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THE TOLS OF ST. FRANK'S!

A Powerful and Complete Story of Mystery and School-life Adventure.

Series: 41-69

OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

August 27th, 1927.



Frantically the Fourth Formers struggled to free themselves from the sticky substance on the seats, while Mr. Pycraft looked on in amazed indignation. "Good gracious!" he ejaculated. "Is the whole Form stuck?" "Yes, sir!" replied the Fourth.

The Feud of the Forms!New Series—Just Started!

THE FOES OF ST. FRANK'S!



By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

A breathlessly exciting story of the feud between the Remove and the Fourth Form, introducing Handforth, Nipper & Co.—and the Mysterious Unknown.

CHAPTER 1.

The Mysterious Figure!

THE tiny circle of light from the electric torch crept steadily round, revealing desk after desk, and then four chuckles, soft and low, broke the stillness of the Fourth Form room in the School House at St. Frank's.

"That ought to do the trick!" murmured a voice.

"Rather!" said another voice. "This ought to make Buster Boots and his men sit up for a bit!"

There were further chuckles, and the electric torch was switched off. Outside, the school clock slowly and solemnly chimed the hour of five. It was five o'clock in the morning, to be exact, and the school had not

yet awakened to the activities of the new day. It was still dark, and the early morning air was chilly.

"Well, let's be going, then," murmured Nipper, the captain of the Remove. "We can be back in bed before the quarter-past strikes. We shall have another two hours sleep, and more, before rising bell. I rather think we've done some good work, you chaps!"

"There's nothing like sticking to it!" grinned Fullwood.

There seemed to be something particularly humorous in that remark of his, for the others chuckled loudly. They were Nipper, Handforth and De Valerie. They all belonged to the Ancient House section of the Remove, and the object of their visit to the Fourth Form room was evidently something unusual.

For it was by no means customary for juniors to make such jaunts as this in the small hours of the morning.

"This ought to be particularly good," went on Nipper. "Nobody else is in the secret. We've kept it entirely to ourselves—and we won't say a word until the event has happened. And then, by Jove, we'll have the laugh on the Fourth, all right!"

"By George, rather!" grinned Edward Oswald Handforth. "But are you sure that this glue of yours will be dry by the time Boots & Co. come into the Form-room?"

"Dry?" said Nipper. "It'll be as hard as old varnish! That's just the beauty of it! The fellows won't know a thing to begin with—but the warmth of their bodies will soon have effect, and then this patent glue will—Well, I'll leave the rest to your imaginations!"

With further chuckles, they examined their handiwork for the third time. Every seat in the Fourth Form room had been coated with a special kind of glue—a concoction that Nipper himself had prepared. At the moment it was still very sticky, and to sit on any of these seats would have been a very precarious occupation. But within two or three hours, according to Nipper's calculations, the stuff would be perfectly dry, and invisible.

It was a decisive move against the Fourth.

Just at present, the Fourth Form and the Remove were at deadly enmity. There was a great feud between the two lower Forms of St. Frank's. It had been raging for several days now, and Nipper and Handforth and Fullwood and De Valerie were the four "generals" of the Ancient House forces. They had embarked upon this early morning enterprise unknown to any of the others.

"It's a pity we can't be on hand, about an hour after the Fourth comes into the class-room," said Handforth regretfully. "By George! Wouldn't it be great if we could only see the struggles of the chaps when they try to get up!"

"We can't have everything," replied Nipper. "We shall have plenty to laugh about at break—when the Fourth can't get out of its class-room! Come on—we've finished here—let's go back, before any of the domestics get busy. We don't want to be spotted by anybody."

They went to the nearest window, and softly opened it. Nipper was the first to emerge, and he suddenly became rigid, and murmured a word of warning.

It was very dim outside—very gloomy. The dawn was just about to break, and a chilly wind, with a wintry feeling about it, was coming across from the playing fields. There was not much fear of disturbing anybody here, for the School House was empty. It was not one of the St. Frank's boarding-houses—it was used exclusively for lessons, and contained the class-rooms, laboratories, lecture halls, and so forth.

But Nipper suddenly leapt out, and ran. He had seen a dim figure lurking amid the bushes, not five yards away. He had wondered if his imagination had played him false

—but he soon knew differently. For the figure turned on its heel, and bolted.

"My hat!" said Fullwood. "Somebody was watching us!"

"Who the dickens would watch?" asked De Valerie. "There's nobody about at this hour of the morning!"

They scrambled through the window, and gave chase, too. Handforth was already rushing along in the wake of Nipper and the Unknown. And Nipper, indeed, had succeeded in grasping the figure. They were struggling fiercely.

"Hold him!" panted Handforth, as he ran up.

In his eagerness, he over-ran himself, and stumbled against a hidden root, near the hedge. He blundered forward, and barged heavily into Nipper. In that second, the Unknown tore himself free, and crashed through the hedge.

By the time Nipper and Handforth broke through, and looked about them, there was no sign of the figure. There was not a sound. He had taken the opportunity to slip away—to vanish, into the gloom of the early dawn.

"You fathead!" gasped Handforth. "Why didn't you hold him?"

"Well, I like that!" said Nipper breathlessly. "It was your fault, you clumsy cuckoo! If you hadn't blundered into me, I should have held him!"

"But who was he?" demanded Handforth. "Who the dickens was he? The rotter was looking at us—watching what we had been doing!"

"I know that—and I don't like it," replied Nipper, frowning. "Let's hope he wasn't one of the Fourth-Formers, that's all. He was just about the right size."

"Oh, crumbs!" said Handforth, startled. "Do you mean to say that we've had all our work for nothing?"

"No, I don't—but it's just possible," replied Nipper. "Somehow, I don't think he was a Fourth-Former. For one thing, he was wearing a curious kind of cap like a gamekeeper, you know. I tried to get a glimpse of his dial, but I couldn't manage it. He didn't utter a sound, either."

"Well, it's jolly rummy," said Handforth, scratching his head. "But, there! He was probably only a poacher, or somebody like that."

"Poachers don't come round public schools, Handy," said Nipper, shaking his head. "No, I'm convinced that he was interested in our movements—and that he was watching us deliberately. But I can't tell you why, and I can't imagine who he could have been."

They went back to the Ancient House, greatly puzzled over the mysterious incident. A little of their satisfaction had gone. They were uncertain. They did not know whether their trick against the Fourth would be a success. Time alone would tell. And it was irritating to have missed the fellow by a mere inch or two—and to remain in ignorance regarding his identity.

Was it possible that this Unknown was the same figure that had previously interfered in the feud between the Fourth and the Remove? Unknown to either party, an outsider, it seemed, had flung stones, and had used a dog-whip with deadly effect. The Remove accused the Fourth—and the Fourth accused the Remove. They knew nothing of that Unknown who had really done these deeds.

Had this early morning figure been the same one?



CHAPTER 2.

Bitter Blood!

LANG--CLANG!

The rising bell was sounding, and full daylight had come. In all the junior dormitories of St. Frank's, the fellows were getting up, wondering what this new day would bring forth.

These were hectic times at St. Frank's.

The lower school was having plenty of excitement. There had recently been a tremendous scrap on Little Side between the rival football elevens. There had been a general free fight in the Triangle, in which the entire Remove and the entire Fourth had taken part. Incidents had constantly been happening—scrap between twos and threes. And there was no cheery feeling in this feud, either. Both the Forms were bitter against one another.

Now that the warfare was in full swing, nobody could exactly remember how the trouble had started. It didn't matter, anyhow. It was quite enough to know that they hated each other—that they were scheming constantly to "go one better." The idea of glueing the Fourth-Formers to their seats was a typical example of the rags which were constantly being indulged in.

Even football was suffering—and that surely showed the seriousness of the situation, for, normally, football came before all else. It didn't matter what private differences there were in the lower school, football could not be interfered with. But, just at present, junior football was practically impossible.

Nipper could not get up a representative team. The Fourth-Formers would not enter an eleven that was captained by a Removite. And, at the beginning of the season, football was very important. Nipper was hoping that the feud would soon blaze up to a final climax, and then burn itself out. It was far better to allow it to run its course.

Indeed, any attempt to stifle it might make things much worse. The prefects realised this, too—and they were winking their eyes at the majority of the happenings. Suppression would be a fatal mistake, for human nature is such that it craves for anything that is officially suppressed.

There was a marked difference in the general behaviour of the junior school these days.

The Remove was housed exclusively on one side of the Triangle—in the Ancient

House and the West House. In just the same way, the Fourth-Formers lived in the Modern House and the East House. And the rival factions kept to their own sides of the Triangle. This, indeed, was a strict order, given by the commanding officers. For each Form had its generals, its lieutenants, and so on. No Remove fellow was allowed to go past an invisible line near the centre of the Triangle, and running from Big Arch, past the fountain pool, and straight on to the main gates. There was a similar invisible line on the other side for the Fourth-Formers—with a brief space in between—already known as No Man's Land.

The juniors were willing enough to comply with these regulations—since it was a very risky business to venture beyond the dividing line.

There was an example of this even now. Timothy Tucker, of the West House, happened to be one of the first juniors down, and he wandered aimlessly across the Triangle, apparently unconscious of the new restriction. He was, indeed, actually in "No Man's Land" when Willy Handforth of the Third approached him. Willy's monkey, Marmaduke, was perched on his shoulder, being taken for his morning airing.

"Better look out, T. T.," warned Willy casually.

"I beg your pardon?" said Tucker, coming to a halt, and blinking at the fag.

"You're in a dangerous position, old man," said Willy.

"Really, I fail to comprehend the full purport of your remark, my dear fellow," said Timothy Tucker, in his stiff way of speaking. "And pray keep that monkey away from me. I observe that he is making curious motions in my direction, and I fear—"

"That's all right," grinned Willy. "You needn't worry about old Marmy. He's rather particular, T. T. But I'm not surprised that he should look at you in such a curious way. He probably recognises one of his brothers."

"How dare you?" demanded Tucker. "Are you suggesting that I am a monkey, my dear sir?"

"Well, I like that," said Willy, with a sniff. "I've often heard you spouting, Tucker—and you've said, many times, that we have all descended from monkeys."

"True—true," admitted T. T., nodding. "If you will study the monumental works of Darwin—"

"Thanks all the same, but I'll take your word for it," interrupted Willy. "And if we've all descended from monkeys, Tucker, it's perfectly obvious that you must be a monkey. Of course, it's obvious anyhow—you couldn't hide the fact, even if you disguised yourself. But we won't pursue the subject. I'm just warning you that you are in danger."

"Indeed?" said T. T. "In danger? From whom?"

"Well, Armstrong and Griffith, and Talmadge and Yorke, just to mention a few," replied Willy. "Of course, it's none of my business, but I'd like to remind you that you're in Fourth Form territory!"

T. T. looked round and smiled indulgently.

"I am not in sympathy with this ridiculous feud," he said, with a lofty wave of his hand. "I do not believe in it. I have participated in one or two events, but under compulsion. I do not believe in these bitter quarrels. I am always for peace. And thus I am perfectly free to walk where I will. I am a non-partisan."

And Timothy Tucker strolled on—right into the arms of Armstrong, Griffith, Merrell, Marriott, Freeman, and several other East House Fourth-Formers. They seized him violently.

"Really," protested T. T., "I protest. Release me at once—at once! I will not be handled in this rough manner——"

"Bump him!" said Armstrong grimly.

Bang! Bang! Crash!

Timothy Tucker was bumped upon the ground—bumped hard, and he yelled wildly. An answering roar came from the door of the Ancient House. Handforth had just emerged, accompanied by Church and McClure.

"Rescue, Remove!" roared Handforth. "These beastly Fourth-Formers have got one of our men! Buck up!"

And Timothy Tucker was bumped again, and then slung across the invisible line—back into his own territory. Armstrong & Co. walked off, making jeering catcalls at the Removites.

CHAPTER 3.

Sticking To Their Work!



R. HORACE PYCRAFT, the master of the Fourth, gave his Form a sour look as he came into the class-room, immediately

following prayers.

"Merrell, your collar is dirty!" he snapped. "Freeman, you have not cleaned your shoes this morning! Skelton, there is a smudge on your face! I am disgusted with you all! How dare you come in to lessons in this shocking condition? Sit down, all of you! Sit down at once!"

And the Fourth Form sat down, trying hard to keep its temper.

Evidently, Mr. Pycraft was in one of his most unpleasant moods. And that meant, in the view of the Fourth, that he was going to be a beast. Mr. Pycraft was an excellent scholar, no doubt, but he was a most unpleasant man in every other respect. And the Fourth knew it. They thought that this morning was going to be a very trying period.

"I have noticed that some of you boys have been acting in a very rough and hooligan-like manner in the Triangle this morning," said Mr. Pycraft, as he went to his desk and sat down. "It has even been whispered to me that you are conducting some ridiculous feud against the Remove Form. Let me see nothing of this nonsense, or I shall be inclined to take drastic action."

The Fourth remained silent.

"We are here to work," continued Mr. Pycraft tartly. "You boys do not seem to realise that you have come to school for the purpose of learning—not to indulge in preposterous quarrels with your school-fellows. Now then, get to work—all of you! Take out your books, and let me hear no whisperings or shufflings."

The Fourth Form sighed, and settled itself down. Mr. Pycraft was evidently intent upon making things unpleasant for them that morning. He had "sensed" that something unusual was in the wind. And it was not in his nature to wink his eye at the rumours he had heard.

Most of the other masters at St. Frank's knew about the feud, but they said nothing at all. Even Mr. Crowell, of the Remove, was no different from usual. He was of the opinion that it was better to let the boys settle this affair in their own way. Interference from a master would probably do more harm than good. Unfortunately, Mr. Pycraft was not blessed with such a sense of fitness.

Thus the Fourth behaved itself admirably.

These juniors knew better than to provoke their ill-tempered Form-master. At the slightest provocation, he would probably commit them to extra lessons, or give them severe impots. It was far better to let him have his own way. As Buster Boots had once remarked: "It is better to please a fool than to tease a fool." But Mr. Pycraft was not aware that he was regarded as such by his boys.

Work went on in the usual way, and nothing exceptional was noticed for some little time. True, one or two juniors were shifting somewhat uneasily in their seats, and they were looking puzzled, too. But, as yet, there was no indication that the Fourth Form was in any way uncomfortable.

"Talmadge, stand up!" commanded Mr. Pycraft suddenly. "You have not been paying attention! Tell me exactly what paragraph it was that we construed last!"

Charlie Talmadge, of Study No. 1, in the Modern House, tried to rise to his feet, but couldn't.

"I—I was thinking, sir!" he gasped. "I—I mean—Hullo! What the—Oh crumbs!"

"Do not make those ridiculous exclamations, Talmadge!" said Mr. Pycraft curtly. "And let this general shuffling cease! What are you doing, Freeman? Why are you shifting about in your seat like that?"

"I—I can't stand up, sir!" gasped Freeman, in a startled voice.

"There is no reason why you should stand up, Freeman," retorted Mr. Pycraft. "I have ordered Talmadge to stand up—not you! Remain quiet."

"Yes, sir, but—"

"You heard what I said, Freeman?"

"Yes, sir!"

Freeman subsided, with a very alarmed expression on his face. And Mr. Pycraft turned back to Talmadge, and regarded him angrily.

"Talmadge!" he shouted. "What did I tell you just now?"

"To—to stand up, sir!" panted Talmadge.

"Then why do you not stand up, boy?"

"I—I can't, sir."

"Good heavens!" said Mr. Pycraft. "What nonsense is this? Why can't you stand up?"

"I don't know, sir!" gasped Charlie, trying to twist round. "There's—there's something—My only hat! I'm stuck!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Half the Fourth Form broke into a laugh. "Silence!" thundered Mr. Pycraft, dancing with rage. "How dare you laugh at this boy's impertinence. Talmadge, I've had enough of this nonsense! Get to your feet at once—or I shall come there with a cane."

Talmadge was very red in the face.

"It's all very well to talk like that, sir!" he burst out. "But I tell you I can't rise! I'm stuck to the form!"

"And so I am, sir!" put in Freeman. "That's what I was trying to tell you just now, but you wouldn't let me speak!"

Mr. Pycraft looked from one junior to the other, and his expression was black.

"Is this an attempt to waste the time of the Form?" he asked, in an acid voice. "Talmadge, I have ordered you to stand up for the last time! Unless you are on your feet within twenty seconds, I will come there and drag you—"

"I tell you I can't get up, sir!" roared Talmadge, exasperated. "My bags are stuck to the form! I'm glued on!"

Mr. Pycraft ran forward, and he grabbed a pointer from his desk on the way. Arriving at Talmadge's side, he brought the pointer across the unfortunate junior's shoulders. Mr. Pycraft was not a patient man, and he had a strong idea that he was being ragged. It was not the first time that he had been ragged, by any means. And it certainly did seem ridiculous that Talmadge should be stuck to the seat.

"Now, sir!" panted Mr. Pycraft. "Are you going to stand up, or not?"

"All right!" said Talmadge desperately.

"I'll try, but—"

While speaking, he had made a sudden effort, and there followed a loud, ominous, ripping sound. Talmadge paused, his face turning pale, and then he sat down again with a gulp. He needed no telling what had happened. That sound had been significant enough!



CHAPTER 4.

One Up Against the Fourth!

NIPPER, in the Remove Form-room, coughed, and held up his hand.

"Well, Hamilton?" said Mr. Crowell, looking up

from his desk.

"There's no red ink in my pot, sir," said Nipper innocently.

"Then go to the cupboard, Hamilton, and fill your pot," said Mr. Crowell, nodding. "Red ink is most essential in this geography lesson."

"Yes, sir, we can't get on without it for mapping," said Nipper, as he went to the cupboard, and opened the doors. "Hallo! Where's the red ink? There's none here!"

"Not there, Hamilton?" said Mr. Crowell. "The bottle was there yesterday. Look again!"

"Sorry, sir, but somebody must have taken it," said Nipper, feeling it quite unnecessary to explain that he was the culprit who had taken it. "But it doesn't matter. I'll pop into the next room, and borrow theirs. Shan't be a minute, sir."

"Very well," said Mr. Crowell, nodding.

It was quite a trivial incident—one that might have happened any day, at any lesson. And the majority of the Removites took no notice at all. They kept on with their work, after only one glance up. But Handforth and Fullwood and De Valerie of the Ancient House were all grinning, and their grins widened as Nipper winked stealthily to them on his way to the door.

"We shall soon know now!" murmured Handforth. "It's a pity I couldn't have gone with him, but old Crowell might have smelt a rat—"

"Handforth, you are speaking!" interrupted Mr. Crowell, looking up. "Kindly attend to your work, and let us have no more of this talking!"

Handforth grunted, and continued his work. Nipper, passing down the passage, tapped at the door of the next class-room, and walked in. He could not have arrived at a more opportune moment. For Mr. Horace Pycraft was standing next to Talmadge, and there were expressions of consternation on almost every face. Indeed, Nipper's arrival was not even noticed at first.

"This is outrageous!" Mr. Pycraft was saying. "What have you done, Talmadge?"

"I, sir?" gasped Charlie Talmadge. "Do you think I'd stick myself to the form like this? It's glue, or something, and it sticks like the dickens! I can't get up! I've torn my bags already!"

"Your what, Talmadge?"

"My trousers, sir!"

"If you mean trousers, Talmadge, you should say trousers!" snapped the Form-master. "I dislike you to use these ridicu-

lous slang terms. You told me that you are in a similar predicament, Freeman?"

"Yes, sir; I'm stuck!" said Freeman, indignantly.

"Extraordinary!" said Mr. Pycraft. "Lessons are being interrupted in the most shocking manner, but I suppose I must attend to you boys before we can continue. I dislike these disturbances. Well, Hamilton?" he added, as he caught sight of Nipper. "What do you want? What are you doing in this room?"

"Mr. Crowell sent me, sir," said Nipper calmly. "Can I borrow some red ink, please, sir?"

"Go to the cupboard, and help yourself!" retorted Mr. Pycraft. "Good heavens! There seems to be no end to these interruptions!"

"Sorry, sir!" apologised Nipper. "Is there anything wrong? Can I help?"

Dozens of eyes were glaring at him from every corner of the Form-room. Here was a member of the enemy, walking straight into the danger zone! And yet Mr. Pycraft's presence made it impossible for any of the Fourth-Formers to attack this Removite!

"If I can do anything, sir——" began Nipper.

"You cannot!" interrupted Mr. Pycraft. "Kindly mind your own business, Hamilton. Get your ink, and go!"

"Very well, sir," said Nipper innocently. He helped himself to the ink, and took his time over it. Mr. Pycraft was making further discoveries every second.

"I really don't know what to do with you two boys!" he said tartly. "I can only assume that you must have been sitting on some glue earlier this morning. Heaven only knows what tricks you get up! And now you have become stuck to your seats here——"

"But they're not the only ones!" interrupted Yorke plaintively.

"What do you mean, Yorke?"

"I'm stuck, too, sir!"

"Yes, and so am I, sir!" said Armstrong, his voice filled with indignation. "I can't move an inch! I'm glued to the seat!"

"Same here, sir!" said two or three other voices.

Mr. Pycraft turned round, gazing at junior after junior.

"Good gracious!" he ejaculated. "Is the whole Form stuck?"

"Yes, sir!" said the Fourth.

"What!" yelled Mr. Pycraft, leaping into the air. "Are you telling me that every boy in this apartment is stuck to his seat? This—this is outrageous! It is absolutely beyond all endurance!"

He failed to observe Nipper stealing silently out of the doorway. Nipper's face was quite grave—until he got out into the corridor. Then he allowed a wide grin to overspread his features.

"Ureka!" he murmured. "It's worked! By jingo, it's worked like a dream! Every

Fourth-Former stuck to his seat! We thought it would be fairly successful, but this is the richest thing for terms! Won't we grin at the Fourth-Formers during the interval?"

He returned to his own class-room and walked in, his face solemn and guileless. He noticed that Handforth and Fullwood and De-Valerie were all looking at him—and their expressions were eager.

Mr. Crowell happened to be attending to a junior on the other side of the room, so Nipper gave a quick nod, and extended both his thumbs upwards.

