic fever!"

An alarming thought had come to Harry—a deep suspicion. Was it possible that Mr. Addison had tampered with Alec's bed? No, not Mr. Addison, decided Harry; somebody else—the mysterious night marauder who had attempted to frighten him on several occasions. He wanted Harry to be alone! Perhaps he was preparing something extra awful to terrify him, and had taken these measures to get Alec Duncan out of the way.

The Unknown had guessed that Alec would catch a bad cold, and he knew that the boy would be removed to the sanatorium. It was, indeed, about the only certain way of getting rid of him. And Handforth had defeated the whole thing by taking Alec's place!

"Well, you needn't look so startled," said Handforth, staring at Harry in a puzzled way. "We'll complain about this blanket in the morning, and I expect one of the maids will get the sack. She jolly well deserves it, too, for putting it on a bed like that!"

"You musn't sleep in that bed!" said Harry tensely.

"Of course not! I'll sleep in yours!"

"In mine?"

"In yours," repeated Handforth coolly. "Plenty of room for the two of us, my lad."

"But—but I thought—— Wouldn't it be better for you to go back—— Oh, well, perhaps not!" said Harry. "Still, I hardly——"

He didn't quite know what to say. It had occurred to him that Handforth's presence might be very welcome. And yet he badly wanted Edward Oswald to be out of the way at eleven o'clock. In any case, there was nothing to be gained by arguing, because Handy had made up his mind.

"I can't sleep in this spare bed," said Handforth, indicating the third bedstead in the room. "There aren't any blankets or sheets, or anything. And I'm not going to get rheumatic fever for anybody by sleeping in Duncan's. So I'll squeeze in with you, old man. In a way, it'll be better—I shall be able to comfort you more."

"Oh, yes, of course!" said Harry faintly.

And Handforth calmly proceeded to spread himself in Harry Gresham's bed, while Harry tried to gain a little ease on the outer edge. Handforth continually pulled the sheets over, and it was as much as Harry could do to half-cover himself.

And within ten minutes, too, Edward Oswald was snoring. The bed was so comfortable that he forgot about his plan to keep awake until midnight; he dozed off, and then slept soundly.

This was a great relief to Harry. Hand-

forth asleep was much better than Handforth awake.

It seemed ages before the school clock chimed out the quarters, announcing that ten-forty-five had arrived. Very cautiously Harry slid off the bed and waited. Handforth was still snoring away noisily.

Harry was feeling no nervousness. Perhaps Handforth's close presence had given him this feeling of confidence. But even when he thought of sneaking out into the shrubbery, he only experienced a thrill. This would be a test for him!

He knew that that Shape was a real thing—a material object—and most of its terrors were thus removed. Besides, Mr. Addison would be waiting just beyond the shrubbery, and there was very little chance of anything dramatic happening.

Harry quickly and quietly dressed, then stole out of the dormitory like a shadow. And the instant he had closed the door, Edward Oswald sat up like a jack-in-the-box, and leapt out of bed.

"Spooferd him!" he murmured. "By George! I'll find out what his little game is! So this is why he didn't want me in the dormitory!"

For once, Handforth had been really smart. Harry had awakened him upon getting out of bed, but Handforth had kept on snoring, just to see what Harry was going to do. And when he saw him dressing, he immediately guessed that there was something unusual in the wind.

It took Handforth about twenty seconds to drag his trousers on, fling a jacket over his shoulders, and to dive into his slippers. Then he crept out, and heard a creak on the stairs. He followed, tense and inwardly excited.

"There's something fishy about this!" he breathed.

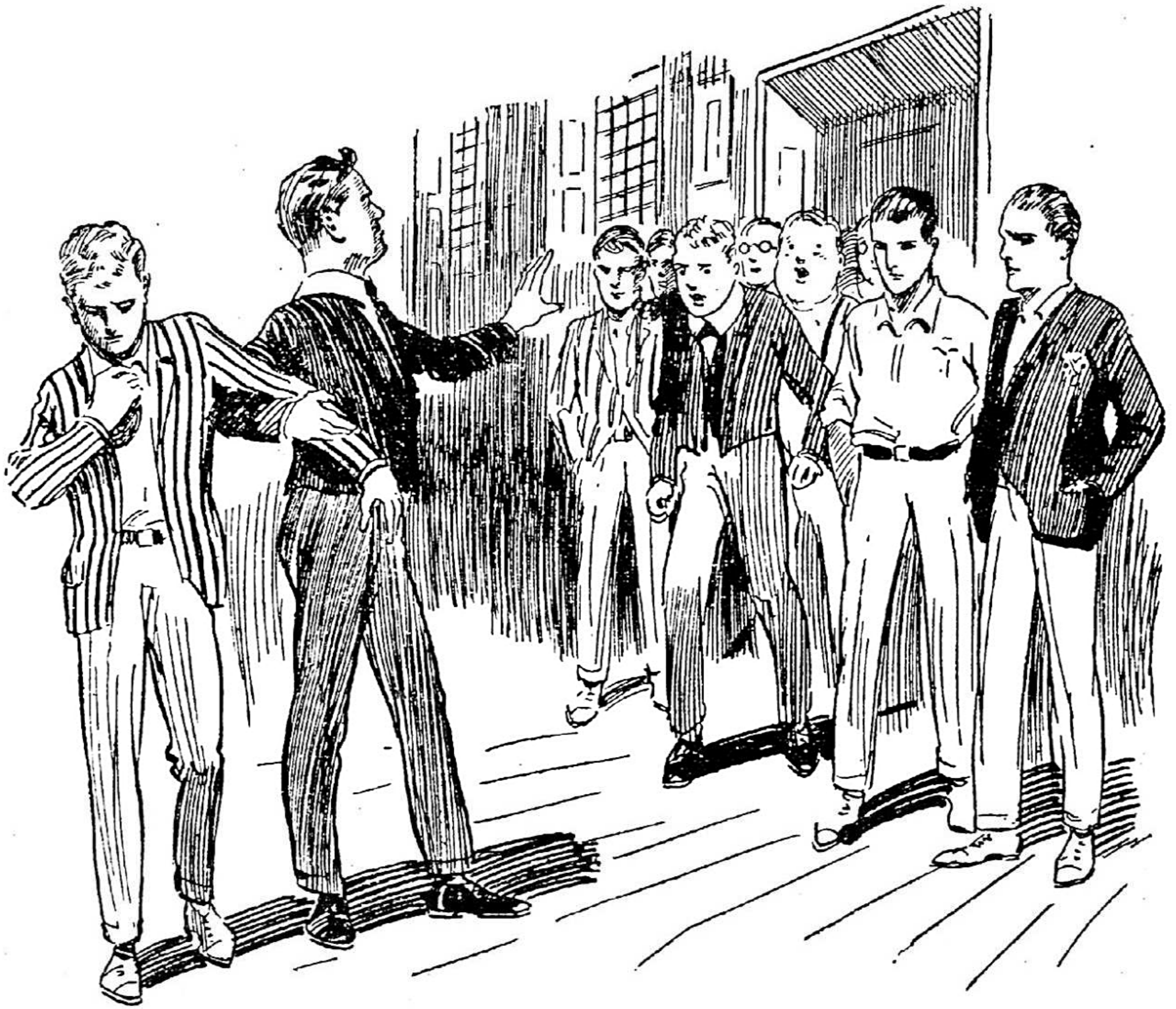
Harry, in the meantime, had no suspicion that he was being so closely followed. Having got downstairs, he went to the Remove passage and entered his study. It was quite an easy matter to get into the square, and a minute later he was creeping along towards West Arch.

It was very dark, and Harry had a dread feeling that his nerve might give way. The darkness affected him strangely. But, although he had this uncomfortable sensation—although a species of pins and needles were running down his spine—he also experienced a certain pleasure. This was a test!

He had to cross the Triangle, go round the gym., and then penetrate the shrubbery. The old monastery ruins were beyond this point. Eerie spots! It would be a test for his nerves.

He felt much stronger than usual to-night.

Just that knowledge that he was dealing with a material terror, and not an imaginative one, made all the difference to his stamina. It had had another effect, too—as



"I send you all to Coventry! The whole lot!" thundered Handforth, and just to show the Remove how much he cared for their opinions, he thrust his arm through that of the miserable Gresham. Handy had made a bet of Harry, and he meant to stand by him through thick and thin.

Hubbard, of the Remove, had already found to his cost! Harry was strengthened generally.

He walked behind the gym., and found that he could keep himself from gazing apprehensively over his shoulder. Hitherto, that impulse had always been a compelling one.

Not that Harry Gresham was complete master of himself.

He wasn't. He knew he wasn't. To tell the honest truth, he was feeling utterly terrified. But he was holding himself in hand. That was the satisfactory factor. He had made a step in the right direction—and he was learning to control that unreasoning terror which had always made such a poltroon of him hitherto.

"I'm winning!" he muttered shakily. "I won't look over my shoulder! I won't run, either!"

He clenched his teeth and walked on, forcing himself to remain calm. In a vague sort of way, he felt danger. He couldn't tell why, but he had an idea that he was no

longer alone. His imagination, of course! It was always playing him tricks like that. But this time he was grappling with it.

He walked in among the trees, and his heart was thumping against his ribs like the explosions of a miniature engine. But still he kept himself in hand. It was a great fight, and the longer it lasted the deeper grew Harry's confidence. If only he could keep it up, this one experience would be worth—

Something touched his arm, and for an instant he hesitated in his stride. A tree, perhaps—or an unseen branch. He forced down the impulse to run. But nothing could prevent him from turning his head and glancing over his shoulder. He wanted to assure himself that everything was all right. The terror of the unseen is far worse than the terror of the seen. Once convinced that he was still alone—

Harry Gresham nearly choked. He halted in his tracks. A shapeless Thing was close beside him, and two 'lat-looking eyes were glaring balefully at him from the darkness!

CHAPTER 10.

THE FIGHT IN THE DARK!



SOMETHING seemed to give way in Harry's brain.

Just the same as ever, he succumbed to terror. But there was one differ-

ence. In his heart he knew that this unknown thing was real, that it was solid. It was no creature of his highly-strung imagination.

But nothing could deprive it of its horror.

Real or unreal, it was a thing to reckon with. And the strongest-nerved schoolboy might have been excused for bolting.

Harry Gresham's nerves were not strong. Perhaps they might serve him better in later years. But now he was a prey to every fantastic fear.

"Oh!" he breathed tensely.

He felt a scream rising in his throat. But then something came to his aid. A sudden determination to fight on. And he choked that scream before it was uttered. Another little victory. Harry hardly knew it at the time, for he was turning away with the one idea of dashing blindly out of the shrubbery. Then the Thing grappled with him.

He couldn't tell what it was. He felt a hairy sort of arm brush against his shoulder, and then a furry object was drawn across his face. Those baleful eyes looked at him unwinkingly.

Harry felt that his brain was bursting, but Nature came to his aid. Afterwards, he scarcely remembered that dreadful moment. He only knew that everything seemed to go blank. He staggered, reeled against a tree, and fell to the ground, laughing insanely.

For an instant the figure stood over him—a strange, uncouth object, hardly distinguishable from the surrounding gloom.

Further back, among the trees, a very startled Edward Oswald Handforth was watching. The leader of Study D had followed Harry closely—not because he thought Harry needed any protection, but mainly out of curiosity. Handforth was the last fellow in the world deliberately to probe into another chap's private affairs. But here he felt that he was on the track of a mystery—and Handforth fancied himself as a detective.

It was a fine opportunity to display his great powers!

He had wondered what was the matter with Harry at first, for he had only heard one or two gasping sounds. Then, when Harry began to laugh in that hysterical, uncanny fashion, Edward Oswald became really alarmed. He pushed forward through the trees.

"Great Scott!" he gasped abruptly.

He saw something there—something that he couldn't place. A pair of eyes looked upon him, and Handforth felt a chill sensation run down his spine. He went cold all over, and could not move.

Truth to tell, the valiant Handforth was momentarily terrified.

And his nerves were perhaps the strongest of any in the Remove, with the single exception of Nipper's. The unfortunate Harry could not be blamed very much for his recent exhibitions of funk. It was easy enough for the other juniors to condemn him, but they had suffered no such experience as this.

A twig crackled, and the spell was broken.

"By George!" panted Handforth.

His powers came back to him, and although he was still partially scared, he hurled himself forward. He clutched at a furry thing, and held tight.

The next second he lunged out with his famous right, and his knuckles thudded hard against a yielding solid. A kind of grunt sounded.

"You rotter!" roared Handforth. "I'm going to find out who you are, you beastly trickster. I'll—"

The unknown creature wrenched madly, and Handforth was aware of a ripping sound. The next second the marauder had pulled away from his clutch, and was running towards the monastery ruins, where Mr. Addison had promised to wait.

Eleven o'clock, as it happened, was just booming out.

Handforth gave a roar, and ran forward blindly.

Crash!

He ran full tilt into a tree, and his forehead received a tremendous crack. He reeled away drunkenly, and scarcely knew where he was, or what he was doing. Somehow he got out of the shrubbery—back into the Triangle. He was half-stunned, dizzy, and utterly befuddled. He leaned against the wall of the gym, and sank down in a limp heap.

Harry Gresham was standing up now, that brief spell of hysteria over. Handforth's familiar voice had effectually aroused him. He was shaky, he was fear-ridden, but he was once again in control of his full wits. He knew that Handforth had gone back on his own tracks, just as he knew that the Shape had plunged forward towards the ruins.

What of Mr. Addison? Why was it that the Head's secretary did not make any outcry—"Hallo! What was that?"

Harry stood tense, listening.

Scuffles—panting breath—and then desperate, hoarse cries.

"Help! Help!" came the urgent appeal. "Good heavens! Am I mad? What is this—Help!"

"Addison!" muttered Harry, with a gulp.

So that Thing was attacking the Head's secretary!

Harry Gresham ran forward, his confidence returning. Addison was a scoundrel, but he was evidently in danger. And Harry had lost his terror now, and his one thought was to rush to the rescue. The near presence of Handforth and Addison had produced a powerful effect. Knowing that he was no longer alone, Harry found an unusual courage.

He burst out from the shrubbery, and he could see the monastery ruins just ahead of him. But all was quiet now. It seemed to him that he was absolutely alone.

"Mr. Addison!" he muttered hoarsely. No reply.

"Where are you?" panted Harry, taking a step forward.

He half expected that Thing of the night to come at him from behind the broken masonry. What had happened to Addison? Why didn't the man answer?

And then came a sound—a scuffle. Something rose from the ground, several yards ahead.

"Help!" came a faint voice.

Harry ran forward, and stood looking down upon the scared, dishevelled figure of Mr. Hubert Addison.



CHAPTER II.

HANDFORTH'S CLUE!

"WHAT'S happened?" asked Harry breathlessly.

For a moment Mr. Addison was incoherent. He clutched at Harry

Gresham convulsively. His fingers were twitching, his breath was coming and going in painful gasps. The man was apparently in the last stages of terror, and his whole appearance was bedraggled.

"Something—something attacked me!" he breathed. "I don't know what it was—I can't tell you what it was. A Thing from another world!"

"Steady, Mr. Addison," muttered Harry quickly.

This man was weaker than himself, and that very fact seemed to strengthen him more. He pulled Mr. Addison to his feet, and the latter looked round apprehensively.

"It came at me without warning," he whispered. "A ghost—a monstrous horror from the spirit world."

"It wasn't," said Harry. "Somebody is trying some trickery—"

"You young fool!" panted Addison. "I tell you it was a spectral thing. I know—I know! I have seen ghosts before. This place is haunted—this whole school is—"

"Oh, no!" breathed Harry apprehensively.

This was a new thought—a new angle—and Harry was momentarily terrified. He knew that his imagination was not responsible, but it had never occurred to him that that Thing might have been a phantom. Perhaps it was watching even now—waiting to spring out upon him—

"We must get out of here," said Addison, interrupting Harry's thoughts. "Come—come! I can't speak to you now. I'll see you again to-morrow. Some time to-morrow. I don't know when—I'll let you know."

The man was almost babbling, and he pulled Gresham by sheer force. Almost blindly he led the way towards the rear

wing of the East House. They passed into the East Square, missing Handforth altogether, who was in the Triangle.

"Where did it go to?" asked Harry, trying to force himself to be calm. "Where did that Thing—"

"How should I know?" snapped Addison. "It vanished—it went into thin air. The ghastly object simply de-materialised. But I can't talk of it now—I can't wait! I'll see you to-morrow, Gresham—to-morrow."

He staggered away, and went off towards Big Arch on his way back to the Head's residence. His mission was forgotten. He apparently cared nothing about broaching the subject of his real object. Money was a matter of small importance to him now.

Harry, finding himself alone, walked quickly to East Square, his object being to get into the Triangle at once. He had remembered Handforth, and was alarmed. What could he say to him? How could he explain things to Edward Oswald? Obviously the leader of Study D had followed him out, and knew everything.

Harry hurried through East Arch, and found the Triangle empty. He was vaguely disturbed by what Addison had just said. It had put a new idea into his mind.

A spectral presence!

Was it possible that—

"Handy!" he muttered, running forward as he saw a figure near the gymnasium. "Is that you, Handy?"

It was. Handforth was rapidly recovering now. His head still sang, but he was no longer dazed.

"My hat, Gresham, what happened?" he asked, as he stared at Harry. "I—I thought that beastly trickster had finished you. I thought you'd gone dotty. That laugh of yours sounded awful."

"Did I laugh?" asked Harry, startled.

"Like a giddy maniac."

"I—I don't remember," muttered Harry, pressing a hand to his head. "But what happened to you, Handy? Did that—that Thing knock you down?"

"I don't think so," replied Handforth. "I was chasing it, and it seemed to vanish. I believe I ran full tilt into a tree."

"Oh, my goodness!" murmured Harry. "Then—then he was right!"

"Who was right?"

Harry checked himself. It suddenly occurred to him that Handforth knew nothing of Addison's recent presence, and no object could be served by telling him.

"Oh, nothing," he muttered. "I don't know what I'm saying. But supposing—supposing that marauder was a spirit?"

"A which?"

"An evil spirit," muttered Harry. "A spectre, you know—"

"You idiot!" growled Handforth. "Did you ever know an evil spirit with a fur coat on?"

"What do you mean?"

"Look at this!"

Handforth pushed a hand forward, and Harry saw that his fingers were grasping a

torn section of rough fur. It was, without doubt, a fragment of a fur coat, or perhaps a fur rug.

"Where did you get it?" asked Harry breathlessly.

"I tore it away when that giddy prowler bunked," replied Handforth. "He was in such a hurry to do the disappearing act that he didn't wait for the rest of his costume. A spectre, indeed! More like Forrest, or one of those other cads, playing a low-down trick!"

Harry said nothing for a moment. He felt a wave of intense relief going over him. He was thrilled too. He felt stronger—bolder. Addison's theory was preposterous—invented, no doubt, in the man's terror. That clue in Handforth's hand was irrefutable.

"I—I thought— Oh, I don't know what I thought," said Harry, at length. "I hope you're not hurt, Handy."

"I am hurt—beastly hurt," said Handforth, rubbing his forehead. "It's a wonder I didn't crack my giddy skull!"

"How did you get out here?"

"I followed you, of course," said Handforth. "That reminds me, my lad. What was the idea of sneaking off on your own? You thought I was asleep, didn't you? Well, I wasn't. I guessed you were up to some game, so I came along to look after you. What did you come here for, anyhow?"

"I—I came to meet somebody."

"Oh, you did? And who was somebody?"

"Please don't ask, Handy," said Harry quietly.

"You fathead! I'm asking now!"

"You wouldn't understand—and—and it's private," said Harry. "Please don't press me, Handy. It's all over now, anyhow. Let's get back indoors. If we're spotted out here—"

"Great pip! Too late!" gasped Handforth. "We're spotted already!"

A figure was coming towards them. There was nothing mysterious about this figure, for it approached with a sharp stride, and Handforth had already recognised the new arrival. It was Mr. Nelson Lee himself! And he had caught two of his boys breaking bounds long after lights-out! It looked like a flogging job.

"Handforth and Gresham," said Lee, as he came up. "I thought so. What are you doing out of your beds at this hour?"

"It's my fault, sir," said Harry quickly.

"Not likely, sir!" put in Handforth. "We're both in it. In fact, I'll take all the blame—"

"I came out of doors to—to meet somebody, sir," said Harry. "Handforth only followed me, to help, in case there was any trouble. It wouldn't be right to punish him, sir."

"Whom did you come to meet, Gresham?" asked Nelson Lee.

"I—I'd rather not say, sir."

"Was it Mr. Addison?"

"Oh!" gasped Harry. "Then—then—"

"Was it?"

"Yes, sir," muttered Harry. "But how did you know?"

"Mr. Addison's attentions in your direction, Gresham, have not entirely escaped my notice," replied Lee quietly. "I take it that you were attacked by somebody unknown in the shrubbery?"

"Yes, sir—and Mr. Addison was attacked afterwards."

"Exactly," said Lee, nodding. "What is that in your hand, Handforth?"

"A piece of fur, sir—"

And Handforth explained how he had obtained it. Nelson Lee listened, and finally took possession of the trophy.

"Get back to bed, boys, and do your best to forget this incident," he said. "Say nothing to any of the others. I'll look into the matter further. I shall not report your misdemeanour to the headmaster, but will deal with it myself."

"You're going to flog us, sir?" asked Handforth.

"Not to-night—and perhaps not to-morrow," replied Lee dryly. "We shall see. Perhaps you were justified in breaking bounds. I will let you know my decision some time to-morrow. Good-night, boys."

"Good-night, sir."

They went back to the Ancient House, relieved and almost happy. It was cheering to know that Nelson Lee had got the case in hand, and Harry Gresham had a vague feeling that his troubles would soon be over.



CHAPTER 12.

HARRY SPEAKS OUT.

BACK in the dormitory, the two juniors were soon in bed again. Both had been very silent, and both were wakeful. Handforth was the first to speak after they had pulled the bedclothes over them.

"What was that about Addison?" he asked. "I've been puzzling about it ever since we were with Mr. Lee. Addison's the Head's secretary, isn't he? What did you want to go and see him for? At eleven o'clock at night, too, behind the shrubbery! Looks suspicious to me."

Harry voiced his thoughts, without answering the question.

"How did Mr. Lee know?" he whispered. "That's what I can't make out! How did he know that I went there to meet Addison?"

"You can take it from me, my lad, that Mr. Lee knows a lot more things than we suspect," replied Handforth. "He's not an ordinary Housemaster. He's a jolly keen detective—as good as Sexton Blake any day! Now and again he leaves St. Frank's on a big case, but nobody hears much about it. He's all there, and don't you forget it!"

"I thought this affair between Addison and me was secret," muttered Harry.

"Which affair?"

"Please don't question me, Handy——"

"Rot!" growled Handforth. "You're not going to keep any secrets from me now, I suppose? Come on, you ass! There's nothing worse than a secret! It weighs you down, makes you miserable, and goodness knows what else. Tell me all about it, and you'll feel miles better."

Harry was strongly tempted. It was very private here, and the pair were quite alone, and close together in the same bed. It was just the moment for confidences—especially after what had happened. Harry had thought about telling Alec Duncan, but why shouldn't he tell Handforth instead?

After all, Handy was a good old scout. He was rough and ready, and he was impulsive—but his heart was big. Somehow Harry felt that Edward Oswald's sympathy would help to strengthen him. And as Handy knew about Addison already, it provided an opening for a beginning.

"I'll tell you," he said quietly.

"Good man!" said Handforth, giving Harry's arm a press. "But, mind you, if it's anything too private, I'd rather not hear it. I'm not an inquisitive rotter, and——"

"No, it's only fair that I should tell you," interrupted Harry.

It was just like Handforth to press him for information, and then say he didn't want it after he had got his way. But Harry had made up his mind now, and he was feeling a great relief. It would do him the world of good to unburden himself to his self-appointed "comforter."

"When I first came to St. Frank's I had an awful shock," he said. "I met this chap, Addison, and he demanded five pounds from me. I've given him two or three other fivers since—and I believe he wanted to dun me again to-night. But that—that prowler upset things a bit."

"Do you owe the rotter some money?"

"No, of course not," said Harry bitterly. "But he knows something about my family—and threatened to tell everybody unless I paid him to keep his mouth shut."

"The awful blackmailer!" said Handforth indignantly. "Why didn't you tell him to go and eat coke?"

"I couldn't," replied Gresham. "I had to pay him."

"Some beastly family skeleton, eh?" asked Edward Oswald sympathetically. "One of your uncles murdered a chap in Australia, or somewhere, perhaps? We can't always guarantee the behaviour of our giddy relatives!"

"No, it's not that," said Harry quietly. "It's about my mother."

"Oh," said Handforth, with sudden embarrassment. "Look here, old son, you needn't tell me——"

"But I must!" insisted Harry, creeping a little closer in the bed. "I've kept it so long,

and I can't keep it any longer. I haven't seen my mother for ten years—not since I was a little kid of five. Ever since then she's been in a sanatorium, down in Kent."

"Well, there's nothing very criminal about that," said Handforth in astonishment. "Why the dickens did you pay Addison good money to keep a secret of that sort? Duncan's in a sanatorium!"

"It's a different kind," said Harry nuskily. "The one my mother's in is only called a sanatorium out of politeness. Sometimes they call it a nursing home—but it's really a lunatic asylum!"

Handforth gave a little jump.

"Great Scott!" he breathed. "You mean, your—your mater——"

"Oh, can't you understand?" choked Harry. "If Addison had let that secret out, what would my life have been like?"

Handforth pressed Harry's arm again.

"You're right, old man," he murmured. "Half the chaps would have been down on you, the cads! But they're not really cads—they're only a miserable lot of sheep! A few of them start jeering, and all the rest follow. They'd have called you 'Loony,' or 'Scatty,' or something like that. I say, I'm awfully sorry. No wonder you paid up. I'll smash Addison to-morrow——"

"No, you mustn't," said Harry in alarm. "You've promised to keep quiet about this. I don't want everybody to know."

"By George, no!" said Handforth seriously. "Ten years, eh? Oh! Then—then your mater hasn't always been—well, dotty? I mean, she hasn't always—— Sorry; I don't quite know how to——"

He stumbled, and Harry helped him.

"No, it was a Zeppelin bomb which caused it," he said quietly. "Until I was five, my mother was as sane as you are—— Perhaps I'd better tell you the rest, though. You've always been wondering why I'm such a funk, and it's only right that you should know the truth. I can't help my nerves. I was born like it. If I'm a coward, it's in the blood!"

"Don't be a silly idiot!" said Handforth severely. "Don't be a dotty—— Oh, lor! I—I mean——"

"You see, when my mother was a girl—two or three years before she married my father—she was in a terrible railway accident," said Harry, speaking eagerly and breathlessly. "She wasn't injured or anything, but lots of people in that same compartment were killed and horribly mangled. It was an awful crash, and it shattered my mother's nerves so completely that she was in bed for practically a year. Then she went to Italy for six months—the Tyrol, I believe—and afterwards to the Mediterranean. That trip set her up, and she got well again."

Harry was feeling happy in this talk. He had wanted to talk for so long. He had felt that he would burst unless he unburdened himself to somebody. Just by chance, it was Handforth who heard all this, instead of Alec Duncan.



“ Will you fight now ? ” asked Gresham ominously. “ By gad, I’ll slaughter you ! ” yelled Forrest, and began to pull off his coat. Handforth patted Gresham encouragingly on the back. At last the funk of St. Frank’s was going to show the school that he could fight !

"Then she met my father," continued Harry. "Everything seemed all right, but my mother's nerves were never really right. I can remember her screaming aloud in terror for absolutely nothing. If somebody broke a plate, or made a noise unexpectedly, she would go as pale as chalk, and be ill for hours."

"I don't wonder," said Handforth sympathetically. "Some people never get over an awful shock like that—especially if they're highly strung."

"And then, when I was about five, that bomb crashed through our house, and mother thought I had been killed," said Harry. "The nursery was blown to atoms, but an aunt of mine had taken me to her own room to show me some toys, and mother didn't know anything about it. She thought I had been blown to bits, and she was injured herself, too. Father was out, and when he got home he found the house burnt to the ground, and mother unconscious. And—and when she came to herself, she—she—"

Harry choked and could say no more.

CHAPTER 13.

HANDFORTH'S SOUND ADVICE.

HANDFORTH was deeply impressed. It had been a tragic story, and Handforth's large heart was affected.

"You mean your mater was—was——"

"Yes!" whispered Harry. "The shock had turned her reason. The doctors said that an artery or something had gone, somewhere in her head—and it had affected the brain. You mustn't think she's a dangerous lunatic, or anything, Handy. She's not. But she's— Oh, well, I think you'll understand."

"Oh, rather!" said Handforth hastily.

For three or four minutes there was a silence. Harry was feeling so much better now.

"You fathead," said Handforth, at last.

"Eh?"

"I said that you're a fathead," replied Handforth. "I thought you were going to tell me something really disgraceful. There's nothing in that story to hide from anybody—"

"But I had to silence Addison," protested Harry. "I couldn't let him tell the whole school."

"Well, no," admitted Handforth. "Perhaps you're right. But how the dickens did Addison know?"

"I don't know, except that he's from Hampshire, the same as my people," replied Harry. "Perhaps he knew somebody from our country place. Not that it matters. I never worried myself about how he knew."

"There's something else," said Handforth, in a grim voice. "What the dickens do you



"Will you fight now?" asked Gresham ominously to pull off his coat. Handforth patted Gresham's shoulder and was going to shoot

mean by saying that you can't help being a coward?"

"It's in the blood——"

"Piffle!" interrupted Handy.