"Good egg!" said Handforth gleefully. "By George, we've made those fatheads——"

"Handforth!" exclaimed Mr. Crowell, twirling round. "What are you saying?"

"I—I—— Sorry, sir!" gasped Handforth, suddenly brought to himself. "I—I was thinking!"

"Then the next time you think, Handforth, I will trouble you to do so in silence," said Mr. Crowell. "It is not necessary for you to think aloud. Ah, Hamilton, you have got the ink? Good!"

"There seems to be a bit of trouble in the Fourth Form-room, sir," said Nipper casually. "The fellows in there are sticking to their seats instead of sticking to their work!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

That laugh came from Handforth and Fullwood and De-Valerie, but they quickly checked it, and Mr. Crowell frowned.

"Really, Hamilton, it is of no interest to us what is happening in the Fourth Form-room," he said coldly. "Let us get on with our work."

But he had made a mis-statement. For it was of very great interest indeed to the Removite to know that something of an unusual nature was going on in the Fourth Form-room. The Removites were very curious. Only four of them in that apartment knew the exact truth. For Nipper and his colleagues had kept their secret well. They were not saying anything until break—until the rag was an accomplished fact.



CHAPTER 5.

Mr. Pycraft Does His Best!

ONSTERNATION reigned in the Fourth Form room.

It was an absolute fact that every fellow was stuck fast to his seat. No matter how he tried to free himself, it was impossible. They were all glued down—and glued so tightly that any attempt to move was an exceedingly precarious proposition.

"I've never heard of such a thing in all my life!" shouted Mr. Pycraft furiously. "There has been some trickery here!"

"You're right, sir!" shouted Boots. "But we're not responsible! You don't think we'd stick ourselves to our own seats, do you?"



"You will all be caned—severely!" said Dr. Stafford, addressing Nipper, Handforth, Fullwood and De Valerie. "Caned, sir?" interrupted Mr. Pycraft indignantly. "I thought the offence was so serious that even expulsion would not be too drastic!"

"Upon my word!" said Mr. Pycraft, as a thought struck him. "Is it possible? Good heavens! Have any of those Remove boys been here?"

"Nipper was here a minute ago, sir," said Bob Christine.

"Nipper—Nipper?" repeated Mr. Pycraft. "Oh, you mean Hamilton! Don't be absurd, Christine! You know well enough that Hamilton merely went to the cupboard and borrowed some ink. These forms must have been prepared some hours ago—and I am beginning to think that the Remove boys are responsible!"

"I began to think that long ago, sir," said Boots bluntly.

"Same here!" shouted a number of other voices.

"We'll make them smart for it, too!" roared Armstrong furiously. "My only hat! This is a bit too steep, you chaps! Fancy sticking us to our seats like this! The rotters! We'll make them sit up——"

"Silence!" raved Mr. Pycraft. "Boys, have you taken leave of your senses? How dare you shout like that, Armstrong?"

"Well, those Remove chaps have done all this——"

"That is a mere guess on your part, Armstrong," retorted Mr. Pycraft. "I am convinced that some of the Remove boys are responsible, but I must have proof of it. You may be sure that I shall make very close inquiries. In the meantime, every boy in this room will get to his feet!"

"But—but we can't sir!" protested Christine.

"Stuff and nonsense!" said Mr. Pycraft. "This glue cannot be so powerful as all that. A sudden effort, and you will be free. Then we can examine the forms, and discover the exact nature of this—this disgusting, sticky material. Boys, get to your feet!"

"But you don't seem to understand——"

"Get to your feet!" shouted Mr. Pycraft.

"We shall tear our bags if we do!" shouted Crowe.

"Any boy who makes a further remark, or who disobeys me, will be given five hundred lines!" shrieked Mr. Pycraft. "I will not be flouted in this way!"

And the Fourth, rather than suffer an imputation of five hundred lines, made a tremendous effort, and rose to their feet. All the desks and forms were made in one—and screwed to the floor. So there was no chance of the seats themselves coming up.

The result of that united effort was startling. The whole Form-room was filled with a frightful sound of tearing material. And John Busterfield Boots and all his colleagues left their seats. They left their seats very literally. To be exact, the seats of their trousers were still glued to the forms—and the Fourth was in no happy condition.

"There you are, sir!" shouted Boots. "What did we tell you? We've torn our bags, now!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"All our trousers ruined!"

"And those Remove rotters are responsible!"

There was a tremendous uproar in the Form-room, and Mr. Pycraft was dazed. Never had he expected such a catastrophe as this.

Lessons, of course, were completely disorganised. There was no hope of continuing work for some time.

"This—this is scandalous!" said Mr. Pycraft, giving a gulp as he caught sight of several Fourth-Formers from the rear. "Good heavens! You are in a—terrible condition, boys! Your—ahem!—rear view is positively appalling! You can't even venture out of the Form-room in this condition!"

"Well, you told us to stand up, sir!" said Armstrong, glaring.

"The culprits shall suffer dearly for this outrage!" vowed Mr. Pycraft, as he examined one of the forms. "Yes, yes! This wood-work is distinctly sticky—there is some disgusting substance spread over the wood! And yet it does not appear to be glue. I really can't understand— I—I— Good gracious! What—what on earth—"

Mr. Pycraft broke off, aghast, for his hands were stuck to that Form! Even in that brief moment this terrible glue had had such effect that Mr. Pycraft's hands were fixed to the flat surface of the wooden seat. But at last he managed to drag his hands free, and he gazed at them in breathless consternation.

"Thank heaven!" he murmured. "I was half expecting that I should do myself an injury. Never have I known such a terrible occurrence! All the work of the morning disorganised—and my boys in such a shocking condition that they cannot even be dismissed!"

"Why can't we, sir?" asked Boots. "We'd better run indoors, and change our things."

"Yes, sir!"

"Let's go and get into different clothes, sir!"

"Certainly not!" said Mr. Pycraft, scandalised. "You boys cannot venture out into the open in this—this terrible condition! Do you realise that you are positively unfit to be seen? Something must be done—and something quickly!"

Mr. Pycraft wrung his hands in the excess of his worry, and when he tried to take his hands apart he found that they wouldn't come. He wrenched in vain. That glue was still doing its work.

"Boys—boys!" he screamed. "Help me! My hands are positively stuck together!"

And the Fourth looked on, with much enthusiasm. The thing wasn't half so bad now that Mr. Pycraft was sharing in the agony. It was impossible for the Fourth-Formers to feel any sympathy for their ill-tempered Form-master. And, when all was said and done, lessons were completely at an end. So there were some compensations, after all!

"Wait!" panted Mr. Pycraft, at length. "Wait here! If any boy dares to leave this apartment while I am gone, I will have him flogged. Remember that!"

"Where are you going, sir?" asked a dozen voices.

"I'm going to fetch a prefect!" replied Mr. Pycraft harshly. "This—this situation is too much for me to deal with alone! And, by

heaven, I shall institute a full inquiry—a searching investigation! The culprits shall be punished with the utmost severity! Indeed, I think it is highly possible that the head-master will have them expelled from the school in disgrace!"

And Mr. Pycraft, still wringing his hands—since he could not get them apart—ran across to the door, and grasped the handle. He nearly went into hysterics when he found that his hands now stuck to the door knob. It was some moments before he could free himself. Then, shouting wildly, he ran down the corridor, leaving the Fourth Form to its own misery.

Next door, in the Remove class-room, there were many happy smiles. Not many of the fellows knew what was occurring to the Fourth—but it was instinctively felt that it wasn't very pleasant!

CHAPTER 6.

Looking for the Culprits!



N

OBODY in the Fourth Form room thought it advisable to make a dash outside.

They were all in a fairly desperate condition, but

Mr. Pycraft's warning had been very straight. Besides that, none of the Fourth-Formers were in a fit condition to appear in public.

"It's those beastly Remove chaps!" said Boots grimly. "They've done this! They smothered this glue all over our forms!"

"But when?" asked Bob Christine, with a frown. "When could they have done it?"

"What does that matter?" retorted Boots. "We know jolly well that nobody else would have done it. It's just like one of their tricks—the rotters!"

And yet at the same time Buster Boots was ready to kick himself for not having thought of such a good dodge!

"They probably got in here last night—after dark," said Armstrong. "Anyhow, we'll make them pay for it! We shall have to get up something special in return for this, Boots! We're relying on you to think of—"

"You leave it to me!" interrupted Buster Boots aggressively. "You needn't think that the Remove is going to get away with a trick like this! I'm the leader of the Fourth, and you can trust me to think of something drastic. This is a deadly insult—and we're going to have a tremendous revenge."

"Hear, hear!"

"Down with the Remove!"

And the uproar in the Fourth Form was terrific—until the door opened, and Mr. Pycraft came bouncing back, followed by a couple of prefects. They were Reynolds and Carlile.

"You see?" said Mr. Pycraft excitedly, as he pointed to his boys. "Something must be done immediately. These unfortunate boys

were stuck to their seats, and when they attempted to rise——”

“They left their seats behind, eh, sir?” asked Reynolds, nodding. “Yes, so I see!”

“This is no occasion for alleged humour, Reynolds!” snapped Mr. Pycraft. “You and Carlile will go at once to these boys’ dormitories, and bring back the necessary pairs of trousers.”

“Oh, I say, sir!” protested Carlile. “We’re not their confounded valets!”

“Never mind that, Carlile—the circumstances are exceptional,” said Mr. Pycraft. “You will go at once to the Modern House and East House, and bring this clothing.”

“Wouldn’t it do just as well if we fetch some newspapers, sir?” asked Reynolds. “They could easily slip across to their own Houses then, and change their clothing in their own dormitories——”

“Do not bandy words with me, Reynolds!” shouted Mr. Pycraft. “I have given you my instructions, and I expect you to carry them out!”

For a moment the two prefects looked rebellious. It was against their dignity to fetch and carry for the Fourth, and Mr. Pycraft had no real authority over them. But, after a glance at one another, they went to the door and vanished. It was just as well, perhaps, to humour him. He would only make a fuss if they raised any objections.

A minute after they had gone the door opened, and Kenmore, of the Sixth, came in—another prefect.

“Ah, Kenmore, I am glad you have come,” said Mr. Pycraft. “Look after these boys while I am away. In a short time Reynolds and Carlile will come with trousers. See that these boys don them, and let there be no disturbances.”

“Trousers, sir?” said Kenmore, amazed.

“Yes, Kenmore—trousers!” snapped Mr. Pycraft. “If you will make an examination, you will see that not one boy here is in a fit condition to continue his work. Yes, and while I think of it. Obtain all the newspapers you can, and spread them over these forms. We do not want any recurrence of the disaster.”

Mr. Pycraft rushed out of the room, and then he hesitated in the corridor. Should he go to the headmaster, and make a serious complaint, or should he make investigations on his own account? He decided, on the whole, that it would be better for him to pursue the latter course.

So, a moment later, Mr. Horace Pycraft fairly bounced into the Remove Form-room, much to the surprise and indignation of Mr. Crowell.

“Really, Mr. Pycraft!” he protested hotly.

Mr. Crowell was a very decent sort in his own way, and he hated to be disturbed in the middle of work. He had a particular antipathy, too, for Mr. Horace Pycraft. Indeed, practically everybody at St. Frank’s disliked this particular Form-master. He

was unpopular with the boys and with his colleagues alike.

“I demand the surrender of the culprits!” shouted Mr. Pycraft excitedly. “I shall not be content with any evasions, and I insist——”

“Be good enough to calm yourself, sir!” interrupted Mr. Crowell. “What is the meaning of this—this outburst? I really fail to see any reason why you should enter my room in this fashion, and——”

“If you see no reason for it, sir, I will very soon supply one!” broke in Mr. Pycraft harshly. “Do you know that every one of my boys has been stuck to his seat?”

“I beg your pardon?” said Mr. Crowell.

“Stuck to his seat, sir!” roared the other. “Some miscreants have smothered glue on the forms, and my boys sat on this glued surface without knowing what the result would be. And when they attempted to rise they were so firmly stuck that they could not get to their feet without tearing their trousers! There has been the most appalling affair in my room——”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

The Remove roared with appreciation.

“My hat!” grinned Reggie Pitt. “All those Fourth-Formers stuck to their seats! We thought there was something going on in there, didn’t we?”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“Silence!” screamed Mr. Pycraft, turning to the Form. “How dare you laugh at me in this way?”

“If you will permit me, Mr. Pycraft, I will give orders to my own boys,” said Mr. Crowell coldly. “Boys, let there be no laughing. This affair that Mr. Pycraft has told me of is apparently serious. But I really fail to understand why you should have come to me, sir. If I can help you in any way, I will willingly do so. But your attitude appears to be somewhat aggressive——”

“I demand the immediate surrender of the culprits!” interrupted Mr. Pycraft fiercely.

“But why should you assume that the culprits are in this room?” broke in Mr. Crowell, with some heat. “Obviously, this trick has been performed on your boys by somebody. But is there any evidence that the authors of the affair are in this apartment? Have you any proof, Mr. Pycraft?”

“You know as well as I do, Mr. Crowell, that there is a—a quarrel between my Form and yours,” replied Mr. Pycraft. “Therefore, it stands to reason that the culprits are in this room. I shall not be satisfied until I have them!”

“This is a very serious charge, Mr. Pycraft,” said Mr. Crowell acidly. “Your assumption may be quite wrong. However, since you appear to be so determined, I will do the best I can. Boys, you have heard what has been happening in the Fourth Form-room. I call upon the culprits—if you are indeed in this room—to stand forward.”

But nobody stood forward. Naturally, Nipper and the others were not going to give themselves away without good reason.

The Remove was silent, and nearly all the fellows looked indignant. Mr. Crowell, seeing these expressions, read them correctly. Until this moment the Remove had known nothing whatever about the Fourth's predicament. Innocence was in every face. Even Nipper and Fullwood and Handforth and De Valerie were looking at one another with bland expressions of surprise. They did it quite well in the circumstances.

"I really think you must have been mistaken, Mr. Pycraft," said Mr. Crowell softly. "As you will see, none of my boys admit their guilt, and I must therefore ask you to retire, so that we can get on with our work."

Mr. Pycraft laughed mirthlessly.

"I shall not retire until I have dragged out the guilty parties!" he retorted. "They are here—and I intend to find them!"



CHAPTER 7.

Pycraft, the Sleuth!

R. CROWELL was thoroughly exasperated.

"It seems to me, Mr. Pycraft, that an official inquiry will have to be made into this incident," he said. "Therefore it is a mere waste of your time and my time—to say nothing of the time of my Form—for you to remain here. I must therefore ask you to retire."

"I am exceedingly sorry, Mr. Crowell, but I have no intention of retiring," replied Mr. Pycraft unpleasantly. "You cannot pretend to be ignorant of the feud which is now taking place between the two Forms. It has been in progress for several days now. There have been fights in the Triangle, and in other parts of the school. For some reason, best known to themselves, the boys have been practically flying at one another's throats, and I have come to the conclusion that several young scoundrels belonging to this Form are responsible for the dastardly trick in my own room—"

"I would suggest, sir, that you moderate your terms!" said Mr. Crowell coldly. "In no circumstances can this affair be called dastardly. Extreme, perhaps, and deserving of severe punishment. But dastardly, no! And I greatly dislike any reference to my boys as young scoundrels. In fact, Mr. Pycraft, I will not have it!"

"Indeed!" said Mr. Pycraft furiously.

For a moment they glared at one another, and the Remove held its breath. It seemed that the two Form-masters were about to join in the general feud! The Removites half expected to see Mr. Pycraft fling himself at Mr. Crowell's sturdy figure. But the master of the Fourth evidently thought better of it, for he himself was a weedy individual. With an effort he controlled his temper.

"I greatly regret that you should take this attitude, Mr. Crowell," he went on. "I may even find it necessary to appeal to the headmaster. He, no doubt, will persuade you to make a more searching examination. Every one of your boys ought to be questioned singly, and all his movements should be investigated. The authors of that outrage are in this room, and I insist—"

"I am sorry that you should insist, Mr. Pycraft, because I have no intention of disturbing my class any longer," said Mr. Crowell frigidly. "Will you therefore be good enough to retire? If you wish to complain to the headmaster, you may, of course, do so."

Mr. Pycraft could see that he was done.

"Very well—very well!" he said shrilly. "We will see about this, sir! We will see what Dr. Stafford has to say. But I tell you quite frankly that I shall seek no rest until I have got to the bottom of this mystery!"

And Mr. Pycraft flounced out of the room with a series of angry snorts.

"Good riddance to bad rubbish!" said Handforth audibly.

"Handforth!" snapped Mr. Crowell.

"Sir?"

"You will write fifty lines for insolence!" said Mr. Crowell. "And let there be no more talking!"

"Well, my hat!" said Handforth blankly. "I thought you'd agree with me, sir!"

As a matter of fact, Mr. Crowell did agree with him, but he could not possibly admit it.

"I will make no further reference to this unfortunate incident in the Fourth Form-room," he said. "If any of you boys are guilty it is quite possible that you will be punished. But I will not have my work disturbed now. So dismiss the entire matter from your minds, and go on with your lessons."

The Remove tried to obey, but it was a rather difficult task. Much as they tried, they could not dismiss the matter from their minds. It had pleased them mightily to know that Buster Boots and his men had been glued to their seats, and that complete disorganisation was rife in the enemy's camp.

Reggie Pitt, Singleton, and a good few other Remove fellows, were pretty certain in their own minds that Nipper was responsible. Pitt remembered Nipper's visit into the Fourth Form-room a little while earlier, and he could easily guess why Nipper had gone. He also guessed that somebody had removed that bottle of ink from the Remove cupboard—deliberately. It had been a mere ruse, in order to find an excuse for visiting the enemy's territory.

In the meantime, Mr. Pycraft was out in the corridor.

He was baffled. He knew very well that some members of the Remove were responsible, but he also knew that it would be rather hopeless to expect them to confess. And unless they did confess, their guilt might

never be brought home to them. There was, of course, the chance that some evidence might be found— But Mr. Pycraft shook his head. It was hardly likely that the culprits would have left any evidence behind them.

"I will warrant that Hamilton is responsible!" murmured Mr. Pycraft savagely. "It was Hamilton who came into my Form-room, not long ago, obviously to find out if his trick had succeeded! Good gracious! That is really a clever thought! A very clever thought! Hamilton is undoubtedly the guilty party!"

For a moment he thought about returning to the Remove Form-room, and taxing Nipper with the matter, face to face. Mr. Pycraft knew something of Nipper's character, and he knew that Nipper would not tell a deliberate lie. But yet it would be perfectly easy to evade the issue. So Mr. Pycraft hesitated again, frowning deeply.

His was a vindictive nature, and he had completely forgotten his own boys. All he wanted now was to bring the guilt home to the responsible party. It would be quite useless to go to the headmaster until he had some proof in his hand—some positive evidence of guilt.

So Mr. Pycraft turned the matter over in his mind, and a sudden thought came to him.

"Good gracious!" he murmured, his eyes glittering. "Why not? The boys are all in their Form-room, and I should be quite undisturbed. Yes, that is the only way—and the best way! I will go straight into the Ancient House now and search Hamilton's study! In all probability I shall find the very evidence I need. Yes, yes, I will go to Hamilton's study and thoroughly examine it."

He hurried out of the School House, and emerged into the sunny Triangle. It was quite a warm morning, for the summer weather was loath to depart. And again Mr. Pycraft hesitated.

Was it quite the thing? He did not feel very sure of himself. Perhaps, when the Head got to know of it, he would censure him for prying into a junior's study. But, then, after another period of thought, Mr. Pycraft assured himself that he was thoroughly justified in taking this action. An outrage had been committed upon his boys—and Hamilton was the guilty party. Therefore, it was only right that he should be brought to book.

And so the ill-tempered master of the Fourth strode into the Ancient House, made his way down the Remove passage, and went into Study C. But he felt rather guilty as he closed the door and looked round him.

Strictly speaking, he had no right here. His one and only course was to have gone to Mr. Nelson Lee—the Housemaster of the Ancient House. It was essentially Lee's duty to come here and make this investigation. Mr. Pycraft was an intruder, since he boarded in the East House. However, now that he was on the spot, he set his lips and commenced his search.



CHAPTER 8.

The Evidence I

"CONFOUND the boy!"

Mr. Pycraft was in a savage mood. His search of Study C had borne no fruit. He had looked into the cupboards, he had examined every inch of the bookcase; he had looked into the table drawer, and in every corner of the apartment.

And he had drawn a complete blank.

"I might have expected this!" he muttered. "Hamilton is too clever by half! Naturally, he has destroyed every trace! But I will have him yet—yes, I will have him! I do not intend to be beaten in this way!"

And yet Mr. Pycraft did not know what to do. It was all very well for him to be convinced that some Remove boys were responsible, but he could not make such an accusation to the headmaster without excellent cause. And Mr. Pycraft was fairly itching to hurry to Dr. Stafford, and complain bitterly against the Remove.

"No doubt I shall find something in one of the other studies," he murmured. "But yet it is impossible for me to examine them all! There is insufficient time—and, besides, it is quite possible that Mr. Lee might come along and discover me. And that would be awkward—most awkward! I must be careful!"

He passed out of the study, thoroughly exasperated—more baffled than ever. And he went out, looking guilty, glancing from right to left. His gaze happened to rest upon the letter "D" on the next study door. And Mr. Pycraft halted.

"Let me see—this is the study that is occupied by Handforth," he murmured. "Upon my word! Handforth, too, is a very likely culprit! He is undoubtedly one of the most mischievous boys in the whole Remove! Yes, it might be very profitable to have a look into this study, too! It is more than likely that I shall meet with success!"

He went into Study D, and looked round. As usual, that famous apartment was in a very untidy condition.

"Disgraceful!" declared Mr. Pycraft, with disgust. "If any of my boys had their studies in this state I would very soon punish them! But Mr. Crowell, I am afraid, is very slack—very slack, indeed!"

He went to the cupboard and examined it. He gave a cry of triumph as he saw a tin, containing some sticky substance. Here it was—the glue! But Mr. Pycraft's triumph was short-lived, for a closer examination revealed the fact that the sticky substance was toffee. It was, in fact, some of McClure's handiwork, and it had been allowed to go sticky. For, to reveal the painful truth, that toffee was a bad failure. McClure had been left to it all by himself, and he had grown tired of it.