"It is!" insisted Harry. "I've inherited my mother's nervousness, and——"

"Don't talk rubbish!" said Handforth, in his blunt way. "Your mother isn't really dotty. It was an accident—on the top of her nervous trouble. Your mater wasn't nervous before she was in that railway accident!"

"I know she wasn't!"

"Then it can't be in the blood," declared Handforth. "There's no insanity in your family, is there? I mean, you haven't had any dotty grandfathers, or other ancestors?"

"No, of course not!"

"Then talk sense, instead of drivel!" said Edward Oswald. "Lady Gresham was affected by that bomb, and something went wrong with her brain. As for you being born with cowardice in you your talking out of the back of your neck! The fact is, you've been brooding over this idea for so many years that it's become an ob—an ob—something."

"An obsession?"

"That's the word," said Handforth. "It's



slaughter you!" yelled Forrest, and began the back. At last the funk of St. Frank's could fight!

become an obsession, my lad! Your nerves are as strong as iron, if you'll only get rid of this idiotic fancy. You've only got to make up your mind that you'll never give way to that weakness, and everything will be all right."

"I—I wish I could believe you," said Harry breathlessly.

"If you don't believe me, I'll biff you out of bed!" threatened Handforth. "You hopeless chump, there's nothing wrong with you! We've all been thinking you were a funk, and your only trouble is imagination! My lad, you've got to cut it out!"

"I'll—I'll try!"

"It's no good trying—you've got to do it!" said Handforth. "I'm jolly glad I've changed into your study. To-morrow we'll start lessons."

"Lessons?"

"In boxing. I'm going to make you a fighter!"

"But I can box already!"

"What!" snorted Handforth indignantly. "You can box, and yet you bunk as soon as anybody squares up to you?"

"That's because I'm—I'm——"

"Say it again, and I'll give you a lesson

in boxing now!" growled Handforth aggressively. "Who taught you boxing, anyhow?"

"My pater," said Harry. "He's won all sorts of championships, you know, and at my other school I was——"

"Well?"

"It sounds a bit like boasting, but I was miles ahead of any other chap there," said Harry. "Of course, it was only a preparatory school, and that was two years ago."

"And you've given it up since then?"

"No fear!" replied Harry promptly. "Why, I used to have a bout with my father practically every morning. I knocked him out once, too, I remember. I was pretty scared over it——"

"If you talk to me about being scared again, we'll have a quarrel!" said Handforth. "My goodness! A first-class cricketer—a champion boxer—and goodness knows what else—and you're sneered at by such cads as Forrest and Snipe and Long! Why, it's—it's disgusting! In fact, it can't go on! To-morrow, you've got to thrash the whole lot!"

"Oh, draw it mild!"

"The whole lot—one after the other!" insisted Handforth. "They're only a set of rotters, and you can settle their hashes within five minutes. After that, I'll see that you get back in the Eleven! You only need to pull yourself together, and there'll be no question of being a funk. It's just your mind, and nothing else. You've always thought that you were afraid of the dark and that your nerve was made of jelly, and you've knuckled under before you could even get going. From to-morrow onwards you've got to wash out that imagination stuff, and start living properly."

Harry breathed rather rapidly.

"Oh, if I could!" he whispered.

"You've got to promise me that you *will*!" insisted Handforth.

"I'll promise to try!" said Harry. "I'm awfully glad I've told you all this, Handy—you've made me feel heaps better!"

"And by this time next week, you won't know yourself," declared Edward Oswald. "You've only got to have one good fight—and win—and you'll get your nerve in no time. I'm not going to believe that you're a funk any more. Everybody thinks that you see things in the dark, and that you're like a nervous kid. They don't know that some rotter is trying to play on your imagination."

"It's a mystery," said Harry. "I can't imagine who can be doing it. The pater never told me of any enemy, or anybody who would want to drive me dotty."

"Drive you dotty?" said Handforth, with a start.

"Well, doesn't it look like it?" asked Harry. "Don't forget my mother—and that terrible imagination of mine. If I hadn't found out that this thing was a fake—or if Nipper hadn't found it out, rather—I should have thought it was just my fancy. And in

the end I might have gone clean off my rocker."

"H'm! Something in that," admitted Handforth. "Nipper's a pretty keen chap, when you come to think of it. He didn't believe that yarn of yours, when that beastly trickster appeared at your window. The first thing Nipper did was to look for marks—and he found 'em, too."

"Do you know, I think he must have put Mr. Lee on the track of things," said Harry thoughtfully. "I expect he told Mr. Lee what had happened and—"

"That's about it," agreed Handforth, nodding. "Mark my words, there'll be some developments, too. By George! What's that striking?"

They waited for the chimes to finish, and one note boomed out.

"One o'clock!" said Harry, startled. "Hadn't we better go to sleep?"

"Yes, rather!" said Handforth. "You'll need to be fresh to-morrow, my lad!"

"Why especially to-morrow?"

"You'll have about half a dozen fights on your hands," replied Handforth happily.



CHAPTER 14.

MORE ADVENTURES IN THE NIGHT!

WHEN Harry Gresham went to sleep, half an hour later, he was calm and peaceful in mind.

Until he had actually unburdened himself to Handforth, he hadn't realised what a relief it would be. And Handforth had given him some very sound advice. Warlike advice, perhaps, but that was only characteristic of him. However, it was just the kind of advice that Harry needed most.

It was all to the good, perhaps, that Handforth had temporarily taken Alec Duncan's place. Alec was a fine chap, and he would have sympathised profoundly. But he would not have urged Harry to such extremities as Handforth had done. And the warlike leader of Study D was undoubtedly right. A good fight, with plenty of hard blows, would do Harry a world of good.

For years he had been the prey to fancies and imaginings. The sooner he got that lumber out of his brain the better. It was only clogging his real character. One fight and it would be expelled for good. It only needed the turning point, and Harry's whole outlook would be different.

That turning point had been passed.

So he went to sleep with a feeling of great

peace over him, and with the sound of Handforth's ever-increasing snores in his ears. Edward Oswald had fallen asleep first, and he was just getting into his stride. He was occupying three parts of the bed, too.

Not that Harry minded. He didn't even notice it. He was perched rather precariously on one edge, but he had a portion of the pillow, and Handforth's snores were not half so bad as Church and McClure had facetiously made out. In fact, they sounded rather soothing to Harry—they throbbed on the air, and made him feel that there was no such thing as loneliness.

He was just dropping off to sleep when Handforth's right shot out, and caught Harry a terrific crash on the side of his head.

"That's it, old man!" mumbled Handforth. "Slosh him! Go it, Harry! Now give him one—"

"Hi, look out!" gasped Harry, shaking his companion's shoulder. "Steady with your fists, you ass!"

Handforth woke up, blinking.

"Was—was I dreaming?" he asked blankly.

"You were having a nightmare," growled Harry, rubbing his ear.

"Rats! I was dreaming that you were just smashing Forrest to pulp," said Handforth. "You silly ass! What did you want to wake me up for? I'll bet I shan't be able to finish it now!"

"I hope you won't, anyhow," said Harry. "If you must try to dream, try to dream about a tea-party, or something nice and peaceful like that."

Handforth grunted, and sprawled over on his back, leaving Harry with less room than ever in the bed. However, he was tired, and within a few minutes he was sleeping soundly. He knew nothing more until he suddenly awoke with a terrible pain in his back. It seemed to him that an earthquake had happened. He blinked, and found the moon shining serenely into the dormitory. Harry was on the floor, and his back was in agony.

"My hat!" he gasped.

He rose painfully to his feet, and looked at the bed. Handforth was on his side, doubled up like a pocket-knife, occupying the entire bed. It needed no vivid imagination on Harry's part to guess what had happened. Edward Oswald had obviously turned over in his sleep, and had heaved his unfortunate companion on to the floor.

For a moment Harry looked at him doubtfully. Then he turned, went to the window, and stood looking out. The night was very peaceful, and singularly mild. The moon was shining in the square, and hardly a breath of wind disturbed the air.

Harry felt a responsive note within him. He was peaceful, too. There wasn't the slightest trace of fear in him now. He looked out into the night without any qualms.

"I'll try to do what Handy advises," he murmured. "He believes in me, and I want to prove that he's right. All the same, I hope he'll go back to his own dormi-

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tory after to-night," he added, as he ruefully rubbed his back.

He got into bed again, pushing Handforth over with relentless energy. Handforth gave one or two grunts, mumbled something, but did not awaken.

Within five minutes Harry Gresham was asleep again. And within half an hour he picked himself up from the floor, rubbing his head. Handforth was snoring loudly, one foot overhanging the edge of the bed. This time, apparently, he had kicked Harry clean out.

"I can't stand this," muttered Harry, looking round. "What the dickens shall I do? He won't go back to his own dormitory — By Jove!"

An idea had occurred to him. There was an empty bed in Handforth's dormitory. Handy's bed. Fair exchange was no robbery! Handy had taken sole possession of Harry's, so why shouldn't Harry return the compliment? At all events, he would spend the rest of the night in peace.

He grinned, slipped to the door, and passed out. He went down the passage for two or three yards, and entered another room.

Church and McClure were sound asleep—enjoying one of the most restful nights they could remember for terms. And there was Handforth's bed—empty, and looking very attractive.

"Good egg!" murmured Harry.

In a minute he was cosily inside, and he slept happily.

For some reason Handforth awoke about half an hour before the rising bell was due to ring. Perhaps this was because he had recently been in the habit of getting up early for cricket practice. He sat up, yawned, looked round, and then stared.

"Hallo!" he said. "What the—— Why, this isn't——"

He broke off, and stared round in alarm. He knew that it wasn't his own dormitory, and full recollection had suddenly come to him.

"Hi, Harry!" he gasped. "Where the dickens——"

He looked under the bed. Harry Gresham wasn't there. He even looked into the cupboard, and by this time he was thoroughly awake.

"They've got him," he muttered tensely. "Oh, my goodness! They've got him, after all—and I was supposed to sleep with him to protect him! Great Scott! This is awful!"

It was characteristic of Handforth to jump to some melodramatic conclusion. He took it for granted that Harry had been kidnapped by a gang of crooks. Probably that queer marauder had come in during the night and had carried the unfortunate boy off. Anyhow, something had to be done about it.

Rushing out, Handforth went to his own dormitory, burst in, and swept the bedclothes off Church.

"Get up!" he snapped, pulling Church out of bed by one leg and dumping him on the floor like a sack of potatoes. "Harry Gresham's been kidnapped!"



CHAPTER 15.

A BOLT FROM THE BLUE!

CHURCH sat up, heavy with sleep and full of pain.

"What's happened?" he gasped. "Where are we?"

"Don't ask silly questions!" snapped Handforth. "Harry Gresham's been kidnapped!"

"Has he?" mumbled Church. "What's it got to do with me? How did I get on the floor here?" he added, in amazement.

"I just pulled out, of course!"

"You—you dangerous rotter!"

"Don't argue—get up!" snapped Handforth.

"And we thought we'd got rid of you for one night!" said Church bitterly, as he rose to his feet. "It's a pity you can't wake a chap decently, instead of trying to push him through the floor. So Gresham's been kidnapped, has he?" he added, with fierce indignation.

"Yes, he has!" roared Handforth.

"Then who's this?" said Church thickly.

Harry Gresham was just sitting up, awakened by the voices.

"Eh?" gasped Handforth, staring. "Why, you—you silly fathead, Gresham! What the dickens are you doing in my bed?"

Harry Gresham grinned.

"I've been sleeping in it," he said unnecessarily.

"What the dickens for?"

"I thought beds were made to sleep in," said Harry. "You seemed to think so last night, anyhow—judging by the way you slept in mine!"

"Oh, he collared your bed, did he?" said Church, with a nod. "Just what he would do!"

"We slept together!" said Handforth curtly.

"Pardon my correction; but you slept, and I spent half the night in being pitched on to the floor!" Harry pointed out. "I stood it for two or three hours, and then I thought it wasn't quite good enough. So I came and took your bed. Fair exchange, you know."

Handforth uttered a snort of disgust.

"And I thought you'd been kidnapped!" he said witheringly.

"I'm awfully sorry—I'll see what I can do next time," replied Harry, with a grin. "I suppose we'd better get up now."

"Couldn't do anything better," advised Church. "You'll get no more sleep, anyhow, once Handy's awake. Just our luck to get him back in this dormy! After Mac and I have been congratulating ourselves, too!"

"Congratulating yourselves?" repeated Handforth, staring.

"I—I mean, we were bemoaning our loss," said Church hastily. "You don't know how we've missed you, Handy. It's been simply wonderful—I should say, it's been simply awful——"

"Rats!" said Handforth. "You're still half-asleep, you fathead! And you don't know what you're talking about! You'd better get up while you're still safe! Help me to yank this lazy Mac out of bed!"

The unhappy McClure was hauled out, and Handforth stalked out of the dormitory, after warning his chums that there would be big trouble unless they were down within ten minutes.

Harry did not hurry himself. He didn't believe in rushing over his morning wash—although Handforth was quite satisfied with a mere minute at the basin. Handforth wasn't unclean, but he was a rapid worker. And long before any of the others were ready, he marched downstairs, to enjoy the morning sunshine and a breath of fresh air. Harry had promised to join him within ten minutes.

The rising bell was just ringing as Handforth descended the stairs. He was feeling good. It always pleased him to get down before any of the others.

But before he got to the lobby he halted on the stairs, and gave a grunt of indignation. A junior was standing down in the lobby, pulling the wrapper from a big news-

paper. He was Ulysses Spencer Adams, the American junior in the Remove.

"Of all the nerve!" said Handforth. "What the dickens are you doing down here before anybody else?"

Adams looked up, and grinned.

"I've put one over on you this time, Handy," he said cheerfully. "The American mail is in, so I thought I'd get down before the rest of you guys."

"Is that what you call the 'American mail'?" asked Handforth.

"Oh, I've got a couple of letters from my pop in my pocket, but I'll read them fully later," said Adams. "I was figuring to give this newspaper the once over."

"Newspaper?" said Handforth, staring at the great roll in Adams' hand. "My hat! I thought you'd got a year's supply there!"

"We print real newspapers in New York," said Adams easily. "Your English Sunday editions are sure punk. There's nothing to 'em, old scout. Just lamp this baby!"

He unfolded the huge newspaper.

"Baby?" repeated Handforth. "Oh, you mean that rag? Why the dickens can't you talk English? Those New York papers aren't fit to wrap up firewood in! They're practically all advertisements! You have to search each page with a microscope to find any news!"

"Gee! Take a look at this!" declared the New York boy, in defence of his home town. "Just peek at the sections. And all for ten cents!"

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"That's twopence-halfpenny, isn't it?" asked Handforth.

"My land! Is that a wise crack, or are you just dumb?" asked Adams with pity. "Ten cents is fivepence in your imitation money. This newspaper is a crackerjack!"

"Rats! It's not worth reading!"

"Aw, gee! You make me tired!" growled Adams. "Where do you get that stuff, anyway? See this?"

He detached the Magazine Section, and proceeded to enlarge upon its doubtful merits. The paper was unquestionably of full value when it came to quantity, but Handforth was not quite so certain of the quality.

And he was probably right. It wasn't one of New York's best Sunday editions. Some of these are undoubtedly excellent in every way. But this paper could hardly be placed in the "excellent" category. It was a journal of the sensational type.

Adams opened the Magazine Section—familiarly known by many as "the scandal sheet"—and pointed out the various articles. Handforth wasn't impressed. They were mainly about crime or society sensations. Some of the New York newspapers appear to be greatly interested in British and French high life.

"This is the stuff that gets over," said Adams with great pride, although he had a kind of feeling that this particular paper did not deserve his eulogy. "Have a look at this, kiddo! Ain't these headlines cute? There's one here— Say, what the— My land!"

He broke off, staring at the opened newspaper.

"For the love of Mike!" he added blankly. "What do you know about this?"

"I don't know anything—and I don't want to know anything—"

"Aw, but look!" urged Adams. "Lady Gresham—"

"What?" yelled Handforth.

"I guess that must be Gresham's family," continued Adams. "Gee, that poor sap won't like the look of this dope. The guy who wrote this stuff has sure spilled the beans!"

"Lemme look!" roared Handforth, grabbing the newspaper.

The thing was a bolt from the blue—something that Harry Gresham could never have anticipated. Here, in this New York newspaper, was this huge, two-page article, accompanied by lurid illustrations. The headlines were quite enough for Handforth:

"THE SAD CASE OF LADY GRESHAM

Why One of London's Most Popular Hostesses of Pre-war Days is Now Never Spoken of Except in Hushed Whispers.

TEN YEARS IN A LUNATIC ASYLUM!"

Handforth fairly quivered as he read those dramatic lines.

"My only hat!" he ejaculated at last.

"Some show-down!" grinned Adams. "Oh, boy! They're snappy in New York!"



CHAPTER 16.

HARRY'S HOUR OF AGONY!

HANDFORTH was staggered. It was so extraordinary. Harry Gresham had told him that secret during the night—and now, the very next morning, the whole school was liable to have it! It was a cruel trick of Fate.

Such an article, of course, would never have been printed in an English newspaper, and under ordinary circumstances this New York journal would never have entered St. Frank's. But Adams was an American boy, and he subscribed to this particular paper because he liked the Comic Section. He possessed the New Yorker's true love for these coloured comic cartoons. The rest of the paper didn't actually appeal to him, much as he boosted it up. Privately, indeed, he was contemptuous of the Magazine Section.

The article was in no way out of the ordinary for New York. Every little titbit of scandal is written up in one way or another, and presented to the public in a highly exaggerated, garish form. And British scandal seems to be the most popular of all—at least, where these third-rate journals are concerned.

And here was the truth about Harry Gresham's mother!

"It's infamous!" roared Handforth fiercely. "My hat! If you're going to boast about this, Adams, I'll smash you!"

"Say, listen—"

"It's a dirty trick to pick on Sir Stewart's misfortune, and make it public like this!" went on Handforth furiously. "You can't defend it, Adams!"

Adams gulped.

"You said a mouthful!" he agreed. "It sure is!"

"Oh, you admit it, then?"

"I'm a great little booster of New York," said Adams, "but I guess this kind of thing gets my goat. I give it the air, Handy—that's what I do! I guess we'd better burn this sheet!"

"Good man!" said Handforth with approval. "You've got more sense than I suspected! Look at it! 'It is said that Lady Gresham was the victim of a bomb explosion during the war, but it is well known in certain circles that the unfortunate lady was always eccentric. Sir Stewart had persistently attempted to hush this up—' Lies!" added Handforth fiercely.

"Say, you seem to know a lot?" asked Adams curiously.

"I know that the bulk of this article is a rotten lie!" retorted Handforth. "I'm going to burn—"

"Very interestin'," drawled a voice from the stairs. "By ga I suspected somethin' of the kind all along!"

Handforth spun round and saw Bernard Forrest. The Cad of the Remove was grinning maliciously, and Handforth stared at him with such helpless consternation that Forrest had taken the paper before he could prevent it. Eagerly he started to read. He had already seen those glaring headlines over Adams' shoulder from the stairs.

"This'll cause a bit of a sensation," grinned Forrest. "So we're harbourin' the son of a bally lunatic, are we? That explains it! The bally chap is probably loony himself!"

"Aw, cut it out!" said Adams, frowning. "You big stiff, hand that paper back to me! You've got a line on the dope already, and I guess that's all——"

"Just a minute," said Forrest. "There's a bit here——"

"Say, how do you get that way?" snapped Adams. "You've got a fierce nerve, I'll tell the world! That paper's mine——"

"By George!" burst out Handforth thunderously

He had suddenly awakened out of his momentary trance. Forrest had seen! Forrest knew this unhappy story about Harry's mother! And when Harry heard everybody talking, he might think that he—Handforth—had been letting out the secret! The very thought of that aroused Handforth to desperate action.

"You cad!" he shouted, leaping forward.

With one terrific punch, he knocked Forrest headlong, and grabbed at the newspaper.

"You dangerous lunatic!" shouted Forrest. "What the——"

"Stand out of the way!" panted Handforth.

He struck a match, and applied it to the offending Magazine Section. In a moment it was blazing up, and Handforth wasn't satisfied until the whole thing was in black ashes.

"Where' the rest of it?" he demanded.

"Say, this part's all right!" exclaimed Adams hastily, holding Forrest back.

"Lies—nothing but beastly, dirty lies!" roared Handforth. "If I ever see another of those rag Adams I'll tear it up!"

The American boy looked rather indignant, but he said nothing. In his heart, he knew that Handforth was justified. He made haste to escape before Edward Oswald could do further damage.

"You needn't think it'll be kept secret!" sneered Forrest. "I read most of it—and I'll soon tell the yarn! Son of a lunatic, eh? The chaps will be deucedly interested to hear——"

"If you breathe a word, I'll pulverise you!" shouted Handforth.

But it was too late.

As De Valerie Hubbard, and a number of other Removites came downstairs, the doorway filled with Fourth-Formers, including

Buster Boots, Armstrong, and a few others of that crowd.

"Listen, you chaps!" yelled Forrest. "I've just been reading an article about Gresham's mother. She's mad. She's been in a lunatic asylum for ten years! No wonder the chap looks scatty!"

"You—you rotten cur!" thundered Handforth.

"Hullo! What's the matter here?" asked Nipper, hurrying down.

"Keep that fool back!" panted Forrest, as he dodged behind a number of juniors. "I've just been reading an article in a New York paper. If you don't believe me, ask Adams! Handforth's squeamish, so he burnt it!"

"Gresham's mater!" said Armstrong. "In a lunatic asylum?"

"Yes!" jeered Forrest.

"I'm not surprised," said Gulliver, with a contemptuous laugh. "It's a funny thing we didn't think of it before! Anybody can tell that the chap is mad!"

"Rather!"

"He ought to be kicked out of the school!"

"Hear, hear!"

"We don't want lunatics here!"

They all streamed out into the Triangle, and as the juniors came down, they added themselves to the excited throng. Handforth could do nothing—and he had the sense to realise that it would be foolish to refute the story. That sort of thing would only make the fellows believe in it more, for they knew that he had "attached" himself to Gresham.

Harry himself came downstairs feeling happier than he had felt ever since he had arrived at St. Frank's. But he was brought up short half-way down the flight.

"Yah! Lunatic!"

"Here comes the son of a maniac!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look at the chap whose mother's in a mad-house!"

Harry went white as a sheet, and clutched at the balustrade.

"Don't take any notice!" exclaimed Reggie Pitt, running up. "It's only these cads who are making such a fuss! The worms! The rotten scandal-mongers! I'll smash the lot of them!"

"Thanks!" muttered Harry. "But—but——"

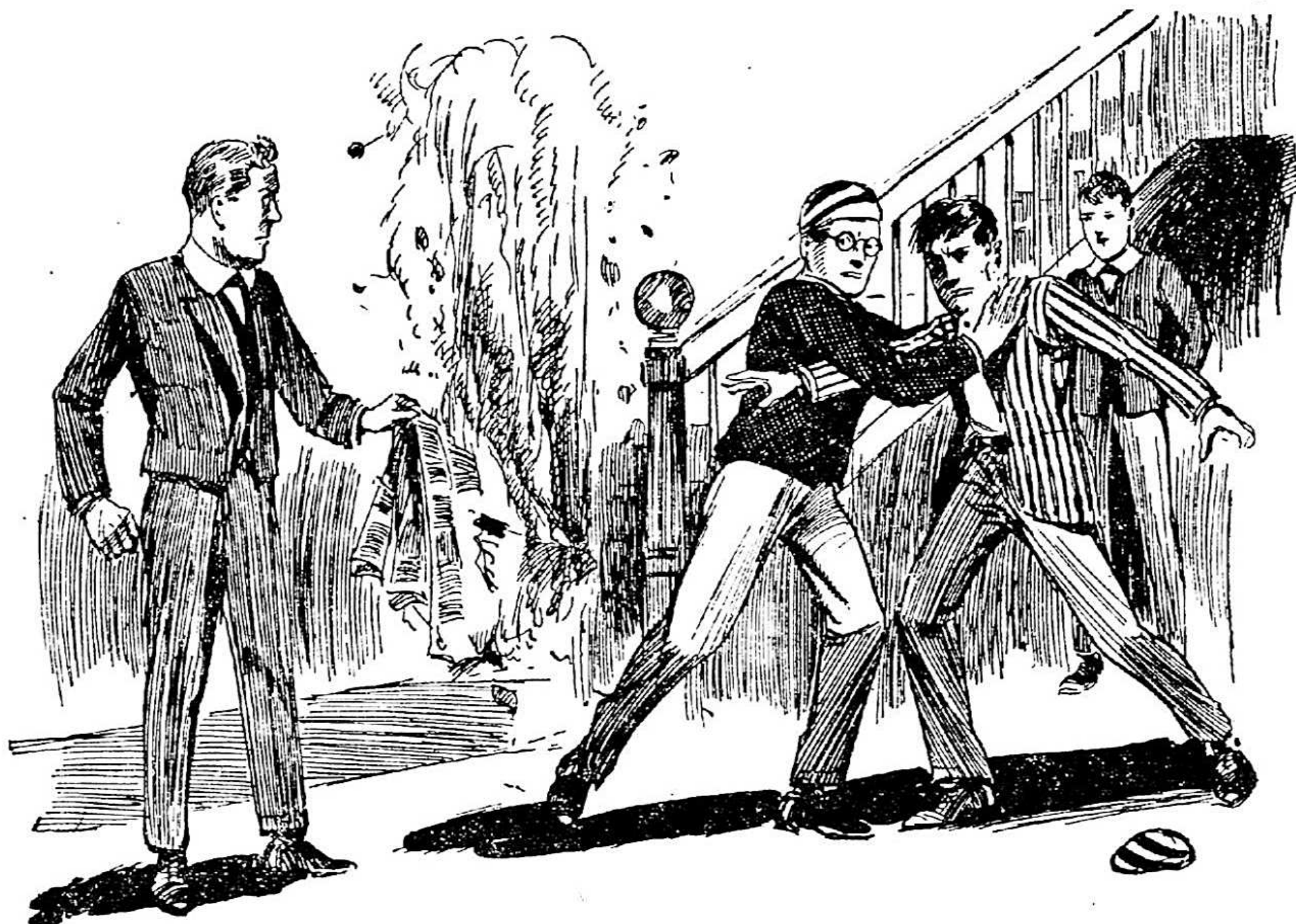
He couldn't go on. Handforth had just come in, and Harry was looking at him with agonised wonder. And Edward Oswald read the silent accusation in his eyes.

"I didn't breathe a word!" he said tensely.

"But—but they know!"

"It was a beastly New York paper!" explained Handforth, in desperation. "Adams received it this morning, and I've burnt it up! He's a decent chap, and he would have kept it mum—but that cad, Forrest, happened to see! And now it's all over the school!"

Harry looked relieved for a moment. It was good to hear that Handforth had not




Handforth struck a match and applied it to the American newspaper, while Adams held back Forrest. But it was too late. Already Forrest had seen those glaring headlines in the paper—and he meant to tell the whole school Harry Gresham's startling secret!

betrayed the secret. But he was filled with intense pain. After all his trouble to keep Addison quiet, the sheer accident of a newspaper article had revealed the unhappy family sorrow.

CHAPTER 17.

VISITORS FOR HARRY!



HARRY GRESHAM was bewildered—dazed. This thing had hit him like a blow, and it was all the more severe because he had previously been feeling so happy. It cast him back into the deepest depths of despair. It seemed to him that all his troubles had come back upon his shoulders trebly as heavy as they had been before.

He felt like unburdening himself to somebody—and now the whole school knew just as much as he had told Handforth! There was something tragic in the occurrence.

It must be said at once, however, that well over half the Removites and Fourth-Formers were silent. They were genuinely sorry for Harry Gresham. Only the cads and the nobodies enjoyed this unhappy situation. It struck them as being rich. It was something to talk about—something to discuss with

relish. Anything of an unpleasant nature always appealed to this section.

Forrest and Gulliver and Bell were the ringleaders. It was they who kept the ball rolling. The cads of Study A had started it, and they took care that the fresh wave of animosity against Harry should grow and flourish. They were down on him just because it amused their mean, contemptible natures. They had nothing against him, really—for he had never done them the slightest harm.

Handforth was more cut up than he could say.

"It was Forrest's doing—the vindictive beast!" he said, as he told Church and McClure all about it. "And the story isn't true, either."

"They wouldn't print a thing like that unless it was true, would they?" asked Church doubtfully. "Why, Harry's pater could prosecute them for libel!"

"Of course he couldn't!" said McClure. "The thing appeared in an American paper—and they're safe from libel over there. Personally, I think it's a lot of exaggerated piffle."

"So it is!" agreed Handforth. "I'm going to fight— Wait a minute, though. I've just thought of something!"

He hurried away and found Harry Gresham. Harry was just coming away from

the sanatorium, where he had been to see Alec Duncan. Alec was better, and Dr. Brett was satisfied that there would be no complications. Alec would probably be out and about again within a couple of days.

"I want you, Harry, my lad," said Handforth. "What about fighting these cads?"

"Fighting them?" said Harry. "Me?"

"Yes, you!"

"I promised to do my best, Handy, but I never said that I'd take on half the Junior School!" replied Harry quietly. "If I fight one, I shall have to fight the lot. They're all jeering—they're all saying contemptuous things about me and—and my mother!"

"But you can fight Forrest!" urged Handforth. "Forrest and those two contemptible pals of his! If you do that, the others'll tone down a bit. You've got to, Harry—you've got to!"

"I wish I could!" muttered Harry miserably.

"They're insulting your mother!" said Handforth staring at him. "Great Scott! You're not going to let them do that, and get away with it! You mustn't, Harry—it's too awful!"