Mr. Pycraft, feeling depressed, looked into the bookcase and into the drawers, and then into all the odd corners. But again he drew

blank. There was nothing here—no trace of any glue. So he went towards the door, grinding his teeth.

"It is most exasperating, but I am not to be done!" he again told himself. "These boys know more than they will admit—Ah! I had almost forgotten to glance into the coalbox. It is just possible that—"

He broke off, bending over the coalbox. He stared dazedly, and his eyes were now glittering with a new triumph. For there, reposing within the coalbox, was a tin. And in the tin was a brush! And the brush was stuck fast into a mass of hard, glutinous stuff which was, beyond all question, a species of glue.

"I knew it!" shouted Mr. Pycraft victoriously. "So Handforth is the culprit! Handforth and Church and McClure! Just what I had expected. The young rascals!"

That tin contained a very peculiar kind of glue. It was, indeed, a special brand, and it had the most peculiar properties. It could be applied like ordinary varnish, and it dried hard. It only became sticky after warmth had been applied to it. And then its stickiness was tremendous.

Handforth had been very careless to leave that tin in the coalbox. But, then, how could he have known that a Form master would come prying into the study like this? How could he have guessed that such a search would be made. It was the very last thing that anybody could have expected.

Mr. Pycraft, hugging that tin closely, rushed out of the Ancient House, and sped through Big Arch, and made his way across Inner Court at the double. He was excited—he was triumphant. And he burst into the Head's House, and practically forced his way into Dr. Stafford's presence.

"Ah, I am glad that you are here, sir!" he panted. "I have brought you—"

"Mr. Pycraft!"

The Form-master gave a gulp as he heard the Head's stern tone.

"I—I—"

"Pray control yourself, Mr. Pycraft," said the Head coldly. "What is the meaning of this—this dramatic intrusion? Why are you so excited, sir? Has anything happened?"

"A great deal has happened, sir," replied Mr. Pycraft. "Work in my Form-room is absolutely at a standstill. I discovered, to my horror, that every one of my boys was glued to his seat!"

"Glued to his seat!" echoed the Head aghast.

"Yes, sir!" insisted Mr. Pycraft, glad of the impression that he had made. "Some of the Remove boys have played this trick—this outrage! I went into Mr. Crowell's room, and ordered the culprits to stand out, but they refused to do so."

"But how can you be so sure that some of the Remove boys are responsible?" asked Dr. Stafford. "I am afraid that you are assuming a great deal, Mr. Pycraft. You must not come to me, making such accusations—"

"But I have the proof, sir!" said Mr. Pycraft quickly.

"Indeed!"

"Yes, sir—here!" shouted the Form-master, producing his tin. "Look at this—glue! And the brush still in the atrocious concoction! I would like to tell you, sir, that my boys were so securely fastened to their seats that when they rose they tore their—their—ahem!—nether garments! They tore them so seriously that I had to send prefects to their dormitories in order to get fresh clothing. I can assure you, sir, that this affair is a most serious one."

The Head's face became grave.

"So it appears, Mr. Pycraft," he said quietly. "What is this—er—tin? Yes, undoubtedly, the substance is glue. Where did you find it?"

"In Handforth's study, sir—in the Ancient House," replied Mr. Pycraft.

"Did you go into Handforth's study and make this investigation personally?" asked the Head sharply.

"Yes, sir; and I maintain that I was justified in doing so," replied Mr. Pycraft. "I was convinced that these boys were guilty, and I have succeeded in getting the evidence before they could destroy it. Handforth and Church and McClure are obviously the culprits, since this tin was found in their study. I appeal to you, sir, to—"

"I must ask you, Mr. Pycraft, to calm yourself," interrupted the Head grimly. "In the circumstances, perhaps you are justified in making this search. But please understand that I do not approve of that sort of thing. It would have been much better if you had reported the matter to Mr. Lee or to myself. It is for us to make any inquiry that is necessary."

"I will remember, sir," said Mr. Pycraft, between his teeth.

But he had gained his point, and was gloating with triumph. A moment later he and Dr. Stafford were hurrying across Inner Court—bound for the Remove Form-room. Trouble was evidently brewing!



CHAPTER 9

A Swishing for Four!

"REALLY, I—"

Mr. Crowell broke off as he saw the figure of Dr. Stafford behind Mr. Pycraft. The door had just opened, and Mr. Crowell was exasperated to see the Fourth Form master back again. But his protest died on his lips as he saw the Head. Once again the work of the Remove was being disturbed.

The Head came in, looking very serious.

"I am sorry to disturb your work, Mr. Crowell, but I have every reason to believe that there are some boys in this room who are guilty of a most outrageous trick. Mr. Pycraft has informed me of the facts, and I

felt it necessary to make an immediate inquiry."

"Very good, sir," said Mr. Crowell.

The Head had just come from the Fourth Form-room, where he had examined those seats, and where Boots & Co. had given him graphic descriptions of what had happened. And the Head was in a very stern mood.

"Evidence has come to light which makes it imperative for me to question three of your boys, Mr. Crowell," proceeded the Head. "Glue has been found in one of the junior studies of the Ancient House, and the inference is obvious."

"There are the boys, sir!" shouted Mr. Pycraft, pointing to Handforth and Church and McClure. "The young rascals! The destructive young——"

"If you please, Mr. Pycraft!" interrupted the Head icily.

Handforth was looking rather startled, and he shot a quick glance at Nipper, only to find that Nipper was sitting in his place, looking very innocent and calm. Church and McClure, for their part, were staring in sheer astonishment, for they had heard nothing whatever about this charge until now. They were not even certain that Handforth had taken part in the glueing episode. They strongly suspected it, but they knew nothing positively.

"Handforth, Church, and McClure," said the Head sternly, "stand up!"

The three juniors rose to their feet.

"I have every reason to believe that you three boys are guilty of this outrageous act," continued the Head. "What have you to say in answer?"

"I—I——"

Handforth paused, floundering.

"It's not true, sir!" said Church hotly. "I don't know anything about it! I didn't go into the Fourth Form-room with any glue!"

"Neither did I, sir!" said McClure, with an indignant glare at Mr. Pycraft. "It must be a mistake!"

"It is no mistake!" said Mr. Pycraft. "This glue was found in your study!"

"We didn't put it there, sir!" said Church. "We absolutely deny this! If we were guilty, we'd own up—but we're not!"

"Of course we're not, sir!" said McClure.

There was a brief silence, and Mr. Crowell turned to the Head.

"I would remind you, sir, that these boys are generally very truthful," he said quietly. "For my own part, I am prepared to accept their word. I hope you will not think it necessary to——"

"I am waiting for Handforth," interrupted the Head. "Handforth, what have you to say?"

There was a very grim note in Dr. Stafford's voice. For Handforth was no actor. His guilt was plainly written on his face. He was very red, and he looked thoroughly uncomfortable. In point of fact, Handforth wanted a cue from Nipper. Nipper and Fullwood and De Valerie were the other partici-

pants in that little game—and it was obviously up to them to confess. Handforth went red at the thought of Church and McClure suffering unjustly.

"I—I—— Yes, sir," he blurted out. "I did it, sir!"

"You!" ejaculated his chums.

"So you own up, Handforth?" asked the Head. "Very well. Stand out here!"

Handforth came forward, his confusion now gone.

"Yes, sir. I'm the chap," he said calmly. "And I'm jolly glad of it, too! If I had another chance, I'd do it again—against those blessed Fourth Formers! They've been asking for trouble for a long time——"

"Silence!" ordered the Head, compressing his lips. "How dare you say such things, Handforth?"

"I am saying them, sir, because I mean them," replied Handforth, with his usual recklessness. "Anything up against the Fourth is——"

"There you are!" broke in Mr. Pycraft excitedly. "You see, sir? The boy is in no way repentant! On the contrary, he is positively gloating over his guilt! I demand that he shall be treated drastically——"

"Mr. Pycraft," broke in the Head coldly.

"I—I beg your pardon, sir!" said the master of the Fourth, with a gulp.

Dr. Stafford turned back to Handforth, and looked at him sternly.

"I am glad that you have confessed, my boy," he said. "It has avoided any prolonged inquiry——"

"Hold on, sir!" interrupted Nipper. "I'm guilty, too!"

"The same here, sir!" said Fullwood, rising to his feet.

"And I'm the fourth one, sir," put in De Valerie.

"Good gracious!" said the Head, starting. "How many more of you?"

"No more, sir," said Nipper. "We are the ones who put that glue in the Fourth Form-room. We did it this morning, sir, before breakfast."

"We thought it was rather a good joke, sir," said Handforth, with a grin. "My hat, I wish I'd been there to see those chaps struggling to stand up! What a glorious sight!"

"Ahem!" coughed the Head. "I must entirely disagree with you, Handforth. So there are four of you, eh? Well, there is only one possible action to be taken. You will all be caned—severely."

"Caned, sir?" said Mr. Pycraft, staring. "But are you not going to give these boys a public flogging? Indeed, I thought the offence was so serious that even expulsion would not be too severe."

The headmaster turned to Mr. Pycraft, and his glance was dangerous.

"I would beg to remind you, Mr. Pycraft, that I am in charge of this affair," he said icily. "I do not forget that these boys regard this glue episode as a joke. From their point of view, no doubt it was an excellent

piece of fun. And I do not intend to lose my sense of proportion. They have confessed, and you may be quite sure that I shall make them pay for any damage that has been occasioned. It shall be stopped from their weekly allowance. For the rest, a caning is sufficient to meet the demands of the case."

"As you will, sir," said Mr. Pycraft.

And then and there the four culprits were caned, the rest of the Remove looking on with great sympathy. It was a very severe swishing, too—the Head himself laying it on. But the quartette did not particularly mind. The rag had been well worth it. And Mr. Horace Pycraft stood by, watching with an expression of vindictive triumph on his face. The Remove hated him for it—and plainly let him see their hatred.

For Mr. Pycraft had made himself more detestable than ever over this business, and even the headmaster could see the Remove fellows were full of animosity. Later on, Dr. Stafford would have occasion to remember that!

CHAPTER 10.

Duped!



EGGIE PITT, of the West House, was looking solemn as the Remove fellows came out of the class-room after morning lessons.

"I've been thinking things out," he said, to a crowd of other Removites. "What with this feud business, and everything else, the Remove is now a sort of armed force. And I think we ought to get up a plan of decorations. Nipper and Fullwood and De Valerie and Handforth have earned the medal of valour!"

"Hear, hear!" grinned Tommy Watson. "They've been heroes, and they ought to be decorated, as you say!"

"A frightfully good idea, dear old warriors!" nodded Archie Glenthorpe. "I mean to say, how are the good old paws? Not smarting so fearfully, I trust?"

Nipper grinned.

"We don't worry about a few cuts across the hands, Archie," he said. "We can stand it—we're tough. And we don't need any V.C.'s, either. It was all for the cause!"

"You bounders!" said Solomon Levi. "You didn't say a word to us about it, either! Thought you'd make it a little surprise, eh?"

"Yes, that was the wheeze," said Handforth. "And it was even more successful than we had expected. Just imagine all those Fourth-Formers stuck to their seats—and then tearing their bags when they tried to get up!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Removites roared with merriment. The joke was certainly an excellent one, and the Remove appreciated it to the full.

Outside, in the Triangle, many were the yells and taunts that were sent across to the Fourth-Formers. It was a great humiliation

for Boots and his men. They were chipped unmercifully. Even the Fifth joined in the general merriment, and there were all sorts of sarcastic queries put to the Modern House and East House juniors.

They were asked if they had visited their tailors, if they had ordered new pairs of bags yet, and if they were doing their own repairing. Various questions on the subject of glue were put to them. In fact, their lives were made miserable for an hour or two. The joke was all over the school, and St. Frank's roared over it.

"Never mind!" said Boots grimly. "We'll get our own back for this! The laugh's on us for the time being, but those Remove chaps will grin on the other side of their faces before we've done with them!"

And the other Fourth-Formers agreed.

They were all looking very stern and relentless. The Removites were beginning to recover their sense of humour. At first, the feud had been a very deadly affair, and Nipper and his followers had been as grim as any of the Fourth-Formers. But lately they had seen humour in the situation. But Buster Boots was different. All the Fourth-Formers were different, in fact. They could find nothing to laugh at, and they took this warfare very seriously, indeed. Nothing was allowed to disturb their determination. Their object was to gain the ascendancy over the Remove, and proclaim themselves, for all time, as the leading Form of the two. It was John Busterfield Boots' ambition, and he was going all out to achieve it.

The afternoon was quiet, and nothing disturbed the lessons. Even at tea-time, there seemed to be no activities, and the joke against the Fourth-Formers had been allowed to die down a bit. They were now getting a little peace.

In the Ancient House, Handforth was all for following up their success of the morning by another rag this evening. He had many wonderful ideas—but his chums would take no notice of him. Nobody else seemed to think much of Handy's ideas, either.

"Let's get prep. over first," said Church diplomatically. "When prep's finished we shall have an hour or two to ourselves, and then we might be able to think of something really good."

"What do you mean—really good?" Handy asked. "What have I just been suggesting?"

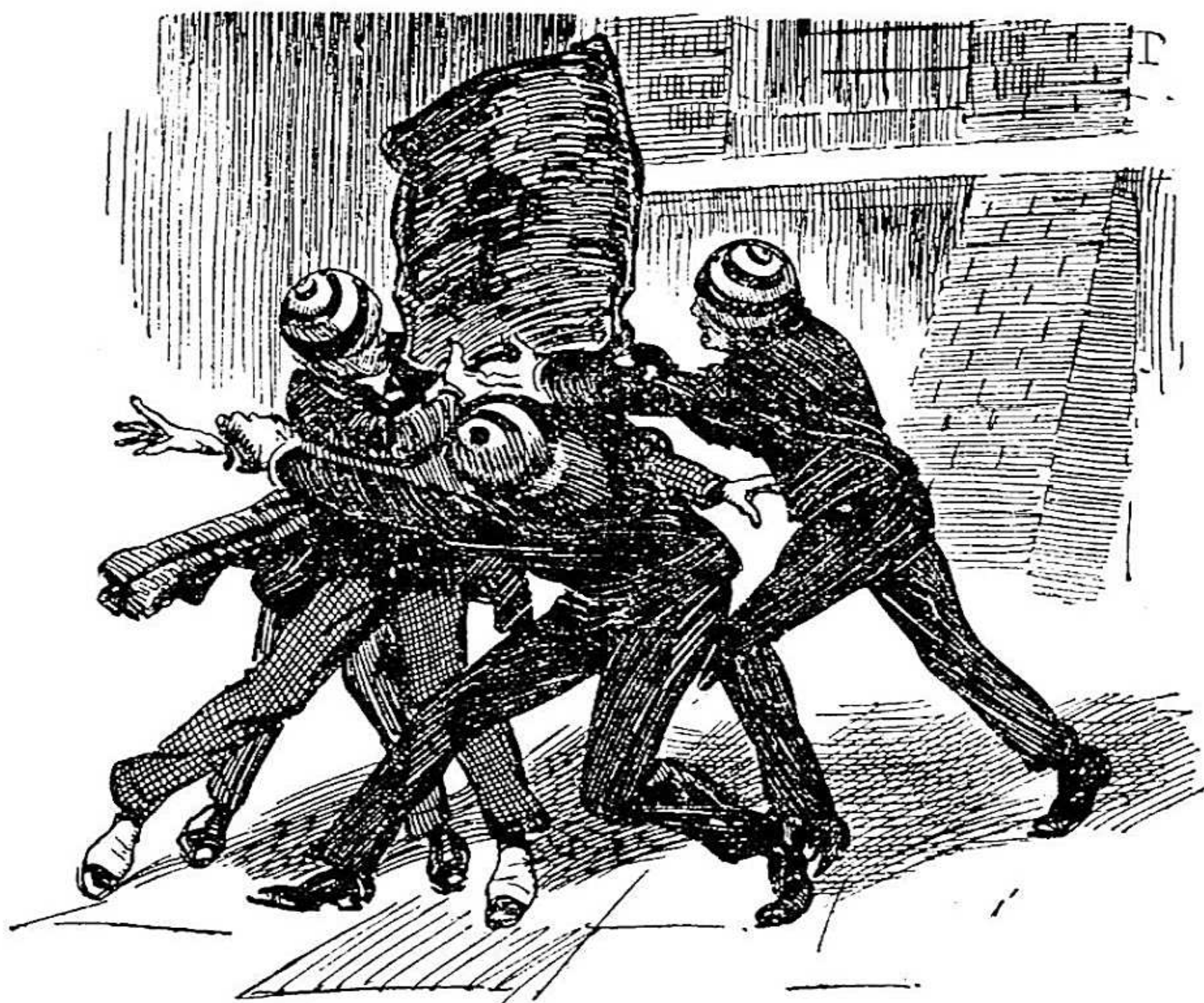
"I—I mean, let's get on with our prep.," said Church hastily. "The time's getting on, and the evening's wearing away. There won't be much time left, unless we're pretty sharp. I think Nipper's calling a meeting in the Common-room for half-past seven, and we shall want to be there—"

The door opened, and Biggleswade, of the Sixth, looked in.

"Sorry, you kids," he said. "But you're wanted."

"Wanted?" asked Handforth & Co., in one voice.

"Yes," said Biggleswade, with a sad wag of his head. "Head's orders! You're to go to the Head at once—he's waiting for you in his study."



Mr. Pycraft gave a smothered gasp as, without warning, three figures suddenly pounced upon him from the rear, and flung a sack over his head and shoulders. In a few moments it had been tied securely, leaving him helpless.

Biggleswade was one of the Ancient House prefects, and he was a very decent fellow. An easy-going sort of chap, and very popular on that account. Just at present he was looking decidedly worried. He never liked telling fellows that they were wanted by the Head. It generally meant trouble.

"But what the dickens for?" asked Handforth. "We were swished this morning, weren't we?"

"So I heard," said Biggleswade. "Still, it's none of my business. I wish you luck, kids. Hope you won't get into too much trouble."

He went off, and Handforth & Co. stared at one another.

"Well, what do you think of this?" asked McClure. "Why does the Head want us now? We've done nothing! At least, I don't remember—"

He broke off, trying to think of some misdemeanour that might have come to the Head's ears. It was quite possible that Mr. Pycraft had been busy again, nosing out something that didn't concern him.

"Well, it's no good talking," said Church. "If the Head's waiting, we'd better go—and the sooner the better. It isn't wise to keep the Head waiting. He takes a prejudiced view of that sort of thing. Come along, Handy."

They passed out into the passage, and Handforth was scratching his head in bewilderment. They ran into Nipper and Tregellis-West and Watson, who were just emerging from Study C, next door.

"What do you think has happened?" growled Handforth. "The Head wants us in his study!"

"Begad!" said Sir Montie. "We've had the same order!"

"What!" said Church. "All three of you?"

"Yes, worse luck," said Nipper ruefully. "I expect some of our past crimes have found us out. Anyhow, it's not much good pulling long faces. We shall have to go. Orders are orders."

They went out wondering. And when they got into the Triangle, they found that the dusk was deep. There were heavy clouds overhead, and darkness had come on prematurely. Nowadays it was necessary to be very cautious before venturing out-of-doors, but the Triangle was quite deserted, and everything was quiet on the other side!

The six juniors hurried towards Big Arch, and passed through. And then, striding out across Inner Court, they received a big surprise. For there was a sudden rush of many feet—and the next second they were surrounded.

"Got them!" came a gloating shout in Buster Boots' voice. "Hold them tight, you chaps!"

"Great Scott!" shouted Nipper. "A trap! And we walked right into it!"



CHAPTER 11.

Boots & Co.'s Revenge!

It was only too true! The six Remove fellows had walked blindly into a trap of the enemy's! Boots and his men were there in force—over twenty of them. And it was utterly hopeless for the six Ancient House fellows to make any fight for it. They were outnumbered, and surprised. Before they could even attempt to resist they were flung to the ground, and held down.

"That was jolly neat, eh?" said Boots, with a grin. "I knew that we could rely on old Biggleswade!"

"Biggleswade!" said Nipper, with a start. "You don't mean to say that Biggleswade helped you in this trap? I thought better of him! I deserve to be kicked for being such a simpleton!"

"You can't help that, Nipper—Nature made you a simpleton!" said Armstrong sourly. "Anyhow, you tumbled into the trap, didn't you?"

"Naturally, we didn't tell Biggleswade the real truth," went on Boots. "We just asked him to tell you fellows that you were wanted by the Head. And Biggleswade, poor chump, thought that it was A.I. at Lloyd's! He hadn't the faintest idea that it was all part of the wheeze!"

"You tricky rotters!" said Handforth breathlessly.

They realised how easily they had been caught. Naturally, as the order had come from Biggleswade, a prefect, even Nipper had not suspected that it was a part of a trick. Boots & Co. had used the easy-going Ancient House prefect to further their ends, and Nipper could not help admitting that it had been a very clever ruse. It was particularly clever because of its simplicity.

Here were six of the most prominent Remove fellows in the hands of the enemy—and not any of their comrades knew of the fact! The events of the next half hour were liable to be very interesting—and possibly very painful, too!

"We're going to make you fellows suffer for what you did to us this morning," said Boots gloatingly. "By Jove! We shall have the laugh over the Remove when this business is through! You've been jeering at us all day, you Remove rotters—but it'll be our turn to jeer soon!"

"Well, it's the fortune of war," said Nipper philosophically. "Get it over quickly, Boots, old man—and don't take yourself so seriously, for goodness' sake."

Buster Boots scowled.

"I don't want any of your soft soap!" he said coldly. "I shan't forget what you fellows did the other day—with your dirty tricks!"

"You rotter!" shouted Handforth. "You were the chaps who played dirtily! We've been clean all the time—we've carried on this warfare like gentlemen! And you've acted like hooligans!"

"Keep him quiet!" ordered Boots. "Either gag him, or sit on his head!"

Somebody sat on Handforth's head, and the unfortunate Edward Oswald's voice died away in a muffled gurgle.