"Give me time!" said Harry, taking a deep breath. "I'm all upset now, old man. I don't know where I am. I feel sort of dazed. I'll fight Forrest later on—yes, I'll fight him!" he added fiercely. "But give me time to get over it first!"

Handforth, who had begun to despair of him, bucked up again.

"That's certain, isn't it?" he asked.

"Yes," said Harry. "It's certain!"

"When?"

"Oh I don't know," said the new boy. "After lessons, perhaps I'd fight him now, only I'm afraid—"

"Afraid!"

"I mean, I'm afraid I'm not ready for it," replied Harry forlornly. "I feel so shaky—so awfully miserable. Handy. Wouldn't you? It's so unjust—it's so dirty! Is it my fault? Can I help my poor mother's affliction? It was caused by an accident."

"Don't, old man," pleaded Handforth. "You'll be better after lessons, perhaps—you'll feel a bit steadied. There's one consolation, anyhow—you can snap your fingers at Addison!"

"Yes," agreed Harry, nodding. "He can't extort money out of me now—I'm out of his hands. He doesn't know any more family secrets, the blackmailing cur!"

Handforth went indoors, and met Nipper and Reggie Pitt in the lobby.

"I've been giving the chaps a straight talking-to," said Nipper grimly. "Some of them say they won't do any more jeering, but I haven't much faith. Forrest's egging them on all the time, and he's trying to get up a movement to have Gresham booted out of the school."

"It's a filthy shame!" said Pitt.

"Gresham's going to fight Forrest," said Handforth.

"Oh, draw it mild!"

"All right—you'll see!" said Handforth, with complete confidence. "He's going to fight Forrest—and he'll win, too. I'd like him to start now, but he says he wants to pull himself together first."

"I say, is this true?" asked Nipper quickly.

"Absolutely! Honest Injun!"

"Then I wish him luck," said Nipper warmly. "But after his previous record the prospect isn't very hopeful. Forrest can fight, you know—he's no weakling."

"Gresham will carve him up," said Handforth confidently.

"He's doing the right thing, anyhow," said Pitt. "He'll be beneath everybody's contempt if he allows these rotten things to be said without doing anything to stand up for his mother."

"But he's quite right to wait a bit," said Nipper. "If he started a fight now, it might end in his being hounded out of the school by a whole mob. After lessons they'll be more settled, and a few of them will be feeling ashamed of themselves, I think. And by then Gresham will be more composed, too."

"That's what he says," agreed Handforth. "But if it was me, I'd smash Forrest now."

"We're not all like you, Handy," replied Nipper, smiling. "You could fight at any hour of the day or night, and in any circumstances, and enjoy it. It's your hobby. Harry's the kind of fellow who wants to have notice in advance."

Morning lessons were rather a nightmare for Harry. Mr. Crowell, however, who had heard rumours, was very kindly with him. And, by the same token, he was very curt with Forrest & Co.

Afterwards Harry didn't remember that morning at all. He didn't know whether he had done any work, or whether he had just sat like a dazed thing. His mind was dulled with agony.

And after lessons he went to his own study, and locked himself in. He knew he was causing pain to Handforth, but he couldn't help it. He wasn't ready to fight Forrest yet. He couldn't bear to come out into the open to hear those ill-natured taunts.

In the Triangle Bernard Forrest was getting up a meeting. He was supported by Teddy Long, Snipe, Merrell, Marriott and such-like rotters. The idea was to create such a noise that Harry would have to clear out of the school. They wanted to hound him off the premises.

"We don't want lunatics here," Forrest was saying. "I saw the whole thing in that paper, you chaps, and you can take it from me that it's the truth. Gresham's mater is as mad as a March hare!"

"Adams says she was knocked silly by a Zep bomb," said somebody.

"Rot!" jeered Forrest. "That's only a faked yarn. She's been mad all her life, and she was probably locked away in the padded cell because she got dangerous. This cad here is dotty, too—and we ought to get up

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a deputation to the Head to have him hoofed out!"

"Hear, hear!"

Nipper and Tommy Watson and a few others came towards the precious meeting, looking grim. They were certain of plenty of supporters if only they gave the signal. But Nipper was rather anxious to avoid a riotous scene if possible.

As it happened, a finely appointed limousine came gliding into the Triangle before he could interfere with the meeting. The big car came to a standstill, and a number of juniors collected round it out of curiosity. The meeting automatically ceased functioning for the moment.

A tall, soldierly figure stepped out of the car as the liveried chauffeur opened the door. Somebody gave a shout.

"It's Hat Trick Gresham!"

"Oh, my hat!" muttered Nipper, in agonised tones.

It seemed to him that nothing could have been more inopportune. If Sir Stewart heard any of the cads shouting their jeers, he would be mortified and shocked.

Sir Stewart was a changed man. When he had seen Harry off at Victoria Station he had looked careworn and sad. But now his eyes were bright, his face was alight with a happy smile, and his whole air was one of serene contentment.

A lady followed him out of the car—a sweet-faced lady of slim figure, and dressed

quietly and fashionably. She, too, was looking smiling and happy, and her eyes were full of intent expectancy.

"I can't see him, Stewart," she said, in a gentle voice. "Perhaps one of these boys can tell us where Harry is?"

She turned to Armstrong, who was nearest.

"Perhaps you know where my son is?" she asked smilingly.

"Your—your son, ma'am?" stammered Armstrong.

"I am Lady Gresham, and my son is Harry Gresham—in the Remove, I think," said the lady.



CHAPTER 18.

THANKS TO NELSON LEE!

LADY GRESHAM!

A sort of stunned silence fell on the crowd.

Lady Gresham!

And they had just been jeering at her—calling her a lunatic—contemptuously alluding to her as being off her rocker! And never had they seen a lady who was so obviously sane! And seldom had they seen a sweeter-faced lady, either. She was under forty, and looked younger—a splendid woman, in the very prime of life.

"Come, boys," said Sir Stewart, looking

round in surprise. "If you can tell us where we can find Harry——"

"He's—he's indoors, I think, sir," gasped Armstrong. "We—we thought—— I mean—— Oh, corks!"

He fled, and Nipper hurried forward.

"This way, Sir Stewart," he said briskly. "If you'll come with me, Lady Gresham, I'll take you straight to your son's study. But perhaps you would prefer to go to the Head first?"

"No, no!" said Lady Gresham quickly. "I want my boy!"

Nipper led them away, and the very instant they disappeared into the Ancient House a wave of remorse swept over ninety per cent of the juniors who had been taking part in the meeting. And it was a remorse which was tinged with rage. All the other fellows were frankly furious.

"Where's Forrest?" shouted Handforth, pushing through the mob. "Where's the cad who started that lying rumour?"

"You saw it in the paper yourself!" yelled Bernard Forrest, in alarm.

"Yes, and we've seen Lady Gresham!" shouted De Valerie.

"And she's one of the nicest ladies you could want to meet!"

"Rather!"

"As sane as anybody on earth!"

"It was all a lie about her being crazy!"

"Of course it was!"

Everybody was speaking at once. They all believed that Bernard Forrest had started the rumour maliciously. None of them had seen that newspaper, and they now believed that it was a myth. Just one of Forrest's dirty lies! The sudden, unexpected arrival of Lady Gresham had put a different complexion on the whole affair, and there was a kind of swift reaction. The fellows, instead of being hostile towards Harry, became friendly. Any fellow who had such ripping parents couldn't have much wrong with him!

As for the story of the lunatic asylum, that was killed on the instant. And Bernard Forrest was only saved from the ragging of his life by the fact that Sir Stewart and Lady Gresham were still in the Ancient House lobby. They had happened to meet Nelson Lee and Barry Stokes, and they were standing there, talking. It would never do to create a terrific commotion in the Triangle—and on such a subject—while Lady Gresham was within earshot.

So Forrest escaped.

"It's all right!" said Handforth, grinning happily. "By George! You wait and see what an effect this will have on Harry. Later on he'll knock Forrest inside out!"

"By jingo, I believe you!" said Nipper.

"It's only a question of time—and not very long, either," went on Handforth, with conviction. "I've never felt so jolly happy in all my life!"

Handforth didn't pretend to understand this miracle—for Harry himself had said that his mother was demented—but something had evidently happened. Something that Harry had been kept in ignorance of.

Just at this period, too, Handforth noticed something which gave him a bit of a start. Mr. Hubert Addison was walking out towards the gates, accompanied by Inspector Jameson, of the Bannington Police! Mr. Addison was talking airily, and nobody took much notice of the pair. But both Nipper and Handforth noticed a curious pallor about Addison's cheeks—and a still more significant grimness in the inspector's eye.

"He's pinched!" muttered Handforth, staring.

"You've hit it!" agreed Nipper. "This is the gov'nor's doing! And here comes Mr. Lee now. We'll have this straight at once!"

Nelson Lee had given one glance at the departing Addison, and there was a curious little smile on his lips when Nipper and Handforth ran up to him.

"Is he arrested, sir?"

"In a way, yes, Nipper," said Nelson Lee dryly. "The inspector may not proceed with the case, but I fancy we have seen the last of Mr. Addison—and the last of that mysterious prowler who has been attempting to frighten young Gresham."

"What?" ejaculated Handforth. "You mean it was Addison himself, sir?"

"Yes," replied Lee. "When I get the opportunity, I am going to tell Gresham all about it."

"Then you followed up that clue, sir?" asked Handforth.

"Why, yes," smiled Lee. "I can't give you the story here, boys, but I can tell you the gist of it in a few words. I have been making certain inquiries, and I understand that a great-uncle of Gresham's had left him a small fortune—not that he needs it, since his father, Sir Stewart, is a very rich man. Just a whim of the uncle's, of course."

"A fortune, sir?" repeated Nipper.

"Not a very considerable sum, as fortunes go, but quite sufficient to keep the impecunious Mr. Addison in luxury for the rest of his life," continued Lee. "You see, Addison is a very distant relation of Gresham's—so distant that they had never previously met. And Addison happens to be the actual next-of-kin to this great-uncle, if Gresham should die."

"Then the rotter's been trying to murder him!" gasped Handforth.

"You mustn't jump to conclusions, young man," said Lee, shaking his head. "If there had been any attempt at murder, Mr. Addison would not have walked out of these grounds as you saw him. No, the man isn't so bad as that—although, perhaps, in one sense, he is even worse. I believe he has been attempting to frighten the unfortunate boy out of his senses."

"Oh, the awful rotter, sir!" said Handforth.

"If he had driven Gresham out of his mind, the law would undoubtedly uphold his claim to the money," added Lee. "But I am doubtful if it is a chargeable offence. Addison, of course, hoped to accomplish his pur-

pose without a soul being the wiser, and people would have believed that the youngster had become demented through some natural cause.

"And knowing Harry's nervousness, sir, the rascal probably believed that a little judicious haunting would do the trick," said Nipper, nodding. "I suppose he took this situation on purpose?"

"Of course," said Lee. "He left a very good position in order to take it. I had a very straight talk with Mr. Addison this morning—after discovering a curious fur coat in his wardrobe——"

"A fur coat, sir!" said Handforth.

"A fur coat, with a sort of domino attachment," said Lee. "This thing had a painted mask on it, with false eyes. And I can well believe that it looked terrifying by night. Mr. Addison's little game is ended, though."

"But he was attacked by that thing last night, sir!" protested Handforth.

"A trick, my lad—in order to deceive Gresham," smiled Lee. "The thing was Addison all the time. Don't say anything about it among the others—and don't tell Gresham, either. I will do that, later."

He nodded, and walked away.

"Well," said Handforth, "everything seems to be coming right, doesn't it?"

CHAPTER 19.

THE GLORIOUS SURPRISE.

AP-TAP-TAP!

Harry Gresham looked up with tired, agonised eyes. He was sitting in the easy-chair in Study J,

and somebody was tapping at the door. His jaw set stubbornly.

"Go away!" he said huskily. "Can't you leave me alone?"

Of course, some of those rotters coming to taunt him! Who else? Handforth wouldn't have given a gentle tap like that. The very sound of it had been suspicious. It had been gentle, just to fool him—so that when he opened the door he would receive a chorus of c t-calls.

"Harry, my boy!" came a deep voice.

For one second Harry sat like a stone; then he leapt out of his chair, raced to the door, and flung it open.

"Dad!" he shouted joyously.

There was such a world of relief and pent-up gladness in his voice that Sir Stewart Gresham hardly knew what to say. He gently forced Harry into the room and closed the door.

"All right, Harry—all right!" he smiled.

"Oh, dad!" panted Harry. "I never wanted to see you so much before! Take me away—take me with you when you go home!"

"Why, what on earth——"

"They've found out about mother!" muttered Harry. "Somebody saw it in a rotten American paper, and all the cads have been taunting me!"

Sir Stewart's face became grim for a moment; then it cleared.

"Thank Heaven, it doesn't matter now!" he murmured. "I don't care what they say, Harry! My poor boy! You must have been going through a terrible time! Pull yourself together, Harry. I've got a surprise for you——"

Harry looked at him happily.

"You couldn't give me a better surprise than this, dad," he said. "You don't know how wonderful it is to have you here——"

"I'll give you a surprise that will make this one the most insignificant trifle!" said his father quietly. "Upon my soul, nothing could have been more opportune! It is providential that we came this morning."

"We, dad?"

"Harry, prepare yourself for what I am going to tell you," said his father. "Don't be afraid—it's a glorious surprise for you—but you must keep calm. Perhaps it was cruel of me not to warn you—but I wanted to be here when you knew."

"Knew what, dad?" asked Harry, wide-eyed.

"I have brought your mother to see you," replied Sir Stewart.

Harry stared at him, dazed.

"Mother!" he whispered. "Oh, but—but——"

Sir Stewart turned, softly opened the door, and made a motion to Mr. Beverley Stokes, who was standing out there, a few yards away, talking to Lady Gresham.

Harry wanted to run out of the study. His heart had begun to thump wildly. He was in a dream—he didn't know what to think. Then, before he could properly gather his wits together, his mother came into the room, and Sir Stewart closed the door.

"Harry!" cried Lady Gresham. "Oh, my boy—my boy!"

She ran forward and clutched him in her arms. Harry clung to her, looking up into her face with a kind of unbelieving happiness.

"Mother!" he sobbed. "Oh, it's you!"

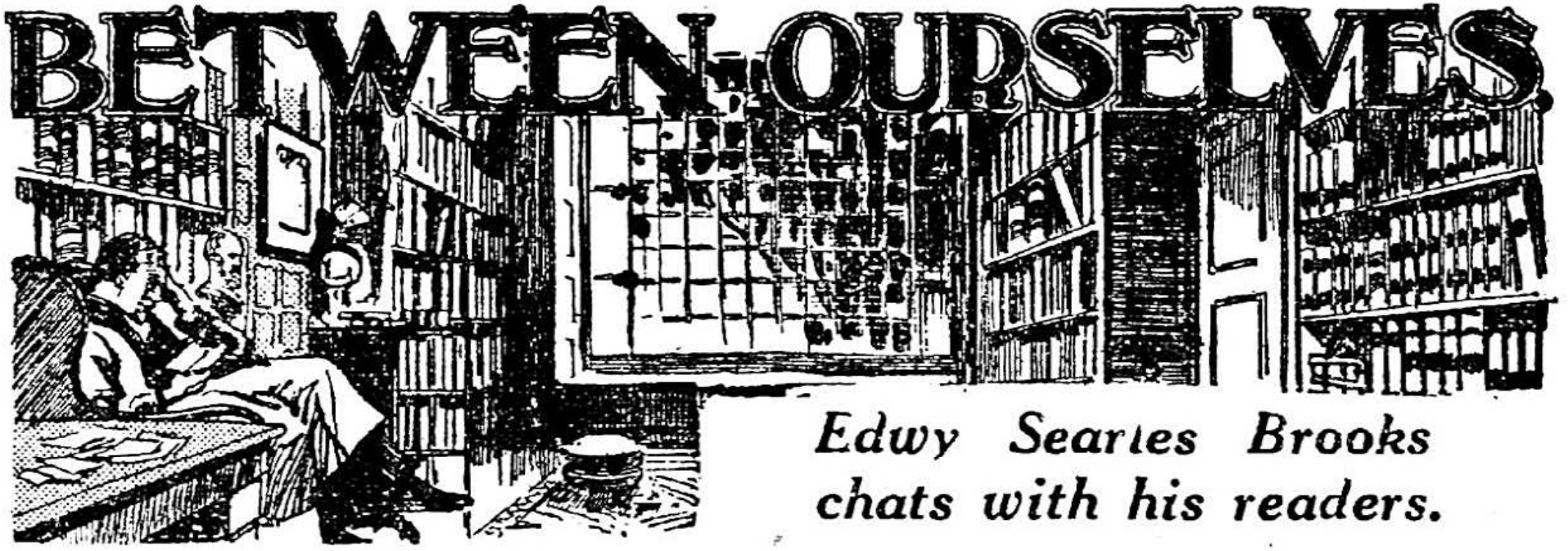
"Yes, darling," said his mother softly. "It was too bad of your father not to write and tell you long ago. He ought to have told you weeks ago—before you ever came to the school——"

"But mother!" panted Harry. "I—I——"

He didn't know what to say. He hadn't seen his mother since he was five years of age—for he had never been allowed to go to the "sanatorium." But he had known her in the first flash. His mind sped back over the years. He needed no photographs to remind him. His mother looked just as she looked when he had been five years

(Continued on page 35.)





*Edwy Searles Brooks
chats with his readers.*

NOTE.—If a reader writes to me, I shall be pleased to comment upon such remarks as are likely to interest the majority. All letters should be addressed to EDWY SEARLES BROOKS c/o The Editor, THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, LONDON. E.C.4 Every letter will have my personal attention, and all will be acknowledged in these columns. Letters of very special merit will be distinguished by a star, thus*, against the sender's name. Communications which indicate writer's age are naturally easier for me to answer.—E.S.B

J. R. Wilkinson* (Edmonton, Canada), Fred J. Potter* (Biggleswade), Fred Webster (Stockton-on-Tees), O. E. Griffiths (Watford), Maurice A. Noakes (Lachine, Canada), Arthur Lloyd (Ramsey, I.O.M.), C. A. Hinge (Margate), W. Parris (Eastbourne), Norah McGowan (Ilford), Terence Sullivan* (Birmingham), Charles Temple Browne—two letters (Lower Edmonton), P. Graham (Sheffield), J. R. Sanderson (Sheffield), Mrs. V. Adnum (Verdun, Canada), James A. Innes (Port Elizabeth, S.A.), "Ambitious" (Lower Edmonton), W. B. Armitage (Palmer's Green), Harry Rawle (W. Greenwich), Reg. Miles (Bournemouth), Leslie Richards* (Margate), Miss D. M. Harvey (W.1), Claude Stanley Taylor (Birmingham), E. H. Norwood (Lavender Hill), Frank Quenby (Nottingham), A. Roberts (Brigg), Walter Ewbank (Manchester), "E. F." (Middleton), M. H. Clanachan (Glasgow), J. W. Fisher (Highbury), W. L. Stevens (Hampstead), Ralph Sewell* (St. Ives), Sinclair R. Dobie (Eastbourne).

Yes, J. R. Wilkinson, I have visited Canada, and I was very interested in your wonderful country. Incidentally, the St. Frank's boys have been to Canada, too—in a long series that I wrote some years ago. As it happens, this series is appearing in "The Monster Library" for April, under the title of "St. Frank's in the Wild West." Perhaps you will be interested. And when you write next time don't forget to give me your first name, instead of only the initials. Other readers please note! How the dickens can I address you properly if I only have initials?

There are five houses at St. Frank's, O. E. Griffiths. But the School House is not a boarding-house, you know. Only lessons are done there, and so there is no Housemaster. Perhaps that's why you have been a little bit muddled.

Hussi Khan is still at St. Frank's, Maurice A. Noakes. We haven't heard much of him lately, I know, but he's there all right. I should have my work cut out if I tried to bring in every character in all the stories! In fact, they wouldn't be stories at all—for there would be so many characters for me to grapple with that the reading matter would be nothing but a long succession of names from start to finish! By the way, the more readers you can introduce, old man, the better. You've done famously, and you have my best thanks.

Thanks muchly for your sketch, James A. Innes. A wonderful piece of work—perhaps! If you notice a peculiar feebleness about my stories in the immediate future, you will know why! That drawing of yours has given me a terrible shock, and I am feeling a little weak in consequence.

In answer to your inquiries, W. L. Stevens, the Old Paper started as a Detective Story Weekly. Your assumption regarding the "Monster Library" is quite correct. As for your last query: Do I like writing the St. Frank's stories? Well, of course I do. I simply revel in writing them. There is plenty of hard work attached to the job, I assure you—but, after all, don't we get the greatest amount of pleasure from our work?

No space to give you a reply this week, Charles Temple Browne. Awfully sorry, but the Editor has severely rationed me in this number. But I shan't forget you next week.

HANDY CURES THE COWARD!



(Continued from page 33.)

old. Indeed, younger—healthier—and more radiant.

"Oh, my boy!" sobbed Lady Gresham. "You must come home with us. I can't leave you here, after seeing you only for a few hours. You must come home, for a week or two at least—until after Whitsun. Stewart, why didn't you tell me he had grown so big and wonderful?"

"I told you a thousand times, dear," smiled Sir Stewart.

"Oh, but, mother!" said Harry. "What does it mean? Father has always told me——"

"Yes, dear, it is quite true," said Lady Gresham. "Until three months ago I was demented. Why should I cloak my words? You know, so there is no need for us to be too sensitive about words. I was demented, and I only thought of you and father in occasional glimpses, through a kind of haze. Ten years! And it all seems like a day! I cannot believe that so many years have passed until I look at you, and see how you have grown!"

"There's not much to tell, Harry," said Sir Stewart, patting him on the shoulder. "For many years I have hoped that an operation would be possible, but there were certain reasons why it could not be attempted. The doctors were afraid that the results would be fatal. But at last—three months ago—the specialists decided. And your mother was operated upon."

"But you never told me, dad!" panted Harry.

"No," replied his father. "The doctors had been none too hopeful, and I did not wish to raise your own hopes unduly. I thought it better to say nothing—and to wait until the crisis was over. As it happened, the doctors met with amazing success."

"Oh, it's too wonderful!" said Harry.

"It was found that your mother was mentally affected by a ruptured artery near the brain," continued Sir Stewart. "The specialists even decided that your mother had never really been technically insane. And after the operation was over, the results were almost too good to be true. For not only is your mother fully recovered, but that

old nervousness of hers is a thing of the past."

"I am more healthy than I ever was in my life, dear," smiled Lady Gresham.

She was looking at Harry wonderingly—as though she couldn't believe her own eyes. True, Sir Stewart had shown her photographs of him, but she seemed to regard Harry in the flesh as something magical.

But at last, after ten minutes' more talk, they went away—Sir Stewart feeling that it would be better to let Harry quietly recover. Moreover, they had an appointment for luncheon with Dr. Stafford.

In the Ancient House the dinner-gong had already sounded, and everybody was in the dining-hall. As for Harry, he never gave a thought to dinner—and could not have eaten a bite, in any case. He was too full.

The change in him was startling.

His mother was well—sane—and even her old nervous trouble had gone! In some way Lady Gresham's newly found health found an echo in Harry. He knew positively, now, that he possessed no inherited weakness. For how could he have inherited a weakness which had never really existed?

It had been a case of auto-suggestion—mind over matter.

But that was gone—swept away as though by some great broom. The Harry Gresham who emerged from Study J was a Harry Gresham that St. Frank's had never seen!



CHAPTER 20.

JUST WHAT THEY DESERVED!

HANDFORTH ran into the Ancient House lobby, and pulled up short.

"Oh, there you are!" he said breathlessly. "Why didn't you come in to dinner, Gresham, you ass?"

"Dinner?" said Harry, as though he had never heard the word.

"And your mater!" said Handforth. "You told me——"

"I know—I know!" interrupted Harry. "But that's all wrong, Handy! My mother's had an operation, and she's healthier than ever! And I'm looking for Forrest! I want to know where Forrest is!"

Handforth recognised the symptoms.

"You're going to fight him?" he asked eagerly.

"I'm going to smash him up!" said Harry with quiet ferocity.

"Hurrah!" roared Handforth.

He grabbed Harry's hand, thumped him on the back, and then suddenly pulled himself up.

"By George!" he said, staring. "There's something happened to you!"

"I know it!" smiled Harry.

"You're different!" went on Handforth in amazement. "I'm dashed if you don't

(Continued on next page.)

look an inch taller! And there's a different look in your eye, too!"

"I've wiped away all the old cobwebs!" said Harry Gresham. "I've never been like this before, Handy—and it's a novelty to me. Do you know, there's only one thing I want to do just now—and that is to fight somebody! I want to fight—fight!"

"My only ha," gasped Handforth. "You have changed!"

He grasped Harry's arm and pulled him out into the Triangle. He left Harry in charge of Nipper, Archie Glenthorpe, and Tommy Watson. Then Handforth rushed round, gathering a huge crowd. Fighting in the Triangle was strictly forbidden, but Handforth had forgotten all about this, and Harry wasn't at all particular.

Bernard Forrest was dragged out forcibly, and the crowds in the Triangle were asking what all the excitement was about. All the animosity against Harry had died, and those fellows who had recently jeered at him were rather ashamed of themselves. But nobody was quite prepared for the dramatic surprise which followed.

"Here he is!" panted Handforth, as he pulled Forrest into the middle of the circle. "Have you fellows rounded up Gulliver, Beil, and Merrell, and Armstrong? Gresham's going to take them on one after the other!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You fool!" snarled Forrest, wrenching himself free. "Do you think I'm going to fight that funk, Gresham?"

"He's going to lick you!" roared Handforth.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Cheese it, Handy!"

"Draw it mild!"

The crowds were shouting rather indignantly. It seemed to them that Harry was being made the butt of a rather cruel sarcasm. But Harry soon disposed of this idea. He stepped up to Forrest and faced him.

"Put your fists up, Forrest!" he said grimly. "I'm going to fight you!"

"You crawling coward!" snarled Forrest. "I wouldn't demean myself by touchin'—"

Slap!

Harry's open palm came into violent contact with Forrest's cheek.

"Will you fight now?" he asked ominously.

"By gad!" yelled Forrest. "I'll slaughter you for that!"

"A fight—a fight!"

"Great Scott, the Funk's going to fight Forrest!"

"It's impossible!"

"Is it?" thundered Handforth. "You wait!"

It wasn't necessary to wait long. Forrest was lashing out at Harry with vicious fury. He regarded the new fellow with contempt, and he meant to put him in his place within the space of one minute. But, somehow, his whirling fists were swept aside, and some-

thing that felt like a sledge-hammer crashed into his face.

"Oh, that was a beauty!"

"Go it, Gresham!"

The crowds of juniors were yelling with wild excitement. And most of these had been bitterly opposed to Harry only a few hours earlier! They changed like a weathercock. Harry was showing them something new—and they revelled in it. He looked so different—he was cool, capable, and absolutely game.

Crash! Biff! Slam!

Forrest and Harry were fighting hammer and tongs, and the battle did not last long. Forrest could fight, but he was no match for this new edition of Harry Gresham. He went hurtling over backwards, and collapsed to the ground, a battered, dazed wreck. And Harry wasn't even marked.

"Next, please!" yelled Handforth.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And while the juniors cheered themselves hoarse, Harry proceeded to thrash Gulliver and Bell—and he was quite prepared to knock the stuffing out of Armstrong and Merrell, too.

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Gresham!"

"By jingo! He's made of the right stuff!"

Harry was panting hard, and he had never enjoyed himself so much before. He had conquered! He had found that his cowardice was a fraud and a fake, and he had discovered his real self.

Before the slaughter could be thoroughly finished, a couple of prefects arrived on the scene, politely inquiring what all the noise was about. And the crowds hastily dispersed.

Handforth thumped Gresham heartily on the back.

"You'll do, my lad!" he said, grinning.

"Rather!" said Nipper. "And your name goes on the Junior Eleven list again, Gresham. Somehow I don't think there'll be any fuss this time!"

"There'll be a fuss if his name doesn't go on the list!" said Reggie Pitt pointedly.

"Come on!" yelled Handforth. "You've got to come to the Moor View School, Harry—I want to tell Irene & Co. all about it!"

Harry Gresham was bewildered. He hardly knew whether he was on his head or his heels. But amid all this confusion of thought, one fact stood out in his brain with crystal clarity.

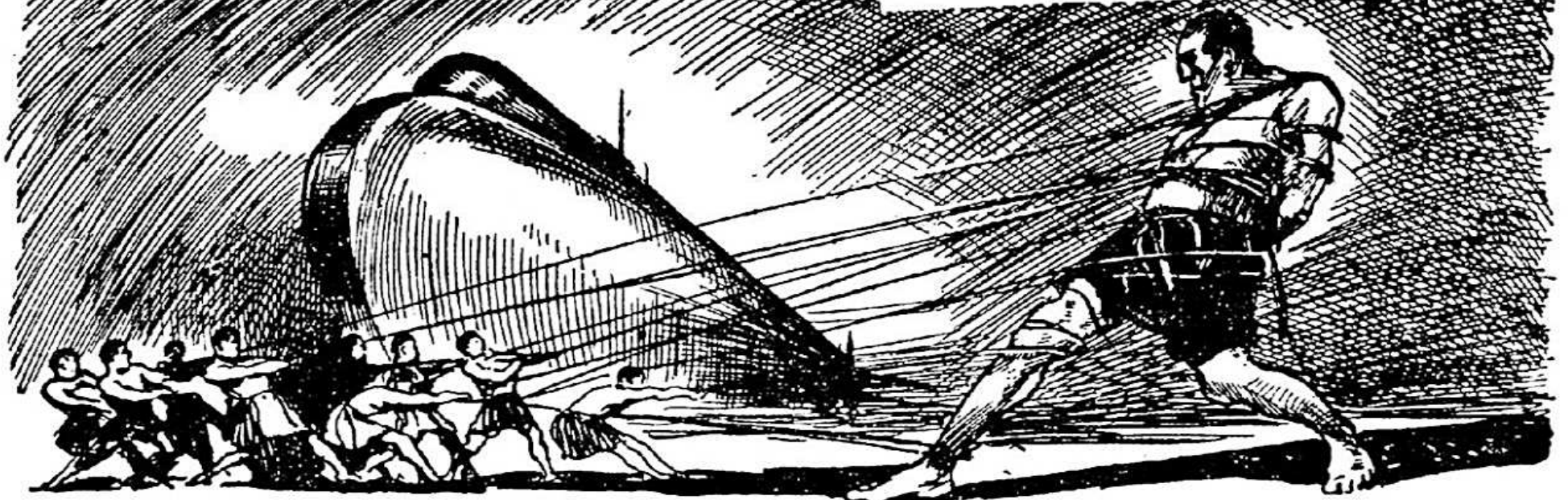
He had done with cowardice for ever—he had found himself!