And then, after that, the six prisoners were smuggled away to a spot behind the Modern House. In the gloom, they were securely trussed up with strong rope, and placed in a row. This spot was quite private, and there was not much likelihood of any interruption. And no light was needed for the particular work that the Fourth-Formers had on hand.

"First of all," said Boots, "the glue!"

"Glue?" said Handforth. "What the dickens—"

"Your own glue!" went on Buster. "Mr. Pycraft was careless enough to leave it about, and we bagged it. Poetic justice, eh? You shoved glue on to our forms, and we're going to rub it into your hair!"

"I say, go easy, Boots!" said Nipper. "That's a special kind of glue, you know. It sets as hard as rock, and if you put that on to our hair—"

"We know it's a special kind of glue, and that's why we're going to use it," interrupted Bob Christine. "And we're not showing any mercy, either. At one time I regarded you fellows as my friends—but I don't now. I don't want to speak to any of you again. You're not worth talking to!"

Nipper was rather puzzled at this attitude on Bob Christine's part. For Bob was really one of the best fellows under the sun. But then, Bob had received a terrible slash across the face from a dog-whip. That incident had occurred during the recent fight in the Triangle. How was Bob Christine to know that the Remove were entirely innocent of that outrage? It had been committed by the Unknown Prowler, who had also used his dog-whip upon Reggie Pitt. And Reggie, very naturally, was convinced that the Fourth-Formers had been responsible. There was a complete misunderstanding between the two enemy forces.

Explanations were out of the question, since none was listened to.

In spite of all protests, the six prisoners were dealt with very drastically. That glue, thinned somewhat, was rubbed into their hair—until the unfortunate victims were in a terrible condition. But this was not the only step that Boots & Co. took.

The hands and faces of the unhappy six were painted with a black dye. And by the time they were finished they all looked like niggers.

"Jolly good!" said Boots, at last. "Now we'll tell you something, you rotters! This

black dye is a special kind of our own. You made your special glue, so we've made our special dye! What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander—see?"

"You—you—you——" began Handforth.

"Oh, you needn't worry," went on Boots. "This dye is perfectly harmless. It won't give you a skin disease, or anything of that sort. But I'll tell you one thing. This dye won't come off!"

"Won't come off!" gasped the prisoners.

"Not until it wears off!" replied Boots.

"And that'll take weeks—perhaps months! I told you that we'd have a fine revenge, didn't I?"

"You bounders!" shouted Church. "It's a dirty trick to make us black like this—to turn us into niggers——"

"That's just it!" said Armstrong gloatingly. "Niggers! We're going to taunt you with it for days to come—and you can make your own explanations to Mr. Lee and to the Head! We know that you won't sneak on us, and you can bet your boots that there won't be any traces left!"

And the six prisoners, without any further ado, were lifted up, and carried bodily back towards the Ancient House. But not towards the front of it. It was rather too open there—for enemy forces might come along, and disturb things.

No, the prisoners were taken to the rear of the Ancient House—and then brought to a halt against a cellar grating. It was only too obvious what the Fourth-Formers intended.



CHAPTER 12.

An Unexpected Discovery!

THE cellar grating was lifted up, and, one after the other, the captives were bundled down into the black depths. Nipper, who was well acquainted with the geography of the school, knew that this particular cellar was in the old part of the Ancient House—a section that had never been changed, in spite of many alterations and renovations. This cellar was probably hundreds of years old, and was never used. It was well away from all the modern parts of the building.

"Well, there you are—all the six of you nicely trussed up like chickens!" said Buster Boots, at length. "We're going to leave you here for an hour, and then we'll send a telephone message across to Reggie Pitt, in the West House. We'll just explain where you are, so that you won't have to remain here all night. And I rather think that we've got the laugh on you!"

And the Fourth-Formers laughed uproariously—and not without a certain malicious note in their voices.

"The rotters!" panted Handforth, when the Fourth-Formers had gone, and the cellar grating had been put back into place. "The—the

awful beasts! Hadn't we better all shout together? If we yell hard enough——"

"It's no good, Handy—we shouldn't be heard," interrupted Nipper. "We're a long way from any of the occupied parts of the building, and we should only be making ourselves hoarse for nothing. They're going to tell Pitt in an hour's time, so our only course is to wait."

"Rats! I don't see why we should wait!" retorted Handforth. "By George! Why not get free at once? Then we could sneak into the Modern House, and have our revenge on Boots while they are unprepared!"

"Yes—if we can get free!" said Tommy Watson gruffly.

"Easier said than done, dear old boy," remarked Sir Montie Tregellis-West. "Be-gad! These ropes are frightfully strong—they are, really. I'm afraid it's quite useless for us to struggle."

They were silent for a while. Only Handforth's desperate movements broke the stillness. He was determined to get free, if there was any possible way of doing so. But he was finding that his ropes were very tight, and the more he struggled, the tighter they seemed to become. That glue was drying on their heads, giving their scalps a curiously tightened feeling. They were in acute discomfort.

"I say, do you think they meant . . . at about the dye?" asked Church uncomfortably. "How ghastly if we shall have to remain black for weeks! It'll be too awful for words!"

"Yes, I believe they meant it," said Nipper soberly. "Just now Boots & Co. are in a very arrogant mood. They're reckless, too, and they don't quite realise what they're doing. I'm afraid we're in a nasty fix."

Thud—crash!

"What the dickens——" began Church. "Is that you, Handy? What are you up to?"

"Oh, corks!" groaned Handforth.

"Have you hurt yourself?" asked McClure.

"Yes, I have," said Handforth tartly. "What do you think I've been groaning for? I was trying to get these confounded ropes off my wrists, and I fell against the wall. Something seemed to give way, too!"

"How can it give way?" asked Tommy Watson. "You couldn't go through a solid stone wall!"

"It isn't a stone wall—it's a wooden panel!" growled Handforth. "This is one of the old cellars, and there's wood all round it. It's been whitewashed and painted, and goodness knows what else—but it's still made of wood—— Hallo! By George, what's this?"

"What's what?" asked the others, struck by Handforth's tone.

"I'm jiggered if I haven't made a jagged hole here!" said Handforth excitedly. "And the wood is as rough as you like! There's an edge here like a saw!"

"Then you'd better steer clear of it," said Church tartly. "I wish we could see! It's as black as pitch in here—"

"I don't need to see!" interrupted Handforth. "I can feel this jagged edge all right—and it ought to slice through these ropes of mine! Didn't I tell you that I should do the trick?"

He was very excited now—and the others, too, were beginning to feel a little happier. By sheer accident Handforth had found something unexpected; and he commenced to draw his wrists up and down that jagged edge of woodwork. It was quite a good notion; for the ropes frayed rapidly under that treatment, and before another minute had passed a yell from Handforth announced the fact that the ropes had parted.

"Good egg!" he said breathlessly. "I've got my wrists free!"

"That's the style!" said Nipper, with a chuckle. "Good old Handy! Never say die, eh? Have you got a pocket-knife?"

"You bet I have!" replied Handforth. "But I wish I had some matches, though. If we could only see—"

"That's all right," interrupted Nipper. "As soon as you've cut your ankles free, come across to the rest of us, and release us. There's an electric torch in my inner pocket, and we'll soon have some light on the subject."

In less than three minutes the other five juniors were freed. They had not expected to gain their liberty as quickly as this. Even Handforth was surprised—although he would not admit it. He triumphantly declared that he had meant to get free, and he added that when he made up his mind, nothing could stop him.

"We'll have our revenge now!" he said eagerly. "We'll go straight across to the Modern House, and get busy before Boots & Co. can prepare themselves for any retaliation!"

"There's something in the idea," admitted Nipper. "Here we are—here's the light! It won't take us long to get out, now."

He switched on the torch, and then gave a sudden gasp. He had forgotten, for the moment, that he and his companions had been treated with that glue and the dye. And the others were looking truly appalling. Five black faces stared at Nipper, and the hair on their heads was standing up in long spikes! Their appearance was utterly grotesque.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Begad!"

They all muttered startled exclamations, and then Nipper turned his torch on the wooden panel that Handforth had smashed. And he made a sudden discovery. There was a dark cavity behind that broken panel—and Nipper caught sight of some steps, old and smothered with dust. Steps—leading downwards into the mysterious depths!



CHAPTER 13.

The Secret Passage!

EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH grunted.

"Don't waste time here!" he said gruffly.

"We all look freaks here, I know, but we can't help that. The best thing we can do is to get across to the enemy camp at once, and make a surprise raid—"

"Wait a minute, Handy—wait a minute!" interrupted Nipper. "Look at this!"

He was now casting his light right down into the cavity, and they could all see those mysterious steps leading downwards. Handforth forgot all about his proposed raid on the enemy. He was excited in a flash—excited in a new way.

"By George!" he gasped. "A secret passage—a hidden staircase, leading down into the subterranean depths!"

"Looks like it!" said Tommy Watson, in an awed voice.

Handforth suddenly remembered something.

"And I discovered it!" he said, a note of triumph in his voice. "Don't forget that, you chaps! I'm the one who discovered this secret passage! If I hadn't busted through the panel—"

"That's all right, old man; we won't try to rob you of your glory!" interrupted Nipper. "Supposing we fill in this next half-hour by doing a little exploring? It was very kind of Boots to put us in here, so that we could make this discovery— Beg pardon, Handy! I mean, so that you could make it!"

"That's better!" said Handforth, nodding.

The others chuckled. They had always known that there were lots of secret passages and tunnels at St. Frank's that had never been discovered. It was generally supposed that some parts of the old buildings were fairly honeycombed with age-old secret passages. The Modern House, for example, was not precisely true to its name. A great deal of the building was modern, but there were parts of it that were almost as aged as the most antique portions of the Ancient House itself. For the Modern House stood on the site of the original monastery. And the Ancient House foundations were hundreds and hundreds of years old.

At different periods there had been many additions and alterations. St. Frank's, as it now stood was largely a new series of buildings. But there were parts of the Ancient House that remained unaltered. Wings had been added, and towers had been built, and so forth, but the foundations, for the most part, were untouched. This particular cellar was in a part of the building that had long fallen into disuse.

"Do you think it'll be safe to go down?" asked Tommy Watson doubtfully.

"Of course it will; and we're going, too!" said Handforth grimly. "At least, I am. You'd better let me have that torch, Nipper—"

"No, old man; I'll lead the way," said Nipper firmly. "With all due respect to you, I'm afraid you're a bit too reckless. There might be pitfalls, and I'm rather more cautious than you are. And I shall stop every now and again to strike a match. There might be bad patches of gas, or something. You never know with these old, disused tunnels."

So they went down those queer old steps, in single file, with Nipper leading the way. This was an adventure, indeed! It was all the more attractive—all the more thrilling—because it had come unexpectedly.

When they got to the bottom of the steps they found that the air was still comparatively pure. It was stuffy and dank, but quite breathable. Now and again Nipper paused to strike a match. They found themselves walking along a brick tunnel—and the very formation of the bricks proved that the tunnel was of tremendous age. But it was in a fine state of preservation, and they received no checks as they walked along.

"Which direction are we going in?" asked Church breathlessly.

"Goodness knows!" said Handforth. "Right under the House. I believe—and there's no telling—we might come out well beyond the school limits."

"If my sense of direction is any good, we're just about under the Triangle," said Nipper. "I may be wrong, of course, but it seems to me that we've come out from the corner of the Ancient House, and that we're now passing under the Triangle, somewhere near the fountain."

"Well, I'm blessed!"

But the tunnel still continued, much to their amazement. And, at length, they arrived at some more stone steps—this time leading upwards. Nipper was very keen now—very eager.

"We ought to be somewhere near an exit," he said tensely. "These steps are significant. It won't take us long to find— Look out! Some of these steps are so worn that they crumble away. Go easy, you fellows! I'm not sure that we ought to mount them. They may fall to pieces altogether!"

"Rats!" said Handforth. "Let's chance it!"

The others were just as keen. Up they went, and after a while they met with a check. The steps ended abruptly. In front of them was a heavy wooden barrier. And there were ancient wooden panels on either side of the narrow staircase, too. It was impossible to progress any further.

"Oh, rats!" said Handforth, with a frown. "Can't we smash this barrier down?"

"Better not try!" said Nipper, in a low voice. "And don't speak so loudly. Listen!"

"Eh?" muttered Handforth. "What on earth—"

"Listen!" repeated Nipper. "I thought I heard something just then."

They all stood stock still, and, sure enough, voices came to their ears—dim, far-away voices, as though they were a long, long way off. Suddenly Nipper started.

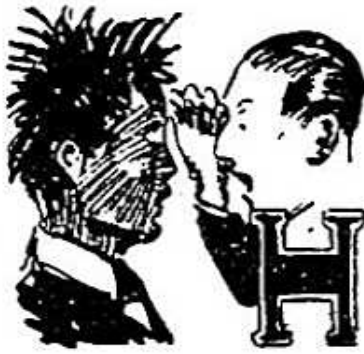
"Did you hear?" he whispered. "That was Boots' voice just then!"

"Boots!"

"Yes—and Christine's, too—and Lawrence's!" went on Nipper. "There are other voices— My only hat! I wonder!"

"Eh?" said Tommy Watson. "You wonder what?"

"Well, isn't it strange?" asked Nipper tensely. "All the voices that we can hear belong to the Fourth-Formers! I wouldn't mind betting everything I've got that we're standing against the wall of the junior common-room in the Modern House!"



CHAPTER 14.

Keeping It To Themselves!

HERE were great possibilities!

Nipper's surmise was a shrewd one, and very possibly right on the nail. It was significant, indeed, that the only voices to be heard were those of the Fourth-Formers—and Modern House Fourth-Formers at that! It was possible, of course, that a crowd of Boots' supporters had gathered in one of the junior studies. But it was far more likely that they were talking in the common-room.

Only a wall lay between this secret passage and the headquarters of the enemy.

"By George!" said Handforth, in a low, excited voice. "I believe you're right, Nipper! It's the junior common-room in the Modern House—sure as a gun! What had we better do? Can't we break this wood-work down, and get in?"

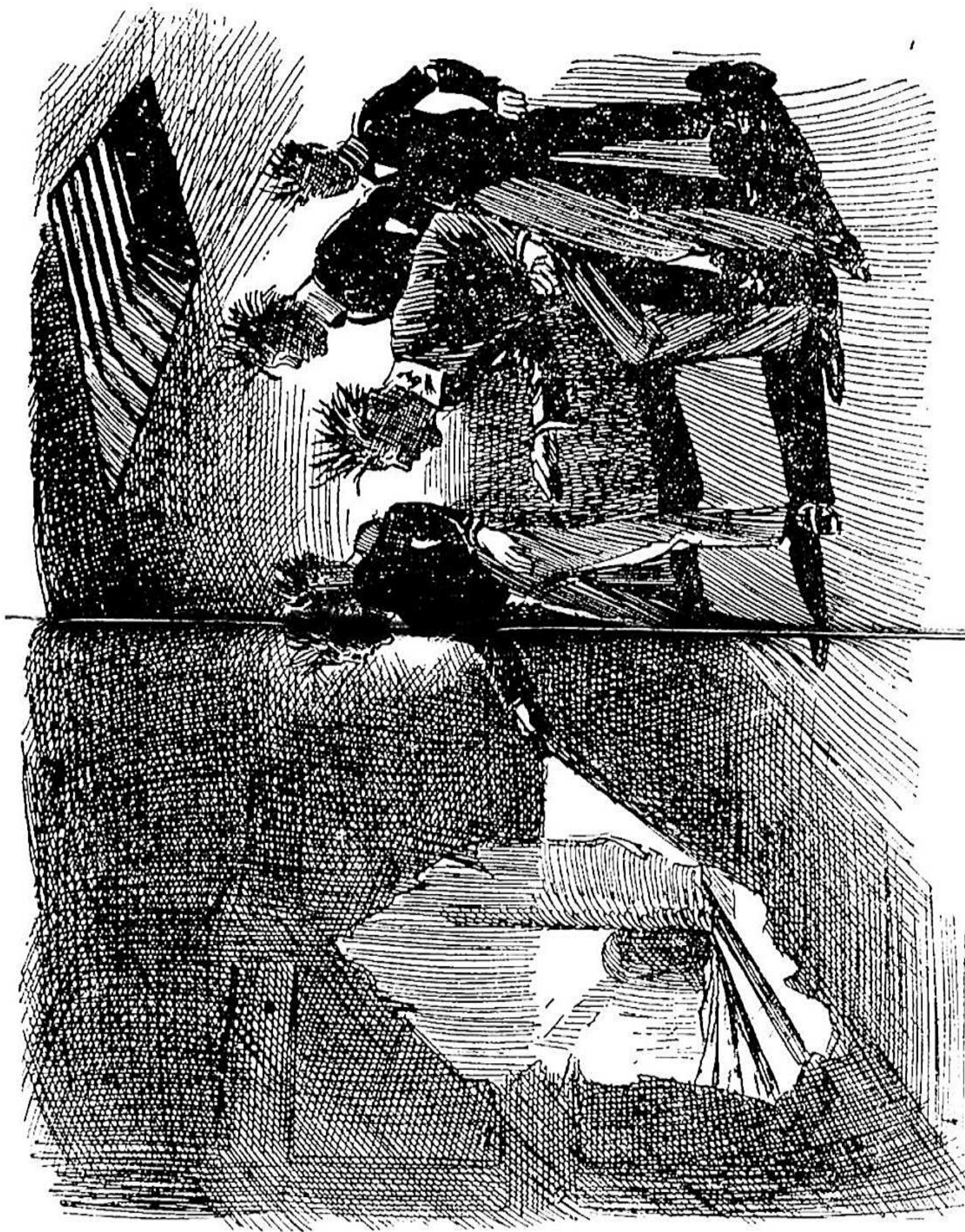
"My dear chap, if we did that we should destroy all chances of making capital out of this discovery," said Nipper. "No; we'll do nothing for the present. And, what's more, we'll say nothing. We'll keep this to ourselves."

"Yes, but what—"

"This discovery is too big to be noised abroad," went on Nipper. "If everybody in the Remove knows, it may get to the ears of Boots & Co., and that will spoil everything. Think of it! A secret way into the enemy's headquarters! Look what it might mean to us later on!"

The others were startled as they stood there, thinking.

"We'll come here again," went on Nipper. "This is too long a job to be done in twenty minutes, or half an hour. We'll come here again after lights out. No time to make any arrangements now, but we can have a talk about it later on, after we've gone to



The grotesque-looking juniors gazed in wonder as he shone his torch down on the smashed panel. Behind it could be seen some steps, old and smothered in dust. To what mysterious depths did they lead?

bed. Handy, you'd better come into my dormitory after lights out."

"You bet I will!" said Handforth eagerly. "But it's a pity we can't do anything now."

"My dear old cuckoo, there isn't time," insisted Nipper. "We'll try to make a way through into the common-room, if we can. And we'll do it in such a way that the Fourth-Formers won't know anything about it. And, as I said before, we'll keep it absolutely to ourselves. But just at present we'd better make haste and get back to that cellar."

"Just what I was thinking," said McClure. "But how can we keep it to ourselves? If Reggie Pitt comes at the end of an hour—as Boots promised—he and the other chaps will see that broken panel—"

"Not if we patch it up," interrupted Nipper. "That's why I want to get back. Our policy is to patch up that wall, and then tie ourselves up again, so that even Reggie won't suspect anything. He can be trusted. I know, and we'll certainly take him into the secret later on. But there's no telling who'll come with him to rescue us. We can't be too careful."

"You're right!" admitted Handforth. "By George, it's just as well to be cautious over a thing like this! Forrest or Gulliver, or Teddy Long might come with the rescue party, and it wouldn't take them long to spout the news all over the place! Come on, let's get back!"

And so, hastening, the six juniors went along that tunnel, and emerged, at length, into the cellar. Everything was still all quiet. No rescuers had arrived. And they set to work with all speed to carry out their plan.

It was most essential that this secret should be well preserved. There were many fellows in the Remove who could be trusted with the secret, but there were others, too, who could not be trusted at all. It was more than probable that the untrustworthy ones would come along to the rescue with the other fellows, so it was highly necessary to do a little bit of faking.

That secret passage might come in very useful for making a surprise raid on the enemy.

It did not take them long to rope themselves up again. Handforth insisted upon being last, and his idea was a pretty good one, too.

"When they come, I'll pretend that I've nearly got free," he explained. "They won't think anything, because they'll be too startled at our appearance. What with the excitement and everything else, they'll soon have us free of the ropes, and they'll never trouble to examine these walls."

The panel had been patched up well—the boards jammed in so closely that it was almost impossible to tell that they had been smashed.

And they were only just in time!

For hardly had Handforth got some of the ropes round him than sounds came from the grating. Voices came down to the prisoners,



The grotesque-looking juniors gazed in wonder at the light, and it could be seen some steps, old and smoothened.

and lights appeared. And then, one after another, a crowd of Removites tumbled into the cellar, led by Reggie Pitt.

"By jingo, it's true!" ejaculated Reggie. "They're here, you chaps!"

"Oh, my goodness!"

"Where are the lights?" went on Reggie. "Can't somebody bring some lights. Oh, my only Sunday topper! What the— How the—"

He broke off, staring blankly at the trussed-up forms on the floor. Handforth was struggling to his feet.

"Can't you give me some help?" he gurgled. "I've nearly got free—only one or two ropes—"

"Handy!" ejaculated Pitt. "All right, old man—I'll help you! But— Great Scott, I nearly had a fit! You're in the most terrible condition! You look like a lot of South Sea Islanders!"

The others came crowding round, shouting with indignation and amazement. Certainly the six unfortunate juniors presented an ap-



his torch down on the smashed panel. Behind
To what mysterious depths did they lead?

palling appearance in the lights which the rescuers had brought with them.

After that the six were hauled out of the cellar, and nobody noticed anything strange about the panelled wall. The secret was well kept. Indeed, the rescuers were so excited about Nipper & Co.'s predicament that it never occurred to them to give a second glance at the cellar walls. All their attention was taken up by the grotesque appearance of the six.