THE END.

(Next week's opening story of a grand new series is entitled "THE FRESH AIR FIENDS!" and this is one of the best Edwy Searles Brooks has ever given us. No lessons at St. Frank's—no tight-fitting Etons—nothing but fresh air! All the juniors get bitten by the stunning new wheeze, and Handy is, of course, well to the fore. You'll thoroughly enjoy this ripping yarn, so order your copy of the N. L. L. NOW!)

The BURIED WORLD!

By LIONEL DAY



INTRODUCTION.

Jim Maitland lives in a small shop in Stagmore. A mysterious man named Stanislaus Cripps owes money to the shop, and Jim determines to collect it. He climbs over the wall of Widgery Dene—Cripps' estate—and drops into the grounds. There he finds an amazing machine which is something between a submarine and an airship. Mr. Cripps is on board and Jim asks him for the money. The man refuses to pay, and before Jim realises it he finds the machine in the air! It travels half over the world, then dives into the ocean. It reaches the bottom, and then, instead of resting on the bed continues going downwards? It is then floating on the surface of an underground river, and Mr. Cripps explains that there must be a sort of leak in the ocean bed and they are being sucked down to the centre of the earth. They stop the machine and come on deck. But as they appear they are captured by several

amazing giants who fall on them from the shore. Jim escapes and later saves the life of a little man called Masra. In return Masra and his daughter Tinta let him live with them. Jim finds himself among a colony of dwarf men who are called the Kru people. They are at enmity with the Giants. Jim, accompanied by Masra and Tinta, rescue Mr. Cripps. To do this Masra has to desert from the Kru people. The four set out on a journey to the Cave of Fire, where dwells He-Whose-Name-May-Not-Be-Spoken, the mysterious personage who rules the Kru. He tries to kill Tinta and Cripps, to save her life, is forced to shoot him. The four intrepid adventurers then prepare for the return, but find that they have only got one day's rations for a four days' journey! "The longer we stay here the hungrier we shall be, so we'd best be moving!" exclaims Cripps.

(Now read on.)

The Return Journey!

STANISLAUS CRIPPS looked round regretfully. "I think I must spare half an hour to inspect this place," he said. "Strange when you come to think of it, boy, HE living here all these thousands of years, and charging himself from day to day from the column of fire."

He paused a moment reflectively.

"I was thinking, boy, that as that column of fire is a substitute for food and drink, we might charge ourselves with sufficient energy to make the journey to the gate. But it's too big a risk. HE was able to take the bath regularly. We should only be able to take it once, and when the energy began to disperse, it would probably leave us in a worse state than we were before. I think not boy."

Cripps sprang from his chair, and, striding across the floor, pulled back the curtain. Beyond was yet another chamber, empty save for a couch and a huge box made of some curious inlaid wood.

As Stanislaus Cripps raised the lid, part of the woodwork dissolved into fine powder in his hands, and examining it, he saw that there were innumerable holes in it, not unlike those fretted

by a moth in a garment. Inside the box there was nothing but layers and layers of dust.

"I expect HE rescued these things from the great catastrophe," Cripps exclaimed. "HE outlived them. They grew old and decayed while HE lived on in perpetual youth. There's nothing here, boy, that we need waste our time on."

With one last look at that rocky apartment where they had undergone such amazing experiences, the four intrepid adventurers turned their faces to the entrance to the Cave of Fires. Once during their journey, the great column of fire came rushing and rumbling past them.

Tinta who was the only one of the party who was not wearing a diving dress, had been dragging along wearily as if her strength were almost spent; but when the column of fire had past, she turned to Jim with a radiant smile.

"Oh, Krim, all my weariness has gone. Strength has come back to me!"

"Lucky for you, my dear," Stanislaus Cripps exclaimed, overhearing the remark. "You'll want it all before we're through."

They gained the exit to the Cave of Fires at last, then passed out into that spiral tunnel beyond. The bag with their provisions was lying there on the ground. One glance at it showed them that Tinta's estimate of their stores had been somewhat optimistic. There was hardly

more than enough for half a day—and four days journey lay before them!

"We'll divide it up," Stanislaus Cripps exclaimed. "Each must carry his share and eat as discretion suggests. My advice is to do without food—or as long as possible."

Of the water they had brought with them, only one bottle remained. Stanislaus Cripps took possession of this

"I'll serve out the rations," he exclaimed. "I'm afraid we shall all be somewhat thirsty before we finish the climb!"

A Living Tomb?

AND the began a march which Jim was never to forget. For the first day it was fairly endurable, and after they had slept and rested and nibbled at their rations, the first hour of the second day was passable. But then the strain began to tell.

The sight of the spiral slope ahead of them, with its suggestion of never coming to an end, was almost maddening, and they had to climb and climb till their backs and legs ached, and the sweat poured down their foreheads.

Then thirst began to attack them. On the third day Jim found himself filled with an unreasoning hatred of Stanislaus Cripps. He suspected him of drinking the water secretly. More than once he was tempted to accuse him of this treachery, until he found Cripps giving his own ration to Tinta. A feeling of shame swept over Jim then and his angry suspicions vanished in a sudden desire to cry

"My dear you'll drink that and do as you're told," he heard Stanislaus Cripps exclaim. "Your need is greater than mine. I can at least divert my attentions from these physical inconveniences by mathematical calculations and scientific speculations. You have not the same gift, my dear"

The scientist ran his fingers through his beard, for they had taken off their diving suits to enable them to walk easier.

"But drink it up quick, Tinta, because my mouth is so parched that I might be tempted to want it back."

By the end of the third day the food had run out; and if their calculations were right they were still twenty-four hours from the gateway!

Stanislaus Cripps was staggering like a drunken man when they began the last lap of their terrible journey. Masra, his body bent, his eyes fixed on the ground, followed in his wake. Tinta alone seemed to still possess some energy

As for Jim he saw the three figures of his companions in front of him, as through a mist. His heart was beating painfully, and he was dizzy and faint. Only instinct seemed to keep him automatically climbing upwards. Suddenly he heard Stanislaus Cripps' voice, raised in some ribald ballad.

"Show me the way to go home,
I'm tired and I want to go to bed!"

Jim heard himself laugh hysterically. If Stanislaus Cripps were reduced to singing comic songs, his plight must be bad indeed. He tried to join in but his dried tongue and lips refused to utter any sound.

Presently, though still keeping his feet, he fell into a kind of lethargy, walking automatically, once reeling so violently against the wall that he hurt himself. He remembered looking stupidly at some blood on his hands, and then again that lethargy settled down on him. He was roused by a shout.

"Boy, we have arrived!" Stanislaus Cripps shouted.

The effect of those words on all of them was extraordinary. But a moment before they had been dropping with hunger and thirst and weariness, hardly able to set one foot before another. Now they began to run. Jim remembered drawing level with Tinta and racing with her side by side up the last of the slope. There was the door!

They flung themselves at it, beating at it with their hands, shouting at the top of their voices, but that great mass of stone never moved, and there was no answer to their cry. With a sob Jim sank to the ground. They were there in a living tomb from which they could never hope to escape!

The End of Everything?

THE red, sulphurous glow of the atmosphere seemed to dissolve into myriad specks of light, like drops of blood. The vaulted roof faded away into the distance. Everything about Jim grew remote, unsubstantial and unreal. Even Tinta's face, as she lay across his knee with her eyes closed, had the semblance of a painted picture.

He was dying. Jim told himself. This must be the torpor that, he had read somewhere, preceded dissolution. They had had all this monstrous journey for nothing. Better a thousand times if HE had put them painlessly to death in his rocky chamber in the Cave of Fires.

Why had they sweated and endured all these privations—tortured themselves with hopes that they had always known could never be realised? That long, nightmare trek was over; they had reached their goal at last; they were at the stone gates—and they were closed, sealed, as he had always known they would be!

His business now was to die—to get rid of this body of his that was so parched and weary, with as little delay as possible. Life was insupportable. He had no desire to prolong the agony of dying there in that tomb a moment more than was necessary.

Through that rain of blood drops he caught a glimpse of Masra's face. He was lying there on the floor with Tinta's hand pressed to his swollen lips—a mute, pathetic appeal in his eyes. He, too, wanted the end to be swift for the sake of her who was all in all to him.

"Good-bye, Masra," Jim whispered. "Good-bye!"

He wanted to say something to Tinta, but he couldn't remember what it was he wanted to say. A great blankness seemed to have fallen on his brain his thoughts refused to function in any ordered sequence.

Now he was wondering whether the lists were out and he had passed the London Matric; now he was chasing the Flying Submarine with Gra. Now he was patrol leader of the 1st Stagmore Troop of Boy Scouts, learning signalling on the hills with a flash lamp. Now he was helping his mother to wash up after tea—

Suddenly there dawned upon his senses what seemed a vast volume of sound. For a while he could make neither head nor tale of it, and then, little by little, out of that confused medley definite words reached his senses.

"And wherever I may roam,
O'er land or sea or foam,
You can always hear me singing this song,
Show me the way to go home."

It was Stanislaus Cripps, singing apparently the only song he knew. Jim shifted wearily on his elbow and looked round.

Stanislaus Cripps, with his coat and waistcoat off, was kneeling on the ground, chipping at the

base of the revolving door with the long, dagger-like knife that he carried in the belt about his waist.

Now and again, with a feeble gesture of impatience, he swept his long red beard aside, as if it got in the way of what he was doing. Cripps was mad, of course, Jim told himself. They were all mad. It was a veritable Bedlam, and they were locked up in this rocky cell for ever and ever and ever!

But Stanislaus Cripps must be the maddest of them all. Otherwise, why should he be trying such an absurd thing as to cut his way through the rock door with that flimsy knife? And he was so weak that he could hardly handle the knife.

Still he went on singing with monotonous determination the chorus of "Show me the way to go home," until the reiteration became almost maddening. Why couldn't they all die in peace?

Suddenly Jim found himself staring into Stanislaus Cripps' eyes. For a moment they gazed fixedly at one another, and then, looking very absurd in his shirt sleeves, Stanislaus Cripps moistened his parched lips.

"Concentrate, boy. It is ridiculous that man's mind cannot rise superior to his wretched body. If we have to go down, let's go down fighting like intelligent creatures. Come and help."

Jim watched him for a moment, and then, with an effort, drew his legs gently from under Tinta's head and dragged himself painfully across to Stanislaus Cripps' side.

"You've got a knife, boy—help me!"

Jim took the knife from his belt and, imitating the other's movements, began to pick at a little section of the stone. He did not know what he was doing or why he was doing it, but somehow the very act of doing it lifted some of the clouds from his brain.

Bit by bit the stone came away in flakes. After what seemed an interminable time, they had made a hole nearly eight inches deep. Stanislaus Cripps sat back, passing a hand across his perspiring forehead. It was clear that he was physically exhausted.

"Got to do it, boy. The will is what matters. I'll make this body of mine work!" He gave an eerie laugh. "Engine only sparking on three plugs, but I'll make it do the job."

Their Last Hope!

As he finished speaking, he drew his revolver, and, opening the magazine, extracted two cartridges. One of these he fitted into the hole they had made; the other he proceeded to slit open with his knife, working very cautiously and slowly, pausing every now and again to moisten his lips and draw the air into his lungs.

Jim could see that his hands were trembling. Now the cartridge was open. Very gingerly Cripps poured the fine white powder it contained into the palm of his hand.

"Boy—get—paper. Pocket of my coat. Daren't move—might tumble—blow us all to blazes!"

The coat seemed a long way off, though in actual fact the distance was not more than a yard. Somehow Jim got to it.

The breast pocket was bulging with papers. As he drew them out he saw that they were a collection of bills, solicitors' letters, and demands for arrears of interest from banks and money-lenders. He crawled back with the bundle to Stanislaus Cripps' side.

"Make cone—like mother—serves sugar in—boy."

Jim took a letter which began: "As no notice has been taken of our frequent applications for the payment of our client's account—" and

with infinite labour twisted it into the familiar cone that he had so often seen his mother pack up sugar in for a customer. This he handed to Stanislaus Cripps.

"Put your hands on my head, boy, and hold it tight. I might faint."

Jim, raising himself with difficulty, pressed his fevered hands to his companion's throbbing temples. He felt Stanislaus Cripps' body stiffen, and then, very slowly, with infinite patience, he decanted that fine white powder from the palm of his left hand into the paper cone which he held in his right.

"Nearly done, boy," he gasped. "Triumph of mind over matter—will to win. Stanislaus Cripps dies but never surrenders. Bunk—"

Uttering those incoherent words, he leaned forward and gently lowered the end of the paper cone into the hole.

"Want string—bit of stone," he gasped, and then picked up one of the flakes that they had chipped away with their knives. "This will do for weight-detonator. Want string, boy; boot-laces no use—not long enough. Let's get right away back—hundred yards."

He glanced around him with bloodshot eyes. His gaze lighted on the empty bag which had contained the food.

"That's the very thing."

He reached out his hand and pulled it towards him. It was made of the fibre obtained from some of the giant fungi of the Inner Cavern, like all the materials used by the Kru. Slitting it up into sections with his knife, which he further separated with his fingers, he had soon a number of fine strips each about three feet long. Motioning to Jim to help him, he began to knot these together into a long rope.

"Do fine, boy," he muttered.

Taking up the flake of rock he had selected, he tied it to one end of this rope, balancing it on the far side of the hole so that the merest jerk would cause it to drop into the hole and down upon the powder in the paper cone.

But these exertions, trifling as they were, told heavily upon Cripps' exhausted strength. Behind his mass of tangled red hair, his cheeks were the colour of parchment. But his indomitable will held.

"We've got to do it, boy. Never say die. Get Tinta and Masra out of the way—right down there. I'm going with the rope."