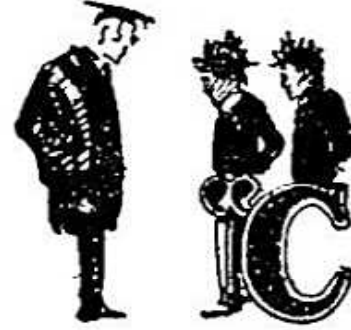
"The rotters!" said Fullwood angrily. "They've made you in a terrible mess, Nipper! The glue on your hair, and all this dye —"

"After all, it's only tit for tat!" interrupted Nipper. "We mustn't grumble too much. We glued their forms—so they've glued our heads! I'm only hoping that the dye will come off—but Boots says that it is permanent."

"Good gad!" said Archie Glenthorne aghast. "You don't mean to absolutely say, old nigger, that you'll be black for the rest of

your jolly old days? How utterly utter! How frightfully frightful! I mean to say, how shockingly shocking! My heart weeps for you, old lads—it absolutely weeps like the dickens!"

Many were the expressions of sympathy—and many were the vows of vengeance!



CHAPTER 15.

A Black Business!

"CAVE!"

It was a cry of warning. The Removites had just succeeded in smuggling the victims into the Ancient House. The idea was to get upstairs unseen—so they could dodge into the bath-rooms, and make a thorough attempt to clean themselves. But luck was against them.

They had just got to the top of the staircase, and were congratulating themselves that everything was all right, when the cry of "Cave!" came from one or two scouts, in advance. And then, before they could dodge into any handy doorway, a stern voice demanded what was the matter. It was the voice of Mr. Pagett, the master of the Fifth!

"Oh, crumbs!" murmured Nipper. "That's done it!"

It was against all reason that Mr. Pagett should have been upstairs at this particular time. He had no right to be upstairs. Indeed, it was like his nerve to be in the Ancient House at all! For Mr. Pagett really belonged to West House, and he was an intruder here. But the fact remained that here he was—and here he had to be faced!

And Mr. Pagett, moreover, was a somewhat short-tempered gentleman. He was very different from the ill-tempered Mr. Pycraft, but, nevertheless, he was a master to be avoided in a crisis of this kind. Unhappily, to avoid him was out of the question.

For Mr. Pagett emerged from a neighbouring doorway, and caught a full glimpse of the six grotesque victims of Boots & Co.

"Good heavens!" ejaculated the master of the Fifth. "What—what is this? Who are these fantastic figures? Boys, stand aside! Let me see!"

All hope of avoiding Mr. Pagett was at an end. The juniors stood aside, and Mr. William Pagett came forward. He took stock of the six figures, and his expression was one of amazement and consternation.

"Who are you?" he demanded coldly. "Upon my soul, I have never seen anything like it. Who brought you into this school? I demand an answer!"

"It's all right, sir—we belong here," said Nipper. "We're just going along to the bath-room to have a wash."

"Good heavens! Is that you, Hamilton?" asked Mr. Pagett, aghast.

"Yes, sir."

"But—but what have you been doing to yourself?"

"Nothing, sir."

"What do you mean—nothing?"

"Somebody else has done it, sir," said Nipper calmly. "You surely don't think that we'd do this to ourselves for a bit of fun?"

"No, no, of course not," said Mr. Pagett hastily. "Of course not! Who are these others? It is quite impossible to recognise them in this—this appalling disguise!"

The others reluctantly gave their names, and Mr. Pagett looked rather grave.

"I can only assume, boys, that this treatment has been meted out to you by some misguided members of the Fourth Form?" he asked. "You don't like to answer, eh? Well, I have no authority over you myself, since you do not belong to my Form. But I consider it my duty to report you to Mr. Lee. He is your housemaster, and he should know."

"I say, be a sportsman, sir!" urged Handforth. "There's no need to report us to Mr. Lee. We shall only get into trouble——"

"I do not desire to get you into trouble, Handforth—but I am certainly anxious that the culprits should be punished," replied Mr. Pagett firmly. "You have been treated very badly—and I admire your spirit in wishing to keep it secret. But I deem it my duty, nevertheless, to inform Mr. Lee. I cannot possibly remain silent on such a subject. Come with me at once."

"Begad!" groaned Sir Montie. "Are you going to take us before Mr. Lee like this, sir?"

"Yes, I am."

"Couldn't we have a wash first?" asked Nipper. "I say, Mr. Pagett, let's just go in and have a wash——"

"Certainly not!" interrupted the master of the Fifth. "If you have a wash, Mr. Lee will not be able to see your condition. No; I am firm. Come with me at once—all of you! It is my command, and there is no getting out of it."

The hapless six were compelled to accompany Mr. Pagett downstairs, where many other juniors were waiting. The Third Formers were in full strength, to catch a glimpse of these fantastic "South Sea Islanders." And there were yells of laughter from everybody. Even the Remove fellows themselves could not restrain their mirth, for the six victims certainly looked very funny.

Mr. Pagett marched them into Mr. Nelson Lee's study, and was rather disappointed when Lee looked up from his desk, and did not even start. He gave the six juniors a single glance, and then turned his gaze inquiringly to Mr. Pagett.

"I found these boys upstairs," explained the master of the Fifth. "Evidently the Fourth Form boys have been up to mischief, and I

will leave you to deal with the matter, Mr. Lee. I should not like you to punish these unfortunate youngsters, but I certainly do think that the culprits should be discovered and severely dealt with."

And Mr. Pagett, having done what he considered to be his duty, departed. Nelson Lee sat back in his chair, and regarded the figures in silence for a moment.

"Names, please," he said at length. "I think I can recognise Handforth, and I rather fancy that you are here, Nipper."

"Right, sir," said Nipper cheerily. "We're in a bit of a mess, but I hope you won't follow Mr. Pagett's advice, and make any inquiries. It's just the fortunes of war."

The others gave their names, and Nelson Lee rose to his feet, and closely examined them.

"It is all very well to talk about the fortunes of war, Nipper, but it won't do," he said sternly. "I have not been quite blind to the events that have recently been happening, and I know there is a feud on between you boys and the Fourth Formers. But it'll have to stop—particularly if there are any more of these affairs. I won't have it."

"We don't like it, either, sir," said Nipper.

"I have no doubt that the Fourth Form boys have done this as a reprisal for the episode in the Form-room this morning," went on Nelson Lee. "H'm! I rather fancy I recognise this dye that has been used for your faces."

"They told us that it wouldn't come off, sir," said Watson anxiously. "Is that true?"

"Well, in a way, yes," said Nelson Lee drily. "Left to yourselves, I seriously doubt if you could have removed this nigger-like complexion. However, I rather fancy that I know of a remedy."

"Oh, thank goodness!" said the six.

"It is a black business in more senses than one," went on Nelson Lee. "I shall take no action in the matter in view of the circumstances, but this sort of thing cannot continue. You must be more careful, boys—you must remember what I have told you. And I shall make it my business to have a word with Mr. Stockdale, and with the other Housemasters concerned. We cannot have the whole life of the school upset by these episodes."

The six victims were greatly relieved. Mr. Nelson Lee, as they had expected, was acting like a sportsman, and the fact that he knew of a remedy for that dye was a very great joy indeed!

CHAPTER 16.

Mr. Pycraft Goes Through it!

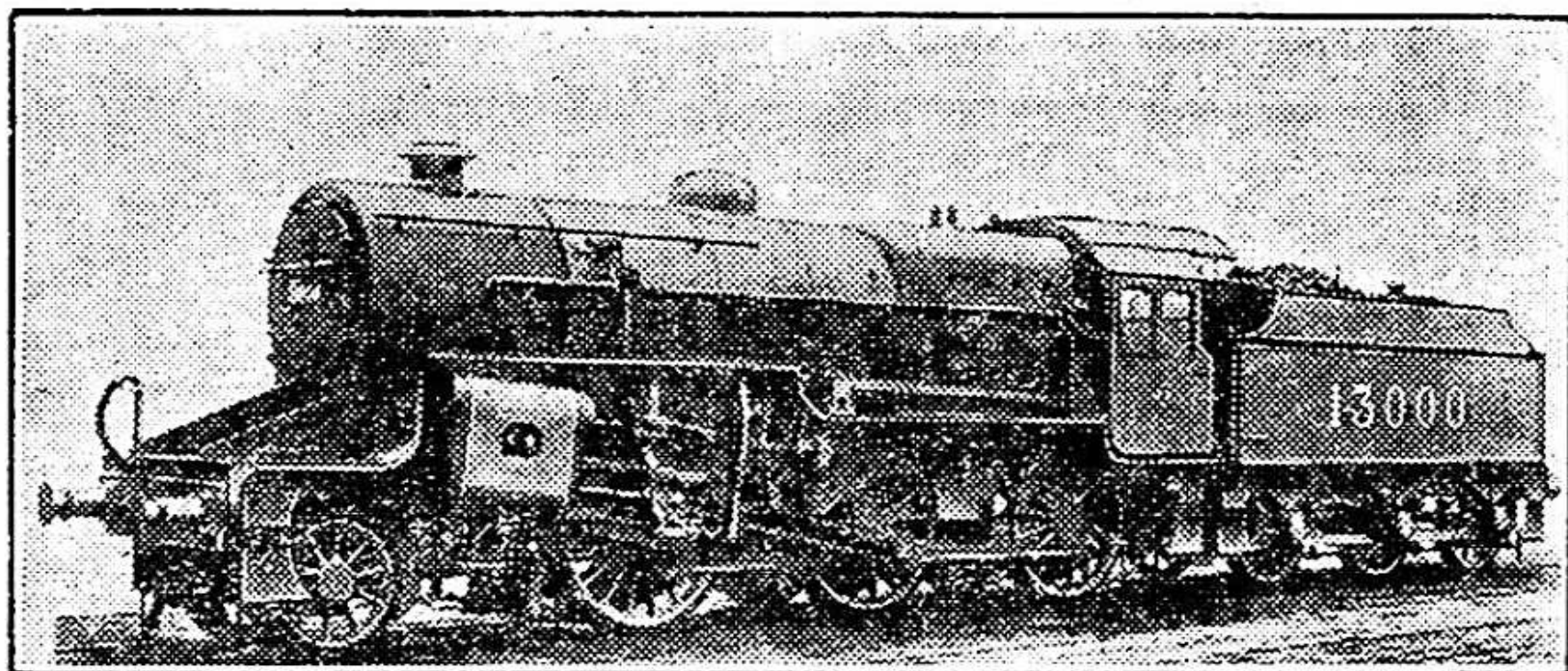


HALF an hour later Nipper & Co. and the chums of Study D were practically themselves again.

While they were busy in the bath-rooms, soaking their heads in

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warm water, and getting the glue out of their hair, Nelson Lee paid a visit to the laboratory. And when he returned he rubbed an evil-smelling chemical over the blackened parts of the six juniors' anatomy, and the dye immediately came off. Except for a little smarting afterwards, there were no ill effects.

"Well, thank goodness that's over," said Nipper, as they went downstairs. "Mr. Lee was a brick, too. He's winked at the whole affair, but we mustn't forget that warning of his."

"I've forgotten it already!" said Handforth bluntly. "It's all very well to tell us to go easy, but how can we? Aren't we going to have our revenge on Boots & Co.? Are we going to stand this treatment lying down?"

"Rather not!" said the others.

"Well, anyway, we shall have to go easy," said Nipper. "Whatever we do will have to be done quietly, so that the masters don't get to hear of it. Let's go into the common-room, and hold a discussion with Reggie Pitt and the other fellows. They're all waiting for us."

And off they went—and many were the schemes suggested, the majority of them warlike in the extreme. The whole Remove

was fired by a desire for vengeance. The feud was growing in intensity, and it was considered that Boots and his colleagues should have plenty of trouble. It was up to the Remove to show the Fourth that it could not do these sort of things with impunity.

In the meantime, other exciting things were happening—quite unexpected things, too.

And this time it was Mr. Horace Pycraft who was the victim.

Emerging from the East House, Mr. Pycraft paused for a moment or two on the steps. He was feeling in a particularly good humour. Earlier in the day he had not been very satisfied over the punishment which had been meted out by the Head to Nipper and his partners in the form-glueing episode. But just recently Mr. Pycraft had heard one or two murmurs from the Junior quarters, and Mr. Pycraft's ears were very sharp. It cannot be exactly said that he had been spying on his own boys—that he had been eavesdropping. But it was an undoubted fact that Mr. Pycraft had heard things that were certainly not intended for his ears. He knew, for example, that six members of the Remove Form had recently "gone through the mill." Hence Mr. Pycraft's good humour.

But this amiable mood of his did not last for long.

For Mr. Pycraft had hardly taken three steps across the Triangle, on his way to another part of the school, before three black forms pounced upon him from the rear. Their movements were silent—stealthy. Indeed, so suddenly did the attack come that Mr. Pycraft had no warning of it.

"Good heavens!" he gasped, as he felt his shoulders seized. "Who— What in the world— Ugh!"

Mr. Pycraft broke off with a startled, smothered gasp. For a sack had been suddenly flung over his head, and it was a filthy coal-sack at that. And the dust that came from it so choked him, and so blinded him that he could not make any outcry. He was smothered—dazed and bewildered. He only knew that the sack was pulled right over his shoulders, and that a rope was tied round him.

He tried to scream, for he was in a condition of fright. But his dust-laden lungs would not allow him to make any loud shout; only a few muffled sounds came from within that thick sack.

Then, at tremendous speed, he was whirled behind East House, and pushed through a hedge and conveyed onwards again for some distance. Mr. Pycraft was so scared and bewildered that he had lost all sense of direction. He did not know where he was, and not a single sound had been made by his assailants. But Mr. Pycraft had not the slightest doubt as to their identity.

"You young scoundrels!" he gurgled at length. "Release me at once! By heaven! You shall pay dearly for this dastardly outrage! Release me, I say!"

But still his captors gave no sign.

"I will have you expelled from the school!" shrieked Mr. Pycraft. "You reprobates! You blackguards! Unless you release me—"


He broke off, choking. It was impossible for him to speak much in that confined atmosphere, for his efforts only resulted in a disturbance of the coal dust, which set him gasping and choking again. He now felt that he was being tied to a post. Why? There was something terribly significant in this action. He was being tied to the post face forward, so that his whole back was exposed. And then came a flick from a whip—an agonising flick which caught him round the legs.

Mr. Pycraft nearly fainted.

The truth was appalling in its staggering significance. He was about to be whipped! He had been tied to a post, and these captors of his were about to horsewhip him!

The Form-master nearly went mad for a moment or two. He was absolutely certain that he was in the hands of the Removites. They had carried the feud to the master of the Fourth! It was only too obvious—it was as clear as daylight! Who else could they be, indeed, but members of the Remove Form?

"Release me!" he shrieked. "If you dare to use that whip on me, I shall—"



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He broke off with another gasp, for the whip had come down again—right across his shoulders. It stung, too, and Mr. Pycraft was so frightened that all his strength gave way. He did not possess a large amount of courage.

He needed courage now. The whip rose and fell. It came across his shoulders, across the small of his back. It licked round his legs, and the agony of it was intense. Perhaps Mr. Pycraft made the worst of it, but there could be no doubt that the pain was severe.

Slash—slash—slash! The whip came down relentlessly. It was not wielded by all the force that it could have been. Indeed, afterwards there were no weals upon Mr. Pycraft's person. But, as Mr. Pycraft had never experienced a horsewhipping before, he now appreciated this one to the full.

That coal-sack over his head, too, made everything twenty times as bad. He could not see who his assailants were, and they uttered no sound, and he found it impossible to guess at their identity. He only knew that they were horsewhipping him, that he was nearly choking, and that he was on the point of fainting. It was not the pain which was bringing on this faintness. It was terror—terror of the unknown.

Any sturdy fellows, perhaps, might have stood up against that whipping with calm indifference. But Mr. Pycraft was not made of that sort of stuff. He was so terrified that he believed that every slash was like the scar of a red-hot iron. His imagination got the better of him, and he thought that he was being cruelly tortured.


And at last the whipping ceased, and Mr. Pycraft clung to the post, loose at his bonds. He was moaning feebly, but he was moaning more with terror than from weakness.

"Scoundrels—rogues—miscreants!" he panted desperately. "By heaven, I shall make you suffer for this! It will not merely mean expulsion—but arrest!"

Still his captors made no sound. And, to Mr. Pycraft's added horror, it soon became apparent that they had not yet done with him!

CHAPTER 17.

Nipper's Discovery!



HE'LL do now!" The voice was so soft and low—the whisper so faint—that Mr. Horace Pycraft did not even hear it. That coal-sack over his head rendered him rather deaf, and he was aching all over from the effects of that horsewhipping, too. In a dull kind of way Mr. Pycraft was wondering what was to happen to him next. He knew that his feet had been bound, and that his wrists had been tied with thin, strong cords. They had been tied so tightly that he was in great pain. His whole

position was uncomfortable—for he was trussed up like a fowl. His knees were hunched against his chest, and his whole attitude was one of discomfort.

Then he felt himself lifted bodily and carried along.

He had long ceased to protest. He felt too weak to do so, and he now believed, too, that he was about to be cruelly done to death. Mr. Pycraft was in a morbid mood, and his mind was apt to jump to tragic conclusions.

He felt himself being carried, and then, suddenly, with a shock which took his breath away, he realised that he was being plumped down into some water. He was awakened with a vengeance!

"You young rogues!" he gasped. "Help! Help! I am drowning—I am drowning! Help!"

But then, a second later, he gasped the fact that he was making himself foolish. For it occurred to him that he was sitting on a hard stone ledge, or something that felt very much like it. The water reached to his shoulders, but not beyond, and there he was left, sitting in that cold water, trussed up and helpless. His mysterious captors had vanished into the night, and not once had they spoken in a voice that Mr. Pycraft could have recognised. Not once had they given any sign which would serve him to establish their identity.

He was much too faint to make any great outcry. He believed that he had been put into the river—into a shallow part of it somewhere. He was quite convinced that he was a long way from St. Frank's—that he had been carried away into some remote spot, there to be left all night. The cold water and the exposure would undoubtedly finish him off long before the morning.

Only a minute or two after this, Nipper, Montie, Handforth, and Watson happened to come out of the Ancient House. They were with Reggie Pitt and Jack Grey and the Hon. Douglas Singleton, and they were bent upon strolling across to the West House. They had been discussing ways and means, but had arrived at no definite plan as to how Boots & Co. should be repaid.

"There's been enough excitement for one day, anyhow!" Nipper was saying. "Those bounders across the Triangle are expecting to see us as black as niggers for days to come, but they'll have a disappointment. To-morrow, perhaps, we'll be able to think of something—"

"What was that?" interrupted Reggie Pitt, frowning.

"Eh? What was what?" "I thought I heard something just now— There you are! There it is again," said Pitt. "Listen!"

"Some of those giddy Fourth Form chaps, probably," said Handforth aggressively. "I don't see why we shouldn't make a raid now, and get a bit of our own back. It's all very well to talk about leaving it until to-morrow—"

"Dry up, Handy!" interrupted Nipper. "Listen!"

They all stood still and listened. And, sure enough, a most peculiar sound was coming from the fountain, in the centre of the Triangle. Gurgling sounds, with the faint swishing of water—and queer kinds of moans, too.

"What the dickens is it?" whispered Pitt.

"Goodness knows!" said Nipper. "We'd better go and have a look. But be careful, though! It may be another trap! Boots is getting very tricky these days!"

They moved cautiously across towards the fountain, and they kept their eyes well open, in case of a surprise. Not that it was probable that Buster Boots and his men would make another attack upon them. Sounds of laughter from the East House signified the fact that the Fourth-Formers were celebrating. Out here, in the Triangle, everything was quiet and still—except for those remarkable sounds from the fountain.

The juniors approached, and then Nipper moved more quickly. There was a sharp note in his voice when he spoke.

"Great Scott!" he muttered. "There's somebody here!"

"What do you mean—in the pool?"

"Yes—look!" said Nipper. "There's somebody right in the pool—sitting here, with a sack over his head!"

"By jove, there's been some beastly work, by the look of it! I say, it's a bit too thick to tie a fellow up, and dump him in the fountain pool! This water is like ice!"

They crowded round, forgetting any possibility of attack. They were curious and wondering. Who could this figure be?

Mr. Pycraft, reviving at the sound of voices, struggled somewhat, and raised his voice as he heard the sounds of people near him.

"Help!" he moaned. "Help!"

"Great pip!" breathed Handforth, staring at the others. "Old Pycraft!"

"So it is," said Reggie Pitt, with a whistle, "Pycraft himself! By Jove, there's been dirty work here! Who could have done this?"

"Never mind who did it—we've got to get him out!" said Nipper tensely. "We don't like him very much, but this sort of thing is going beyond all bounds! Look at him! Sitting in the fountain pool here, with a coal-sack over his head! It's pretty certain that he's bound up, too! Come along, you fellows—lend a hand!"

"Rather!" said Handforth indignantly. "Of all the dirty, filthy tricks! Hang it, the man's a bit of a beast, but there's a limit to—"

"Don't jaw, Handy—help!" interrupted Nipper.

They all bent over the fountain pool, and raised Mr. Pycraft from that watery bed. And then, just as they were about to hoist him out on to the dry ground, the sound

of voices came from the East House doorway.

"Who's that over there?" came a demand. "What are you juniors doing by the fountain?"

It was the voice of Simon Kenmore, the head prefect of the East House. And with him was Guy Sinclair—another senior of the same breed. They were both bullies and rotters. And now they came up, curious and somewhat aggressive. It was just like Kenmore and Sinclair to interfere—in the hope, perhaps, of catching somebody "on the hop." As they came up, the Remove juniors were just resting Mr. Pycraft on the edge of the stone pool. And, in a way, the circumstances looked very suspicious.

Indeed, it almost seemed that the juniors were about to put Mr. Pycraft in, instead of taking him out. And Kenmore and Sinclair could be relied upon to assume the worst!



CHAPTER 18.

Accused!

SIMON KENMORE elbowed his way to the front.

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

"Don't butt in now, Kenmore!" said Nipper. "This is Mr. Pycraft, and somebody has put him into the fountain pool here—after binding him up and shoving a coal-sack over his head!"

"Somebody?" said Kenmore sharply. "Yes, and I think I know who the somebody is!"

"What do you mean?" asked the Removites, in one voice.

"You can't fool me like this!" retorted Kenmore roughly. "We were just in time to stop it, Sinclair! They'd got him in the fountain, but they pulled him out again as soon as they saw us coming—"

"It's a lie!" shouted Handforth. "We were just rescuing him! You rotters! Do you think we'd—"

"That's enough!" interrupted the prefect. "And not so free with your tongue, Handforth!"

The juniors were aghast. It filled them with consternation to realise that they were suspected of committing this outrage on Mr. Pycraft. Kenmore and Sinclair had come upon them just as they were lifting Mr. Pycraft out, and there was absolutely nothing to prove that they had not just put him in. And it was known all over the school that the Remove fellows had a big grudge against the master of the Fourth. Quite a number of the Removites had made that fact public property during the day.

Kenmore was feeling important. He had never liked Nipper and his friends, and here was a chance to get even with them. On more than one occasion, Kenmore and Sin-



Nipper, Handforth and Pitt gazed in blank amazement at the sack-covered figure in the pool. "Help, help!" moaned a feeble voice, and Handy gave a start as he recognised the tones. "Great pip!" he breathed. "Old Pycraft!"

clair had suffered at the hands of the juniors.

"I'll attend to him!" he said, as Nipper pulled out a pocket-knife. "You juniors stand aside, and don't go away, either!"

"You needn't worry—we're not going!" said Nipper. "And don't kid yourself, Kenmore. We didn't put Mr. Pycraft here, and as soon as he's released he'll say so."

"Why, yes, of course," said Handforth, with relief. "Mr. Pycraft knows that we didn't do it—he knows that we've only just come up."

"We'll see about that," said Kenmore. "Lend a hand, Sinclair, old man."

They soon had the sack from off Mr. Pycraft's head. And the unfortunate Form-master, finding himself in the hands of rescuers, revived somewhat. His other bonds were freed, and he was helped to his feet. Not that he could stand. Or, if he could stand, he pretended that he couldn't. He clung to Kenmore and Sinclair, and he really did look pitiable. The coal-dust from that sack had smothered his face, and it was streaked with wetness, too.

"Thank heaven!" murmured Mr. Pycraft. "I thought they were going to murder me! The young brutes!"

He looked round dazedly, and saw Nipper and Handforth and the others. And at the sight of them, he revived even more. He pointed a quivering finger at them.

"There they are!" he said shrilly. "Don't let them escape, Kenmore."

"O-ho!" said Kenmore, looking at the juniors. "I thought you said that Mr. Pycraft would exonerate you?"

"And so he will," said Nipper sharply. "Mr. Pycraft! We didn't do this—"

"Lies—lies!" said Mr. Pycraft. "These are the boys who assaulted me! They took me away, they tied me to a post and horse-whipped me! And then, not content with that, they trussed me up and put me into this water! The young scoundrels! The hooligans!"

"But it's not true, sir!" shouted Nipper. "We haven't touched you! We found you in the fountain pool, and we were pulling you out when Kenmore and Sinclair came up!"

"You mean you were putting him in!" said Sinclair harshly. "Mr. Pycraft has accused you, and that's enough! You can't deny it now!"

"But we do deny it!" said the juniors, in one voice.

They were utterly staggered at Mr. Pycraft's accusation. The evidence was absolutely conclusive. And it was a tremendous shock for the Removites. Never for a moment had they expected that Mr. Pycraft would utter those words.

Not that the Fourth Form master was deliberately telling falsehoods. At that moment he genuinely believed that he was face to face with his late captors. From the very first he had told himself that they were Removites—and now, when the sack was taken from his head, and he saw a number of Removites round him—well, the thing seemed obvious to him. He accused them on the spur of the moment, believing his accusation to be sincere. Mr. Horace Pycraft was several kinds of a rotter, but

he was not a liar. He really did think that these were the actual culprits. And Kenmore and Sinclair were ready enough to believe it.

"Come along—we'll take you straight to the Head, sir," said Kenmore. "This matter must be reported to him at once—and then you'll have to be put to bed."

"These confounded juniors will escape!" said Sinclair.

"They won't go far!" replied Kenmore. "I know who they are—Hamilton, Tregellis-West, Watson, Handforth, Pitt. Yes, I've got them all in my mind! I shall know who they are again. Come along, Sinclair, lend a hand!"

They went off, and, in spite of Mr. Pycraft's protests, they took him to the Head. Mr. Pycraft himself wanted to go to his own room—to get straight into bed. But this did not suit the prefects' book. They wanted the headmaster to see Mr. Pycraft exactly as he was—in his present deplorable condition. This would surely mean the sack for the culprits!

As it happened, Dr. Stafford was entertaining some visitors just at that time, and he came out into the hall in response to the urgent summons. He was staggered at the spectacle of Mr. Pycraft.

"What ever has happened?" he asked, aghast. "Is that you, Mr. Pycraft? Good gracious! You are in a terrible condition, sir!"

"Those boys!" said Mr. Pycraft weakly. "Those blackguardly young scoundrels! They have done this, sir. They have——"

"You mean that some of our boys have assaulted you, Mr. Pycraft?" asked the Head, in a voice full of gravity. "I find it very difficult to believe this!"

Mr. Pycraft babbled out his story—how he had been seized and horsewhipped—how he had been bound and thrust into the fountain pool. And the headmaster listened with growing fury.

"There's no getting away from it, sir," said Kenmore. "We found these juniors surrounding Mr. Pycraft as they were about to put him into the fountain pool. We caught them red-handed, sir."

"Do you know who these boys were?" asked the Head sharply.

"Yes, sir—every one of them!"

"Well, Kenmore—I will come within ten minutes," said the Head grimly. "In the meantime, you and Sinclair must escort Mr. Pycraft into the sanatorium. The doctor must see him at once."

"Yes, sir," said the prefects.

And they went off with Mr. Pycraft—who wasn't anything like so badly injured as he had made out. Indeed, with prompt measures, he would probably be saved from a chill; the effects of that horsewhipping were already beginning to wear off.

However, the case was very black indeed, and Dr. Malcolm Stafford was fiercely deter-

mined to discover the culprits, and to punish them with the utmost severity.

Events were moving fast in this feud between the Remove and the Fourth!



CHAPTER 19.

Who Did It?

CROWD of juniors surged round Nipper & Co. in the lobby of the Ancient House. The news had got round like lightning, and

everybody was in a fever of excitement.

"Keep cool!" urged Nipper. "There's no need for any of us to be afraid. They can't prove this thing against us."

"But Mr. Pycraft accused us!" said Handforth angrily. "He told Kenmore that we did it!"

"He thinks we did, I expect," said Nipper. "The real culprits made no sounds at all, in all probability—or else they tried to make old Pycraft believe that they were us. And when Kenmore came along and found us lifting him out of the fountain pool, it almost looked as though we were putting him in."

"Well, we can provide you with an alibi, you chaps!" said Fullwood. "You were in the common-room, here, until a minute or two before the discovery. And you couldn't have horsewhipped Mr. Pycraft, and bound him up in no time, could you?"

"Good gad!" said Archie Glenthorpe. "That's rather a brilliant thought, old lad! An alibi, what? One of those jolly old things that prove that a chappie is in one place when he's supposed to be in another—useful things to have about, I mean!"

"The trouble is, it might not work," said Nipper ruefully.

"What do you mean—it might not work?" asked Tommy Watson.

"Well, the Head might believe that these fellows are telling fibs, just to excuse us," said Nipper. "It isn't as though we had been attending a lecture, with a master presiding over us, or anything like that. Not that I'm really afraid. We know we didn't do it, and so we can face the music with a calm front."

"Yes, but who did do it?" asked Pitt grimly. "I don't think we need ask twice, eh?"

Nipper's expression changed.

"No, it seems obvious," he replied. "But we mustn't jump to any hasty conclusions——"

"Rats!" said De Valerie. "Boots & Co. did it!"

"Of course they did!" shouted several others.

"We haven't any proof——" began Nipper.

"All the proof we need!" interrupted Handforth fiercely. "By George! Those rotters! Boots & Co. have always hated old Pycraft—he's their Form-master, and they know him! And so they attacked him like

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v.

THE NEW KLUX KLAN

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this, and they did it deliberately, too! Everybody knows that we're supposed to have a grudge against old Pycraft. And those cunning Fourth-Formers assaulted him so that we should get the blame!"

"Oh, my goodness!"

"Of course, it's perfectly clear!" nodded Fullwood. "It was done deliberately. They even made Mr. Pycraft believe that they were members of the Remove. Look at the way he accused you chaps directly he spotted you! It was a cunning plot from the beginning to the end! Those Fourth-Formers did it to get their own back on Pycraft, and to make it seem that we were the culprits!"

The anger which swept through the Remove was tremendous. There seemed to be no end to the cunning trickiness of John Busterfield Boots and his men! Nobody in the Remove had committed that assault upon the master of the Fourth. That was well known to the Remove. But who else would believe it?

Over in the ranks of the Fourth a similar wave of anger was sweeping through the juniors.

"Things are getting too thick!" Buster Boots was saying. "Those Remove fellows have collared old Pycraft and they've half-murdered him!"

"Of course—revenge for what he did this morning!" said Armstrong. "But I never thought they'd have the absolute nerve to attack a master! This feud between the Forms is one thing—but when it comes to going for the masters—well, it's getting pretty dangerous!"

"They'll suffer for it!" said Boots, with satisfaction. "In fact, we can be pretty certain that they'll be sacked!"

"You mean Nipper and Handforth, and the others?"

"Yes, all of them!" replied Boots. "They'll be kicked out of the school—and it'll serve them right, too!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Good riddance to them!"

"Rather!" said Bray, as another idea struck him. "Once Nipper's gone, Boots—and Handy, too—to say nothing of Pitt—you'll be able to seize the reins of leadership in the Lower School. You'll be the big boss!"

"Yes, I suppose I shall," said Boots slowly. "But I didn't want to win like that! My idea is to seize the reins in any case—to triumph over these other chaps while they're still here. But as they've turned out to be such rotters, it's high time they were booted out of the school!"

They went out of the Modern House and

stood on the steps. Immediately, a loud outburst of boing and hooting started from the Houses on the other side of the Triangle. Boots & Co. listened in astonishment.

"Anybody might think that we had done this dirty business, by the way they're hooting at us!" said Christine indignantly.

How were all these juniors to know that that assault upon Mr. Horace Pycraft had been committed by somebody else—some mysterious outsiders? Who were they? Up till now there had only been one Unknown. But it seemed that there were several! Who were these strangers? Who were these people who kept interfering in the feud between the Remove and the Fourth—and interfering in such a way that grave misunderstandings were caused?

For now the worst misunderstanding of all had occurred.

Every fellow in the Remove believed that Buster Boots and his men had assaulted their Form-master, and that they had done so in such a tricky way that the blame would be put upon the Remove.

The Fourth-Formers were equally convinced that Nipper and his supporters were the culprits. There was one inevitable result of this dangerous situation. The hatred of the fellows had increased by leaps and bounds, until it was a veritable fever.

But for the fact that an order came that every boy in the school should go at once into Big Hall, another free fight might have taken place in the Triangle. For several skirmishes had commenced, a few of the Removites venturing out into the open, and a few of the Fourth-Formers acting in the same way. It might easily have ended in a tremendous riot, only that order came in the nick of time.

Everybody crowded into Big Hall—excited, eager, and angry. The entire Lower School was at fever pitch. Even the seniors were catching some of the general excitement. They felt that the next half-hour was to be very dramatic.



CHAPTER 20.

The Inquiry.

R. BRETT smiled.

"More fright than anything else, sir," he said dryly. "There's nothing much the matter with him.

He'll probably be all right again to-morrow—and I can assure you that there is not the slightest danger of any serious complications."

The Headmaster was greatly relieved. He and Dr. Brett were standing outside the door of Mr. Pycraft's room in the sanatorium. Mr. Pycraft was now in bed, trying to make himself believe that he was in a very critical condition.

"But he has received a horsewhipping?" asked the Head.

"Well, in a way, yes," said the doctor.

"Not a very severe one. There are no weals,

or even bruises. His skin is, no doubt, tender, but he'll easily survive!"

"And what about the immersion in the fountain pool?"

"Well, he was removed so quickly that I doubt if he will even take a chill," said Dr. Brett. "Really, sir, there's nothing to worry about."

"Thank you," said the Head. "I am greatly relieved. It will be quite all right, I suppose, if I have a few words with Mr. Pycraft?"

"You can talk to him for an hour if you like," replied the doctor, smiling.

The Head went in, and he was not very pleased when he saw that Mr. Pycraft immediately lolled back on his pillow, and moaned. It was only too clear that Mr. Pycraft was making the worst of things.

"If it is not troubling you too much, Mr. Pycraft, I would like you to answer one or two questions," said the Head gently.

"I will try to, sir—I will do my best," said Mr. Pycraft, in a feeble voice. "But I would remind you that I am in much agony—and I do not even know if I shall be able to survive this dreadful ordeal."

"We must hope for the best," said Dr. Stafford quietly. "You say that Hamilton, and Pitt, and Handforth, and one of two others are the boys who assaulted you, Mr. Pycraft?"

"Yes!"

"Are you positive of this?"

"Absolutely positive!"

"Can you tell me why you are so certain?" asked the Head.

"Because the boys were there immediately the sack was removed!" replied Mr. Pycraft. "I was rescued by Sinclair and Kenmore. And these wretched juniors were standing about even then, having been caught red-handed as they were about to add to their misdemeanours."

"Really, Mr. Pycraft, I am afraid that you are relying upon assumption," said the Head. "You saw these boys, and you immediately jumped to the conclusion that they were the guilty parties. But do you not think it most improbable that they would have remained there? I want to get this quite straight before I go into Big Hall and make any accusation."

"I am certain that these boys are guilty," said Mr. Pycraft feebly.

"I understand that you were attacked as you came out of the East House?"

"That is so."

"Did you recognise these boys then?"

"Then?" said Mr. Pycraft, with a start. "Well, no—not exactly."

"Did you hear any voices while you were being horsewhipped?"

"I cannot say that I did," said Mr. Pycraft. "I only knew that I was carried away by several attackers, that I was horsewhipped, and that—"

"The coal-sack was thrust over your head during the very first moment—before you could see anybody?"

"Yes, sir," said Mr. Pycraft reluctantly.

"Then it seems possible, in these circumstances, that Handforth and Hamilton and the others were actually pulling you out of the fountain when Kenmore and Sinclair arrived," said the Head, pursing his lips. "We must not be unjust, Mr. Pycraft. It is only too evident that some of the boys assaulted you. But we do not want to accuse the wrong ones. Thank you for answering these questions. I shall now know how to proceed."

"But I am convinced that these boys are the guilty parties!" insisted Mr. Pycraft. "They were there when I was rescued. They were caught red-handed—"

"Yes, yes—I quite understand," interrupted the Headmaster. "But now you must go to sleep, Mr. Pycraft. You must forget everything, and leave me to deal with the whole matter."

He went out, and his expression was very grave. It was still grave when he came upon the platform in Big Hall, five minutes later.

Dr. Stafford was convinced of one thing. Some of the boys of the Lower School had assaulted Mr. Horace Pycraft. But the Head was by no means satisfied that Nipper and Pitt and the other juniors were responsible. There was no proof of that whatever. He had questioned Kenmore and Sinclair closely, but they had only been able to inform him that the juniors had been collected round Mr. Pycraft at the moment. He had even

forced the seniors to admit that the juniors had protested that they were helping Mr. Pycraft out of his predicament. The Head preferred to believe this part of the story, but this did not alter the fact that somebody was guilty, and the culprits would have to be discovered.

A hush descended over the school as Dr. Stafford walked towards the edge of the platform.

"There is no need for me to tell you what has happened," he said gravely. "You all know that Mr. Pycraft has been assaulted. That he was attacked by some members of this school is unquestionable. I call upon the culprits to surrender at once—to stand forward."

There was a hush, but nobody surrendered. "Hamilton!" order the Head. "Come here, upon the platform!"

"Yes, sir," said Nipper, leaving the ranks of the Remove.

A storm of hisses went up from the Fourth as he walked down the hall.

"Wait a minute, sir!" shouted Handforth excitedly. "If you're going to accuse Nipper, it's not fair! He didn't do it, and—"

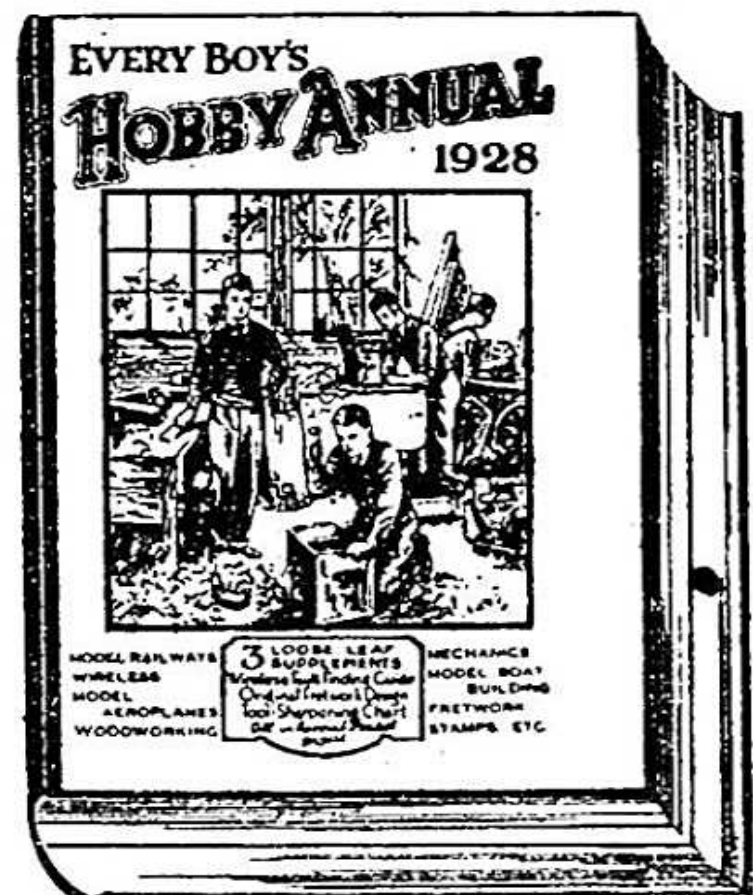
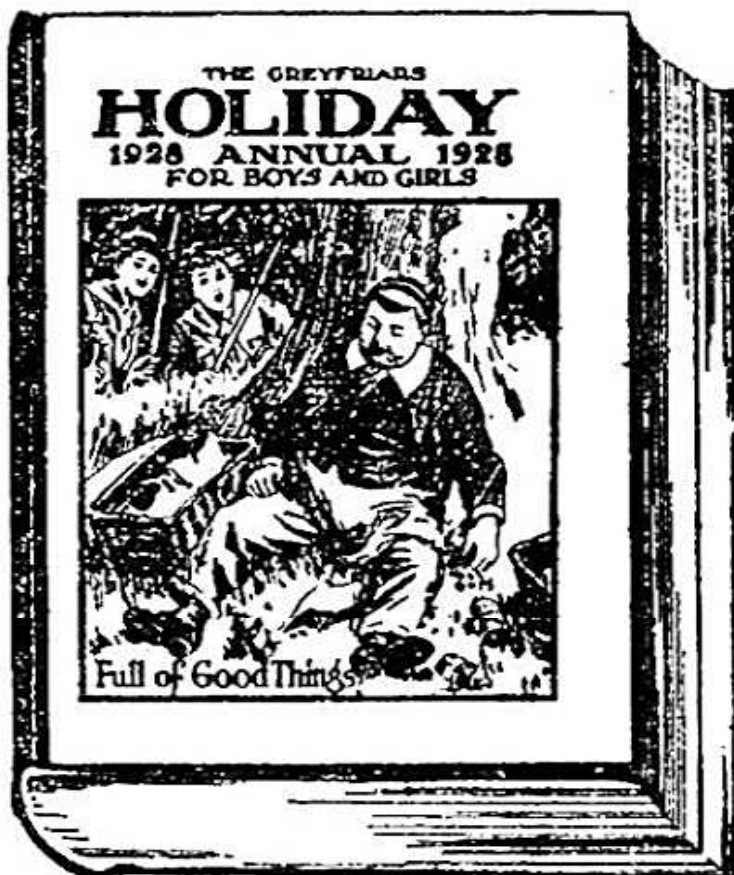
"Be silent, Handforth!" ordered the Headmaster. "I am accusing nobody—yet."

Nipper was quite calm as he stood on the platform. He did not mind the hisses from the Fourth. They were only to be expected. But they were rather "thick" all the same—

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considering that the Fourth-Formers themselves were the guilty parties.

That was the thought that ran through Nipper's mind as he stood on the platform, waiting for the Head to speak.

"Hamilton, I understand that you were on the scene when Mr. Pycraft was discovered in the fountain pool?" asked Dr. Stafford.

"Yes, sir!"

"Tell me exactly what happened."

"I had just come out of the Ancient House with two or three other fellows, sir, when we heard some sounds from the pool," replied Nipper promptly. "We immediately went there, and found a figure, with a sack over its head. Then we recognised the voice of Mr. Pycraft, and we were pulling him out when Kenmore and Sinclair came up, and jumped to the conclusion that we were just putting him in."

"But you give me your assurance, Hamilton, that you did not commit this grave offence?"

"Yes, sir," replied Nipper quietly. "We know nothing about it. I speak for all the others who were with me."

"I am satisfied, Hamilton, that neither you nor your companions are guilty," said the Head, much to the indignation of the Fourth. "I believe your story—that you were taking Mr. Pycraft from the pool when the two prefects came up. But the culprits are still undiscovered, and I intend to take very strong action. You may go back to your place, Hamilton."

"Thank you, sir," said Nipper, much relieved.

A cheer went up from the Remove—for many of the fellows had been fearing that several of their number would be expelled. And shouts of indignation went up from the Fourth-Formers. They were disappointed—they were completely baffled. They had expected so much from the Head—and he had let them down!