Breathing heavily, he began to crawl back down that spiral slope, cautiously paying out the rope as he went. Jim crept to Tinta's side, and taking her by the shoulders, shook her.

"Tinta, you've got to come," he exclaimed.

She opened her eyes wearily.

"Oh, Krim, let me die," she gasped.

"We may be able to get out after all, Tinta. Mr. Cripps is trying a plan, and it won't be safe for you to stay here. You must come back down the slope."

"But he cannot break the gates that He-Whose-Name-May-Not-Be-Spoken has closed," she answered. "And I am very weary, O Krim!"

"He thinks he can, Tinta," Jim exclaimed with an effort, then added after a pause, not believing a word of what he said, "I think he can, too. You must try and move, Tinta. It is only a little distance. For my sake, Tinta, make just one effort."

A smile that was infinitely pathetic lit up her wan face. As if that appeal was the only one that had the power to rouse her from the torpor of exhaustion, she turned feebly on to her hands and knees and began to crawl down the slope. Fortunately there was no need to say anything to Masra. He followed his daughter instantly.

Crawling one behind the other, stopping every now and again to rest, they at last reached the

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spot where Stanislaus Cripps was sitting with his back against the wall. His head had sank forward on his chest, and his eyes were closed. In one hand he held the end of the rope.

"Mr. Cripps" Jim exclaimed, laying his hand on his shoulder. "Mr. Cripps, we're all here."

Stanislaus Cripps drowsily opened his eyes and looked with an expressionless glance at the boy.

"We're all together again? We're here, we're here," he chanted. "Time to go to sleep, boy!"

His eyes closed again, and his chin sank back on his chest. Jim realised that the man upon whom all their fates depended was coming very near to failing them. In spite of his immense will power his body refused to respond. And yet he must be roused. There must be some plan that he had formed—some plan that still remained to be executed.

Jim did the only thing he could think of. He thrust his fingers into that matted red beard, and tugged at it with all his might.

The effect on Stanislaus Cripps was instantaneous. He opened his eyes, and Jim saw that they gleamed now with the light of madness. He drew up his legs as if to spring to his feet, and as he did so he jerked the string.

The next moment a titanic roar broke upon their deafened ears. The ground beneath them shook. There was a sound of rending stone, and then a vast volume of hot air bore down upon them, crushing them to the floor.

Jim heard Tinta call out his name with a wail of terror. He saw Stanislaus Cripps, on his feet now, supporting himself by the wall. A great wind was rushing up from below, making his long beard stream like the tail of a kite in front of his face; and then, as the echoes of that tumult died away, he heard his booming voice:

"Done it, boy, done it! The gates are down! Food—water! Come—"

Water at Last!

JIM slowly twisted round his body and stared up the spiral slope. Even then he could not believe that what Stanislaus Cripps had said was a fact. It was the hallucination of delirium. They were all mad,

and they were seeing things. And yet—where there had been the great revolving slab of stone that hermetically sealed the entrance to the road leading to the Cave of Fires, was a great jagged hole, beyond which he could see the lighted corridor of the Inner Cavern!

"Tinta, Masra—you know the way. Show us where we can get water and food."

Stanislaus Cripps was speaking, and as he spoke he clasped Tinta by the arm and half dragged her to her feet.

"Girl, we are nearly spent. Show us the way to water and food."

With a cry of wonder Masra and Tinta staggered to their feet, and clinging to the wall, began to drag themselves upwards, Stanislaus Cripps and Jim following. Now they had reached the spot where once the gate had stood.

They could see the effects of that tremendous explosion. The whole rock was gone—disintegrated into dust—and the cavity in which it had previously swung was torn and splintered and gashed. Another moment and they were across the threshold.

Jim heard himself give a little sobbing laugh. Almost it was like being at home again, to see once more those familiar corridors lit by the hanging lamps, and to know that they had set foot in the Inner Cavern. Stanislaus Cripps, ahead of him was repeating again and again just two words:

"Water—food—"

They staggered onwards, their bodies, which had a moment before seemed so utterly feeble and exhausted, strengthened and revived by their miraculous escape. They had gone some hundred yards when Tinta turned swiftly to the left, and dropped on her knees.

By the light of the lamp above her head, they could see that she was kneeling before a hollowed basin in the rock that was filled with water. With a cry they closed about her, and like cattle at a drinking pool, set their lips to that precious liquid.

For a while nothing could be heard save the suction of their mouths as they drank greedily.

When they had taken their fill, they bathed their heads and faces; then, dripping with water they rose to their feet, wonderfully refreshed.

"Now, Tinta, food, my dear," Stanislaus Cripps exclaimed, his voice resounding with its old boom. "Where is the Cave of the Mushrooms? Take me to it, girl, and leave me there to browse—for some weeks!"

But to gain the Cave of Mushrooms they had to pass through one of those sections of the Inner Cavern where that portion of the Kru live during their period of duty in milking the cattle and gathering the food. Tinta pointed out this fact to Stanislaus Cripps.

"Remember, O Hairy One, that we are outcasts. Our lives are forfeit, He-Whose-Name-May-Not-Be-Spoken has given judgment against us."

"My dear a! that is over and done for. He-Whose-Name-May-Not-Be-Spoken has gone west. He's a mere electric disturbance. As an entity he no longer exists. Show me the way; I will lead you and see that no harm comes to you."

Masra Mystified!

HE indicated the corridor down which they must pass, whereat Stanislaus Cripps, boldly thrusting himself at the head of the party, followed the course she pointed out. There on either side of them were the curtained doorways of the rocky homes in which the Kru lived. Of their occupants there was not a sign. Presently upon their nostrils there broke the intoxicating scent of mushrooms seethed in milk. Stanislaus Cripps halted.

"Boy, it smells good," he boomed. "It's more than human nature can stand to smell that and not eat it. As there's no one there to invite us we must make bold and solicit an invitation."

As he spoke he drew back one of those curtains. Beyond was an apartment familiar enough in form to Jim. There was the couch on which the owner slept. There were the strange paintings on the walls. There was the coal fire in the centre of the floor. And over the fire was a big yellow vessel from which steam was emerging. On the floor by the side of the fire were a number of metal plates and the curious chopstick-like implements which the Kru employed to transfer food to their mouths.

"As nobody seems to be at home, we will dine without waiting for an invitation," Stanislaus Cripps remarked. "Let us eat, for the love of Mike!"

Taking the vessel off the fire, he decanted its contents into the plates. Then, seated cross-legged on the ground, they began to eat in silence. For five minutes not a sound was heard save the movement of their jaws. Then Stanislaus Cripps looked into the cooking vessel, saw that it was empty, sighed resignedly, and rose to his feet.

"I feel a new man, boy. All that I require now is sleep."

There were three couches in the room, covered with that wonderful silk-like fabric that the Kru made.

"As a precaution, boy, we will take it in turn to mount guard. Until we have had an opportunity of testing the political situation created by the regrettable passing of He-Whose-Name-May-Not-Be-Spoken, it would be as well to err on the safe side. I will take the first hour. Masra shall take the second, and you, boy, can take the third."

As Jim thankfully laid his head down on the couch and curled himself up, he saw Stanislaus Cripps don his diving suit. Then, as his head touched the pillow, sleep descended upon him. He was roused from that dreamy slumber only a moment later. It seemed to him, by a touch on

his shoulder. Looking up he saw Masra in his diving suit standing by his side.

"I have awakened you, O Krim, even as the Hairy One told me to."

Jim sprang out of bed, sleepily rubbing his eyes. Stanislaus Cripps, he saw, was stretched on the couch next to him, snoring stentorously.

"And the Hairy One said, O Krim, that you were to put on the Shining clothes," continued Masra. "If the Kru were to return, they might come with their liquid fire and we would be destroyed."

"Have you seen anybody, Masra?" Jim inquired as he began to don his diving suit.

"No one, Krim. It is very strange. According to our law and custom, it is forbidden for those who take their turn to tend the cattle and gather the food, to leave these sleeping apartments. And yet, all are empty. I have been to see."

He made a sweeping gesture with his gauntleted hand.

"They are all fled. And fear must have been on them, O Krim, for their cooking pots were on the fire and their food was ready. Look, I have brought some of it here so that we can eat when the time of resting is over."

He pointed to three of those yellow metal pots which stood around the fire.

"What do you think it means?" asked the boy anxiously.

Masra shook his head.

"I know not, O Krim, but I fear that some evil may have fallen upon my people!"

(Is Masra right? And if so, how will it effect the four adventurers? Next week's exciting chapters will tell you. Make sure of securing your copy of the NELSON LEE LIBRARY by ordering in advance!)

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A Smart Magazine.

A. Shaw, 114, Milton Road, Gravesend, sends me an interesting letter about his magazine. This is a school mag. run by fellows at the Gravesend Junior Technical School. It is not printed, but is written by hand. The job of writing the copy is shared by a few energetic fellows, who all do their whack. The magazine is not sold, but loaned at a ¼d. a night, and there is a fine of the same amount if (1) the mag. is not brought back on time, and (2) if it is damaged. There are two competitions in each issue: 1st Prize, a Venus Pencil; 2nd, Drawing-Office Rubber.

Light and Sound.

A Cheshire chum asks about the travelling rates of light and sound. He had a fierce argument with a pal. The pal said sound went quicker. The pal was mistaken. Light travels at 186,000 miles per second; the sound rate is 1,132 ft. per second. The best example is found in a thunderstorm; you see the flash long before the clap of thunder is heard.

The Films.

"N.B." wants work on the films. How is this to be obtained? The only way is by application to the management of a film studio. Addresses can be found in the directory. The cinema companies have offices in London and in many of the large towns.

Correspondence Overseas.

A Sheffield reader asks for correspondents in Australia, South Africa, and New Zealand. He has only to consult our correspondence column to find what he requires.

Muscle!

"Kildare" is anxious about his muscles, and he has not got a punch-ball. Until he secures this valuable gym. accessory he can keep up to the standard of the village blacksmith—the muscles of whose brawny arms were strong as iron bands!—by sticking to the elastic exerciser.

A Jolly Life in Canada.

A Toronto globetrotter says he has been in Canada, where he went from Kent, for three years. "It's a bit lonesome at times, but Canada is a great land." My correspondent's father was a captain in the Mercantile Marine, and the son has caught the wandering spirit from him. He makes lots of money, and intends to see more of the jolly old world before he comes home. There will be some few who will envy him—and wish him still more luck.

Who's For The Ferry?

A jolly letter from Sydney is full of interesting details of that part of the world, with a description of the coves and bays of Sydney Harbour. The Harbour swarms with ferry boats, and on some of them two thousand people can be seated comfortably. He has a good word, too, for Melbourne, with its wide, clean streets and magnificent electric trams.

The Royal Navy.

A Portsmouth reader, aged fourteen, wants to enter the Royal Navy. He is right on the spot to get information regarding his ambition, and should apply at the Royal Naval Barracks, Portsmouth.

CORRESPONDENTS WANTED.

G. Gaskin, 77, Ley Street, Ilford, Essex, wishes to correspond with readers.

Edward H. Kingerley, 139, Granville Avenue, Long Eaton, nr. Nottingham, wishes to correspond with readers anywhere, especially U.S.A. and Canada.

B. Foster, 435, Dudley Road, Wolverhampton, wishes to join a League club in Wolverhampton, and would like to hear from readers in the district.

G. C. Pearson (O.O.), 63, Newbridge Road, Hull, wishes to hear from readers who would like to join his club.

G. R. Jones, 43, Tennyson Street, Battersea, London, S.W.11, wishes to get in a cricket team in his district.

Bernard Palmer, 65, Valetta Road, Acton, London, W., wishes to hear from readers in France, also with those interested in swimming and cycling.

Israel Kerr, P.O. Box 3116, Johannesburg, Transvaal, South Africa, wishes to buy back numbers of NELSON LEE, 1-130, also wishes to correspond with readers.

Leonard Angus, 83, Alabama Street, Plumstead, Kent, S.E.18 wishes to correspond with readers.

T. Litchfield, 5, Surrey Place, Albany Road, Camberwell, London, S.E.5, wishes to hear from readers in his district with a view to forming a club.

V. M. Roper, 81, Nelson Road, Great Yarmouth, wishes to hear from readers anywhere who are interested in painting, drawing, music, and French.

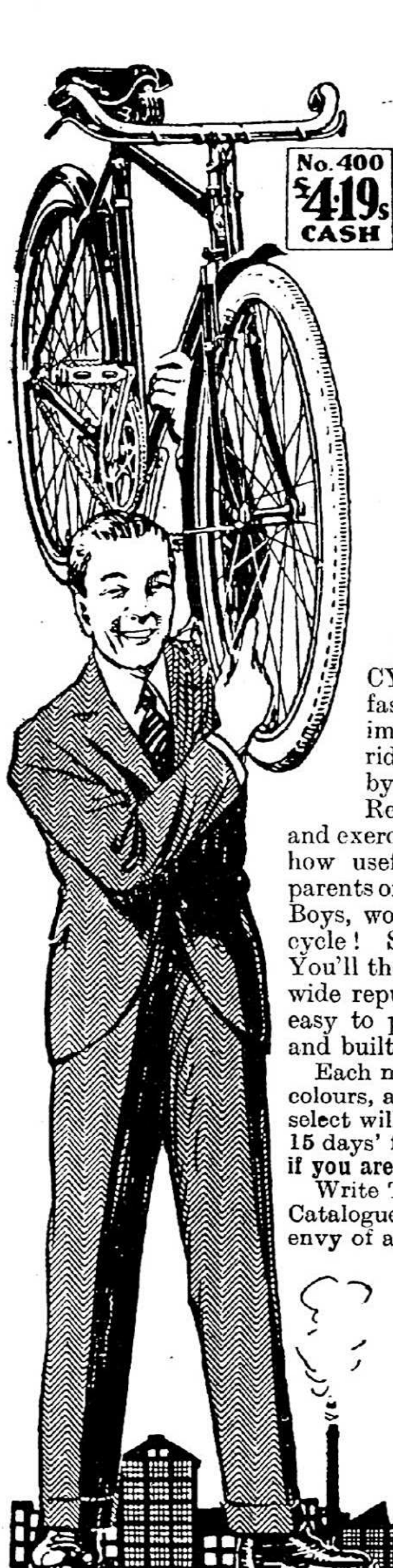
W. A. Rowe, 24, Littlemede, Uppingham Road, Leicester, wishes to hear from the O.O., also readers in his district.

Stanley Elwis, 134, Woodside Lane, Pitsmoor, Sheffield, wishes to correspond with readers.

Ivor Blake, 2, South View, Queen Street, North Cliff, Withernsea, nr. Hull, wishes to hear from members in his district.

THE ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE.

The Application Form for membership of the St. Frank's League appeared in last week's issue; it will be published again very shortly. All holders of **BRONZE MEDALS** who have qualified for **SILVER MEDALS**, and wish to exchange their medals for the higher award, should send their medals together with a stamped addressed envelope, to the Chief Officer, the St. Frank's League, c/o "The Nelson Lee Library," Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C.4.



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