The Removites were not even punished, and Boots and his supporters felt that they had been swindled.



CHAPTER 21.

A Dangerous Situation!

RELIEF was the main emotion in the Remove just at that minute.

But, if the fellows had given themselves time to think, they would have known at the very first that the Head would not bring down the chopper unless he had positive proof. There was absolutely no evidence as to the assailants who had dealt so roughly with Mr. Horace Pycraft. The mere fact that Nipper and his companions had been on the spot at the time of the discovery was of little or no importance. Mr. Pycraft had not been able to give a single detail regarding the actual people who had horsewhipped him. And so the matter remained a mystery.

Buster Boots and Timothy Armstrong and all the other Fourth-Formers were rather disgusted. They had expected the Head to take such drastic measure with the Remove. And here he was, taking no action at all! And the Fourth was quite convinced that the Remove was guilty.

But, if it came to that, the Remove was equally convinced that the Fourth was guilty.

"The culprits have not come forward, and I have no alternative but to adopt a very drastic course," said Dr. Stafford, after a short pause. "I am aware that there is a feeling of enmity between the Remove Form and the Fourth Form. There have been many disturbances of late, and some of these junior boys are unquestionably responsible for the assault upon Mr. Pycraft. But as the actual culprits will not come forward, I must punish both Forms as a whole."

A gasp of consternation went up from the Junior School.

"From this hour onwards, the Remove Form and the Fourth Form are both confined to gates," continued the Head relentlessly. "Furthermore, every half-holiday is cancelled until further notice. In the meantime, I shall do my utmost to discover the identity of Mr. Pycraft's attackers. When I know who they are, their punishment will be drastic in the extreme."

Indignant shouts went up from the Remove and the Fourth.

"Gated, by jingo!"

"And all our half-holidays docked!"

"But it's not fair!" roared Handforth. "Why should we suffer because of those beastly Fourth-Formers?"

"The Remove's guilty—the Remove did this!"

"It's not fair to make the Fourth suffer!"

There were all sorts of angry shouts, and Dr. Stafford grew thunderous.

"Silence!" he commanded in a terrible voice. "Upon my word! Have you lost all sense of discipline? How dare you make this disturbance in my presence? It is high time, indeed, that this absurd quarrel in the Junior School came to an end! I can see that I shall have to be even more severe. And I tell you all now that if there is any further disturbance, even of the slightest nature, the leaders will be expelled without an hour's delay!"

The Remove and the Fourth became utterly silent—silent with consternation.

"And I mean this!" continued the headmaster. "If there is any fighting in the Triangle—any ridiculous raiding by either side—all of the participants will be either publicly flogged or expelled. I mean to put my foot down heavily on this absurd nonsense. There must be no more of it! You may dismiss!"

The school trooped out of Big Hall, the seniors wisely shaking their heads and saying that the Head had done the right thing. It was time that these juniors were put into their places! The fags were equally sage in their remarks. For Willy Handforth and his fol-

lowers had taken no part whatever in the feud, and they were keeping well out of it. It wasn't their quarrel, and they saw no reason why they should butt in.

But in the ranks of the Remove, and in the ranks of the Fourth, there was resentment and sullen fury.

Each Form felt that it had been harshly treated. The Remove was unanimous in its opinion. Why should they be called upon to suffer because of the sins of the Fourth? It was the Fourth who had attacked Mr. Pycraft—so that the Remove should be accused. And the Remove was being called upon to suffer. More than ever before, the Removites were incensed against their rivals.

And what of the Fourth-Formers?

Their bitterness was great. They hated the Removites worse than ever. For Buster Boots and his followers knew well enough that they had not attacked Mr. Pycraft. And they took it for granted that the Remove had. And so the deadlock came about. So the misunderstanding continued. The enmity in the Lower School was so grave that even the headmaster's stern warning was not likely to have much effect.

And yet, what could the juniors do?

If there were any further disturbances, it would mean the sack for the ringleaders! The situation was highly dangerous. It was as though the Remove and the Fourth were composed of gunpowder. The slightest spark would cause a terrific explosion. Far from the feud being killed, it was more active than ever. In all the Junior common-rooms the fellows were excited and indignant. Meetings were held in every corner, and voices were raised in hot protest.

There was much talk of raiding—much discussion of a barring-out, even. If the Head was so obstinate, why should they take any notice of him? This was their quarrel, and they meant to fight it out! So why shouldn't they fight? Why shouldn't they continue this battle, and carry it on to a bitter end? If necessary, they would defy the headmaster, and defy all authority.

But this sort of talk, after all, was so much "hot air." The level-headed fellows did not allow themselves to be drawn into any of these absurd arguments. There was no grievance against the school—or against any of the rules or regulations. The quarrel was entirely confined to the Remove and the Fourth.

And yet, how could they carry on that quarrel now? It seemed that the war of the Houses at St. Frank's was nipped in the bud. They were all helpless. If they attempted any further raids, and they were discovered, the consequences would be appalling. For such fellows as Nipper and Handforth and Reggie Pitt would be hauled before the Head, and expelled from the school. If Buster Boots or Armstrong or Christine were discovered in any activity against the Remove they would suffer a similar fate!

And, really, it wasn't worth the risk. The prefects would now be on the alert. Unques-

tionably, they had received definite instructions from the Head, and from their House-masters. They would be vigilant—they would be watching for any disturbances. Previously they had winked their eyes at the doings of the Juniors; but they could no longer wink their eyes. The Head had passed his edict, and it would have to be obeyed.

So the period of open warfare for the two Forms was at an end. What was to be done now? How could the war be carried on?

These were questions which nobody could answer. It seemed only too plain that the campaign had been scotched.



CHAPTER 22.

Handforth's Great Idea!

"HEER up, Handy, old man!" said Church softly.

"Eh?"

"I said, cheer up!"

"And what have I got to cheer up about?" demanded Handforth, as he gave the fender a kick. "Everything's gone wrong—everything's lopsided now. We're dished—diddled—done! I tell you, I'm fed-up!"

Edward Oswald Handforth sat back in his chair in Study D, thrust his hands deep into his trousers-pockets, and kicked at the fender again. Seldom had the great Edward Oswald been in such a morose mood.

Church and McClure were sitting at the table, pretending to do their prep. It had been an interrupted evening from the very first. Nothing had gone right since Biggleswade had come in with that fake message from Boots & Co. Since that minute there had been one long round of hectic excitement. Even the remembrance of that secret passage, and what it might mean, meant nothing to Handforth now.

He was a fighting man—a warrior. And the headmaster had sent forth the word that any fighting was to be put down with a strong hand! Why, he couldn't even biff a chap on the nose without being afraid that he would be placed on the carpet, and probably sacked! It was a disgusting situation.

"It's not so bad as you make out, old son," went on Church softly. "Don't look so jolly miserable——"

"If you must talk, talk proper English!" interrupted Handforth tartly. "How can I look jolly, if I'm looking miserable?"

"Well, you know what I meant!"

"I know that I'm wild!" said Handforth gruffly. "What the dickens can we do now? Nothing—absolutely nothing! If we meet any of those Fourth Form chaps in the Triangle, I suppose we've got to go up to them and kiss them? If we don't, we shall be booted out of the school!"

Church and McClure smiled.

"If we kissed any of those Fourth-Formers we should deserve to be booted out," said

Mac blandly. "The thing to do in a case like this, Handy, is to accept the situation stoically. There's no doubt about it—the Head has come down with a heavy foot. And as he is the Head, and as we're only Juniors, we've got to toe the line. If we don't, it'll be the worse for us!"

"Nothing like facing facts!" nodded Church.

Handforth leaned over, and picked up a magazine.

"Oh, what's the use?" he asked sullenly. "It isn't often I lose my temper—not in this way—but I've lost it now! The Head showed a grain of common sense when he refused to believe that we were guilty of assaulting old Pycraft. But he spoilt everything by what he said afterwards. I tell you, I'm fed-up!"

He turned over the pages of the magazine and pretended to read. But his mind was on other matters. How could this feud be continued under the existing conditions? Why, it was out of the question! The Juniors would be watched morning, noon, and night. The prefects would be like hawks now—on the alert for any sign of a disturbance. Life wouldn't be worth living—

Handforth's thoughts strayed for a moment as he found his attention riveted upon a striking illustration in the magazine. It was a picture of cloaked figures—strange, mysterious figures, with slits in the hoods which surmounted the cloaks. And then, suddenly, Handforth sat bolt upright in his chair.

"Great jumping corks!" he muttered breathlessly.

He was staring at the magazine in a dazed, bewildered kind of way. Church and McClure looked at him wonderingly.

"What's the matter?" asked Church. "What have you seen there?"

But Handforth flung the magazine down and commenced racing up and down the study.

"An idea!" he said tensely. "A brain-wave! By George, the idea of the century! The Black Hand! That's it—the Black Hand!"

"The what?" gasped McClure.

"The Black Hand!"

"What the dickens do you mean—the Black Hand?" asked his chums in one voice.

"Or the Camorra," went on Handforth.

"The Camorra—or the Mafia!"

"Camorra?" breathed Church.

"Mafia?" said McClure, staring.

"It's the greatest wheeze under the sun!" went on Handforth, his eyes glittering. "My sons, we've got it! At least, I've got it!"

"I suppose you mean you've got 'em?" said Church. "You've gone off your rocker, you silly ass!"

The change in Handforth was certainly remarkable. All his moroseness had gone. All his despondency had vanished like mist before a summer sun. He was full of enthusiasm—full of vigour and vim. But Church and McClure knew what their leader's ideas could

be like, and they were not particularly impressed.

"What's that you were saying about the Black Hand?" asked Church curiously.

"It's the solution to the problem!" said Handforth in a dreamy voice. "We've only got to adopt methods like that, and we shall be safe! We can do as we jolly well like—we can go for the Fourth as much as ever. In fact, we can go for them a lot more! And think of the excitement—think of the thrills! By George, I've thought of a few ripping ideas in my time, but this one beats everything!"

He seemed to be talking to himself, rather than to his chums. They were as mystified as ever.

"What do you mean, you chump?" they demanded, pulling him to a halt, and facing him. "What's the solution of the problem? And how do we get thrills and excitement? Explain yourself, ass!"

Handforth looked at them impatiently.

"Haven't I just explained?" he demanded. "I tell you, this wheeze—"

"What wheeze?" roared Church.

"Why, the one I've just been telling you about!"

"But you haven't told us!" shrieked McClure.

"What the dickens is the good of talking to you chaps?" demanded Handforth, glaring. "I've been talking for the last five minutes, and you don't take any notice of me! Haven't I just been saying that we've got to form a Black Hand? It's the only way to carry on against the Fourth, and to make those rotters pay for their dirty trickery. We shall have them whacked, and the feud will be more interesting than ever it was before!"

"Oh, he's hopeless!" said Church, shaking his head. "He's gone crazy!"

"I'm going straight to the common-room, and I'm going to put it before Nipper and the other fellows," went on Handforth, making for the door. "And if they don't agree—But they'll have to agree! They couldn't possibly turn down an idea like this!"

And out he went, bubbling with excitement—boiling over with enthusiasm. Church and McClure glanced at one another, shook their heads, and followed him. They were beginning to have serious doubts regarding their leader's sanity.



CHAPTER 23.

The Ancient Order of Avengers I

THE common-room was fairly full when Handforth burst in. There were a good many visitors from the West House, including Reggie Pitt and Singleton and Dick Goodwin, and a few more. They were all discussing the new situation, and nobody had been able to suggest anything of a cheering nature.

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"I've got it, you fellows!" roared Handforth excitedly.

"You've got what?" asked Nipper, looking at Handforth in surprise.

"The greatest idea that's ever been thought of!" replied Handforth promptly.

Church and McClure came in at that moment, both of them looking puzzled.

"Do you know anything about this?" asked Reggie Pitt. "Have you been let into this marvellous secret?"

"We don't know any more than the man in the moon!" replied Church. "But Handy's been gassing about the Black Hand—"

"The which?"

"Listen to me, you chaps!" said Handforth, compelling attention by his very earnestness, and by his blazing excitement. "The Head has told us pretty plainly that we can't do any more open fighting. Well, why shouldn't we carry on just the same—but in secret? In other words, why not form a secret society, like the Black Hand; or the Mafia, or the Camorra?"

"A secret society!"

Handforth had certainly created a sensation.

"Yes, and we'll call it the Ancient Order of Avengers!" he continued. "We'll form a society of our own, and wear long cloaks, with hoods, and slits for the eyes. You know the kind of thing—flowing robes, and all that business!"

"By jingo!"

"It doesn't sound so bad!"

"And think of the possibilities!" said Handforth excitedly. "We shall be able to raid the Fourth-Formers with impunity, and carry on the warfare just the same! Nobody will be able to recognise us, even if we're spotted, because we shall be disguised! We shall be wearing our special cloaks and hoods. We shall just be members of a secret society, and nobody will be able to discover who we are! The Avengers! Do you see the idea?"

Reggie Pitt came across, and fell upon Handforth's breast.

"How did you do it, Handy, old man?" he asked feebly. "It's not merely an idea—it's a brain storm! It's a mental tornado!"

There were buzzings from every part of the common-room. Church and McClure, too, were thoroughly interested. For once, Handforth had suggested an idea that every boy had leapt at. It was something novel—something thrilling. Of course, there had been secret societies in the St. Frank's School before, but never in such circumstances as these. It was the very thing to fit the case. The warfare could not be continued in the open, but a secret society would solve the difficulty.

"Well, what about it, Nipper?" asked Handforth. "You're supposed to be the leader of the Remove, but I rather think that I ought to step into your shoes now. I'm the fellow who's had the big idea, and I deserve—"

"You deserve first prize, old man," smiled Nipper. "Yes, there's a great deal in this scheme of yours. A secret society seems to fit the bill exactly. But it won't be very secret if we keep talking like this—and shouting. We've got to remain calm, and we've got to make a lot of preparations."

"Then you think the idea's good?" asked Handforth eagerly.

"It's not only good, but it's adopted unanimously by the entire meeting," replied Nipper. "We're with you, Handy—we're with you all along the line. As you say, we can't do anything openly now, but that's no reason why we shouldn't form a secret society, and continue the warfare against the Fourth in a different way."

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Handy!"

"By Jove, we'll show the Fourth something this time!"

All the former despondency had gone. A secret society! It was an idea that took the breath away. The possibilities were enormous. Attired in cloaks and hoods, members of this new society would be able to attack the Fourth-Formers unawares, and then they would mysteriously disappear. They would vanish into their haunts, and nobody would ever know who they actually were. Even if the Head heard about it, and instructed the prefects to make inquiries, nothing could be proved, so long as the members of the society left no traces behind them. Recognition would be impossible, and there were endless fields of scope.

Nipper had already thought of one, and it was connected with that secret passage that had been discovered down in the old cellar. The others hadn't thought of it yet, but Nipper was struck at once by the significance of it. A gleam entered his eye. A secret society, and an old, hidden passage, leading right into the heart of the enemy territory! That secret passage would have been useful in any circumstances; but to the members of a secret society it would be the one thing necessary to make everything complete.

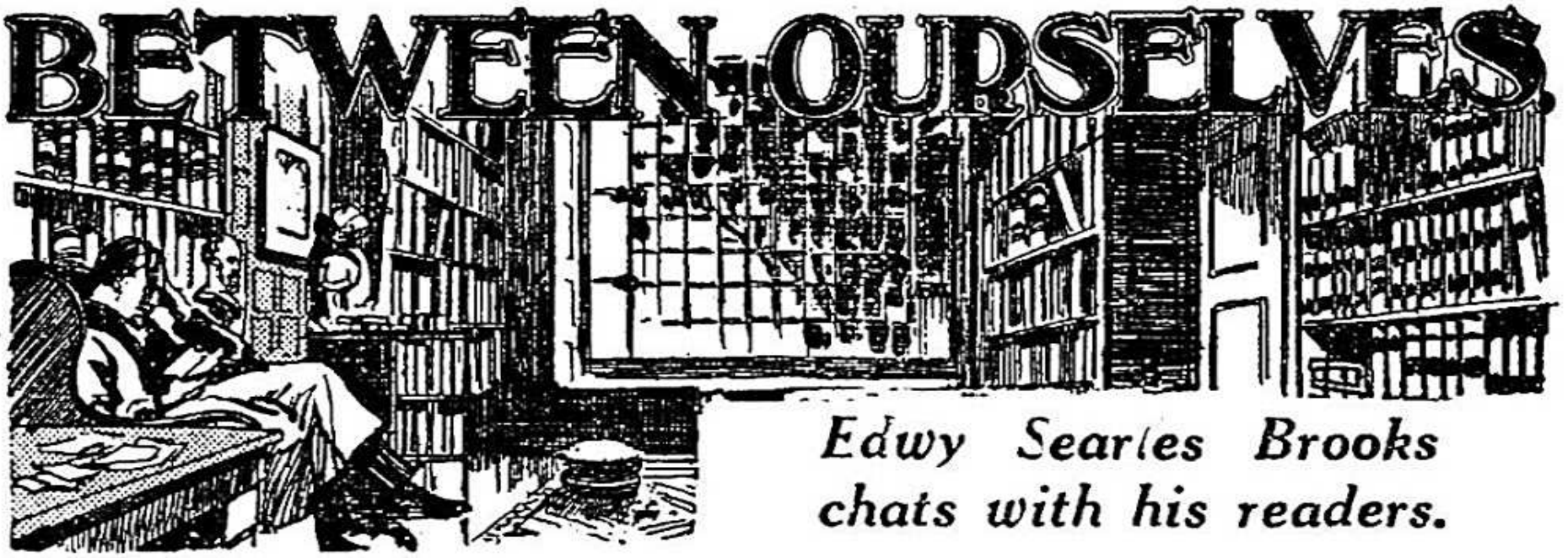
And so the idea was discussed, and turned over and over. And gradually, the Removes calmed down. They began to take this thing seriously. Above all, it was necessary to be cautious. Not one word of this new Ancient Order of Avengers must leak out.

And when the Remove went to bed that night the fellows were agog with suppressed excitement. The warfare against the Fourth Form was not at an end—it seemed, indeed, that it was only just beginning.

Forthcoming events at St. Frank's were scarcely likely to be dull and uninteresting!

THE END.

(Stirring events happen at St. Frank's next week when the Ancient Order of Avengers get going. "The Secret Societies of St. Frank's!" is a real thriller—a story you simply must not miss. Make sure of getting your copy of the N. L. L. by ordering NOW!)



*Edwy Searles Brooks
chats with his readers.*

*NOTE—If any 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. Photo exchange offer—mine for yours; but yours first, please—open indefinitely.
E.S.B.*

DURING this past week I've been doing quite a lot of thinking. Of course, there's nothing new in that—I'm always having to think more or less. But this week I've been thinking in a different sort of way. I'll tell you all about it.

* * *

Among all the hundreds of letters that reach me from readers, lots of them—in fact, heaps—have told me that their writers started reading the Old Paper quite by accident. They didn't see it advertised, or anything like that. They picked up a copy somewhere or other—they were ill, and somebody lent them some back numbers—they were told about it by a friend, and bought one out of curiosity. Anyhow, they started reading the paper *accidentally*. And since then, they tell me, they have been regular, constant readers. Well, that's very nice to hear, and very encouraging, too.

* * *

However, seeing that such a number of you have started reading the Old Paper by accident and have kept on reading it by design, my little scheme is this. First of all, though, I'd better tell you something. Just recently I have been working in conjunction with Mr. Martin Clifford, the popular author of the St. Jim's stories in "The Gem Library." I hope you'll realise that I'm letting you into a deep secret. Anyhow, when this present series of stories has concluded in Our Paper, another series will start. ("Go hon! The silly chump thinks he's telling us something!") Ah, but half a tick! This series will be a very different one—the series that follows the present yarns, I mean, because it will be written in conjunction with some special stories that Mr. Martin Clifford has turned out.

I expect you're wondering what on earth all this has to do with that scheme I had in mind? Well, you needn't wonder much longer. I am going to put the next sentence all to itself so that you can see it boldly.

* * *

HOW ABOUT A SPECIAL READERS' ADVERTISING WEEK?

* * *

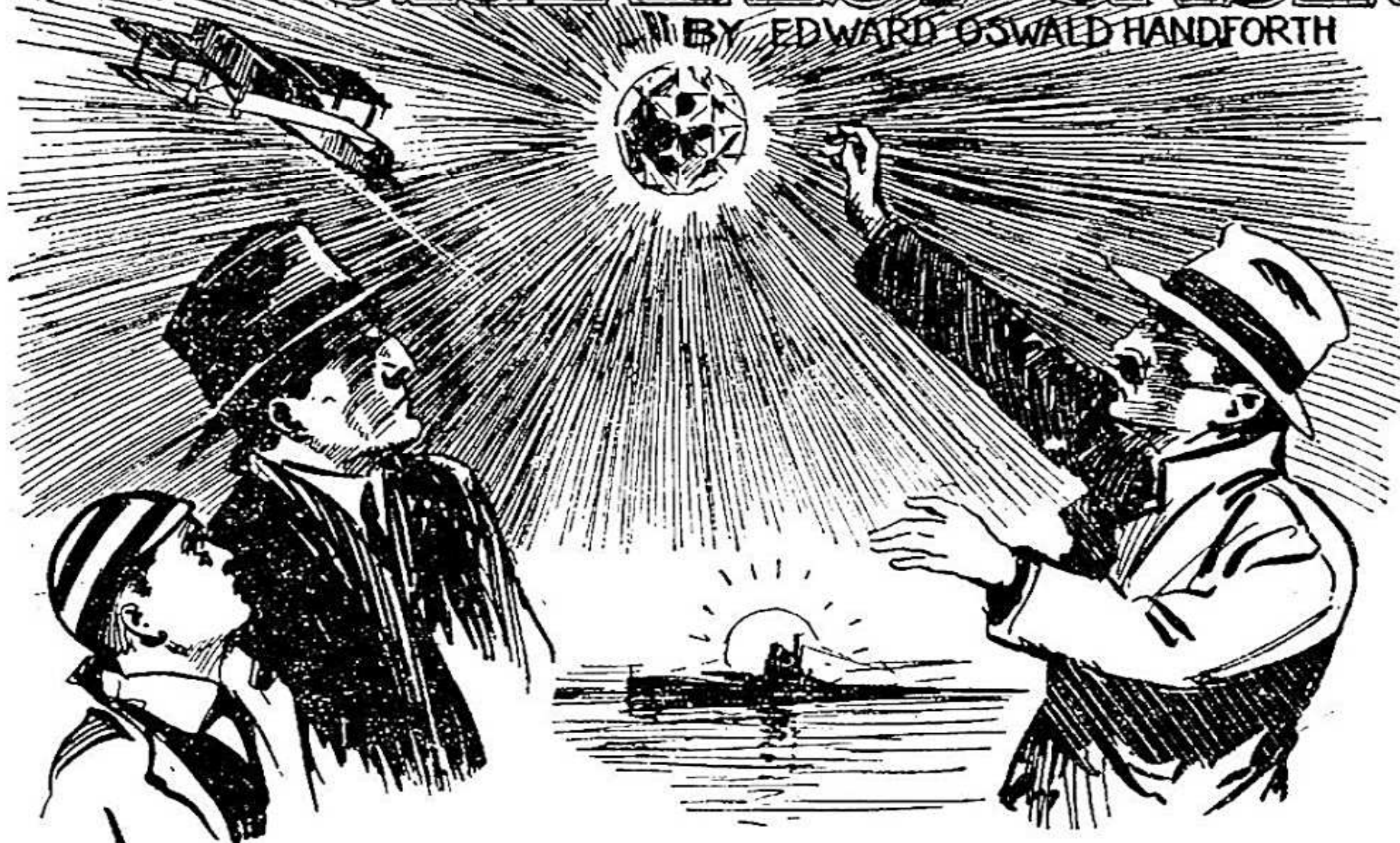
Do you see the idea? Later on I'll tell you exactly when this new series is to start—or, rather, when the two series are to start, because there'll be a series in the "Gem," too. And I am going to propose that all of you who are enthusiastic enough should buy an extra copy of the Old Paper that week. If you started reading the St. Frank's stories accidentally, why shouldn't somebody else? And my little idea is that you should buy this extra copy and give it to somebody who doesn't read the Old Paper now. You never know—perhaps he or she will become a permanent reader. And it will be an excellent time to work such a dodge, because it'll be the beginning of a new series. I'm telling you all this time in advance so that you can save your money up—or, at least, ear-mark a special twopence for use later on, on the date that I shall mention in a week or two.

Edwy Searles Brooks

Handy's Amazing Serial!Dig Into This NOW!

TRACKETT GRIM'S GREATEST CASE!

BY EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH



NOTE.—Handforth flatly refused Mr. Edwy Searles Brooks' offer of assistance in the writing of this story, and insisted that it should be published exactly as he wrote it. The story now appears as it came from Handforth's pen, with the exception that certain errors in spelling and punctuation have been corrected by the Editor.

THE ENTHRALLING OPENING CHAPTERS.

Trackett Grim, the celebrated sleuth, has sworn to recover the great Blue Ruby, the property of Sir Esau Starrs, the famous astronomer. Trackett Grim finds himself up against Armand Rocke, the master crook, but Trackett Grim is not daunted. He follows Armand Rocke's submarine to the Amazon, using his wonderful aeroplane, the Vulture, for this purpose. After many adventures on

the mighty Amazon, Trackett Grim has at last discovered the Blue Ruby, and it is now in his possession. Trackett Grim and Splinter are about to get into their aeroplane, in the midst of the impenetrable jungle, intent upon reaching home with their spoils, when two great lions drop down from the overhanging trees, and our heroes find themselves fighting madly for their very lives!

NOW GO ON READING!

A Staggering Discovery

ANY other man but Trackett Grim would have been scared out of his wits by the sudden descent of those two whacking great lions. But the world-celebrated criminologist and his assistant thought nothing of such encounters as this. They were in the habit of laughing at dangers, and snapping their fingers at frightful perils.

All the same, our heroes would certainly have died, but for a ruse of Trackett Grim's.

There they were, struggling madly with those two monarchs of the forest, and just as Splinter's head was about to be caught in those cruel jaws, the loud snorting of a rhinoceros awoke the echoes of the impenetrable jungle.

The rhino—the deadly enemy of the lion! The way those two lions bunked was terrific! They pricked up their ears, backed away from Trackett Grim and Splinter, and then bolted into the undergrowth as though a crowd of demons was after them.

"Saved!" gasped Splinter breathlessly.

Trackett Grim grinned.

"Yes, rather!" he agreed. "Wasn't bad, Splinter, was it?"

"That rhino coming along, you mean, sir?" asked Splinter. "I hope the beastly thing doesn't charge us!"

"You silly young ass!" said Trackett Grim, frowning. "That was *me!*"

"You!" gasped Splinter, staring. "My hat! I knew you had a good voice, sir, but—"

"You leave my voice alone!" said Trackett Grim. "I knew that only one thing could save us, my lad, and so I imitated the roar of a rhinoceros, and the lions did a bunk. Come on—let's get to the aeroplane. I'm anxious to be home."

And dismissing the incident as though it had never occurred, Trackett Grim and Splinter resumed their way through the jungle. Presently they came upon the Vulture, resting there amidst the tropical beauties.

Trackett Grim poured the petrol into the tank, and then the engine roared. Two minutes later, the Vulture was soaring over the stately forests of the Amazon, and the great Blue Ruby was in Trackett Grim's pocket. Success!

"Now, Splinter, I think we deserve some rest," said Trackett Grim, as he set the controls of the aeroplane. "I have steered a course due east, and before long we shall be out upon the Atlantic, well on our way home. Let us go to bed now, and—"

"But what about Armand Rocke, sir?" asked Splinter. "It's a pity we didn't collar the rotter!"

"That is my only regret," said Trackett Grim sadly. "We have recovered the Blue Ruby, and the master miscreant has eluded us. Never mind, Splinter. One of these days we shall come across him again. He will cross my path, and then—"

Trackett Grim paused, and that pause of his had a world of meaning.

They both went to bed, and the Vulture went roaring on through the evening, and far into the night. Once her course was set, there was nothing to worry about. Trackett Grim and Splinter slept like tops throughout the night, and when they got up, the sun was shining upon a new day. And far, far below were the illimitable waters of the ocean. Not a ship was in sight—not a speck of land.

Splinter busied himself with breakfast, and Trackett Grim strolled into the control room, and had a look at the machinery. Everything was working fine.

And then, suddenly, Trackett Grim uttered a hoarse cry. Splinter was by his side in a moment, and he found his famous master staring down at the sea—staring with eyes that were full of amazement.

"Look!" said Trackett Grim, pointing.

"The sea, sir!"

"I know it's the sea, you young fathead!" snapped Trackett Grim. "But this isn't the Atlantic at all! I set our course for England, and the only way to get to England is to fly across the Atlantic!"

"But—but how do you know that this isn't the Atlantic, guv'nor?"

"How do I know?" retorted Trackett Grim. "Don't I know the appearance of every ocean in the world! I can see, by the first glance, whether we are over the Atlantic, the Pacific, the Mediterranean, the Indian Ocean, or the Dead Sea, and I recognise this water below us as the Pacific!"

"Oh, corks!" panted Splinter.

"Yes, the Pacific," repeated Trackett Grim. "That means to say that we have come in the wrong direction! Yet our compasses are all set! There can be only one explanation, Splinter! The machine has been tampered with!"

"Oh, heavens!" breathed Splinter.

"And Armand Rocke is responsible!" went on Trackett Grim, his eyes glinting, and his words coming out like bullets. "Armand Rocke has been messing about with our machine, and instead of flying homewards we are now over the vast, trackless spaces of the Pacific!"

Over the Pacific!

SPLINTER received the dread news with that stoical calmness which his famous master had taught him. He turned as pale as chalk, clutched at Trackett Grim, and he was trembling in every limb with agitation.

"What does this mean, sir?" he panted hoarsely. "Tell me the worst! I am ready for it!"

"Brave lad!" said Trackett Grim, patting Splinter on the shoulder. "It means that we are thousands of miles out of our course."

"But can't we turn back?"

"We can—but it will be useless!" replied Trackett Grim. "For our compasses are no good. They've been messed about with, and they're all wonky. In any case, I doubt if there is much petrol left. I'll soon see."

He went to an indicator, and then uttered a hollow groan.

"Just as I thought!" he said. "Only half a pint of petrol in the tank! In other words, Splinter, we may be forced to descend at any moment! And there is not a ship in sight—not a speck of land to be seen!"

And there they stood looking down upon the sunlit waters of the Pacific. They forgot their breakfast altogether. They wondered, vaguely, how long they would last after the Vulture had plunged into the water.

Suddenly the engine gave a kind of splutter. Then it stopped altogether.

"We're doomed, sir!" panted Splinter. "The engine has petered out, and we are falling!"

Like a stone, the Vulture was dropping towards the sea. Down, down, down! With a steady hand, Trackett Grim guided the aeroplane, and she descended as lightly as a feather. But there was no petrol left, and a disastrous end to the flight was inevitable. Nothing could be done to avert this mishap.

"If only there was a rock, it wouldn't be so bad," said Trackett Grim. "We could

come down near it, and then swim to the rock, and light a signal fire. But do not despair, Splinter. Once we have landed upon the ocean, we will rig up a sail, and no doubt we shall be able to make port."

Trackett Grim was always full of optimism. His ingenuity was marvellous, and he had never been at a loss. When one thing failed, he thought of another. His brain was working all the time. Even when he was asleep he couldn't keep his brain still—for he frequently had nightmares.

With a sudden shout, Splinter pointed.

"A sail—a sail!" he said tensely. "Look, sir! There's a ship over there—right in the distance!"

"A ship!" said Trackett Grim, grabbing for a pair of binoculars. "By George, Splinter, you're right! It's a whacking great sailing ship! And it's coming in our direction! If only we can last out until—"

But at that moment the Vulture touched the water, and plunged underneath the surface. With one blow of his fist, Trackett Grim smashed through the wall of the saloon. The next moment he and Splinter were swimming desperately in that shark-infested sea. The aeroplane had plunged straight down to her doom, and there were the pair, swimming. Two or three miles distant, the sailing ship was coming ever onwards.

Would she see these two desperate swimmers?

The sailing ship was miles off yet, but there was a pretty strong breeze blowing, and she was moving through the water at a spanking pace, and Trackett Grim and Splinter swept onwards, ever onwards.

But those ten minutes were anxious ones.

At last the sailing ship was right across Trackett Grim's beam, and he waved a despairing hand. A hail came from the bridge of the sailing ship, and the next moment she swung round, then bore straight towards the swimmers.

"They've seen us, sir!" said Splinter happily. "Hurrah! They're going to pick us up!"

"Have I not always told you, Splinter, to trust me?" said Trackett Grim. "It doesn't matter what danger we are in, you can always rely upon me to get us out!"

As the ship came sailing by, they clutched at the ropes that were flung out to them. Shortly afterwards they were hauled on board, and they found themselves gazing with interest at the skipper.

This man was a hulking great rotter of about six foot three, with a big black beard, and a sword dangling at his side. He also had a couple of revolvers in his belt, and, all round, he looked a pretty tough sort of beggar.

"Ahoy, there!" he sang out, as he looked at Trackett Grim. "You was nearly food for the sharks, wasn't you? Well, you're safe aboard this craft now!"

"So I see," said Trackett Grim. "My name is Grim—Trackett Grim—"

"The world-famous detective?" snarled the skipper, showing his teeth with terror.

"The same!" agreed Trackett Grim. "I have just concluded a great case, and I have succeeded in rescuing the great Blue Ruby!"

The skipper's eyes glittered.

"You have the Blue Ruby?" he repeated greedily. "Then you are my prisoner! Men, grab these two! They are our enemies! Trackett Grim and Splinter are the enemies of all wrongdoers!"

In a trice, the captain and his crew showed their true colours. They opened their coats, revealing the blue jerseys they were wearing, and on every jersey was the sign of the skull and crossbones!

"Pirates!" gasped Splinter. "We're in the hands of pirates, sir!"

The Fight for Liberty!

PIRATES!

Amazing as it seemed—incredible and dumbfounding as it appeared—this was a pirate ship. It conclusively proved one of Trackett Grim's great theories. The days of pirates were not over! Out here, in the Pacific, pirates were just as active as they had been in the old days of Captain Kidd and Jack Sheppard.

The pirate chief leered in Trackett Grim's face.

"So you have the great Blue Ruby on you, eh?" he said mockingly. "All right, Mr. Trackett Grim! Perhaps you'll be good enough to hand it over?"

"Never!" cried Trackett Grim, in ringing tones.

"You'd better obey orders, you scum!" snarled the captain. "If you don't, by hokey, I'll make you walk the plank!"

"I defy you!" said Trackett Grim, with fine coolness. "You can do your worst, you miscreant!"

"Idiot!" said the pirate chief, the words hissing between his misshapen teeth. "Refuse to obey my orders, and I will drill you with holes! After that, I'll drop you to the sharks! Do you understand?"

"Perhaps you will understand this!" retorted Trackett Grim boldly.

Crash! Biff! Biff! Thud! Zing!

Quick as lightning, Trackett Grim landed a beautiful blow with his right. He followed it up with a left, and then another right. The pirate chief had an idea that a couple of thunderstorms had hit him. He went backwards, rolled over like a nine-pin, and finished up in the scuppers.

"It's a fight, Splinter!" roared Trackett Grim. "Come on! We'll take them on!"

"Hurrah!" yelled Splinter enthusiastically.

(How's that for a thrilling instalment, you chaps? Here we have Trackett Grim and Splinter fighting a crowd of rotten pirates—two against twenty odd! Next week's instalment is a stunner, and contains many surprises! Look out for it!—E. O. H.)



All LETTERS in reference to the League should be addressed to the Chief Officer, The St. Frank's League, c/o THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY, The Fleetway House, Farringdon St., London, E.C.4. Enquiries which need an immediate answer should be accompanied by a stamped and addressed envelope.

Camping.

Once again comes the query, always interesting, about camping, and what to take, etc. The great thing is to know what to leave out.

A Lancaster chum is going on a week's cycling tour with a pal. A lightweight tent from the Lightweight Tent Co., 70, High Holborn, London W.C., or from Gamages, Holborn, London, is required. Other necessities are as follow: Scout's billycan, knife, fork, spoon, plate, cup, matches (in bottle to keep dry), blanket, groundsheet, compass and map. Food is bought en route.

Permission must be asked before camping, and the place should be left as found, all litter being burned or buried. The cost of such a trip should pan out at about £1 for the week.

Two Sportsmen.

Two keen chums write to me from Ward 7, Robroyston Hospital, Glasgow. They are Matthew H. Clanachan and Peter Hughes, and are likely to be in hospital for a year at least.

They have started a St. Frank's League Club, and they hope soon to have all their ward mates entered as members. They are running a magazine for which a halfpenny is charged, the money going to the club funds.

They want to hear from their nearest O.O. I am sure that all Leaguers will join in wishing the best of luck to this plucky pair.

Troubled About His Looks!

Here's a letter from Australia, in which the writer tells me he is worried by his ugliness. I don't see why my chum should go complaining round on this score. The handsome fellow has a terrible handicap, for he so often wastes time which should be given to good work, in thinking how frightfully good-looking he is.

And then, what is ugliness? I know fellows with features which seem to have been hustled together while the train was waiting, but, with all that, the owners of these unprepossessing faces are so real and good and earnest that their ugliness is forgotten in the

admiration one feels. There is real wisdom in the rhyme:

“For beauty I know I am no star.
There are others more lovely by far.
For myself, I don't mind it,
Since I get behind it.
It's the fellows in front get the jar!”

CORRESPONDENTS WANTED.

Nelson Herr, P.O. Box 3116, Johannesburg, Transvaal, South Africa, wishes to form a sports club in his town, and would like to hear from those interested. Also he has back numbers of the N.L.L.

L. Talbot, 405, Collins Street, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, wishes to hear from readers who have back numbers of the N.L.L. for disposal.

Ian Hamilton, Wanganui, Grandview Street, Pymble North Shore Line, Sydney, N.S.W., Australia, wishes to hear from readers. Interested in stamps.

John Dalton, 80, Blatchington Road, Hove, Sussex, wishes to correspond with readers anywhere.

H. McMahon, 50, Long Street, West Broken Hill, N.S.W., Australia, wishes to hear from readers in England, especially London.

B. Maxwell, 21, Armidale Street, Petone, Wellington, New Zealand, wishes to correspond with readers anywhere interested in reading, drawing and painting.

T. Rex, 5, Gladstone Street, Leichardt, Sydney, N.S.W., Australia, wishes to correspond with London readers who are keen on bikes.

H. W. Meek, 9, Fitzhamon Embankment, Riverside, Cardiff, wants Nos. 1-150 (old series), N.L.L.

C. Miller, 23, Ashcombe Street, Fulham, London, S.W. 6, wishes to hear from members in his district.

M. Donovan, 130, Delapole Avenue, Anlaby Road, Hull, wishes to hear from readers who would assist in forming a club.

Charles H. Dalton, 80, Blatchington Road, Hove, Sussex, wishes to hear from readers who are interested in dance bands and dancing, especially American readers.

J. R. A. Cummings, 17, Hay Street, King William's Town, South Africa, wishes to hear from his nearest O.O.

Thomas H. Littlejohn, 40, Bridge Street, New Bradwell, Bucks, wishes to obtain Nos. 1-40 (new series) Nelson Lee Lib. He also wishes to hear from stamp collectors anywhere.

A. Watts, 9, Clifton Road, Kingston Hill, Surrey, wants readers to join his cycling club; eight-mile radius Kingston. He would also like to hear from Australian readers.

Reginald William Thoreau, Moreland House, Craig Street, Jersey, Channel Islands, wishes to hear from stamp collectors. He has sheets of stamps. He would also like to hear from George T. Edgar, junior, 66, Pine Hill Road, Dalnior, Dunedin, New Zealand.

Charles V. Brereton, 50, High Street, Congleton, Cheshire, wants to correspond with readers in British Columbia and the United States.

Albert Dimock, 15, Exmouth Road,

Walthamstow, London, E.17, wishes to hear from readers.

W. Brett, 5, Parkfield Road, Alum Rock, Birmingham, has NELSON LEE LIBRARY Nos. 123-358 inclusive for disposal.

Reginald Rushworth, Homeland Bungalow, Over-the-Burn, Low Fell, Gateshead, Co. Durham, wishes to contribute serial stories to amateur magazines.

D. Cosway, 40, Hanover Road, Willesden, London, N.W.10, wishes to correspond with readers in his district who are interested in Meccano and stamps.

Edward Ellmore, 25, Sreatfield Avenue, East Ham, London, E.6, wishes to correspond with 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 next Wednesday. 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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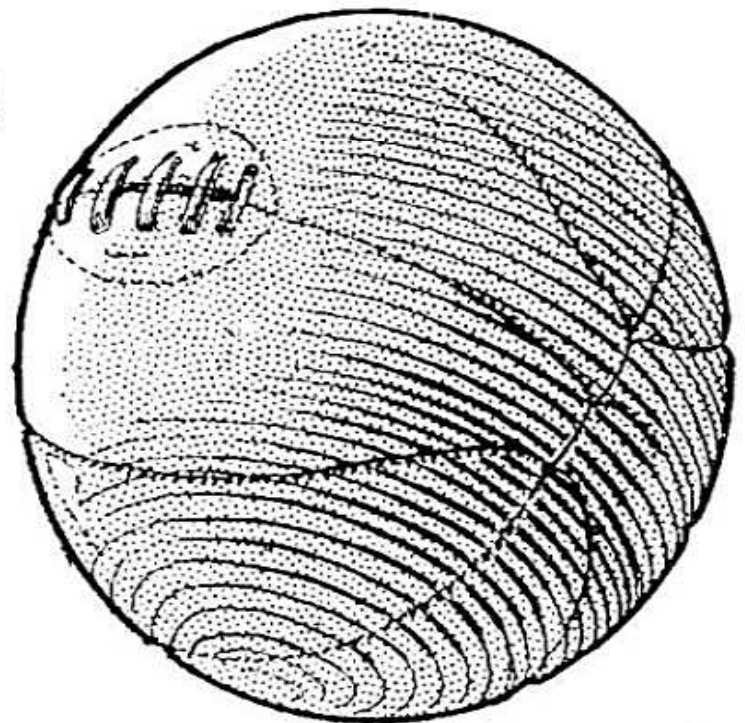
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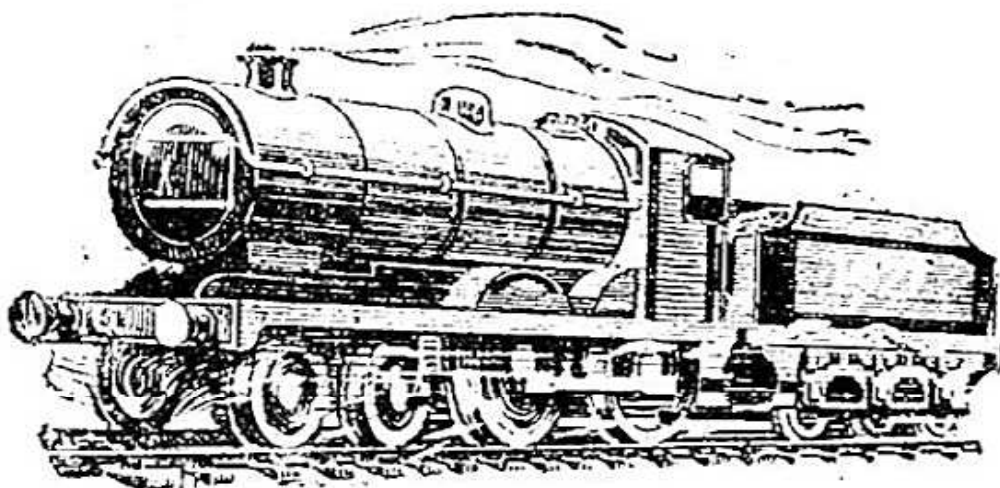
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